

UNCONFIRMED

MELLS PARISH COUNCIL (mellsparishcouncil.org.uk)

Minutes of Mells Parish Council held in the Barn on Tuesday 12 March 2024

- 01.03.24 PRESENT:** Cllr John Earl - Chair, Cllr Steve West, Cllr Alan Brady, Cllr Claire Freeman, Cllr David Seviour, Cllr Jan Seewooruttun
In Attendance: Joy Book – Clerk,
Members of the public: 1
- 02.03.24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Cllr Clare Asquith, Cllr Vince Turner, Cllr John Henderson and Cllr Barry Clarke - Mendip Central and East Somerset Councillor
- 03.03.24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** None
- 04.03.24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**
- i. **Quarry noise:** Member of public presented an article which appeared to show a photo of Whatley Quarry and referred to a survey carried out on behalf of the quarry. The following text is taken from article – *‘Residents of several villages surrounding a large quarry complained about the quarry noise. So the quarry owner consulted a noise survey company. They carried out a noise survey at five village locations over several days and nights. This concluded that noise levels exceeded the night time planning noise limit at four of the village locations.’*
- The article appears to contradict the quarry’s stance that the noise levels are within planning limits. It is understood that an independent noise survey has been conducted but the results have not been made public and there has been a possible lack of transparency. Clerk and Cllr West to follow up with Somerset Council and the quarry.
- 05.03.24 APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2024**
Previously circulated. The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.
- 06.03.24 SOMERSET COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR’S REPORT:**
- i. **2024/5 Council Budget:** LibDem Council Members unanimously agreed a range of measures to bridge a funding gap of £100m for 2024/25, including cost cuttings, increasing Council Tax by 5%, and using £36.8 millions of reserves. The proposals also include a ‘capitalisation direction’ request of £36.9m – seeking permission from Government to borrow money or sell assets to pay for day-to-day running costs. Around 1,200 jobs are expected to go at Somerset Council over the next three years (about a quarter of the workforce). As a result of the cuts, some Town Councils have stepped in to save services (CCTV, public toilets etc) but this has resulted in a 179% council tax increase in Taunton, 90% in Yeovil and 164% in Bridgwater. Council papers are still predicting a further £103 million budget gap in 2025/26.
- ii. **Healthy Somerset:** A new website has been launched by Public Health to help people in Somerset lead a healthier life www.healthysomerset.co.uk –features health and wellbeing resources tailored to all age ranges – making it even easier for users to find the information and support they are looking for.
- iii. **Take the Pressure Off:** Over half of all strokes and heart attacks in Somerset are caused by high blood pressure. The “Take the Pressure Off” campaign is designed to encourage residents, particularly those aged 40+, to regularly check their blood pressure and take necessary steps towards managing their health. Residents are also encouraged to borrow a

free blood pressure monitor from their library to test their own blood pressure in the comfort of their home, or visit their local pharmacy for a quick and easy check.

07.03.24 MATTERS ARISING

- i. Barn lease:** No further information.
- ii. Pavilion lease and future of recreation ground:** A meeting is being held this week and Cllr Seewooruttun will ask for an update on progress.
- iii. Councillor vacancies – Co-option:** No one has come forward yet. Clerk to re-advertise in the magazine.
- iv. Noticeboards:** Cllr Brady is nearing completion of the works to the boards and has also cut back some vegetation around the village.
- v. Silt under Vobster bridge:** Cllr Seviour to follow up with the contact at Somerset Rivers Authority.
- vi. Old GPO box on verge – road to Leigh on Mendip:** Cllr West has re-contacted Openreach as their claim that the cabinet is still in use is incorrect as the cabinet is completely empty.
- vii. Queens Canopy – tree planting:** For discussion at the next meeting.

