

MINUTES OF ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT EASTON VILLAGE HALL, EASTON BA5 1EP ON MONDAY 7TH AUGUST 2023, 7PM.

PRESENT: Cllrs J Baker; F Bird; P Blatchford; P Cannon; M Cooke; T Hathway; M Hayden; I Humphreys; S McCoy; M Mitchell; G Pettitt; J Reeves; J Zorab.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms M Exton (Parish Clerk); Somerset Council Cllrs Tony Robbins and Heather Shearer; 2 Members of the Public.

01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO CONSIDER THE REASONS GIVEN

Apologies were received from Cllrs B Conder; E Danson; J Joseph; M Lunnon.

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

02. CO-OPTION OF UP TO 2 MEMBERS TO REPRESENT THE SOUTH AND NORTH WARDS

RESOLVED: Mr Simon McCoy was successfully elected as a South Ward Cllr.

RESOLVED: Mr Freddie Bird was successfully elected as a North Ward Cllr.

03. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

03.01. Cllr Cooke declared a PERSONAL interest in item 11.

03.02. There were no requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests.

03.03. There were no requests for dispensation.

04. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: To exclude the Press & Public from item 17 for data protection reasons.

05. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Mitchell who had recently been in an accident and was on crutches – Cllr Mitchell thanked everyone for the flowers and card that Members and Staff had sent to her.

The Chairman noted that Cllr Hathway's election as the Vice-Chairman of the Council's LCN is brilliant.

The Chairman reminded Cllrs that they had been elected to represent Residents and therefore should keep any strong personal opinions they have to themselves.

06. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A Member of the Public from Dinder spoke on item 12 in support of a 20mph zone in the village – this item was brought forward to here.

Another Member of the Public expressed grave concern about speeding vehicles on the A371 as they enter and leave Haybridge, which has got worse since the 30/40 sign has been moved a few yards towards Easton. The Resident is extremely worried about the safety of residents crossing the road and would like to request that the 30mph zone is extended to the edge of Haybridge where he believes a 30mph speed limit would lead to greater enforcement action. The Council's SID has recently been monitoring speeds in this location and this data was provided to Members. The Clerk is to put this item on the agenda for the next Full Council meeting.

07. LOCAL AUTHORITY REPORTS

To receive reports either in person or in writing from:

- Avon & Somerset Police – There was no report.

- Somerset Council Councillors – Cllr Robbins’ report for August had been sent to Cllrs prior the meeting. The report identified that the Council will be applying an overall 10% increase in parking charges in August – Cllr Shearer will look into how the increase will be calculated for individual sites. It was noted that there is a lack of designated motor bike parking spaces and that the introduction of EVC points has taken some existing parking spaces. Cllr Shearer will feed back the views of both Members of the Public who had spoken at the meeting on speeding traffic to Somerset Council. Cllr Shearer reaffirmed the importance of 2-way communication at LCNs for LCNs to work successfully. The Council is currently working on how to meet all of its statutory responsibilities within its budgets. Cllr Shearer will get an update on the 126 bus service.

08. MINUTES OF ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 19TH JUNE 2023

RESOLVED: To confirm and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Council held on Monday 19th June 2023.

09. IMPROVING THE COUNCIL’S CYBER SECURITY

The findings of the Council’s IT audit were discussed as part of the process of improving the Council’s cyber security/data protection. The Clerk requested that all Cllrs ensure all devices used for Council business are password/pincode protected. The use of personal email accounts for Council business was discussed

RESOLVED: To approve that all Cllrs have a .gov.uk email address as soon as is practical.

10. DRAFT 3-YEAR BUDGET FORECAST 2024/25 TO 2026/27

Members considered the recommendation of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee 7th June 2023. Committee Chairs are to send any additional budget requirements to the Finance & Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: To use the 3-year budget forecast 2024/25 to 2026/27 as a guide when considering the annual budgets.

11. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

The Council reviewed a schedule of items of expenditure and issuing of payment. The bank statements and reconciles for all bank accounts for June 2023 were verified by the appointed Member.

RESOLVED: To approve a schedule of items of expenditure and issuing of payment.

12. TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT GRANT PROGRAM AND 20MPH ZONES

A Resident from Dinder thanked the Parish Council for its help in progressing a proposed 20mph scheme in Dinder which has led to Somerset Council giving their support to the scheme. Because so much work has already been done and the scheme would just be changing signage, the costs are projected to be between £5,000 to £10,000 rather than £15,000 to £20,000 as for new 20mph schemes. The Resident expressed concern that should the Parish Council decide to approve and implement a traffic management grant program that required Residents to contribute to the cost of the scheme, that villages such as Dinder, that are perceived as wealthy despite the number of Residents renting properties, would be expected to make a bigger contribution and this would be unfair and unreasonable. He requested that a more workable, less divisive, and well-considered funding approach be adopted.

