

**MINUTES OF HAMBRIDGE AND WESTPORT PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MONTHLY MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021 IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

**21/814 PRESENT:**

Mr. S. Denley (Chairman), Mr. P. Masters (Vice Chair), Mr. R Maidment, Mr. R Meecham, Ms. J Lock, Mr. A Dance (County Councillor), Mrs L. Brooks (Clerk). 1 member of the public was present.

**21/815 APOLOGIES:**

M Stanton (District Councillor)

**21/816 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

Councillor Denley declared an interest regarding footpaths - Proposed diversion of footpath L 9/22, Hambridge

**21/817 MINUTES:**

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

Proposed: Cllr. Meecham

Seconded: Cllr. Maidment

Agreed unanimously.

**21/818 PUBLIC TIME**

**21/818/a Public Time:**

Mr Evans from the HWRT attended the meeting. He requested that the Parish Council could apply on behalf of the village hall for a grant available from SCC called the 'Opening Up Safely and Reconnecting Communities Fund'. The aim of the fund is to help with - Reconnecting Communities, where some people will have been very isolated during lockdown and may be concerned about mixing again. This is looking to help fund ways village halls and other community run buildings can help people to re-engage in community activities.

HWRT would like to invest in a new hearing loop system for the hall, plus a request to upgrade the audio-visual provision. Mr Evans went on to explain that the current projector does not work and they would like to upgrade and replace this. The Parish Council suggested this may only need repairing rather than replacing and also discussed how this was bought by the school. He asked the Parish Council if they would consider funding the difference, if the money they were lucky enough to receive from this funding from SCC didn't quite cover the full amount of their intended improvements. The Parish Council felt that the £1,500.00 that is included in the budget/precept every year for village hall projects must be used rather than the Parish Council finding further funds. The Parish Council has been extremely generous over the last few years with their support for the HWRT.

The Clerk asked Mr Evans for more up to date accounts for the village hall as the last available accounts on the village website was from 2018/19. Mr Evans said he would send the latest ones through and the clerk will upload them onto the website. The Parish Council commented that the village hall was looking fabulous now after all the recent refurbishment throughout and felt there was nothing more that was needed for the time being. The Parish Council were in full agreement for the Clerk to apply on their behalf for the available funding. The Clerk will fill out the required forms and update the Parish Council on the outcome.

**Action: Clerk**

Mr Evans also asked the Parish Council if they would like a copy of the contact details of some village residents that he holds. Having discussed this further, the Parish Council decided there would be no benefit for them to hold this list, and therefore declined the offer. Due to GDPR it would just cause an administrative headache to the Parish Council. They felt that their current methods of publishing Parish Council information are completely transparent and easily available to view either on the website and notice boards. The newsletter is also delivered door to door (the newsletter, financial documents, minutes and agendas are also always published on the website for people who prefer to view a digital copy can see). Clerk to inform Mr Evans. **Action: Clerk**

**21/818/b District Councillor:**

Councillor Stanton was not present at the meeting but he did send a report that was circulated to all the Parish Councillors. It included:

**Unitary Authority:** SSDC's CEO and Leader have been meeting with MHCLG civil servants and the minister to prepare the ground for the new authority, as set out in last month's report.

Election timing is a particular issue: Parish Councils are being consulted by government on whether they wish to stick to the current timetable, which would have elections held in May 2023, or whether they prefer to hold them in May 2022, to coincide with elections to the new Authority, thus saving some costs.

The definition of the 'Divisions' or 'Wards' from which Unitary Councillors will be elected is under discussion and will be the subject of a briefing to SSDC Councillors on 17<sup>th</sup> September.

**Planning:** Applications within the rainfall catchment area which feeds the Somerset Levels are still delayed by Natural England's (NE's) requirement for phosphates control.

Mitigation arrangements in the form of 'Phosphate Credits' purchasable by housing developers are expected to be available via EnTrade later this month or early next. EnTrade is the subsidiary of Wessex Water which is creating and will manage the market in these Credits. My own summary of the way it will work is as follows:

- Farmers are the suppliers: they can offer wetland, tree planting or reversion of land use;
- Mitigation will be within a river catchment, e.g. the Parrett: a bidder in that catchment will purchase credits at auction from a farmer also within it.
- Communities - and the world - will gain from a reduction in farm nutrients outflow and more wetlands, woodlands and wildflower meadows.
- Within 5-10 years Wessex Water will have reduced domestic phosphates outflow from their sewage plants to the lowest level achievable and permissible.

