

DRAFT MINUTES OF HAMBRIDGE AND WESTPORT PARISH COUNCIL
VIRTUAL MONTHLY MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10th MARCH 2021
VIA ZOOM AT 7.30 P.M.

21/761 PRESENT:

Mr. S. Denley (Chairman), Mr. P. Masters (Vice Chair), Mr. R Maidment, Mr. R Meacham, Ms. J Lock, Mr. M Stanton (District Councillor), Mr. A Dance (County Councillor), Mrs L.Brooks (Clerk). 3 members of the public were present.

21/762 APOLOGIES:

Nothing to report

21/763 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

There were no declarations of interest.

21/764 MINUTES:

The Minutes from the February meeting have been circulated. They were agreed and signed.

Proposed: Cllr.Lock

Seconded: Cllr.Maidment

Agreed unanimously.

21/765 PUBLIC TIME

21/765/a Public Time:

A member of the public queried the trees that were given to the Parish last year for planting. The Chairman responded that both he and Cllr. Masters were in the process of looking for appropriate places to plant them. The resident also offered to help plant them. The Chair will also put something in the newsletter to see if there are any other volunteers you would like to help.

Action: Chairman

The resident also asked if SSDC had any plans with improving our environment. District Councillor Stanton explained they had many schemes currently being rolled out in the area. The GetSussed newsletter gives all the information – anyone can sign up to receiving it via the SSDC.

A resident who was representing the village hall Trust discussed the repairs they've had to carry out due to the floor rising up from damp and the need for drains to be put in. The Trust member requested that the £1,500.00 that is budgeted for the hall be called upon. The Chairman said it would have to be put on the Agenda for April and a request letter would be required from the Hall Trust. The Parish Councillors would then discuss this before any decisions would be made.

21/765/b District Councillor: District Cllr. Stanton had emailed a report that had been circulated to the Parish Councillors. Items included were:

Planning Phosphates issue: South Somerset District Council unanimously approved at its 25th February meeting a motion demanding action from Wessex Water and the Government on the phosphates crisis – summary sent separately earlier.

The Full Council approved a Phosphate Calculator which will allow developers to set aside an appropriate amount of land to offset against the increased phosphate that their development will generate. He reported that thousands of planning applications will remain in limbo until this issue has been resolved. Methods for stopping or mitigating phosphate pollution into watercourses are still under research and review, so may not be available for some months.

SSDC Budget for 2021-22

Council approved on 25th February :

- A Net Revenue Budget for 2021-22 of £16,743,010.
- 2021/22 Council Tax increase of 2.91%, increasing the annual Band D rate by £5 to £177.11.
- A new capital programme.

Unitary Authority progress:

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government, Robert Jenrick, launched a consultation on 22nd February; submissions must be in by 19th April, through the government's Citizen Space website or by email or post.

Which unitary solution? Opinion is split:

Stronger Somerset (2 Unitaries, East & West) is proposed by the four District Councils, and supported by Ian Liddell-Grainger, MP for Bridgwater, and by Liberal Democrats.

One Somerset (1 Unitary) is proposed by the County Council and supported by Marcus Fysh, MP for Yeovil, and by Conservatives.

Cllr Stanton informed the Parish Council that he supports the Stronger Somerset, two unitaries, It will create an innovative fresh start for key services, particularly social services, until very recently not well provided by the County Council. It will tackle the serious challenges Somerset faces from high rates of child poverty and climate change, while preserving local decision-making & democracy. It also will provide financial sustainability and greater savings than the single unitary option, deliver better jobs, affordable homes, stronger communities and a carbon zero county.

Here are the key links:-

Government announcement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/proposals-for-unitary-local-government-in-cumbria-north-yorkshire-and-somerset>

Government consultation: <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/governance-reform-and-democracy/somerset/>

Options websites: <https://www.strongersomerset.co.uk> <https://onesomerset.org.uk>

He reiterated that this is a really important consultation that will affect everyone's lives in Somerset for decades to come, so Parish Councils, Parish Councillors as individuals, plus any resident, should respond with their views.