Cllr Hathway explained to Members that as Somerset Council does not have any funds for 20mph schemes and more villages are requesting such schemes, that it makes sense to have an annual budget for traffic management schemes. The Dinder scheme could be the

first to be implemented and then the annual budgets could be built up over time for other schemes throughout the Parish. He asked the Council to consider whether to have a traffic management scheme budget, how much it should be and should Residents where a scheme is to be developed/implemented, contribute to the costs. It was noted that lack of funding for 20mph schemes put Parish Councils with lots of villages like St Cuthbert (Out) at a disadvantage. Members extensively debated: the fairness of asking Residents to contribute; the inequality of traffic management implemented on the basis of affordability of Residents; if such a scheme would be workable; if it would be inclusive; the proportion of the Council's precept that a traffic management budget would be; the efficacy of 20mph speed limits when there is no enforcement; prioritising danger spots (supported with statistics). Cllr Shearer noted to Members that this issue could be supported to have a voice by the LCN if a common aspiration but that LCNs are not currently equipped with funds.

RESOLVED: To approve that a Traffic Management Program budget head, based on the principle of inclusiveness throughout the Parish, is set up for the start of the financial year 2024/25, the amount of the budget to be decided when the Council's annual budgets are considered and approved.

RESOLVED: To approve that the cost of any Traffic Management Program scheme will not rely on Residents contributing.

13. LCN UPDATE

The Deputy Clerk had sent notes on the inaugural meeting of the Wells and Rural LCN to Cllrs. Cllr Hathway further updated Members: it was made clear that 2-way communications between Somerset County and all the other organisations is essential if the LCN is to be productive; Parish Councils and other organisations do not want the meetings to be "talking shops" but want actions to be the outcomes; some sub-groups are being set up; meetings can rotate around the LCN area but venues will need to have sufficient car parking. Since the meeting Cllr Hathway is in the process of seeing all the Parish Councils within our LCN to find out common issues and agree on the initial points raised at the meeting. So far, he has found that there is a difference between the core and peripheral Parish Councils: the core Councils focus towards Wells and the peripheral Councils focus away from Wells. He is hoping to complete his findings to take to the next LCN meeting in September/October. Cllrs Hathway and Zorab have met with Wells City Council Mayor and Wells City Cllr Philip Welch who conveyed that Wells City Council understands and agrees that the co-dependence of Wells and surrounding rural villages is key to the LCN working. Cllr Pettitt is enthusiastic that our LCN is showing that it is proactive and therefore will be able to achieve objectives.

14. ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP (EWG)

Acknowledging the Council's biodiversity duty (to conserve and enhance biodiversity), Cllr Pettitt updated Members that there had been 2 recent walking meetings along the Dulcote end of the Strawberry Line. These meetings investigated the potential for wildlife corridors and the installation of ponds as wildlife habitats and have given the EWG a lot to think about to move the Council's biodiversity duty actions forward.

15. WELLS BUS USER GROUP (WBUG)

The Clerk informed Members that the lead for the WBUG had contacted her to ask the Council to support improvements to bus services in the Parish and to ask if the Council had objections to requests to change the location of some bus stops in Wells. Members were happy to give the Council's non-financial support to these requests and Cllr Shearer volunteered to investigate where the remainder of the Bovis development S106 payment

of £50,000 for public transport is. Members did not have any objections regarding the bus stops outside the Parish.

RESOLVED: In addition to the 67 bus route which covers areas West of Wells, the Council supports the WBUG's request for a circular route "mini" bus type service to run through neighbouring villages such as Coxley, Wells Bus Station, Wookey Hole, (possibly Wookey and Haybridge), Dulcote, Dinder, South, East and West Horrington and possibly at school start/finish, extend to include Wells school's catchment.

RESOLVED: To support the WBUG's request for an earlier start of the 67 bus.

RESOLVED: To support the WBUG's request for livery updating on the 67 bus.

16. REPORTS OF WARD ACTIVITIES

Cllr Reeves updated Members that there is a lot of interest in the refurbishment of the Polsham bus shelter and the Asset Management Committee is working on ideas such as a mural and displaying interesting information. Cllr Joseph had sent his thanks to the Asset Management Committee for their work on this. Cllr Reeves also updated Members that further progress on the MUP in the West Ward has dropped back to March 2024.

17. STAFFING COMMITTEE UPDATE ON RECRUITMENT OF ADDITIONAL CLERICAL SUPPORT STAFF

Members were updated that the Staffing Committee 25th July 2023 had considered the staffing structure. The Committee has identified that an Assistant Clerk (with an environmental focus) to work 20 hours per week and essentially to consult with Residents, is needed to meet the increasing duties of the Council. The job description, person specification and recruitment process has been started and a timeline drafted. The salary scale would be in the range of LC1 SP13-17. There was a discussion as to whether the Staffing Committee should be given delegated power to appoint staff rather than just recommend appointments for Full Council approval as per the Committee's current Terms of Reference so that new staffing appointments would not have to wait until the next Full Council meeting. It was decided that the Terms of Reference should not be changed and that an extraordinary meeting of the Council can be called if necessary to approve recommended staffing appointments – the recommended Candidate's name is to be notified to Members in the agenda/notice email.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11th September 2023 at **7pm**.

19. DATE OF NEXT PARISH MEETING

9th April 2024.