

SHEPTON BEAUCHAMP PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE SHEPTON BEAUCHAMP PARISH COUNCIL

Held on Monday 18th November 2024 at 7.30 pm
In the Village Hall, Middle Street, Shepton Beauchamp TA19 0LQ

Councillors present: Cllr Nigel Wylie Carrick (Chairman) Cllr David Bourn (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Angie Joy Cllr Ed Wakely
Cllr Tim England Cllr Nick Howard
Cllr Sally Burwood

In attendance: Stella Davies (Clerk)

Members of the public: There were no members of the public in attendance.

Unitary Councillors in attendance: Somerset Cllr Jo Roundell Greene (arrived 7.40 pm and left at 8.10 pm)

Report from Somerset Council

Jo reported that she had sent an email to ask if contractors can come into the village to maintain the drains without getting permission from the County Council and was awaiting an answer. She asked if the council would like another walk around the village to familiarise her with the problems in the village, particularly around the issue of mud. She will ask if Highways can also attend that meeting. Cllr Wylie Carrick said there were two areas – one to do with storm drains and the clearance of flood water and the cleaning up afterwards, and the other to look at the agricultural land and how to slow the flow of water and mud from the fields. Cllr Wakely said it would be good to get additional drainage at the bottom of Love Lane. Cllr Wakely and Cllr England said they would try and attend the meeting with Highways.

The County have been looking at a council tax reduction scheme which has to go to full council in December. The budget is looking less bad. They will however have to lose 22% of their staff. They have currently saved £34m on staff savings. Cllr Wakely asked if we were looking at a 5% increase in council tax next year and Jo thought it would be.

Cllr England said that he had been contacted by a resident as they had contacted the County via the website about dog fouling outside their property sixth months ago and had finally got a response to say that they cannot provide signs or a dog warden as this service had been discontinued on 1st June. They will still prosecute where a person has been identified as letting their dog foul. Jo said she would investigate, but if someone did send in photographic evidence of a dog fouling, then action could be taken.

Ser Item

- 1147. To receive apologies for absence and to approve the reasons given** (LGA 1972, s85(1))
Apologies were received from Cllr Rowswell (away).
Resolved. To accept and approve the apologies given.
- 1148. Declarations of interest** – Members to declare any interest, including Disclosable Pecuniary Interest they may have in agenda items that accord with the requirements of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct and to consider any prior requests from members for dispensations that accord with the Localism Act s33 (b-e). (NB this does not preclude any later declarations)
There were no declarations of interest.
- 1149. To approve as a correct record the minutes/decisions of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 21st October 2024** (LGA 1972, sch 12, para 41(1)).
Resolved. That the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday 21st October be signed as correct.
- 1150. LCN (Local Community Network)**
To discuss any relevant issues that have been received from the LCN

The next LCN meeting planned in December has been postponed and moved to 30th January. On the 19th November there is some one network training (re road blockages etc). Cllr Howard said he would try to attend. The Highways working group is being held on 11th December, but this is not being held remotely and is during the day, so it is unlikely anyone will be able to attend. There is an Active Travel working group meeting on 3rd December 6 – 7 pm.

1151. The Local Plan issued by Somerset Council

To discuss the questionnaire issued by Somerset Council and Resolve the answers to be submitted by the Clerk on behalf of the Councillors by 30th November.

The questionnaire had been completed via a recent zoom meeting of some of the councillors and then circulated to all. The Clerk asked is we should mention the lack of direct bus services from the village and that the nearest banks are in Chard and Yeovil This will be added to the answers. The Clerk is to submit the answers to the questionnaire on-line.

Action – Parish Clerk

1152. Devolution of maintenance of footpaths and bridleways

To discuss the recent communication from the council and resolve the action the Parish Council needs to take.

The councillors discussed the recent guidance document. The village does not have a voluntary group looking after footpaths and bridleways, although the Cowleaze volunteers do maintain the footpath running from Cowleaze along the bottom of Home Farm Land to Drove Lane.

Our current understanding is that the annual cut of main footpaths will continue by the County Council as before, however the Parish Council will have to continue with cutting the rest of the footpaths. Landowners remain responsible for access along the footpaths; however, the Somerset Council may be able to supply specific gates.

The Clerk said she would need to allow for additional footpath maintenance in our next year's budget.

Action – Parish Clerk

Cllr Wylie Carrick agreed to find out if Somerset Landscapes had a machine that could be hired to us to clear the footpaths.

Action – Cllr Wylie Carrick

1153. NALC consultation to allow Parish Councils to attend virtually

To resolve whether the councillors wish to respond to the Consultation and what the response should be.

The councillors responded to the questions during the meeting. In summary the Council favoured face to face contact but agreed to remote access as and when required. The Clerk will submit a response as the closing date is tomorrow (19th November).

Action – Parish Clerk

1154. Mud & Flooding in the village

To update the council on the communication with FWAG and resolve what action needs to be taken.

