

**UNCONFIRMED**

**MELLS PARISH COUNCIL**  
**(mellsparishcouncil.org.uk)**

**Minutes of Mells Parish Council held in the Barn on Tuesday 14 January 2025**

- 01.01.25 PRESENT:** Cllr John Henderson – Vice Chair (Chaired meeting in Cllr Earl’s absence), Cllr Steve West, Cllr Jan Seewooruttun, Cllr Alan Brady, Cllr David Seviour, Cllr Clare Asquith, Cllr Claire Freeman,  
**In Attendance:** Joy Book – Clerk, Cllr Barry Clarke – Somerset Council  
**Members of the public:** 0
- 02.01.25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Cllr Vince Turner, Cllr John Earl – Chair
- 03.01.25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** None
- 04.01.25 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None
- 05.01.25 APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2024**  
Previously circulated. The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.
- 06.01.245 SOMERSET COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR’S REPORT:**
- i. **Household Support Fund:** Applications can only be made online and close on 31 March 2025. <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/somerset-household-support-fund/> The Clerk will assist anyone who does not have internet access. The Household Support Fund cannot make direct payments towards bills. It does not provide cash payments or make payments to your bank account. Where support is approved, vouchers will be issued for an agreed monetary value. The Household Support Fund could help you if you are struggling to afford important things like:
- Gas and electricity** – If you have a pre-payment energy meter, your cards or keys can be topped up. You must redeem your voucher within 5 days of receiving it. For help towards all other energy bills, food vouchers can be given in place of payment towards fuel bills. The value of the food vouchers can then be used to offset payment of fuel bills or other direct debit bills.
- Food** – For help towards paying for food, supermarket food vouchers are issued which you can use in all major supermarkets. Vouchers are valid for six months from the date you receive them.
- The fund will not cover:** debt repayments, cash payments, rent or housing costs, phone bills, non-urgent items such as televisions and some furniture
- You do not need to be in receipt of benefits to apply for this fund. And any existing benefits will not be affected by payments from this fund.
- ii. **Local Plan Call for Sites:** Somerset Council will be launching a Call for Sites in the new year as it prepares to develop its first Local Plan. The new Somerset Local Plan will generally supersede all existing former district council Local Plans, which will remain part of the Development Plan until they are officially replaced. The Call for Sites is a six-week period where landowners, developers, and site promoters are invited to submit land they want to be considered for future development. Submissions can be for various uses including housing, economic development, gypsy and traveller pitches and plots, and renewable energy installations.
- ii. **New fostering campaign:** More foster carers are urgently needed in Somerset – call 0800 587 9900. <https://www.fosteringinsomerset.org.uk/>
- iii. **Somerset Business Survey 2024-25:** The survey is an opportunity for Somerset businesses of all types, shapes and sizes, to tell the Council and Growth Board what it is like to do business

in the county and what is most important to them. The survey closes on 24 January 2025, takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and is anonymous.

<https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/economic-development/business-survey-2024/>

- iv. Somerset Councillors came together to back local farmers and food producers in their last meeting of 2024. With 3 motions passed that backed our rural communities.
- v. **SLINKEY transport service:** This demand responsive transport is a bookable, flexible service which residents can use if there is no public transport alternative. All users need to do is register online to start using the Slinky bus to get to the shops, to visit friends and family, get to college or social clubs, or access medical appointments. You can also call: **01749 880482** for Mendip area. The service is available to anyone in Somerset who does not have access to a regular bus service. Car owners can also use Slinky.
- vi. **The Boundary Commission** has launched a consultation on new division boundaries in Somerset - <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/somerset>. Mells is not affected by the proposals. Somerset Council has misgivings with some of the proposed changes which are placing parishes with larger areas they are not immediately associated with. An extension has been sought to the 20 January deadline. The changes will be implemented in 2027 and would reduce the number of County Councillors required to cover the areas from 110 to 96.
- viii. **Redundancies and financial situation:** Somerset Council will be making another tranche of redundancies in March in a bid to save £34 million. They hope to make savings on white lining, grass cutting, sign clearance etc except where legally obligated. Cllr Clarke advised not to take on the work due to the insurance and liability issues that would be involved.