The Caravan at Westport: Cllr Stanton reported that they have now spoken to the owner of the caravan. They will now put pressure on the owner to remove it.

21/765/c County Councillor: County Cllr. Dance had emailed a report that had been circulated to the Parish Councillors. Cllr Dance also reported on the following:

Unitary Authority progress: County Councillor Dance talked in great depth reiterating what Cllr Stanton had said (please read above). He felt very strongly that the consultations were not democratic and the people who would be affected the most were not being consulted.

Somerset County Council Elections: as reported last month, SCC had written to Government to request permission to postpone the May 2021 Local Elections. The Secretary of State has now granted this deferral so there will not be any County Council election this May.

21/765/c P.C.S.O. Report:

The Clerk had received a report from the PCSO informing the Parish Council that there has been a significant rise in rural crime over the last few weeks. They reported that they had one success with recovering a stolen mini digger and trailer, but unfortunately the rest of the farm equipment has not been recovered. He asked for a message to go out to local residents to be extra vigilant and report any suspicious activity. He said, that it seems a significant amount of people do not call to report anything suspicious because they feel they will be wasting Police time. There is a dedicated number for non-emergency calls which is 101. The Chairman will include a piece in the newsletter.

Action: Chairman

21/766 MATTERS ARISING

21/766/a Banking: changes to mandate - update

1. Banking – The Chairman reported that they are no further forward with this. He will visit the bank again at the weekend and see if he can push it forward. He also reported that the Precept is due in April and as soon as that has been paid into the bank he will look into moving the accounts elsewhere. The Clerk reported that she will be unable to apply for the VAT that is outstanding until she is registered with the bank as the new Clerk and can show 3 months of bank statements with her name on.

Action: Chairman

2. Environmental issues – Solar Power offer: The Clerk reported on the South Somerset Solar Streets Project, where PV Installer IDDEA is making discounted panels available to homeowners and businesses by offering bulk savings on installation and donating to a community fund for each scheme. The Parish Council felt this would be good to include in the newsletter.

Action: Chairman

3. Consultation on the future of local Government in Somerset – The formal Government Consultation is now live, and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposals-for-locally-led-reorganisation-of-local-government-in-cumbria-north-yorkshire-and-somerset>

More information on our bid can be found here: www.strongersomerset.co.uk.

SSDC proposals aim to keep decision making close to our communities, as well as providing a fresh start for services such as adult and children's social care - services which have consistently failed under the Conservatives for many years. The Closing date for the Consultation is 19th April at 11:45pm.

Clerk to write an email in support of the Stronger Somerset bid on behalf of the Parish Council **Action: Clerk**

4. Face to Face meetings - The Clerk reported that Parish Councils had been informed that as from 7th May all meetings needed to be face to face again. However, NALC is working with a number of national bodies to press the Government to extend these regulations beyond this date and will continue to stress the urgency and importance of this issue. It is thought the Government will extend this date. NALC will update the Parish Clerk as soon as they know more on this. Clerk to keep the Parish Council informed. **Action: Cler**

5. Road safety mirrors – Isle Brewers Lane and Ruskway Lane

Nothing to report

6. Benches – update on refurbishment

The bench repairs are work in progress.

Update on parking in lay-by – Hundry Lane – From SCC – The Clerk reported that she had spoken to the PCSO who said we would need to contact County Council and discuss with them about the use of the layby overnight as it would be up to them to sign non allowance. Clerk also spoke to SCC who reported - During the COVID pandemic Local Authorities in Somerset (with the support of Public Health and the Police) took the joint decision to not enforce unauthorised encampments unless they posed a safety risk to the individuals on an unauthorised encampment and/or the wider community. This was in line with Government advice and so as to limit the unnecessary movement of people. Until this position changes (and I don't have a timeframe for this) it is unlikely that enforcement action will be taken to remove the encampment.

