

MINUTES OF ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT DINDER VILLAGE HALL, DINDER BA5 3PF ON MONDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER 2023, 7PM.

PRESENT: Cllrs F Bird; P Blatchford; M Cooke; T Hathway; I Humphreys; J Joseph; S McCoy; G Pettitt; J Reeves.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms M Exton (Parish Clerk); Mrs L Pool (Deputy Parish Clerk); Somerset Council Cllr Tony Robbins; 4 Members of the Public.

01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO CONSIDER THE REASONS GIVEN

Apologies were received from Cllrs J Baker; B Conder; E Danson; M Hayden; M Lunnon; M Mitchell; J Zorab.

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

02. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

02.01. There were no declarations of interest.

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

02.03. There were no requests for dispensation.

03. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items for exclusion of the Press and Public.

04. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

05. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

As a Member of the Public, Independent Shepton Mallet Town Cllr and Parliamentary Candidate for the next general election Abi McGuire introduced herself and offered her contact details.

Rosa Kell, lead for the Wells Bus Users Group (WBUG) informed Members of the Somerset Council Bus Users & Stakeholders Group Teams meeting at 10am on Tuesday 12th September when she will be asking questions about the tender for the 126 bus service and asked that Parish Cllrs attend if possible to support her.
Two Members of the Public spoke on item 08.

06. LOCAL AUTHORITY REPORTS

To receive reports either in person or in writing from:

- Avon & Somerset Police – There was no report. When the Clerk had requested a Police report for the meeting, the Police had informed her that they would no longer be providing reports or attending Parish Council meetings but would instead be attending LCN meetings and would give briefings on issues in those areas.
- Somerset Council Councillors – Cllr Shearer had sent her apologies. Cllr Robbins' report for September had been sent to Cllrs prior the meeting. The report referenced the consultation on creating places for people and was discussed. It was noted that this consultation runs from 4th September to 16th October and is a start in the development of Somerset Council's (SC) Local Plan and that SC's transport policy will also be developed and will be more integrated with the Local Plan. The Parish Council's Planning Committee will set up a sub-group to consider the Council's responses in detail. When asked about possible reduction in services due to SC's

financial position, Cllr Robbins suggested that the more that Parish Councils could take on, the better.

07. MINUTES OF ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 7TH AUGUST 2023

RESOLVED: To confirm and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Council held on Monday 7th August 2023.

08. BOWRING CLOSE UPDATE

Members were updated that Somerset Council (SC) Cllr Wyke has confirmed that the sale of the 2 plots of land at Bowring Close via auction is imminent and that SC is planning to sell the land without planning permission to reduce its maintenance and insurance responsibilities for bits of land, to make money and get best value, and for extra building plots (possibly for social housing) which are needed. As happened in February when these plots were originally going to be auctioned but the auction was stopped following representations by Cllr Wyke, Residents and the Parish Council, again there has been no consultation with Residents and the Parish Council – the latter initially found out about the forthcoming auction via the Coxley Village Life Facebook page.

Two Residents spoke on this item. One Resident, who is a retired builder, does not consider the plots suitable for housing and identified that they are useful for children's safety as due to there being no pavements, children step onto these grassed areas to get out of the way of moving vehicles. He has spoken to several other Residents and relayed to the meeting that the majority are concerned. There is also concern about removal of the trees and where the existing communal noticeboard, grit bin and tree swings would be relocated.

Cllr Reeves suggested that when SC formally consults the Parish Council, there are 3 options:

- 1) Do nothing and let the sale go ahead without comment,
- 2) Offer to take responsibility for the land (lease it off SC at a peppercorn rent and take responsibility for the insurance and maintenance),
- 3) Push for the land to become a Village Green.

Before the Parish Council can decide on what action to take, it needs an accurate briefing on SC's true imperatives to sell these 2 pieces of land. If it is:

- the need for building land, the Parish Council can refer to Mendip Local Plan Part 1 that stated that Coxley was only expected to provide another 19 houses and as there have been at least 62 houses built with planning permission for another 18, more than sufficient building land in Coxley has already been provided.
- for convenience, then a Parish Council offer to lease the land should be agreeable.
- for funds, the Parish Council could look at registering the land as a Village Green and thereby identify early in the development of the new SC Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan, (as recommended by Cllr Wyke in February) that the Parish Council wants to protect the land.

