

LEIGH ON MENDIP PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held at Memorial Hall on Monday 18th December 2023, starting at 7:00pm

Present: Cllrs Vicki Taylor (Chair), Martin Carter, Iain Kirby, Estelle Kirby, Sue Sweet

Attending: Barry Clarke (Somerset Council); Joe McGhee (Clerk);

1 Welcome by the Chairman

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 Apologies for absence

Cllr Paula Freeland; Cllr Philip Ham (Somerset Council)

3 Absent

There were no absences.

4 (a) To receive declaration of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda

There were no declarations of interest from councillors in items on the agenda.

(b) To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests

Cllr Martin Carter has a written request for dispensation in relation to Leigh on Mendip Recreation Association for four years (June 2027). Cllr Vicki Taylor has a written request for dispensation in relation to Leigh on Mendip War Memorial Hall for one year (June 2024)

(c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate

There were no requests for dispensation.

5 Public Session

No members of the public were present.

6 County Councillor Reports

Cllr Clarke provided a verbal report on several topics.

The financial situation at Somerset Council has improved somewhat with smaller deficits predicted for this year and next. There will be a full council meeting on 20th December to discuss the budget. Possible actions include taking funds from reserves and a council tax increase.

The Local Council Networks will continue.

Funds of £108M will be available for roadworks in the county, funded from savings coming from changes to the HS2 project.

There will be changes to waste collections in parts of the county in 2024. Michael Cowdell is the Somerset Council point of contact for that.

There will be no changes to parish boundaries under the boundary review taking place, but there will be the option for parishes to merge if that could lead to efficiencies. There is no timeframe set for such developments.

A thermal imaging camera will be available from Frome library and can be borrowed for up to three days at a time. Cllrs E and I Kirby will look into the practicalities of this facility and how it might benefit the parish.

The precept process for 2024 will be as before.

Space has been identified for a further 505 house in the Mendip area of the county as required by judicial review, although there is no detail available yet of precisely where those will be sited.

A review is underway of the use of second homes in the county.

7 Monthly update from Tom Kemp – Parish Tree Officer

(a) Update on Tree Officer job description (including biodiversity).

Deferred to the meeting on 15th January. Clerk will ensure Tree Office is copied when the agenda is issued.

8 To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 20th November, previously circulated (Attachment 1).

The council **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 20th November as a true record; these were signed and dated by the Chair.

9 Matters arising from the minutes but not on the agenda.

Cllr Taylor advised there had been an offer from a parishioner, Mr Higgins, to undertake the implementation of hardstanding at Park Hayes as a community venture. Equipment would be borrowed from Mr Massey, a local builder, who has agreed to provide it. This would be done over a weekend. The Parish Council agreed to this proposal in principle and will be supportive of this initiative as it will be implemented on Parish Council land. The Council will apply to a quarry for materials. Council support is contingent on further investigation of practicalities such as insurance and the implications of carrying out work adjacent to a public highway.

Cllr Taylor will liaise with Mr Higgins to develop this proposal.

10 Planning Applications – If other planning applications are received between the date of this notice and the date of the meeting, they may be considered.

None.

11 Planning Applications – Responses to be noted from Somerset Council

None.

12 To Be Discussed / Resolved

(a) Draft budget and precept for 2024-25 (Attachment 2)

Following discussion, it was agreed that a new line would be added for the sum of £1,000 to be allocated to developments arising from the Community Plan. That sum would be moved from General Reserves/Contingency. The Clerk will revise the budget accordingly and include a column showing the option of a 20% increase in the precept. This will be discussed again, and the precept level agreed, at the Council meeting on 15th January following more information on developments in Somerset Council.

Cllr Clarke left the meeting at 19:54.

(b) Letter from Dave Milton, SALC Chairman (Attachment 3)

Councillors will consider this letter and its request for feedback with the aim of resolving a response at the meeting on 15th January.

(c) Update of NS&I signatories

Council **RESOLVED** that the signatories for the Council's NS&I investment account in future will be Cllrs Taylor and I Kirby along with the Clerk. The appropriate NS&I form was completed by those three.

The Clerk will send to NS&I along with a covering letter of explanation and an extract from these minutes as evidence of the Council's decision.

(d) Financing of T Kemp proposal for tree planting at Park Hayes (Attachment 4)

The funding of £617.88 was agreed in principle. The proposed tree planting will be put forward for further discussion and ratification at the meeting on 15th January.

(e) Cemetery maintenance 2024.

After a discussion of the Idverde proposal and possible alternatives Council **RESOLVED** to renew the contract with Idverde for a further year. The Clerk will communicate this to Idverde.

