

MINUTES OF ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH COUNCIL AS TRUSTEE FOR DULCOTE RECREATION GROUND HELD REMOTELY ON MONDAY 5TH FEBRUARY 2024, 7PM

Present: Cllrs J Baker; M Cooke; E Danson; T Hathway; M Mitchell; J Reeves; J Zorab.

In Attendance: Mrs L Pool (Administrator/Parish Clerk); Mr R Coulson (Assistant Clerk)
1 Member of the Public.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies from Cllr M Hayden; Cllr P Blatchford*;

Resolved: To approve the reasons given for Members' absence.

*Cllr Blatchford's absence was due to internet connectivity issues just before the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Clerk reminded Trustees that as they are also the Parish Councillors, any decisions they make at Board of Trustees' meetings, must be made in the best interests of the Charity and not the Council. All Trustees declared a PERSONAL interest as Parish Councillors.

3. Exclusion of the Public from Item 9

The Clerk clarified that there had been a typing error. There were no items requiring the exclusion of the press and public.

4. Approval and Actions of Minutes 21st August 2023

The Trustees were updated on the following action from the minutes 6th February 2023: a resident had called to inform the Council that, to date, no expert advice had been sought regarding the potential damage to trees caused by installing a ramp for better accessibility. Cllr Hathway prompted the Clerk that this should be undertaken by the Clerk on behalf of Trustees for the next meeting.

Resolved: To confirm and sign as correct record the minutes of the Board of Trustees held on 21st August 2023.

5. Public Speaking Time

On behalf of residents unable to attend, Cllr Jenny Baker asked about the process for holding events at the Recreation Ground. There were more vibrant, young families in the village and an interest in making the Recreation ground better used for community events. The Clerk informed Cllr Baker that there was a checklist that event organisers should request and complete as a way of ensuring that both Trustees and organisers were properly covered for liabilities and risks.

Action: Cllr Baker is to forward the Clerks' email for residents to be sent an event checklist.

Cllr Baker also relayed the community aspirations to have a semi-permanent structure at the top end of the Recreation ground, that could be adapted for different sized and seasonal events. Trustees agreed that Dulcote as a village lacked communal space and that a community willingness to address this should be encouraged. Funding sources were discussed: an application could be made to the Parish Council without impacting on the Trustees' status as independent, and there were also wider funding streams that may be available. It was logical that any structure (or water fountain) should be near the top of the Recreation Ground, close to a water source.

RESOLVED: the Board of Trustees approved more communal use of the Recreation Ground by residents.

Another resident unable to attend emphasised the need for a ramp into the Recreation Ground for better accessibility. The proposed ramp would be on the eastern side of the recreation ground, although it was agreed that a scoping document should explore various options and get some costings.

ACTION: the Clerks are to provide contractor quotes and design suggestions for the next meeting.

ACTION: the Parish Clerk is to ensure that the Annual Tree Survey 2024 also considers the potential damage to trees that any ramp installation may cause.

A resident introduced the Trustees to a planting opportunity called Miyawaki Planting and explained how it may be suitable to some areas of the Recreation Ground. It encourages dense, fast growth, captures carbon and therefore contributes positively to the biodiversity of the site. A site to the right of the steps on entering the Recreation Ground was mooted; the scheme involves the planting of roughly 5 trees per metre and there is much guidance about suitable species. The resident will write up a more detailed précis and the Chairperson drew attention to the Horniman Museum's use of the scheme.

ACTION: the Clerks are to investigate the resources needed and suitable space for such planting opportunities and report back to the next meeting.

Cllr Hathway referred to the surveying of the wild plants present on the Recreation Ground and that this should be done by a suitable expert.

ACTION: the Environmental Working Group was to explore this idea.

6. Administration

Accounts: The Clerk reported that she had circulated the Trustees Annual Return for 2023 and that the accounts presented represented the balances of £XXX (Treasurers Account, 09 January 2024) and £1,665.14 (Business Account, 09 January 2024.) The Clerk stated that the accounts would be better presented for the next meeting.

RESOLVED: the accounts presented were approved by Trustees present.

Governance: there was a discussion about separating the roles of Trustees from that of Parish Councillors. It was suggested that it could be perceived as confusing without clear definitions, but also noted that restricting Trustees from voting as parish councillors was disenfranchising. Creating an Trustees' Advisory Group or Parish Council Working Group were both discussed but with no concrete outcome: the issue requires more careful research, time to consider, implications for voting rights and various options being viewed. The input of residents in decision-making was also discussed as a positive.

ACTION: the Clerks were to provide a range of options and implications of various processes for the next meeting.

7. Biodiversity

The Assistant Clerk proposed that Dulcote Recreation Ground could be nominated in the Playing Field of the Year awards run by the Somerset Playing Field Association and this was agreed by Trustees.

Miyawaki – The Miyawaki method of planting was mentioned again by the Assistant Clerk in which he stipulated that the method seemed to be an ideal fit for the site. Due to the presence of the playground equipment over a large part of the Recreation Ground, any extensive planting would need to be restricted to smaller areas. The Miyawaki method seems ideally suited to this due to its requirement for dense and diverse planting.

Bird boxes were also raised as a potential fit for the site. The tall trees bordering the Recreation Ground were agreed as an ideal fit for bird boxes. Specifically, swallow boxes were suggested as an idea to bolster swallow populations in the area to offset their

population decline. The Environmental Working Group was to expand on this idea independently of the Board of Trustees.

Winter flowering on the site was discussed. While flowers are present, they tend to be spring/summer varieties. To bolster the biodiversity and the aesthetic appeal of the site, winter flowering wildflowers were suggested by the Assistant Clerk. The Environmental Working Group is to follow up on this independent of the Board of Trustees as part of their survey project.

Cllr Cooke briefly suggested the idea of beehives on the site to build potential for wildflowers and insect biodiversity. However, several other Trustees quickly pointed out that adding beehives to what is predominantly a children's playground may lead to problematic outcomes. No further action has been taken on this suggestion.

8. Maintenance & Miscellaneous (ANNEX C)

The Clerk informed the Trustees that the impact of Service Devolution from Somerset Council would only impact Dulcote Recreation Ground regarding litter collection. As yet, there was no concrete information to steer action.

The Clerk summarised the Maintenance Report regarding most common maintenance repairs, the current maintenance contractors, the 2024 Annual Maintenance Contract schedule and an update on the Annual Tree Works and pending Certification.

The Clerk also mentioned that the top access gate was often reported as lacking a padlock. She pointed out that the gate style meant that either the gates were locked totally and therefore restrictive for pedestrians or a padlock was installed to secure the site at pedestrian disadvantage.

ACTION: The Clerk would advise the monthly contractors that, until next meeting, there would not be a padlock on the access gates and request they do not highlight it in monthly reports.

The Tfor2 swing's return was celebrated. The Asset Management Committee had requested a letter of thanks be sent to Sutcliffe Play South West, which has been done. The Trustees were asked to approve the installation, and accompanying servicing, of a portaloo for the summer months. It was approved and agreed that it would make community events even more appealing. Hire charges were £25 per week for a period of 17 weeks, from 02 May 2024 to 03 September 2024 (17 weeks). In total, including delivery charge, the sum was £455, which was budgeted for in the Asset Management budget 2024-25.

ACTION: the Clerks were to instruct Eagle Plant Hire by 05th April 2024 that a portaloo was to be hired and that the company would advise on the best position for the portaloo.

RESOLVED: to accept the Clerk's Maintenance Report for February 2024.

9. Date and Venue of Next Meeting – 19th August 2024