08.03.24 HIGHWAY AND FOOTPATH ISSUES:

- i. Condition of grass triangle – Bottom Lane and area in front of Vobster Inn:** Clerk to contact Cllr Turner who has agreed to help with flattening the land and placing top soil on it. Cllr Seviour and Cllr West are looking into obtaining and placing the barrel planters by the Vobster Inn.
- ii. HGVs – Top Road:** Highways have given the possible locations of two signs on Lime Kiln Hill. Clerk to confirm these are acceptable and ask for their installation.
- iii. Overgrown bush by Honeysuckle Cottage, Vobster:** Clerk to chase.
- iv. Stone baskets on Park Corner:** The land is not owned by Highways but the matter has been passed onto the Area Manager to seek advice as to whether any enforcement action needs to be taken.

09.03.24 PLANNING

- i. New applications:** None
- ii. Planning decisions:** None
- iii. Other planning matters:**
 - a) Local Plan Part II:** Comments are sought on the Mendip Local Plan Part II (Sites and policies). The consultation runs until 12 April 2024.
 - b) Old telephone exchange:** Clerk to re-contact enforcement officer as a vehicle is present overnight.

10.03.24 CORRESPONDENCE:

- i. Email Somerset Council – Highway maintenance devolution:** As Somerset Council face significant service reductions they are looking at several options for local parishes to be able to continue the current level of service. These include:-
 - **Local self delivery** - where someone is trained to undertake various activities (eg. vegetation clearing, sign cleaning). Insurance and training would be required.
 - **Parish ‘price list** – Purchasing highways services direct from Somerset Council’s contractor (Kier).
 - **Buying back** – Raise the precept to buy back the level of service.
 - **Highways steward** – Parishes would employ a steward with a vehicle, tools and equipment to carry out verge maintenance, sign cleaning etc. Costs could be split between several bordering parishes but as one steward would cost £50k it would be prohibitive to many as their share would be most of the annual precept unless a significant precept increase was made.

- ii. **Letter – Frome Police station – regarding Glastonbury Festival and impact on local villages:** The festival generally has very little effect on the village.
- iii. **Email - Sarah Dyke MP regarding the possibility of a zebra crossing by village shop:** Due to the lack of pavements, several junctions merging in the area and the hill, it would not meet the basic safety restrictions to be considered for moving forwards and the costs would be prohibitive.
- iv. **Email – resident regarding a life buoy by the White bridge:** It was felt that at times of most need ie. during a flood, a lifebuoy at this location would be ineffective due to the fast flowing water a person would be swept away before the lifebuoy could be deployed. If a lifebuoy was to be funded, Woodlands End would be the most sensible location for one.
- v. **LCN – Questionnaire:** Cllr Asquith and possibly Cllr Brady to meet with area co-ordinator to discuss how the LCN may assist.
- vi. **Email – J W Witt:** 9% price increase from 1 April.

11.03.24 ACCOUNTS AND OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS

Bank account: Lloyds: 29 February – £8,581.13
Barclays at 20 December 2023 - £5,373.97

- i. **Payment of accounts:**

Clerk’s Salary & expenses (February)	£319.57
HMRC PAYE (Period 12)	£76.60
J W Witt – bin emptying (133807)	£71.09
- ii. **Receipts:** VAT Refund £285.40
- vii. **Barclays account:** Cllr Earl and Cllr Henderson are looking into gaining internet banking so the standing order can be set up and managed online.

12.03.24 ITEMS TO REPORT / ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

- i. **Crates obstructing defib at the shop/post office:** Several crates are always blocking the small area that is available to access the defibrillator and would need to be removed before the defib could be accessed in an emergency. This is likely to cause further distress to anyone already in an agitated state. The shop has stated that it does not have any where else to place the crates and has suggested that the defib should be moved. Its current position was agreed by the Estate and their approval would need to be sought to move it to another location on the building. Moving the unit and electrics would cost in the region of £250-£300 which the PC is not willing to fund without good justification.
- ii. **Tourist information centres:** These are likely to be closed as part of the cuts despite being well used.
- iii. **Fingerpost by Vobster Inn:** This is currently spinning and requires fixing. Clerk to contact the contractor who will be painting it in the spring.
- iv. **Vobster litter pick:** The layby was full of rubbish and within 10 hours of completion of the pick, more rubbish was visible.

13.03.24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 9 April 2024 at the later time of **7.15pm** in the Barn.

Meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Printed name: _____