

BISHOPS LYDEARD & COTHELSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Temporary voluntary Clerk to the Council: Cllr Clive Martin, Lovells, Mount Street, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, TA4 3AN. Phone: 01823 432911 Email: clerk@bishopslydeard.org Website: <http://www.bishopslydeard.org.uk>

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the Village Hall, Bishops Lydeard on Wednesday 11th October 2023 at 7pm (*taken by Cllr Jane Warmington*).

Present: Cllrs Allen, Bainbridge, Bletcher, Lewin-Harris, Martin (Chair), Pattermore and Warmington.

Councillors absent: Cllrs Ball, Hunt, and Rigby.

In attendance: five members of the public.

147/23 Apologies: Cllrs Ball, Hunt and Rigby.

148/23 Declarations of interest relating to matters on the agenda: None.

149/23 Adoption of the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held 13th September 2023: On matters of accuracy - Under item 127/33 Clerk's report - the code of conduct complaint made against Cllr Bainbridge was dismissed. The County Monitoring Officer found there was no breach of the code of conduct (rather than 'inadequate grounds found for this to progress' stated in the draft minutes). The Chairman apologised for getting this wrong.

- Under item 120/23 Apologies - Cllr Delderfield should not have been referred to as a councillor having already tendered his resignation.

It was proposed, seconded and agreed that these minutes be adopted with the changes noted above.

150/23 Matters Arising (not appearing elsewhere on the agenda): There were none.

151/23 Clerk's report: The Chairman presented the Clerk's (his) report to the meeting.

- The suggestion to offer the DARBY WAY TELEPHONE BOX "as is" to West Somerset Railway has been followed up by Cllr Lewin-Harris. **Clerk to check whether there is any existing [live] connection to the power supply before any removal.** WSR said they would prefer not to have to make good the site after any removal. Cllr Bainbridge pointed out that as any decision to remove the telephone box was not on the agenda (but only drawn from the Clerk's report). **It will therefore need to be an agenda item for next month when a formal decision can be made to either retain or remove the phone box (to be re-sited).**

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- Full information has been belatedly circulated to Councillors concerning PUBLIC ACCESS RIGHTS. The indication is that this process will take a while to resolve and the full Council will need to respond when asked to do so.

- The Chairman/Clerk met Wessex Water about the PUBLIC TOILETS' WATER LEAK. The leak is a trickle but action needs to be taken. They will check the stopcock and meter but if those are okay the Council will be served a formal notice requiring we take action within 28 days (eg appoint a contractor to undertake any work). **The Chairman/Clerk has already started to take meter readings a week apart to measure the leak volume so that can be deducted from our bill.**
- Request from STREAMSIDE RESIDENTS GROUP - Clerk is liaising with Somerset Council to see if “cyclists please dismount” signs can be put up at either end of the footpath connecting Hither Mead with the DWH estate. The Group may also suggest some other improvements. **Clerk also chasing some other issues on behalf of Residents Group.**
- Clerk has had discussions with the Lethbridge Arms public house and Church House Dental Practice about ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS. This is an agenda item (159/23 below) to work out the way forward.
- The SPEED INDICATOR DEVICE is still waiting for an electrician to inspect it. **Clerk will seek to add it to the insurance. Clerk has now located correspondence relating to unsuitable lighting columns and will raise with Highways.**
- The Clerk has written to manager of the Coop to support earlier deliveries by lorry to avoid village rush hour.
- The Clerk spoke to the Football Club. The Club isn't sure holding cars back would make much of a difference to traffic hold-ups when matches are over and everyone is leaving around the same time.

152/23 Chairman's report: since the last meeting -

- He has written an article for Fiveways;
- Attended a Streamside Residents Group meeting;
- Has met the head teacher of the village school regarding the siting of their defibrillator (item 159/23 below); Is expecting an application from the school for a CIL grant to pay for the wall cabinet to house the defibrillator. (Pupil numbers are rising and Ofsted have rated Bishops Lydeard Church School in Somerset as 'Good' in all areas). **The CIL working party will need to meet and make a recommendation. This will be an agenda item for the November meeting.**
- News of a contract about to be signed between developers and the Coop for the new store off Taunton Road.

153/23 Comments from members of the public:

QUESTION - Is there an interim traffic order relating to GREENWAY ROADWORKS (and subsequent road closures)?