RESOLVED: The Clerk is to write to SC Cllr Wyke to ask her to specify what SC's true imperatives are for selling the 2 pieces of land at Bowring Close; to request that the auction is stopped and confirm it has been stopped; to inform her that the Parish Council wish to protect these 2 pieces of land as their current use for Residents suggesting either taking a long-term lease or registering the land as a Village Green.

RESOLVED: The Parish Council to initiate the process for applying for Village Green status for the 2 pieces of land in Bowring Close.

RESOLVED: The Parish Council to investigate the likely costs of a Village Green application, purchasing or leasing the land at Bowring Close.

09. SPEEDING VEHICLES ALONG THE A371 AT HAYBRIDGE

It was reported that Cllr Hayden, the Somerset Council Traffic Engineer and the Resident who is requesting that the 30mph zone is extended to the edge of Haybridge had met onsite. The Traffic Engineer has been advised by the developers that the extents of the speed limit will in time move. The Traffic Engineer will get the bus stops remarked either this year or next year, depending on budgets.

10. REVIEW CURRENT BUDGET AND SPEND TO DATE (2023/24)

Members considered the recommendation of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee 16th August 2023. The Clerk reported that the VAT Return for Qtr 1 for 2023/24 had been submitted to HMRC.

RESOLVED: To approve the budget and spend for the first 3 months 2023/24.

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 July 2023 were verified by the appointed Member.

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

12. MARKED RESERVES

Members considered the recommendation of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee 16th August 2023 to add £3,000 of the 2023/24 budget for Play Equipment to Marked Reserves.

RESOLVED: To approve the Council's amended Marked Reserves.

13. LCN UPDATE

Members had been sent the details for the next LCN meeting on 14th September at Binegar and active travel and winter preparations will be the topics for discussion. Cllr Hathway informed Members that each LCN meeting will aim to discuss 1 or 2 topics in depth. Earlier publication of the agenda for LCN meetings is to be requested.

14. ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP (EWG)

The EWG's report following their meeting on 29th August had been sent to Members before the meeting. Cllr Joseph updated Members that Cllr Hathway will notify the LCN about taking forward an integrated local delivery pilot project proposal by the South West Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.

15. GRANT POLICIES

Members reviewed the recommendations of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee 16th August 2023.

RESOLVED: To approve the Council's General Grant Policy.

RESOLVED: To approve the Council's Green Villages Grant Policy.

16. REPORTS OF WARD ACTIVITIES

Cllr Reeves reported that a couple of tyres had been fly-tipped near the bridge in Coxley and that a Resident who had picked them up and taken them to the dump, had been charged for their disposal. The Deputy Clerk is to inform Residents via the Council's weekly contact sheet, that Residents should report [fly tipping to Somerset Council \(SC\)](#) and not remove the fly tipping themselves. It was also noted that invasive Himalayan Balsam is spreading throughout the Parish. The Deputy Clerk will inform Residents via the contact sheet that they should report any sightings on [SC's Harmful or Poisonous Weeds webpage](#).

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

Full Council 7th August resolved to use the 3-year budget forecast 2024/25 to 2026/27 presented to them at that meeting as a guide when considering the annual budgets. However, the Finance & Scrutiny Committee 16th August agreed that the inflation rates for 2024/25 onwards need to be updated to reflect the latest inflation rates.

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

18. ACCOUNTS 2022/23

The Clerk presented the External Auditor's report which specified that in their opinion, the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR was in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirement had not been met. Members thanked the Clerk/RFO for her work in producing the year end accounts.

RESOLVED: To accept the External Auditor's Report and Certificate for the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) 2022/23.

19. STAFFING COMMITTEE UPDATE

Cllr Pettitt updated Members that the closing date for applications for an Assistant Clerk (with environmental focus) is 15th September and that the interview questions and panel are almost ready.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

23rd October 2023 at 7pm.

21. DATE OF NEXT PARISH MEETING

9th April 2024.