- (f)** Update from Cllrs Estelle Kirby and Paula Freeland on pre-application, incorporating landscaping scheme, for the new cemetery.
Cllr E Kirby had already sent an email with details of further discussions with Planning at Somerset Council. After informal advice on practicalities and costs, it became clear that the best course of action is to abandon the pre-application and instead submit the full application in early 2024 with the aim of being able to make the appropriate material change to the site, i.e. proceeding with a requested interment, within the next five years.
Cllr E Kirby will proceed with the planning application.
- (g)** Update from Cllr E Kirby on draft statement on the lack of a five-year plan at Somerset Council.
Cllr Kirby drafted the contents of the letter and circulated by email.
The Clerk will use that draft to produce a letter and issue on behalf of the Council.
- (h)** Review of councillor responsibilities (including Community Action Plan).
A separate meeting will be convened for discussion of the Community Plan and its progression, with a view to ratification at the meeting on 15th January or the earliest meeting thereafter. The Community Plan will be included as a separate item on the agenda of the next meeting.
Areas of involvement for each councillor were agreed as follows:
- . Cllr Taylor – Memorial Hall, Community Action Plan
 - . Cllr Carter – Recreation Field, Allotments, Community Speedwatch, Highways
 - . Cllr I Kirby – Quarries, LCN, Finance, Assets and Services Devolution from Somerset Council
 - . Cllr E Kirby – Quarries, Cemetery, School
 - . Cllr Sweet – Community Action Plan, Health and Safety
 - . Cllr Freeland - Planning
- (i)** Update from Cllr Carter on liaison with Recreation Field Committee re further funding.
Covered above under precept.
- (j)** Update from PPLO on stakeholder discussion re the fact that the right of way from park Corner to Great House Farm (FR 8/24) is impassable.
A meeting has been called but no date confirmed yet; continues.
- (k)** Update from PPLO on discussion with landowner re alternative route around Tweed Farm.
No discussion has taken place yet with landowner; continues.
- (l)** Damming of streams – Cllr Sweet approach to Environment Agency.
Cllr Sweet reported approaches to several agencies including Somerset Council and the Environment Agency. It was eventually established that responsibility for this sort of issue lay with the Flood and Coastal Team at Somerset Council but in this instance no action would be undertaken.
- (m)** Update from Cllr Carter on letter to Charlie Higgins of Somerset Council on the possibility of clarification of the signage related to Apple Meadow/Park Hayes.
Cllr Carter referred to an email sent to C Higgins and his response, which were circulated to councillors. The Clerk is to use this to develop a letter to Somerset Highways and report to the next meeting on any development.
Cllr Carter also provided further updates:
- . The Community Speedwatch team carried out exercises recently to monitor vehicles and found relatively few exceeding the speed threshold
 - . A new PCSO is taking up position and will be at the Council's meeting in January to speak during the Public Forum.

A suggestion has been made that the flashing lights at the school should incorporate a "20mph when lights flashing" instruction. Cllr Carter will take this up with Somerset Council.

- (n) Update and proposal from Cllr Taylor on additional dog bin at Sparks Field.

A village has offered to install a new bin. Cllr Taylor will get quotations.

The Clerk will liaise with Somerset Council's street cleaning department to ensure any new bin is included in their schedule.

- (o) Proposal for Christmas gift for Village Rangers.

Council approved a spend of up to £50 on a Christmas gift for village rangers; Cllr Taylor will bring the appropriate receipt to the next meeting.

13 Clerk's / Councillors' Report

- (a) Update on deeds for land at Park Hayes

A definitive copy of a deed could not be found in the records. The Clerk will seek a definitive statement on ownership from the Land Registry.

- (b) SALC funding of £1,750 transferred to Recreation Field Management Committee account.
Noted.

- (c) Proposal for tree replacement to Simon James Ltd. drafted and sent on to Cllr Taylor and T Kemp.

The Clerk had drafted a proposal and will now complete and send on to Simon James Ltd. following comments.

- (d) Contact details updated with Planning East at Somerset Council

Noted.

- (e) Halecombe Quarry Community Fund poster and supporting material advertised and placed on the council website.

Noted.

- (f) Administration information and contact details updated with Unity Bank.

Noted.

14 Finance

Bank reconciliation (Attachment 5).

Bank Balances as at: 30th November 2023

Current Account £6,805.87

Reserve Account £9,583.86

Receipts

None.

Payments

- (a) Idverde grass cutting October - £113.53 – BACS transfer on 22 Nov 23

- (b) SALC grant to LOM Recreation - £1,750.00 - BACS transfer on 22 Nov 23

- (c) HMRC income tax - £71.20 – BACS transfer on 27 Nov 23

- (d) Joseph McGhee – Sal & Exps Nov 23 – BACS transfer on 28 Nov 23

- (e) Ionos web hosting - £13.20 – DD on 12 Dec 23

- (f) Clerk salary December - £285.00

- (g) HMRC income tax - £71.20

- (h) Clerk expenses – working from home - £6.50.

- (i) Idverde churchyard grass cutting November - £113.53

- (j) J McGhee – defibrillator pads and battery – TheDefibPad - £112.79

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the above receipts and payments.

15 Correspondence to be noted.

- (a) Letter from Dave Mitton, SALC Chairman – forwarded 15 Nov 23
- (b) Member Briefing – Financial Emergency Update (via B Clarke) – forwarded 16 Nov 23
- (c) Notes from Clerks Forum on devolution letter from leader of Somerset Council – forwarded 29 Nov 23
- (d) Briefing from Cllr Barry Clarke – forwarded 04 Dec 23
- (e) Email from Ally Laing with range of information on devolution arising from City, Town, and Parish Council Working Group meeting – forwarded 05 Dec 23
- (f) SALC December 2023 newsletter – forwarded 12 Dec 23

16 Matters to report / items for next agenda.

There were no further matters to report or items for the next agenda.

17 Date and time of next meeting: Monday 15th January, 2024 in the Memorial Hall starting at 7.00pm.

Meeting closed at 21:09