There is and this was sent out to councillors. **It will now be forwarded to this resident to pass on to others.** It seems the proposed roadworks have changed and are taking much longer because the gas pipe was mis-mapped. Access and parking for houses is now restricted (with threat of traffic wardens to enforce these). The diversion onto the single track road is not coping with the traffic, is

long and local parking has been lost. The consensus is that these changes have been very poorly managed by Highways.

COMMENT - Cllr Allen emailed Somerset Councillor (and Pff) Cllr Rigby and is awaiting a reply. Residents think with more thought it would be possible to complete the work in short stretches, reopen these and move onto the next area. The works are badly affecting residents (access to properties, parking, long and slow diversions and prospect of taking a further month to complete). Funerals have been affected and there are concerns about any possible ambulances journeys taking much longer (another worry for residents). Three road closures are marked on the Somerset Highways website (October through to to mid November), but unclear. **Chair/Clerk to chase with Highways immediately.**

QUESTION - about whether budget was authorised for extending QUANTOCK VIEW CAR PARK and where this was recorded (FOI request suggested there was no recorded budget)?

The Chairman said the planning application for additional car parking at Quantock View was a result of 32 households who voted for more parking (with only 1 against). The then district council (Taunton Deane who owned the land) initially agreed to these spaces. However under the subsequent new district council (Somerset West and Taunton) the view changed and only a few extra spaces were proffered (subject to a planning application). Chairman understood that concerns were over recording decisions (rather than the decisions themselves) with insufficient detail. More comprehensive minutes are now being taken and proper process aimed at (with no parish clerk in place yet to properly advise).

COMMENTS - from Cllr Bainbridge about code of conduct. That objections to not following due process should be discussed at a Parish Council meeting. The Chair said that these will be properly discussed following the expected request from the official process (the formal AGAR process). In the meantime the Council is trying to adopt correct processes, decision making and learning from this.

154/23 Planning applications for comment:

06/23/0028 Erection of a single storey extension to the rear of 9 Hamber Lea, Bishops Lydeard: The Parish Council made no comment.

06/23/0029/T Application to carry out management works to one birch tree included in Taunton Deane Borough (Bishops Lydeard No.2) Tree Preservation Order 1996 at 2 Homefield, Bishops Lydeard (TD671): Cllr Lewin-Harris did not feel she had an interest. The Parish Council made no comment but defers to the Tree Officer.

155/23 Resolution to formally declare a casual vacancy following the resignation of Cllr Delderfield - To consider consequential electoral arrangements: It was formally resolved that the Parish Council declare a casual vacancy as the result of the resignation of Councillor Delderfield. The Clerk will contact Somerset Council Electoral Services (ES) to this effect. At the June Parish Council by-election ES requested the Chair to make an immediate decision whether Polling cards were wanted for that election. The Chairman hesitated but then agreed to these. It is likely we will

be asked to make a similar decision if there is an election for this current vacancy. ES have said they would try to reduce the cost of any election to the Council. Last time the photographic ID requirement to vote did not slow the process down much, therefore fewer staff would be needed which would halve this part of the cost. Councillor Bainbridge pointed out that it is not yet known whether there will be an election this time. **Agreed that we will discuss this at the November meeting and may ask the Clerk to request a breakdown of costs from the June election (having since discovered that polling cards cost about £1800 not £1000 mentioned by ES at the time).**

156/23 By resolution to approve the provisional offer of appointment made by the staffing committee to the Clerk/RFO vacancy - To consider next steps in terms of Proper Officer/mentor role, pay and conditions, start date, etc.: Cllr Allen (Chair of Staffing Committee) gave an update.

There were two applicants for the post - one much more experienced than the other. The recommendation to the Council was to offer the post to the more experienced candidate (a qualified accountant although with no direct parish clerk experience, recently relocated from Wells and keen to become involved in the area). **The Council voted unanimously to agree to the appointment and offer the post to the more experienced candidate Neal Gossage.**

The Staffing Committee will meet again to make the formal offer and agree pay scale with the candidate (the advertised pay scale was between £14.21 - £15.67 per hour).

In addition, a qualified clerk will almost certainly be needed in the background as voluntary mentor. Other councillors may be called upon to help with familiarisation within the two parishes. **Clerk to approach neighbouring clerks and SALC.** Cllr Bainbridge has also offered some support, time permitting.

The General Power of Competence (introduced as Power of General Competence under the Localism Act 2011) gives qualifying councils more power. We qualified after the last full Parish Council elections and this lasts until the next election in May 2027. One of the qualifying requirements for a Council is that their Parish Clerk be qualified for a year prior to the next election*.

