

MINUTES OF ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT DINDER VILLAGE HALL ON MONDAY 9th SEPTEMBER 2024, 7PM.

PRESENT: Cllrs F Brown; P Blatchford; M Cooke; E Danson; T Hathway; M Hayden; K Hoogesteger; S Johns; J Joseph; M Mitchell; G Pettitt; Cllr Reeves & Cllr Zorab (Chair).

IN ATTENDANCE: Lisa Pool (Parish Clerk); Somerset Council Cllrs H Shearer, R Wyke & Tony Robbins; LCN Link Officer Megan Harnedy & 2 members of the public.

01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO CONSIDER THE REASONS GIVEN

Councillors Lunnon & McCoy sent their apologies for holiday and work commitments.

RESOLVED: to accept the reasons offered for absence

02. CO-OPTIONS

To accept the co-option of Toby Brown as Councillor for the East Ward.

RESOLVED: Toby Brown was voted in as a co-opted councillor for the East Ward.

03. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Zorab declared a pecuniary interest in Item 9, for expenses incurred from the Chairman's Allowance.

04. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items excluding the press and public.

05. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reminded Councillors of the vacancy on both the Staffing & Finance & Scrutiny Committee, due to Jenny Baker's resignation, and urged those interested to get involved. The Clerk encouraged them to talk with respective chairs and return to Full Council in October to be elected. The Chairperson also notified Councillors of the Christmas Meal planned for Friday 22nd November at the Wookey Hole Inn, 1pm. The deadline for current councillors for transitioning to the gov.uk emails was notified as 31st December 2024. New Councillors would be issued a gov.uk account as soon as practical. Councillor Zorab again requested that Councillors notify the clerks of their attendance at meeting and reminded them it was a simple courtesy to help meetings run smoothly.

06. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A member of the public attended to raise concerns regarding speeding on Polsham Lane and the A39. She questioned why other villages on A Roads were able to have speed limits but that this dangerous stretch of the A39 was being passed over for consideration. Cllr Wyke prompted her of Somerset Council's urge to report any incident to build a case for 'hot spots' which are more likely to create action, as well as evidence for the parish council. The Clerk requested she continued to stay in touch and, where possible, to get involved in the LCN Highways & Transport Working Group meetings. Cllr Hathway requested that meeting details were also sent to 2 other concerned residents when available.

07. LOCAL AUTHORITY REPORTS

Cllr Shearer urged councillors and residents to complete the survey from the Police & Crime Commissioner, which is now open and closes on 12th October. The Clerk circulated the survey link and will share on the next Community Sheet; it was advised that both individual and council responses would be valuable. Cllr Shearer also encouraged

participation in the SEND School provision consultation and explained how the central government funding for schools was inadequate for the scale of SEND needs in Somerset. A discussion followed about the proposed school site at Haybridge (Bovis). The expense of building a school is a Dept. of Education decision and based on demographic calculations. Cllr Shearer noted that the Council were very concerned that after a certain time lapse, the site reverts to the developer. It was raised that new and pending housing development would inevitably lead to higher need for school places and that outlying villages are not factored in the calculations: it did not seem the case that there was no need currently for more school places.

Cllr Wyke explained that, despite a small underspend, the financial situation for Somerset Council remains acute and staff pay increases from central government is not yet known. Cllr Wyke also informed the council about Boundary Commission plans to probably reduce the number of Unitary Councillors per ward in Somerset, and that a parish council boundary review was likely after that, the driving factors being various.

Cllr Tony Robbins explained the reasons for the missing monthly reports and hoped they would be reinstated as soon as possible.

08. MINUTES OF ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH COUNCIL ON MONDAY 5TH AUGUST 2024

The Council agreed to confirm and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Council held on Monday 5th August 2024, with a minor amendment (attached),

RESOLVED: to approve and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Council held on Monday 5th August 2024.

09. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

The accounts were checked and reconciled prior to the meeting by Cllrs Hayden & Danson.

RESOLVED: to approve the accounts and bank reconciliation as presented.

10. WELLS & RURAL LCN

Cllr Hathway introduced the LCN Link Officer, Megan Harnedy. The Council's previously identified LCN priorities were summarized, alongside those themes resulting from the LCN AGM of July 2024. Focuses, meetings & activities were developing for the Highways & Transport, Flooding and Active Travel working groups. Winter support and pre-emptive resident participation for the Local Plan were also areas of interest. The question of funding for LCNs was raised, as it was believed that the Unitary business case included LCN funding; Cllr Wyke clarified that LCN funding was never intended to be a grant pot but was being used for officer funding. She hoped there would be more available in the future. Cllr Wyke reiterated that LCNs were intended as facilitators. The next Full Council meeting would give considerable time to LCN & Devolution matters.

RESOLVED: the Council agreed to keep the focus on the 3 working groups representing a good range of interests.

11. ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP

Cllr Pettitt summarized the EWG activities: the online survey was not to be further pursued: responses were low. Cllr Pettitt clarified that a scoping budget was available for the Strawberry Line pond and explained that the Strawberry Line group had experience of similar projects; digging and constructing the pond was the first step, after which funding from multiple sources would be sought. Cllr Pettitt had had positive discussions with Cllr Wyke about permissions and a detailed plan would be coming to a later Full Council. Green Villages Grants form had been amended to include a condition that a grant should be accompanied by sign installation as long as practical.

12. TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT UPDATE

a) Haybridge / A371 junction & Wookey Hole Road / Underwood Quarry junction

Concerns were raised that the double yellow line proposals and the consultations to be held at both sites should be run by Somerset Council and it was inappropriate for this council to undertake any information or education campaigns on Somerset Highways' behalf. The Clerk was unable to say how the consultations would be run. Recent, pending and future housing developments presented a huge challenge to both safe transport, traffic volume and parking at both sites and Haybridge generally. Cllr Hathway urged involvement in the LCN Highways & Traffic Group and the Clerk was asked to invite residents.

RESOLVED: to decline the suggestion of a leaflet drop or any other publicity in support of Highways proposals. Instead, the Clerk is to request that Somerset Highways organise a public, face-to-face evening meeting about both site proposals as part of the consultation that could accommodate 100 or more residents and arrange a venue.

b) Polsham speed limits

Cllr Hathway urged involvement in the LCN Highways & Traffic Group and the Clerk was asked to invite residents; Cllr Reeves was also interested in attending. Many councillors felt there was an accident problem on the A39. The Multi-User Path route from Glastonbury to Polsham was still in a conceptual stage: it was suggested that the LCN Active Travel Group could be a useful place to investigate further and Cllr Reeves also hoped to attend. The clerk was asked to forward the petition by Polsham residents to the Highways Officer.

c) Village Signs-East Horrington

The Council requested that they see a representation of what a Somerset Highways-installed sign would look like before agreeing to the installation offer available. The Clerk is to request further details.

13. INVESTMENT STRATEGY & POLICY

Cllr Hayden explained the origins and need for the Investment Policy & Strategy and that the RFO had thoroughly explored the options for the Finance & Scrutiny Committee in August. Protection of finances and avoiding risk were absolute priorities. Although the Council propose to arrange this for April 2025, funds will start to be moved in this financial year as is prudent. It was suggested that 4 different sources would be used, being either NS&I, Fixed Term Bonds or ISAs.

RESOLVED: to accept the recommendation of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee to adopt the Investment Policy.

14. ADDITIONAL BUDGET ITEMS FOR LARGER ITEMS NOT UNDER COMMITTEE REMITS

It was explained that these suggestions were for items, projects or programmes not already under consideration by standing committees. Cllr Hathway raised the possibility of occasional work hubs for clerks. Councillors were urged to send ideas to the RFO. Cllr Pettitt asked whether there was time to discuss with groups such as the EWG and this was encouraged. Cllr Blatchford asked whether the ideas should relate to one-off or on-going projects: the answer was both. Cllr Hoogesteger asked about additional hall provision that could serve as meeting space, offices, community venues; it was decided that this was a sizeable discussion and should be deferred.

15. BOWRING CLOSE

RESOLVED: To approve the draft response to the Registration Authority, as per the request of the authority following the consultation.

RESOLVED: to ensure the residents are aware of the positive outcome thus far regarding Village green Registration.

16. ASSET DEVOLUTION

A broad update regarding Somerset Council Devolution of waste collection & enhanced highway maintenance proposals was given. Cllr Pettitt offered clarification about statutory highway responsibility against the Enhanced Highway Maintenance (EHM) pilot, and the volunteer training. Much detail for both issues (waste collection & EHM) was still unknown, as were the Council's options but these would be worked on by the Devolution Working Group, to report back to next Full Council. The pressing timescale, in terms of budget-setting and annual maintenance contract tenders, was recognized.

It was agreed that reactivation of the Asset & Service Devolution Working Group was timely. Members present who had been elected in December 2023 agreed to continue, with the addition of Cllr Pettitt. The group agreed to a kick-off meeting on Monday 16th September, online, at 6pm. Cllr Humphreys' capacity and interest in being a member was to be clarified by the Clerk.

RESOLVED: the Devolution Working group consists of Cllrs Cooke, Hathway, Johns, Mitchell, Pettitt, Reeves & Zorab. Cllr Hayden would attend where financial input was required and Cllr Humphreys would be consulted.

17. PARISH COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION

The following administrative points were discussed:

- a) Confirmation of the date of 2025 Parish Council Annual (May) General Meeting as 19th May 2024, in Dinder was agreed.
- b) Approval of Asset Register as recommended by Finance & Scrutiny Committee.
RESOLVED: to approve the Asset Register in its new format, as recommended by the Finance & Scrutiny Committee.
- c) Dulcote Board of Trustees (Draft) Minutes for 5th February 2024: the Clerk had made an error in requesting these be approved. Although the February Minutes had been approved by trustees at the August meeting, there was no paper, signed version to be approved as the meeting was online. The Clerk is to furnish the Chair with paper copies for signing and return them to the next Full Council.
- d) Further details were to be presented in October regarding the Wedmore Flooding & Dredging consortium. The question of LCN collaboration and input of neighbours such as Croscombe was raised as a concern and that the Wedmore group was possibly overlapping with LCN initiatives. Megan Harnedy confirmed that the flooding group was aiming to focus on thematic, rather than geographical, approaches and encouraged participation in the LCN Flooding Working Group.

18. REPORTS OF WARD ACTIVITIES

Cllr Reeves asked about the Coxley Bridge over the River Sheehey and requested information about the funding provided by former Mendip District Council. Cllr Wyke said she was meeting with John Grimshaw imminently. It was suggested that this too was raised at the LCN Active Travel Group meeting on 8th October. It was pointed out that the bridge plans was significant to both the Coxley Holt, the parish council and Coxley Recreation Ground. Cllr Hoogesteger relayed worrying details about reckless speeding and driving along Elm Close, resulting in car right-offs and requested the topic was revisited for a longer discussion.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 28th October 2024 at **7pm (Easton)**.