Cllr Wylie Carrick said that he contacted FWAG about this issue and had submitted a marked air photograph of the area together with photos. He will ask for a FWAG representative to attend the meeting with Jo Roundell Greene and Highways. Cllr Wylie Carrick suggested that we need to involve the collective community of farmers to that meeting, so there is a common approach to the flooding coming into the village. Cllr Wakely said it was unlikely that the local farmers would put in grass margins as people then walk the boundaries of the field, but diverting the water could be an option. He suggested that we should press the County Council for additional drainage in the village. The councillors agreed that it was important to have a dialogue with the local farmers outside the meeting with the County Council, so that we could work together to see what could be done. Cllr Howard said that that farmers were an important part of the community and any meeting should discuss other issues apart from flooding, such as footpaths and dog mess. This would be for the wellbeing of the landowners and residents. Cllr Wakely said he would contact the four local farmers before the January meeting and see if we could meet together, possibly every quarter.

Action – Cllr Wakely

Cllr Wylie Carrick said Somerset Rivers Authority were launching their flood action plan and a grant could be applied for, which is something we could look at.

We are still having problems getting the drains cleared. The Clerk said the private contractor she approached said he needed permission from the County Council. Jo Roundell Greene was now chasing the council for us about this. In the meantime, Cllr Howard suggested that while this was being sorted that we pay ourselves for the contractor used by the County Council to clear the drains.

Cllr Wylie Carrick said he would like this issue brought up at the next LCN meeting, as we cannot be the only Parish Council having this problem.

Resolved. That the Parish Council pay for the relevant drains to be cleaned and jetted as a one-off rather than waiting for the County Council to do it. **Action – Parish Clerk**

Cllr Wylie Carrick suggested that we could get Adam Dance involved if we had no success with the County Council about using alternative contractors.

1155. Grant Application – The Events Team

To review the grant application from the Events Team and resolve whether to give a grant of £846

Resolved. The grant of £846 to the Events Team was approved unanimously.

1156. Recreation Field grass cutting contract

To resolve whether to extend the current contract which runs out on 31st December 2024 for another year.

Resolved. That the current contract be extended to 31st December 2025.

1157. Recreation Field October Committee Meeting *For information only*

Cllr England reported that a small working party had met. They had tidied up the Leylandii, a couple of trees on the slope and wire brushed the gate. We still need to spread the wild seed on the slope.

Regarding fund raising, we could hold the Bingo in November as the Events Team have that slot, so we will ask for one in the New Year. He said the recreation field was also a problem and a child had fallen over into some dog mess. The Clerk will find out the cost of posters for us to put up, which will need sturdier posts. **Action – Parish Clerk**

1158. National Pay Award – backdated to 1st April 2024

To approve the National Pay Award for the Clerk/RFO backdated to 1st April 2024.

Resolved. The National Pay Award was approved.

1159. Finance

To review the Bank Reconciliation as at 31st October 2024 (previously circulated).

To approve the schedule of payments totalling £2,094.05 (previously circulated)

Resolved. The bank reconciliation was approved and signed as correct by a non-bank signatory. The payments were approved.

1160. Report from Clerk/RFO *For information only*

The Clerk reported that the threshold for employers N.I. had reduced and so N.I. at a rate of 15% would be payable once her salary reached £5,001. The staffing budget she has set for next year allows for this.

She had received an email from Adam Dance about flooding in the village as a resident had attended his recent surgery and voiced concerns. She has replied to this saying that we had already contacted FWAG and Somerset Council.

She had put an advert on the website for a new councillor and so far, had received no enquiries. Cllr England said he would advertise this on the village Facebook page. **Action – Cllr England**

All Parish Councils will soon have to move across to a Gov.uk domain. The Government are currently offering £100 to Parish Councils to do this now and over 70% of the funding has been used already. The £100 goes directly to the website company and then they discount that amount of their invoice. If we move our mailbox at the same time the cost would be £100 plus vat. The council agreed it would be better to go ahead now while the grant was still available.

She is still having problems with the credit card application. She originally applied for the card on 30th August and has recently chased them. They had missed her email and said they would deal with it now as a matter of urgency.

1161. Reports *For information only*

Highways

In the absence of Cllr Rowsell There was nothing to report.

Lethbridge Recreational Ground Committee

Nothing to report.

Ranger

There was a replacement range for 2 weeks. They are continuing to do a good job.

Allotments

Nothing to report. We still have one vacant allotment, once it has been re-measured.

Cowleaze

A couple of months ago, they contacted Somerset Wildlife Trust and they visited. They talked about developing a new management plan for Cowleaze. They had suggestions on how to improve it. Today 2 community conservation people from Wessex Water visited and it was mentioned that Cowleaze wanted to put in hedging, and wanted to extend the wetland area to put in a permanent pond and coppice the woodland area. They were very positive about it and there is a possibility that we could apply for environmental and biodiversity grants from Wessex Water.

Footpaths

There was nothing to report, other than they are waterlogged.

1162. Annex A – Deferred items register

Annex A was updated.

Meeting closed: 9.10 pm