Cllr Bainbridge suggested booking an unqualified clerk on a CiLCA course after twelve months experience (required) but well in advance to secure a place*. In the meantime there are good software packages available to help in the role of clerk. She also suggested the Council might buy the book by Arnold Baker on Local Council Administration (13th addition, available from SLCC Bookshop on line for £137) - the regularly updated clerk's 'bible'.

157/23 Avon and Somerset Police Report: This was noted. There were several favourable comments on the PCSO' "blog" which now seems to be a regular monthly production and will be regularly circulated. The monthly Police report to the Parish Council provides the most detailed information on reported crime for Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone. All Police reports can be found on the Parish Council website (link at top).

158/23 Road and Traffic Issues update: good news that Somerset Highways has agreed to a new non-section 278 less formal approach to village traffic calming thanks to Cllr Rigby. **Clerk to ask Cllr Rigby to arrange the initial formal meeting between village traffic consultant and Highways.**

There are common elements to both formal and less formal approaches - raised sections, narrowing, village gateways, so there is hope for approval on these. The village gateways ought to be good places to start as quite straightforward with the entrance to the village by the football grounds first.

Meetings of the consultant and Highways will be required but these may be virtual. There are no plans to update any of the drawings at this stage (as this is expensive and we need a clear agreement with Somerset County first). Consultant costs will be met using CIL monies.

There are some concerns (after so long) whether any of this will actually happen but Cllr Rigby has been a useful advocate, and interruptions from local government reorganisations over the past eight years or so are now completed.

159/23 Electric vehicle charging points - To review progress so far and to consider by resolution setting up a Working Party to progress this issue: The Clerk has spoken to the Church House Dental Surgery and Lethbridge Arms and they haven't said no. With WSR and the Doctors' Surgery there are four potential sites. However, there are many considerations beyond potential sites (eg. charger type, potential income streams for those setting up). A number of other village halls have now got an EVCP including Halse, Watchet, Williton and Stogumber although no rural parish councils have any to date. **It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed in principle to establish a Working Party. The Working Party will look into the issue and make recommendations to the Council. Agreed we will advertise in Fiveways for interested outside members. The membership of the Working Party will be an agenda item for November**

160/23 To consider assisting Bishops Lydeard School to make their defibrillator accessible to the public by meeting the costs of its installation outside the school entrance on Quantock View and if agreed to resolve to spend no more than £500: The headteacher would like this to be located at back entrance to school in Quantock View. The special cabinet doesn't require a power supply (some do). **The Council unanimously agreed to fund the cabinet and fixing for school defibrillator (costs probably nearer to £310).**

161/23 To discuss Woodland Walk Community Asset Transfer: Purchase v lease is leftover from districts councils moving to a unitary authority. The new Somerset Council have a policy not to sell green spaces (only lease them).

The Council would need to study the conditions and length of any lease. Transfer costs were going to fall to both authorities but that may have changed and the Council may now be asked to bear the full cost. Somerset Council have now done the work to tidy up the wood (but won't replace the old fencing. The Lengthsman has repaired the gates).

The Council would in principle accept a 99 year lease subject to conditions and the likely costs of taking this on. Clerk to contact Somerset Council.

Cllr Bainbridge suggested other opportunities to maximise community benefit including possibility of creating nature trails.

162/23 On Your Bike (OYB) update: Cllr Hunt who organised this and was successful in applying for the grant, is indisposed but others reported the event a success. **Cllr Hunt to be invited to give a full update at the next meeting when this will be an agenda item.** For information - the grant has yet to be paid, and the bill for £250 costs has been received.

163/23 Station View Public Open Space update: The history here is that the lowest quote was taken up (£17k, some were double) although the Council aimed to spend no more than £10k. It seemed right to go ahead at the time as rather more money had come in from CIL with the building of these houses. The decision was agreed but poorly recorded (recent so councillors could remember the details above). **The Chairman feels we are therefore duty bound to pay the invoice of approx £17k (ex VAT) and will ask Council for formal authorisation next month.**

164/23 Climate Change update: no update as no current climate change lead on the Council.

165/23 Village Planting (Hanging Baskets) Review: to be put on next month's agenda for discussion.