Some housing developments will be able to be approved from sometime soon after September, subject to the initial deal-making on credits working well.

The Environment Bill to cut the amount of raw sewage which water companies discharge into waterways is currently at the House of Lords, and still makes no mention of the phosphates issue; however, David Warburton MP assures me that he is pressing for it to be included, via the minister, Rachel Pow, & others.

**Area North Committee:** next planned meeting is 22<sup>nd</sup> September, probably again as an 'informal' Zoom meeting with decision powers delegated to council officers, who will follow the meeting's view.

**Covid-19:** At the time of writing, declared new cases and hospitalisations locally are again decreasing after several weeks of increase. Death rates are below half their level during the second wave. Vaccination rates among care workers, younger people and pregnant women are still too low.

**Waste:** Somerset Waste is back on track and restarting garden waste collections.

**New CEO:** Jane Portman has now taken up her new role with us.

**Somerset Rivers Authority** held a special strategic planning 'round table' meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> August in Somerton to think ahead about the next few years: it has fulfilled the requirements of its first such plan, made after the 2014 floods.

District Councillor Stanton also sent an updated report regarding the caravan at Westport.

**21/818/c** County Councillor:

Councillor Dance attended the meeting. He discussed his disappointment regarding the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) decision to support the move to a single Unitary Council across Somerset. He felt that the people of Somerset had not been listened to and it had been purely down to what the MPs for Somerset wanted. Work has now commenced to refine the transition and implementation programme. The four District Councils and Somerset County Council are working closely with MHCLG to implement the decision. A recent request from Government to look at a maximum of circa 85 Councillors on the new Council has also meant that a review of Divisional/Ward boundaries is now being undertaken. In addition, the impact of a May 2022 Unitary election on Town and Parish Councils who are not due to elect until 2023 is also under consideration with the views of these Councils being sought on the options available. It is expected that statutory orders will be laid before Parliament in the late Autumn and a vesting date of the new authority as April 2023. Cllr Dance discussed the impact all of this will have on District Council staff and the issues that that it will create from staff leaving due to fear of being out of a job way before the Unitary even starts. The Clerk raised concerns that key staff had already left SSDC and the impact it was having on certain departments like planning and localities was very apparent.

**21/818/d** P.C.S.O. Report:

Nothing to report

**21/819** **MATTERS ARISING**

1. Banking – update

The Chairman reported that he had started proceedings to change banks from Nat West to the Unity Trust Bank. The Parish Council agreed to transfer the money from the reserve account into the new account with Unity Trust. The Clerk requested that the Parish Council still should have two bank accounts – one current and one reserve, as it has always worked well this way. The Clerk also felt it would be a good idea to transfer some more funds into the Nat West current account so there is enough in the account to pay people in October and November – just in case there are any hold ups with the new account. The Chairman will complete the setting up of the new accounts and transfer the majority of the funds, leaving some in the Nat West current account to pay all invoices until everything is running smoothly with the Unity Trust and then the remainder will be transferred and the Nat West Accounts will be closed. **Action: Cllr Denley**

2. Road safety mirrors

Nothing to report

3. SSDC Rangers Scheme:

The Chairman has been informed by Steve Fox at SSDC that he now needs to contact Jon Brown at SSDC, to arrange the start-up of the Rangers Scheme for Hambridge and Westport Parish Council. The Chair reported that he had tried a couple of time to make contact with Mr Brown, but has not received a reply. The Clerk expressed the need to start this ASAP as the poles for the speed sensor were delivered a few weeks ago and need installing so the speed sensor that the Parish Council have already purchased can be delivered and installed. The installation of the posts will be a priority when the scheme starts. The Parish Council felt there would be plenty of jobs for the rangers to carry out. The Clerk will email Jon Brown and ask him to respond to Cllr Denley's emails. **Action: Cllr Denley**

