

LEIGH ON MENDIP PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held at Memorial Hall on Monday 15th January, 2024, starting at 7:00pm

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

Attending: Barry Clarke (Somerset Council); Joe McGhee (Clerk); Tom Kemp (Tree Officer); one member of the public (Joanna Hudson)

1 Welcome by the Chairman

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 Apologies for absence

Cllr Philip Ham (Somerset Council)

3 Absent

None.

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

None.

(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

The member of the public, Ms Joanna Hudson, raised the subject of a potential development on the back field of her property in the village. She also mentioned a proposed development of three new detached bungalows. These had been the subject of a communication from her, by post and email, to the Council. This communication was due to be discussed as item 12(b) below, but was brought forward to this item of the meeting.

Ms Hudson said she had read the Community Plan and taken note of its recommendations. She added that she is keen to work with the Parish Council and others to ensure that any development delivered sustainable benefits to the village, and that she is open to suggestions of how that might be done. There are no timescales for the field development at present.

There followed a general discussion during which a number of points were made by councillors, including: it would be beneficial if clarity could be provided on the development Ms Hudson proposes; any plans should complement existing facilities and not compete with them; it may be possible to incorporate at least part of a safe cycle way; care must be taken about the impact of additional traffic; due attention must be paid to the church as a heritage asset (Grade 1 listed building).

The discussion concluded with the Chair emphasising that the Parish Council cannot be involved in attempting to predetermine a proposed development, it can only assess and express a view on each planning application on its given merits. She proposed to Ms Hudson that, as other developers had done, she publish her plans and hold an open meeting for parishioners so that they can ask questions and comment on any plans. Ms Hudson agreed to do so.

6 County Councillor Reports

Cllr Barry Clarke of Somerset Council delivered a verbal report.

Cllr Clarke has recently sent a number of papers and updates on the budgetary difficulties in which Somerset Council finds itself. (The Clerk routinely forwards these communications to councillors.) A number of steps are proposed to deal with the budgetary shortfall, including

borrowing on capitalisation and a likely increase in council tax of 10%. There is a consultation process in place which will end on 22nd January. Budgetary control steps will be finalised at a full
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council meeting in February.

Cllr Clarke reminded the meeting that Parish Councils can take on services, although they need to pay careful attention to related responsibilities such as the need for insurance. Parish Councils can work together on services, with one suggestion being a shared, staffed general maintenance service although that would incur significant costs (estimate as £50k per annum).

There will be a change in the cost of recycling building waste, with no charge for waste resulting from homeowners doing their own improvements.

Waste collection dates will be changing in 2024 over some areas of the county, although this should not affect Leigh On Mendip.

Five recycling sites will be shutting.

Cllr Clarke left the meeting at 19:34.

7 Monthly update from Tom Kemp – Parish Tree Officer

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

T Kemp provided an updated job description. Some comments were provided by the Chair, including the removal of references to district councils. The Clerk will update the description, send to T Kemp for approval, and publish.

8 To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 18th December, 2023, previously circulated (Attachment 1).

The Council **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 18th December, 2023, as a true record; these were signed and dated by the Chair.

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

None.

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 (including training) (Attachment 2)

Budget to be revised to increase training allocation to £800, to include Chapter 8 training, with the increase being taken from general reserves.

Cllr I Kirby spoke about the budget and the need to balance the possibility of taking on responsibility for more services from Somerset Council with the desire to avoid an excessive increase in the precept. After a brief discussion, Cllr Taylor proposed a precept increase of 20%; Cllr Sweet seconded. Cllr E Kirby proposed an increase of 15%; Cllr Carter seconded. The proposals were put to a vote, with 4 councillors voting for a 15% increase and 2 for a 20% increase. **RESOLVED** – the precept will be increased by 15% to £13,645. The Clerk is to update the budget, complete the precept form and submit it to Somerset Council by the due deadline of noon on 2nd February.

(b) Communication from J Hudson on potential development

Covered under item 5, Public Session, above.

(c) Letter from Dave Milton, SALC Chairman (Attachment 3) – response

A number of comments were provided on this letter; Clerk to draft and submit a response.

(d) Ownership of land at Park Hayes (Attachments 4 and 5)

It was noted that Somerset Council is shown by the Land Registry as the owner of the land at Park Hayes. A discussion was held on the plans for tree planting already drafted by T Kemp

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and the impact on them of Somerset Council's ownership. It was decided that T Kemp will draft a proposal for the tree planting and that this will be distributed to homeowners local to the land, prior to a possible approach to Somerset Council. T Kemp to send draft proposal to Cllr Taylor with the aim of issuing to homeowners at least two weeks before the next meeting, with a response deadline of two weeks so that feedback can be assessed at the meeting on 19th February.

(e) Financing of T Kemp proposal for tree planting at Park Hayes – ratification

Deferred until item 12(d) resolved.

(f) Proposal to Simon Hayes Ltd. for replacement tree at Park Hayes

Deferred until item 12(d) resolved.

(g) Update on application for the new cemetery.

Cllr E Kirby to discuss soft landscaping with T Kemp. Cllrs E Kirby and Freeland to progress thereafter.