166/23 Parish Lengthsman -

a) **To consider monthly report:** As well as the extensive maintenance tasks carried out in the Parish, the Lengthsman reported that:

- SOAP on the automated hand wash in the toilets is empty and no soap and paper towels in the disabled toilets. **Clerk to explore more formal arrangement with replenishments either with Lengthsman or cleaners.**
- STATION GREEN will be finished after the planting of trees and shrubs when all maintenance will then be carried out by the Lengthsman.
- WEED MACHINE they "have tested one and are testing another next week. They work well at clearing the weeds but will need to do it more regularly than spraying to keep on top of it because it doesn't kill them. But it does clear all the soil and debris that the weeds grow in which is good. The cost of the machine and Maintenance of it will mean [the Lengthsman] would have to charge a machine use of £15 an hour plus the wire bushes." Some uncertainty was felt with aspects of this cost. **Clerk to discuss with the Lengthsman as to whether he is buying or leasing the machine, whether the cost quoted is in addition to or instead of his usual charges, etc..**

b) **To review Lengthsman's schedule further:** no time to discuss this at this meeting.

166/23 Somerset Council matters: Cllr Rigby has given his apologies but has updated the Clerk on a few matters.

167/23 Finance:

To approve annual schedule of payments. This item should be deferred until the appointment of Clerk/RFO.

To review the quarterly financial statement. This item should be deferred until the appointment of Clerk/RFO.

To note income received:

HSBC	£34.90
CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund (monthly)	£1568.79
Library (fees and charges)	£77.45
Somerset Council (burial)	£1800.00

To note payments made by direct debit:

BT (telephone and broadband)	£83.06
Somerset Web Services (email account)	£5.52
British Gas (public conveniences electricity)	£81.92
EDF Energy (Library electricity)	£104.60

To note payments made by cheque:

Jack Council (Parish Lengthsman work - July)	£1477.80
Jack Council (Parish Lengthsman work - August)	£1140.70
RYAL media group (Clerk job advert)(duplicate)	£468.00

To authorise payments to be made by cheque or BACS:

On Your Bike (fee for 16th Sept event – we are due £2500 grant)	£250.00
Somerset Association of Local Councils (annual fee)	£885.00
AIS Cleaning Contractors Ltd (loos and Library cleaning)	£759.65
Somerset Council (grass cutting and dog bins)	£1401.29
Somerset Council (Parish Council by-election)	£4994.74
(this will require funds to be vired by resolutions from (e.g.) Community Projects Support (£2500 unspent) as the budget line only has £4000 for election costs)	
Jack Council (Parish Lengthsman work - Sept)	£1120.50

Proposed, seconded and Agreed to authorise payments above and to vire monies (to cover the cost of possibly another Parish election) from community project support budget (which rolls over).

168/23 To note planning permissions granted:

06/23/0021 Partial demolition of outbuilding and erection of a two storey extension to the side of Crossways, 5 Gore Square, Bishops Lydeard - Conditional approval.

13/23/0007/LB Creation of winter roost within external wall of Cothelstone Manor, Cothelstone - Conditional approval.

13/23/0008/LB Creation of bat loft (summer roost) in half of the roof space of Mangel House Barn, Cothelstone Manor, Cothelstone - Conditional approval.

06/23/0023/LB Erection of sun room to 3 The Courtyard, South Drive, Sandhill Park, Bishops Lydeard - Conditional approval.

06/23/0025/T Application to fell one sweet chestnut tree and to carry out management works to four oaks and one willow (and to fell two dead trees) included in Taunton Deane Borough (Bishops Lydeard No.2) Tree Preservation Order 1997 at Lethbridge Park, Bishops Lydeard (TD705) - Conditional approval.

169/23 To note planning applications refused/withdrawn - None.

170/24 Any other business - for report only:

-Cllr Bletcher was approached by a resident of Hither Mead about the bin by bus stop and hedge being cut back as it couldn't go on private land.

-Cllr Pattermore reported that WSR were making a finger post to sign the way to the village.

-Chair drew to our attention **Bishops Lydeard Players' Comedy and Variety in the village hall on Friday 20th and Saturday 21st October.**

-Cllr Allen would like to thank all those who supported the MacMillan coffee morning which raised over £800.

-Cllr Bainbridge reported on the Local Community Network (of which the parishes are a part). It concentrated on youth and what local parish councils could take on and assist with.

Information about the virtual meeting concerning local bus routes will be forwarded by the Chairman to the resident who was asking for this at the last meeting.

-Community Speed Watch is being set up by Cllr Bainbridge with enough volunteers to begin.

171/24 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 8th November 2023, 7pm at Bishops Lydeard Village Hall.

Meeting closed at 9.11pm.