7. Old Vicarage Nursing Home Covenant: The Chairman reported that he had been approached by the Earnshill Estate to explain that a proposal had been made for the purchase of the Old Vicarage property for use as a school for autistic children. There is currently a covenant in place that states that the building can only be used as a care home. The estate were keen to hear what the Parish Council's view to changing/removing the covenant. The Parish Council discussed the suggested change of use of the Old Vicarage and unanimously agreed that the use of the building as an educational/care institution, would be welcomed by the villages. Rather than withdrawing the covenant completely, the Parish Council would be keen to protect the neighbouring residents from some possible unsympathetic development of the site in the future. Chair to inform the owner. **Action: Chairman**

8. Ipads for Hambridge school – This was discussed at great length. The Clerk will further investigate whether the Parish Council can lawfully donate money for Ipads for the school. The Parish Council are very keen to support the children. County Councillor Dance gave the Clerk an email contact at SCC to see if County can help in any way as well. **Action: Clerk**

21/767 PLANNING:

21/767/a Matters for report:

Nothing to report

21/767/b Decisions Notified:

Nothing to report

21/767/c Applications for consideration.

APPLICATION NO. 21/00181/S73A APPLICANT Mr & Mrs Duarte

PROPOSAL: Application to vary condition 2 (approved plans) of planning approval 18/02149/FUL and as amended 19/02771/S73 to allow a minor increase in roof height, to ensure buildability and a continuous parapet.

LOCATION: Land Adjacent Burgum, Westport, Langport TA10 0BH

The Chairman invited the owner of the build to speak for her allocated 5 minutes. She informed the Parish Council that since they had raised their concern with SSDC about the height of the build, they'd had an inspection on the 13th November 2020. She explained that when they had previously submitted plans to SSDC back in 2019 to make amendments to the original plan, the architect had submitted the wrong plan, hence the reason for submitting another S73 application now. She informed the Parish Council that the height difference from what was approved to what has been applied for now is 270mm. She also wished to point out that, the parapets do not change the internal heights of the building but were designed to hide the roof pitch with PV panels, vent pipes and skylight, from the road view. The owner of the build expressed her disappointment with the Parish Council reporting their concerns to SSDC and said that they had support for the build from local people.

The Chairman spoke about the crux of the matter being the fact that the architect made an error. He discussed how there have been a succession of applications made to ensure the buildability of the property. This has resulted in the increasing of the height of the building over successive stages, all because of the issues that have been encountered with the build to date. He pointed out that the planning process is in place to prevent this from happening – once original plans are approved with relevant restrictions, those restrictions have to be adhered to and that this was making a mockery of the planning system by returning time after time and increasing the height each time.

The Parish Council had calculated that the build is now at least as high, or even higher, than the property situated on the opposite side of the road, Burgun, which is a two storey property and must now be affecting their natural light. The Chairman clarified that he'd had received verbal complaints from residents in Hambridge and Westport about this build.

The Parish Council took a vote to decide their final opinion on this matter.

All 5 members of the Parish Council voted unanimously to OBJECT to this planning application.

21/768 FINANCE:

21/768/a Matters for report:

VAT update – see above (Matters Arising in banking)

2. Matters for Resolution:

Nothing to report

3. Cheques Payable:

Louise Brooks	Salary for February 2021	£	192.06	chq no: 0507
HMRC	PAYE payment for February 2021	£	48.00	chq no: 0508
Louise Brooks	Expenses & Home office allowance for February 2021	£	40.00	chq no: 0509

Proposed: Cllr.Meecham

Seconded: Cllr. Masters

Agreed unanimously.

21/769 CORRESPONDENCE:

All correspondence received, had been forwarded to the Parish Councillors.

21/770 FOOTPATHS:

Cllr Maidment reported that he'd had a catchup with Vicky Taylor. She has informed Cllr Maidment that there are new forms to fill out which he will do. She has informed him of the information she needs. She did warn him that due to Covid it is taking longer to get things through. He also reported that he had also mentioned the bridge to Vicky and she would put Cllr Maidment in contact with the person responsible for bridges. She did say the bridge was already down for replacement.

21/771 MEMBERS' REPORTS/ITEMS FOR NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING:

Nothing to report

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21.15

The next VIRTUAL meeting will be held on Wednesday 14th April at 7.30pm