

# MINUTES OF ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT EASTON VILLAGE HALL ON MONDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024, 7PM.

**PRESENT:** Cllrs J Baker; M Cooke; E Danson; T Hathway; K Hoogesteger; I Humphreys; S Johns; S McCoy; M Mitchell; G Pettitt; J Reeves; J Zorab.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs L Pool (Parish Clerk); Somerset Council Cllrs H Shearer & T Robbins; 3 members of the public; Mr Richard Greenwell (assistant to James Heappey MP)

## **01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO CONSIDER THE REASONS GIVEN**

Apologies were received from Cllr P Blatchford; Cllr M Hayden; Cllr J Joseph.

**RESOLVED:** To approve the reasons given for Members' absence.

## **02. CO-OPTION OF up to 1 MEMBER TO REPRESENT THE NORTH WARD**

The Council received a short presentation from a Candidate who explained why he would like to be co-opted as a North Ward Councillor.

**RESOLVED:** to co-opt Mr Fergus Brown as a Councillor for the North Ward.

## **03. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **04. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Due to financial sensitivity, the press and public were excluded from the last two points of Item 16. It was thought prudent, given the attendance of Somerset Councillors and a representative from James Heappey MP's office, that part of the discussion should be accessible.

**RESOLVED:** to exclude the press and public from Items 16.5 and 16.6

## **05. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairperson reminded everyone present about the Annual Parish Meeting and encouraged their attendance, as well as taking posters to put in notice boards. The Chair also encouraged Councillors to consider Committee membership in preparation for May's Full Council Meeting.

## **06. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Council received a request from a resident for a dog waste bin at the Easton end of the Strawberry Line Multi-User Path (MUP). The resident has been heavily involved in the voluntary work involved in the new MUP and explained that parts of the path were blighted with dog waste. A bin would alleviate this problem, as well as giving dog walkers options at both ends of the path. A discussion followed: issues were voiced that covered uncertainty about Somerset Council's future collections, responsible dog-owner conduct in taking waste home if bins not available, the potential plethora of future requests for the Council, the strategic purchasing, installing, maintaining and probable collection costs from bins on the MUP as a whole and the desire to support residents who are so committed to developing the MUP. It is acknowledged what an extraordinary asset the path is. The Asset Management Committee is the forum for decisions on dog waste bins and no vote could take place. The Chair of the Asset Management Committee shared with the Council that such a small committee can exert influence or be divided on decisions and he was interested to gauge the opinions of the Full Council.

The Clerk is to include the matter as an item for the next meeting agenda that records whether there is a consensus regarding dog waste bins.

## **07. LOCAL AUTHORITY REPORTS**

It was noted that the Crime Statistics gathered should be shared with the public through the weekly Community Sheet. Cllr Robbins apologised for the absent Somerset Council update, which was due to the creator being on honeymoon.

## **08. MINUTES OF ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH COUNCIL ON MONDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2024**

The Minutes of the meeting were approved.

**RESOLVED:** to approve the Minutes of Monday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 as a true and accurate record.

## **09. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

It was agreed that, on this occasion only, the Accounts would be approved at the Finance & Scrutiny Meeting on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024, as would the payments, receipts and bank reconciliation.

**RESOLVED:** on this occasion only, to delegate responsibility to the Finance & Scrutiny Committee to verify accounts, invoices and the bank reconciliation.

## **10. UPDATE: ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP**

Cllr Pettitt offered updates on various projects. The Greener Villages signs had not yet had confirmation of positioning from some resident groups but it was noted that in future, installing a sign would be a condition of a grant award. There were currently 2 grant applications to be discussed by the Environment Working Group, who would make recommendations to the Finance & Scrutiny Committee. The Miyawaki planting scheme is being researched further and sites are being sought. The Strawberry Line attenuation pond was also developing: a site visit took place, it was explained that it would be a wildlife pond and therefore deliberately subject to seasonal appearance. Insurance details and planning permission requirements were needed as the next step and the Assistant Clerk is to progress this. The pond would be groundwater-fed, no more than 1m deep and responsibility for the pond would lie with The Strawberry Line.

