

UNCONFIRMED

MELLS PARISH COUNCIL
(mellsparishcouncil.org.uk)

Minutes of Mells Parish Council held in the Barn on Tuesday 13 February 2024

- 01.02.24 PRESENT:** Cllr John Earl - Chair, Cllr Steve West, Cllr Alan Brady, Cllr Claire Freeman, Cllr John Henderson, Cllr Vince Turner
In Attendance: Joy Book – Clerk, Cllr Barry Clarke - Mendip Central and East Somerset Councillor
Members of the public: 0
- 02.02.24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Cllr David Seviour, Cllr Clare Asquith, Cllr Jan Seewooruttun Cllr Philip Ham
- 03.02.24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** None
- 04.02.24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None
- 05.02.24 APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES HELD ON 9 JANUARY 2024**
Previously circulated. The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.
- 06.02.24 SOMERSET COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:**
- i. **2024/5 Council Budget:** Despite recent increases in Government funding the scale of the Council's financial woes continue. The budget gap of £36.6m for 2024/5 is predicted to increase to £147.9m in 2026/7 if no actions are taken. Consequently the Council is proposing over 260 cuts (or fee increases) to service funding in 2024/5 including:
- Closure of five recycling centres (not Frome)
 - Removal of historic open space and burial ground grants to Parishes
 - Cancellation of RNLI Lifeguard contract
 - Removal of all School Crossing Patrols
 - Reduction in road safety budget
 - Closure of all public owned toilets
 - Cessation of funding for Citizens Advice local assistance programme
 - Closure of Tourist Information and Visitor Centres
 - Proposal to cease the Mobile Library service.
 - Review of subsidies for contracted bus services
 - Increased Crematorium charges
- 20-25% employee redundancies are also about to be made.
- ii. **Local nature recovery strategy:** Somerset Council has launched an online survey to shape the county's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The work is funded by Defra and local authorities throughout England have been appointed to lead the work. LNRS will set out local priorities and actions for restoring and creating habitats. For more information visit www.somerset.gov.uk/lnrs
- iii. **Voter registration:** Residents in Somerset are encouraged to make sure they are ready to vote in elections – both local and Parliamentary. The next scheduled elections in Somerset are for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Avon and Somerset on Thursday 2 May 2024. Everyone who votes must be on the electoral register and for those unsure if they are registered, the Electoral Services team 0300 123 2224 will be able to help. Voters also may need to update their details if they have moved house or changed their name. This can be done via: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/register-vote-and-update-your-details>.
- iv. **Flooding:** Somerset Rivers Authority are responsible and any issues should be reported to them. Cllr Barry Clarke and Cllr Philip Ham should also be contacted as they are collating

information to assess and help the worst affected areas. Funding is available (3 months relief from council tax) from Somerset Council if your property is flooded.

- v. **Potholes:** Anyone can report a pothole on the Somerset Council website <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-on-the-road/>
- vi. **Parish Councils taking on more services:** Cllr Clarke reported that one proposal is to have a Man and his van employed for £50k/annum who carries out works in several villages who split the cost. The administration of this would be difficult as some villages may require far more services than others and would need to be jointly overseen by all the parishes involved. Cllr Clarke advised not to take on any services until the PC really has to as insurance costs would escalate to cover anyone working near the highway who would also require training and be in receipt of the required licences to do so.

07.02.24 **MATTERS ARISING**

- i. **Barn lease:** No further information.
- ii. **Pavilion lease and future of recreation ground:** No further information.
- iii. **Overgrown bush by Honeysuckle Cottage, Vobster:** Clerk to chase.
- iv. **Councillor vacancies – Co-option:** No applications have been received to date.
- v. **Silt under Vobster bridge:** Cllr Seviour to be advised to contact the Somerset Rivers Authority.
- vi. **Old GPO box on verge – road to Leigh on Mendip:** Openreach has raised a project number to investigate. If the box is redundant it will be removed. If not, there would be a charge of around £1,000 in which case the PC will not pursue its removal.
- vii. **Noticeboards:** Cllr Brady has nearly completed the works.

08.02.24 **HIGHWAY AND FOOTPATH ISSUES:**

- i. **Condition of grass triangle – Bottom Lane and area in front of Vobster Inn:** Works to flatten the area will start next month. Awaiting further information regarding the planters for Vobster Inn.
- ii. **HGVs – Top Road:** Clerk to chase.
- iii. **Drain – Rectory Corner:** The drain grate has now been reset properly.
- iv. **Pothole by Vobster bridge:** This has been filled.

09.02.24 **PLANNING**

- i. **New applications:** None
- ii. **Planning decisions:** None
- iii. **Other planning matters:**
 - a) **Old telephone exchange:** No further information.

10.02.24 **CORRESPONDENCE:**

- i. **Email from resident: Queens Canopy – tree planting:** For discussion at the next meeting.
- ii. **Email – Hedgehog Highway Project:** After discussion, it was agreed not to be part of the project as Mells has many open areas and hedgehogs are frequently seen free roaming.
- iii. **Email from Frome Town Council – LCN questionnaire:** Councillors will look at the questions asked although many do not apply to Mells. Clerk to respond.

11.02.24 **ACCOUNTS AND OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS**

Bank account: Lloyds: 29 December – £10,487.36
Barclays at 20 December 2023 - £5,373.97

- i. **Payment of accounts:**

Clerk's Salary & expenses (January)	£319.57
HMRC PAYE (Period 11)	£76.60
J W Witt – bin emptying (132581)	£74.09
TSOHost – domain renewal	£9.54
Mells Barn Management Committee – barn hire	£240.00
Defib Sales & Training – 3 x new pads (authorised to be	

paid between meetings due to use of Vobster defib –
Two sets to be kept in stock)

£228.00

ii. **Receipts:** None

iii. **Barclays account:** Account has not been used for a while and a request has been made by the bank to either transfer money into or out of the account by 5 April 2024 otherwise they will close it. As the interest rates are currently more favourable, it was agreed to move £5,000 from the Lloyds account into the Barclays account. To keep the account active moving forward, an amount of £200 will be transferred each month from the Lloyds account to the Barclays then back again by Standing Order.

12.02.24 ITEMS TO REPORT / ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

i. **Police drop in sessions:** The police will be available to speak to once a month in the shop. Dates will be advertised.

ii. **Quarry liaison meeting:** Cllr West reported that there had been 174 complaints in 2023 and 3 so far this year.

iii. **Stone baskets on Park Corner:** Clerk to report the large baskets of stone to Highways as they pose a significant safety issue.

13.02.24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 12 March 2024 at the later time of **7.15pm** in the Barn.

Meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Printed name: _____