4. Speed sensor update – post installation and delivery date (with training) for speed sensor:

See above – The speed sensor and poles were paid for on a pro-forma at the beginning of August. We are now waiting for the Rangers Scheme to start so the poles can be installed. The Clerk said it was important that the Parish Councillors had a look together to see where the best place for the 3 poles need to be positioned, and suggested the 'agreed spots' need to be marked with spray paint so that the Ranger new exactly where to concrete them in. Clerk to speak to Truvelo UK as soon as there is a date that the posts have been installed. **Action: Cllr Denley**

5. Dog Bins for Westport?

Currently Westport currently have no dog bins. It was felt that it was now a requirement due to the increase in walkers and dog owners. The Clerk explained that the process for getting permission from SSDC to install a dog bin had now changed. Now the localities team have to come out and decide if one is required and agree to the place for installation. Cllr Meecham agreed to work on this project. The Clerk will find out who is now in charge of this service and pass the details to Cllr Meecham. **Action: Clerk/Cllr Meecham**

**\*\*post script\*\*** The Clerk has been in touch with SSDC (09.09.21) and has been informed that SSDC have had to put a hold on any additional bins at present as they have been inundated with bin requests from throughout the district. This level is unmanageable with their present staffing and vehicle levels. As soon as things change, the Parish Council will resume with the addition of a dog bin for Westport.

#### **21/820 PLANNING:**

**21/820/a** Matters for report:

Nothing to report

**21/820/b** Decisions Notified:

Nothing to report

**21/820/c** Applications for consideration.

Nothing to report

#### **21/821 FINANCE:**

**21/821a** Matters for report:

Payment of invoice 17476 on 26.07.21 to TRUVELO (UK) LTD for the speed sensor and posts for the sum of: £4,440.00. (CHEQUE no: 536. Resolution already made at previous meeting).

**21/821/b** Matters for Resolution:

Nothing to report

**21/821/c** Cheques Payable:

Louise Brooks	Salary for July 2021	£ 384.13	chq no: 537
HMRC	PAYE payment for July 2021	£ 96.00	chq no: 538
Louise Brooks	Expenses & Home office allowance July 2021	£ 40.00	chq no: 539
SALC & NALC	Affiliation Fee 2021/22	£ 147.43	chq no: 540
Louise Brooks	Salary for August 2021	£ 384.13	chq no: 541
HMRC	PAYE payment for August 2021	£ 96.00	chq no: 542
Louise Brooks	Expenses & Home office allowance August 2021	£ 40.00	chq no: 543
M Von Tyszka	July & Aug - Recreation ground maintenance 6 x mowing @ £110 per session	£ 640.00	chq no: 544
M Von Tyszka	July & Aug - Churchyard mowing x 3 @ £100.00 per session plus spray around church	£ 600.00	chq no: 545
Paul Knight	Refurbish of village benches	£ 355.00	chq no: 546
Rockwell Print and Sign	September '21 12pp x 260 copies	£ 140.40	chq no: 547

Proposed: Cllr. Denley

Seconded: Cllr. Masters

Agreed unanimously

**21/822 CORRESPONDENCE:**

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

The Clerk reported an email that had been sent to the Parish Council via the website regarding a piece of unfenced waste land between the canal basin and the main road and the removal of a shed leaving paint pots exposed. The Chairman said this was private property and therefore nothing to do with the Parish Council.

Councillor Maidment would reply to the email explaining this.

**Action: Cllr Maidment**

**21/823 FOOTPATHS:**

Proposed diversion of footpath L 9/22, Hambridge:

The Chairman reported that during July and August he had received correspondence from the owners of Hambridge Farm, who were in the process of selling their property and land. Footpath L9/22, crosses some of their land. They requested an update on the situation with regards to the diversion of the footpath and gave their full support regarding this. The Parish Council had also been contacted by a prospective purchaser of the property who wanted an update as to where we were with the diversion request with SCC. Cllr Maidment said he would visit the owners of Hambridge Farm and ask them to sign the application papers regarding the diversion.

**Action: Cllr Maidment**

**21/824 MEMBERS' REPORTS/ITEMS FOR NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING:**

Items for the next meeting: Any of the above which require follow-ups from this meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.10pm

**The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm in the village hall.**