#### 07.01.25 MATTERS ARISING

- i. **Barn lease – additional land:** The lease is ready for Cllr Henderson to sign.
- ii. **Pavilion lease and future of recreation ground:** Reassess progress in a couple of months.
- iii. **Councillor vacancies – Co-option:** No further information.
- iv. **Quarry noise:** Cllr West reported that there had been 4 noise complaints at night and 3 in the evening over the past few months. An electric vehicle has been ordered and will be delivered in July. Clerk to arrange meeting between the Quarry Area Operations Manager, Cllr Asquith and resident to discuss the issues and see if there are ways to alleviate the noise.
- v. **Trees in Vobster graveyard:** These have been looked at by the PCC and arrangements will be made to remove them as they are likely to cause damage to the wall if left in situ long term.
- vi. **Bus shelter graffiti – Vobster:** Cllrs Brady and West will carry out the work.

#### 08.01.25 HIGHWAY AND FOOTPATH ISSUES:

- i. **Condition of grass triangle – Bottom Lane:** Cllr Henderson will confirm with the resident that they may go ahead with the planting of a memorial crab apple tree.
- ii. **Area in front of Vobster Inn:** Cllr Seviour will obtain quotes for the planting barrels. There is currently an abandoned vehicle on the land which has been reported to Somerset Council.
- iii. **Speeding vehicles in Vobster:** No response has been received from Highways. Clerk to approach again to ask if it is feasible to reduce the speed limit and what the process is.
- iv. **Park Corner:** Cllr Seewooruttun reported that the details of another two vehicle accident had been passed to Highways. Clerk to ask Highways to accelerate their intentions for this junction.
- vi. **Damaged bridge – Vobster Cross:** Clerk to approach Nick Jacklin, Head of the bridge department as no progress has been made to date.
- vii. **Speeding traffic – Lime Kiln Hill:** No further information.

#### 09.01.25 PLANNING

- i. **New applications:**  
**2024/2251/HSE:** Erection of single storey front porch & single storey rear extension – Stone Cottage, Upper Vobster Road. No objections.

**2024/2291/TCA:** Beech x 6 – raise canopy by 3 meters – Mells Green to Little Green, Mells Estate (notification only, being dealt with by Tree Officer)

**2024/2055/HSE:** Erection of single storey extension & associated works (retrospective) – 6 St Edmunds Terrace, Upper Vobster Road. No objections

**ii. Other planning matters:**

**a) Old telephone exchange:** No further information.

**b) Quarry applications - Westodown:** Permission has been granted, but signing of the legal agreement has not taken place yet.

**10.01.25 CORRESPONDENCE:**

**i. Mells with Vobster PCC & Citizens Advice:** Thank you for grants.

**11.01.25 ACCOUNTS AND OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS**

Bank account: Lloyds at 7 January 2025 - £2,486.61

Barclays at 20 December 2024 - £13,520.84

**i. Payment of accounts – December**

Clerk's Salary & expenses (December) £334.88

HMRC PAYE (Period 10) £80.40

**ii. Receipts:** Barclays interest - £50.37. Barclays will be reducing their interest rate on the account by 0.05%.

**iii. Barclays account – setting up monthly direct debit:** Clerk has drafted a letter for Cllrs Henderson and Earl to sign instructing the bank to transfer £200 every month to the Lloyds account to keep the account active. The money will be transferred back again.

**v. Budget and precept setting:** After discussion, it was agreed by all present, that the precept should increase by £1,500 to cover the additional costs of emptying the bins and general village upkeep etc. The precept therefore for 2025/2026 was set at £16,500.

**12.01.25 ITEMS TO REPORT / ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**

**i. Funding for church:** Cllr Asquith asked if other churches in the area received funding from the parish council as the situation was getting quite critical for the church. This would need a substantial increase in the precept to cover the costs and would require the support of the parish.

**ii. Lime Kiln Hill – debris:** Cllr Brady will contact Pennys to request that the road is kept clear of mud and gravel.

**iii. Verge – Top Lane:** The verge is being eroded by the works being carried out at Bridge Cottage. Clerk to ask the owner to reinstate once works are completed.

**13.01.25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday 11 February at 7.15pm in the Barn.

Meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_