

UNCONFIRMED

MELLS PARISH COUNCIL
(mellsparishcouncil.org.uk)

Minutes of Mells Parish Council held in the Barn on Tuesday 10 October 2023

- 01.11.23 PRESENT:** Cllr John Earl - Chair, Cllr Steve West, Cllr Clare Asquith, Cllr Alan Brady, Cllr John Henderson, Cllr Jan Seewooruttun, Cllr Vince Turner, Cllr Claire Freeman
In Attendance: Joy Book – Clerk,
Members of the public: 0
- 02.11.23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Cllr Barry Clarke - Mendip Central and East Somerset Councillor, Cllr David Seviour
- 03.11.23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** Cllr Asquith declared an interest in Item 09.11.23 i. 2023/1804/FUL and Cllr Henderson declared an interest in Item 10.11.23 ii.
- 04.11.23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None
- 05.11.23 APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2023**
Previously circulated. The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.
- 06.11.23 SOMERSET COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:** (submitted prior to the meeting)
- i. **2023/4 Financial Position:** There is a predicted overspend this year of £27.3 million including £14.9m in Adult's and £12m in Children's social care. Reserves will have to be used to plug the gap. Next year the expected budget gap is £100m which represents 20% of the total budget (£70m is within Social Care). There will be insufficient reserves to cover the £100m shortfall. As a consequence a Section 114 notice will be need to be issued. By law a council must have balanced budgets. If the council cannot find a way to finance its budget. The issuing of a section 114 notice prohibits all new spending with the exception of protecting vulnerable people, statutory services and pre-existing spending commitments.
 - ii. **Highways Contract:** Somerset Council has signed a new eight-year contract with Kier Transportation Ltd to deliver core maintenance across its road network to include road repairs, drainage, verge cutting and winter service, such as gritting and other emergency functions in adverse weather.
 - v. **Recycling:** Nearly half the contents of Somerset bins is being recycled which is mostly due to less plastic pots tubs and trays being put in the refuse.
 - vi. **Somerset Gritters:** Somerset's fleet of 23 gritters are ready to be mobilised across 900 miles of road as soon as the temperature drops below zero this winter. Last year the gritter fleet went out on 67 occasions when freezing temperatures were forecast.
- 07.11.23 MATTERS ARISING**
- i. **Barn lease:** The planned meeting in October was postponed so the possibility of the Management Company taking over the lease, releasing the PC of all responsibility, is yet to be discussed.
 - ii. **Pavilion improvements:** All the repairs have been completed however tiles are falling off the walls in the shower. The tennis courts are going to be re-tarmacked. Unfortunately the funds do not stretch to replacing the fence at present although this is in urgent need of renewal. Clerk to invite the Company Directors to a meeting prior to a PC meeting to discuss the lease.
 - iii. **Overgrown bush by Honeysuckle Cottage, Vobster:** Highways has confirmed that they will inspect the area.

08.11.23 HIGHWAY AND FOOTPATH ISSUES:

- i. **Condition of grass triangle – Bottom Lane and area in front of Vobster Inn:** The stones have been put in place. The land requires further levelling and seeding, which will be done in the spring. Barrels to be purchased for the area outside the Vobster Inn.
- ii. **Accidents on Park Corner:** No further response from Highways. The fingerpost that was removed several years ago indicating the direction to Leigh on Mendip, Mells and Coleford has still not been replaced. Clerk to contact Highways again next month regarding these two issues if nothing has been heard in the meantime.
- iii. **HGVs – Top Road:** No further response from Highways.
- iv. **Fingerposts:** A quote of £1,320 was accepted . There are some works to be carried out on the post at the top of Conduit/Park Hill which is covered by vegetation and is leaning. The Chair will look into getting these works done. The post refurbishments are unlikely to take place until late April due to the weather.
- v. **Woodlands End – Give way sign:** The vegetation has been removed from the three signs.

09.11.23 PLANNING

- i. **New Applications:**

2023/1804/FUL: Creation of car park. Land at Tinkers Lane, Newbury (Letter from Coleford PC seeking support of this application) – For approval

Westdown Quarry: SCC/3795/2021 Works ancillary to the operation and restoration of Westdown Quarry, including upgraded access. **SCC/3836/2021/IDO** Interim Development Order for the determination of mineral planning conditions. **SCC3838/2021/ROMP** Consent for the determination of mineral planning conditions made under the Environmental Act. ROMP consolidated two parcels of land to the north-east and an area within the south west collectively covering an area of 14ha. The Asham Wood part of the application has been removed whilst consideration is given to other options for the waste soil. No objections.
- ii. **Planning decisions:** None
- iii. **Other planning matters:**
 - a) **Old telephone exchange:** No further information.

10.11.23 CORRESPONDENCE:

- i. **Email Cllr Barry Clarke - local boundary commission review:** Changes to parish and division boundaries are likely by 2027 in readiness of election of new councillors. This may not only change boundaries but also names and numbers of councillors. The first date on this pathway is 7 November when there will be a briefing.
- ii. **Letter – Mells with Vobster PCC – request for graveyard grant:** It was agreed to continue with a grant of £2,500 to ensure that the Vobster graveyard is cut several times a year.
- iii. **Almshouse vacancy:** Mells Charities has a property available which gives priority is given to applicants who are in need, hardship or distress. Application forms (by Friday 29 December 2023). Further information: Secretary to the Trustees, Mrs Lise Lambton, Rock House, Woodlands End, Mells, FROME, BA11 3PF lise.lambton@btinternet.com.
- iv. **Email – Asset and service devolution:** Due to Somerset County's financial situation, town and parish councils are being asked to look to the future to see if there are any services they would be willing to take on.

11.11.23 ACCOUNTS AND OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS

Bank account: Lloyds: 21 September – £14,220.38
Barclays at 20 September 2023 - £5,355.32

- i. **Payment of accounts:**

Clerk's Salary & expenses (October)	£295.44
HMRC PAYE (Period 8)	£70.40
J W Witt – bin emptying (128765)	£74.09
Mells with Vobster PCC – graveyard grant	£2,500.00

- ii. **Receipts:** None
- v. **Preliminary budget and precept discussion for 2024/25:** Due to the likelihood of having to take on some of the services from Somerset County in the coming years, the precept will need to be increased next year for the first time for several years.
- vi. **Clerks salary for April 2023-March 2024:** NALC has finally agreed to a new payscale for the year, back dated to April 2023. Clerk's scale point has gone up £1/hour therefore the new hourly rate is £12.63 which equates to an annual increase of around £365.

12.11.23 ITEMS TO REPORT / ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

- i. **Councillor resignation:** Karen Punter has tendered her resignation. The PC now has two positions available for co-optees which will be advertised once the required legal period has passed. Clerk to write to Karen thanking her for her service. Karen was attending the Local Community Networks meetings so this responsibility will need to be passed on as this is an important issue to be involved with.
- ii **Lorries – Vobster bridge:** Drivers are still ignoring warnings and getting stuck by the bridge. There has been damage to the bridge but Highways do not have the money to repair it
- iii. **Website:** There is some out of date information published at present which the Clerk will remove/update.

13.11.23 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 12 December 2023 at 7.15pm in the Barn.

Meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Printed name: _____