## **11. UPDATE: WELLS & RURAL LCN**

Cllr Hathway updated the Council on the recent meeting of all LCN Chairs, which was extremely beneficial and encouraged much wider collaboration. He has made contact with the Chairs of neighbouring LCNs in Shepton Mallet & Glastonbury. He also summarized the 3 working groups that were gaining momentum: the Flooding Group has a meeting planned, flood cafes were being held and there was a drop-in meeting at Godney today with various external agency representatives; the Active Travel group was progressing well and its last core group meeting is to be held on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March, before hoping to widen its membership; the Highways & Traffic Group also had a diary date with venue to be confirmed.

## **12. Approval of staff appointment**

The Chair summarised the recruitment process and confirmed that the Staffing Committee had made an appointment, subject to Full Council approval.

**RESOLVED:** the Council approved the appointment of Mr Simon Davies as the permanent Responsible Financial Officer for St Cuthbert (Out) Parish Council.

### **13. ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

The Clerk apologized for the lack of definitive quotes for catering but explained that Morrissons prices and portions had been studied and prices would be under £50.

**RESOLVED:** to accept the costs for catering and audio-visual equipment as presented for the Annual Parish Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

### **14. D-DAY80 COMMEMORATIVE EVENT**

Cllr Reeves informed the Council that there were two possible beacon sites at Rookham & Horrington Primary School, both with good visibility for the beacon chain. Wells City Council currently has no plans for beacons, although a cathedral service and the Town Crier are to provide focal points for the commemoration. Cllr Reeves asked what the appetite was for keeping the event small or widening it to be more of a gathering, with hospitality and indoor cover. It was agreed that there would be a working party to move the planning on: Cllr Baker undertook to liaise with Horrington School, and Cllrs Cooke & Cllr Johns will also assist. It was agreed a costed plan would be available for the next Full Council meeting, where a budget would be requested. In the short-term, access to both sites by vehicle, the gas canister requirements, parking and wet weather provision would be explored. The Clerks are to support where possible.

**RESOLVED:** to pursue an event outline based around the lighting of the beacon to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day.

### **15. MULTIPLE TRAFFIC ISSUES**

To resolve on any preferred course of action regarding the following traffic-related matters:

15.1 Milton & Tynings Lane, Wookey Hole (Cllr Lunnon): It was noted that Paul Cannon had been successful in getting some new signage. There was some discussion about whether Traffic Regulation Order or advisory signs should be pursued but a conclusion reached that the Council needed costings and timeframes for both options before pursuing. It also needed clarifying whether advisory signs would preclude a TRO at a later date. Wookey Hole Traffic Group was interested in supporting, but was also interested in village-wide issues. The Clerk is to pursue these costings and timeframes and liaise with Cllr Danson regarding resident input.

15.2 Haybridge bus stop access A371(Mr Derek Cooper): A resident spoke about the trouble he had experienced in using the bus stop with mobility scooters. He argued that a Traffic Regulation Order or consultation with residents was not the solution but that extending the designated space for the bus stop was all that was required to prevent resident parking. Reinstated yellow lines were required and the Council agreed to report the issue via 'Report a problem on the road' online form. It was also agreed that the Parking Control Centre should be contacted through the correct channels to enable better enforcement of parking. Posters should also be added to the bus stop shelters. The bus stop in question is the only west-bound (towards Weston) stop to be a problem.

**RESOLVED:** The Clerk is to report the poor signage, request re-painting and reinforce Mr Cooper's difficulties accessing the bus service, contact the Parking Control Centre and place posters regarding resident parking in the bus shelter.

15.3 Horrington School B3135 (Cllr Baker): Cllr Baker told the Council that despite recent road improvements, there continued to be no physical crossing to alert drivers or keep those crossing safe. Further lobbying of Somerset Council for a marked crossing was needed. The SID results reinforced that speeding remained a hazard to the school children. Further, dropped kerbs south of the school intended to provide an alternative access to the school was not working. Cllr Baker also noted that the 20mph flashing lights

worked inconsistently. It was agreed that a greater campaign, mobilizing parents and the school itself, would be valuable for lobbying for a marked crossing. Cllr Baker was to lobby parents and use their newsletters to promote the campaign. The Clerk was to draft a possible article for Cllr Baker.