Cllr Taylor to raise a request to the Memorial Hall Committee at its next meeting for its approval to mount memorial plaques on the wall of the hall.

Clerk to clarify ownership of land at Bellfield from the point of view of access across it to the new cemetery.

(h) Community Plan – ratification

Action continues. Meeting set for Wednesday, 31st January, at 7:00pm in the Bell Inn.

(i) Hardstanding at Park Hayes – update from Cllr Taylor

No update available; continues.

(j) Letter of complaint on lack of 5-year plan – update from Clerk

Clerk to clarify several points with Cllr E Kirby, then draft and submit a letter of complaint.

(k) Signage – Park Hayes/Apple Meadow View

Clerk to draft request to Traffic Management at Somerset Council, using material provided by Cllr Carter, for signage change on safety grounds. This request to incorporate request re flashing lights at school – see 12(n) below.

(l) Update from Cllr Taylor on additional dog bin at Sparks Field.

Cllr Taylor provided options for suitable dog bins. Clerk to put a message out via the council website and Facebook pages requesting sponsorship of £200. Clerk to also contact Idverde/Somerset Council to confirm the new bin would be included in the street cleaning schedule.

(m) D Day celebration

It was noted that there will be beacon lit to mark the D Day celebration. Cllr Carter will put a message out on appropriate Facebook pages inviting parishioners to suggest ways of commemorating D Day.

(n) Update on incorporation of “20mph when lights flashing” message at school lights; Cllr Carter.

As note under item 12(k) above, Clerk to submit to incorporate request for “20mph when lights flashing” sign at the school in communication to Somerset Council's Traffic Management department. Evidence of cars travelling at speeds of 47mph derived from the Speedwatch exercise to be cited, along with the concern expressed by Somerset Councillor Philip Ham that such a sign was not already in place.

(o) Update on new dog bin at Sparks Field; Cllr Taylor

Duplicate – covered under 12(l) above.

13 Clerk's / Councillors' Report

- (a) Letter sent to NS&I requesting change to signatories on investment account
- (b) Land Registry search done for Park Hayes – see above
- (c) Notice on availability of thermal imaging camera posted on website and Facebook

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- (d) Idverde informed of contract extension and have confirmed receipt and continuation.
- (e) Updates from PPLO, Chris Cudmore:
 - a. Right of Way from Park Corner to Great House Farm (FR 8/24)
A meeting was held on 8 Jan with representatives from Tarmac, Somerset RoW, and LoM PC (IK). It was agreed to clear the route of the definitive Right of Way with a permissive path linking it to the existing permissive path around the quarry. Tarmac will seek authorisation for this work and Somerset RoW will provide any gates, signs etc. Tarmac will also sign the existing path around the quarry with Permissive Footpath signs.
 - b. Tweed Farm Waymarking
Landowner has received details of suggested route and confirmation is expected shortly.
 - c. Replacement of stiles with kissing gates
Somerset RoW Warden has this in hand but not date. She will advise if any assistance is required.
 - d. Rangers
CC has agreed to take over the running of the LoM Rangers from David Sparkes after the session on 11th Jan. The intention is to advertise each session and possibly try some on weekends. Councillors will be welcome.

14 Finance

Bank reconciliation (Attachment 6).

Budget review at third quarter, 31st December, 2023.

Bank Balances as at: 31st December, 2023

Current Account £6,185.65

Reserve Account £9,583.86

Receipts

None.

Payments

- (a) J McGhee – defibrillator pack - £112.79 – BACS 20 Dec 23
- (b) Idverde – grass cutting - £113.53 – BACS 20 Dec 23
- (c) HMRC Income Tax - £71.20 – BACS 28 Dec 23
- (d) J McGhee – salary and expenses - £291.50 28 Dec 23
- (e) Unity Bank – service charge - £18 – 31 Dec 23
- (f) Ionos – web hosting - £15 10 Jan 24
- (g) Clerk salary January - £285.00
- (h) HMRC income tax January - £71.20
- (i) Clerk expenses – working from home January - £6.50.
- (j) Clerk expenses - Land Registry search - £29.95

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

15 Correspondence to be noted.

- (a) City, Town and Parish Council Clerks Working Group Agenda - forwarded 12 Dec 23
- (b) Email from B Clarke on Flooding/Sandbags - forwarded 14 Dec 23
- (c) Whatley and Westdown Community Liaison Group Minutes - forwarded 15 Dec 23

- (d) Whatley and Westdown Community Liaison Group Meeting Link – forwarded 15 Dec 23
- (e) Land Registry Title Deeds search result – forwarded 19 Dec 23
- (f) Barry Clarke – change to recycling charges – forwarded 02 Jan 24

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- (g) Barry Clarke – briefing sheets – forwarded 02 Jan 24
- (h) Drop-In session re revised plans for Westdown Quarry – forwarded 04 Jan 24
- (i) Barry Clarke - Information on budget deficit and actions – forwarded 07 Jan 24

16 Matters to report / items for next agenda.

- (a) Speedwatch update.
- (b) Highways update.
- (c) PCSOs update.
- (d) Community Review

17 Date and time of next meeting: Monday 19th February, 2024 in the Memorial Hall starting at 7.00pm.

Meeting closed at 20:59.