15.6 Dinder 20mph update (Cllr Hathway): Cllr Hathway updated the Council that the TRO was being actioned and forewarned that it had taken more than two years to come to fruition.

15.7 Pavements and footpaths (Cllr Hathway): Cllr Hathway appealed to all to bring footpath and pavement inadequacies to the Council's attention as well as road matters. He highlighted the issues on the Dulcote to Constitution Hill pavement, it being excessively narrow and in very poor condition.

15.4 Roemead Road/B3139 (Cllr Blatchford): pursue the installing of double white lines and a speed restriction in the area along Rookery Farm.

15.5 Polsham – Southwood A39: no residents were present and this item was not discussed due to timing

15.8 Village Signs (Ms Jean Brown, Cllr Zorab): discuss two village gateway signs for East Horrington, and potentially more around the parish

**RESOLVED:** Items 15.4, 15.5 and 15.8 were to be deferred to the next meeting.

## **16. BOWRING CLOSE, COXLEY**

16.1 Somerset Council meeting & response.

16.2 James Heapey MP input.

16.3 TVG Application – update.

16.4 Tree Preservation Order – update.

The meeting was brought up-to-date with events since the last meeting, included the village green and tree preservation order applications, the input of James Heapey MP and the issue of street furniture. Cllr Danson thought that the auction site did now hold a reference to the dispute between Somerset Council and the Parish Council. The Clerk attempted to summarise some terms and conditions of the auction legal pack that stated the buyer responsibility in verifying any fixtures, fittings, boundaries, measurements and conveyancing issues.

Items 16.5 and 16.6 were closed to the press and public and all but Councillors & the Clerk left the building. Before leaving, both Richard Greenwell (on behalf of James Heapey MP) and Cllr Heather Shearer offered their support.

16.5 Somerset Council revised offer.

16.6 Resolution regarding purchase and progression (Combined Annex C).

There was a prolonged discussion about events to date and what the Parish Council should do next. There was some debate as to whether a small sum should be available for purchase but overall, the unknown legal costs of any purchase ruled out the feasibility of purchasing the land or proposing a figure to Somerset Council. The significant reduction in price from the auction guide price to the £30,000 for both plots that Somerset Council had offered the Parish Council was discussed, as was the short timeframe for any action. The ultimate objective was to achieve the withdrawal of the two plots from auction. It remained unclear who had the authority to force the withdrawal from auction and it was suggested that an appeal to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities would not provide a swift outcome.

**RESOLVED:** the Council would not bid at auction, nor make an offer in advance of auction, for the 2 plots at Bowring Close.

**RESOLVED:** the Clerk was to compose a letter to James Heappey MP and request that it is forwarded through the proper channels in Central Government. Cllr Reeves would ask James Heappey MP what support he is able to give when they meet about flooding. A Press Release was to be drafted and distributed widely. A formal complaint would be made to the Local Government Ombudsman and Somerset Council would be informed and updated of St Cuthbert (Out) Parish Council actions.

#### **17. REPORTS OF WARD ACTIVITIES**

West Ward: Cllr Reeves noted that he was attending a meeting with James Heappey MP, along with 2 residents, regarding flooding at and near Coxley recreation Ground.

#### **18. MAY'S FULL COUNCIL MEETING**

The Chair reminded Councillors to begin thinking about Committee membership in time for May's Full Council meeting and that ideally all councillors should contribute to at least one Committee. The Clerk informed the Council that she intends to produce a mini-guide to the committees, meeting frequencies and common focuses and encouraged councillors to attend meetings in the interim to see what goes on. The Clerk also noted that she had fallen behind with some documentation reviews and these would happen at May's meeting to bring the routine back into line. The assembled crowd went wild with joy.

#### **19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 13<sup>TH</sup> May 2024 at **7pm (Dinder)**.

#### **20. DATE OF NEXT PARISH MEETING**

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024, Coxley Memorial Hall.