

ENMORE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday November 7th 2023 at 7.30 pm in Enmore Memorial Hall

Attendance: Cllr. Hopkins, Cllr Jackson, Cllr Comley, Cllr Hucker, Cllr Fergusson, Cllr Hubbard (Footpaths Officer) Clerk: D. McIlroy, RFO: A. Stoye, F. Cross (Airband Liaison Officer) Revd E. King, 8 members of the public.

1. No apologies were received.
2. Cllr Comley introduced Faye Cross, who gave a brief background of Airband, which is an independent subsidised company who are working with Devon and Somerset to provide fibre broadband to rural areas. They will provide cable connection to homes using poles/underground cables with their own equipment/infrastructure, though taking advantage of existing Openreach poles and exchanges where available and practical.

BT have stated that they will cease to use copper wires for landlines after 2025. However, how BT plans to complete this change in service is still uncertain.

Airband would only provide broadband, with landline telephones operating via broadband. F. Cross also stated that, due to various legal requirements, the roll out of fibre broadband is now expected to start in Spring 2024 and be completed by Autumn 2024. Cllr Comley asked if would be possible to have a more detailed timetable for the project. F. Cross stated she would investigate and report back to the Parish Clerk. There was some uncertainty regarding Airband contracts, pricing and speed, which Cllr Comley asked to be clarified prior to informing residents via the Enmore & Goathurst magazine about the roll out of the Airband programme.

There were no further questions. Cllr Hopkins thanked F. Cross for attending the meeting and looked forward to further updates. F. Cross left the meeting.

ACTION: D. Mcilroy to email F. Cross to receive updates.

3. Declarations of Interest on Agenda Items.

Cllr Hopkins declared that, as he was a member of St Michael's Parochial Church Council, he would abstain from any discussion on agenda item 9.

Cllr Hucker declared that as he was mentioned in the approval of payments he would abstain from agenda item 8.

4. There were no Public Comments on Agenda items and Questions on matters of concern
5. The Minutes of last meeting, held on 5th September 2023, were approved and duly signed.
6. Planning applications

Planning application number: 27/23/00010/LE Cutters Combe, Enmore Road, TA5 2AH
Proposal: Change of use of land from agricultural to allow for siting of 5no. caravan pitches, including new access and installation of a septic tank.

Cllr Hopkins reported that there had been a site meeting with Mr Evans and that the councillors had received feedback from this prior to the council meeting. He then asked for any comments.

Mr Evans, the applicant, asked if he would be permitted to speak to clarify his plans. He stated that he had now ascertained that the ditch running alongside the proposed new entrance to his property belonged to him. Therefore, he would undertake to maintain it regularly.

Mr. Evans assured those present that there would be no more than 5 touring caravans on the site at any time and that the site was not for static caravans or Hinkley Point workers. The pitches would be in use all year round but caravans would only be allowed to park for a maximum of 28 days. He noted that at various times there were touring caravans/motorhomes parked in the Enmore Inn car park that did not cause any issues.

The septic tank noted in the plans is to be a contained unit with no soakaway or seepage and would be emptied as required.

Mr Evans stated that there would be no loss of road hedge, merely that it would be moved back into the field. He intended to plant a mixed hedge to soften the impact of the new access and plant trees within the site. He also stated that his main concern was to achieve improved access to his property across his field, as at present his access track is shared between three properties and is very narrow. Furthermore, vision on leaving this track to join the main Enmore Road is very limited. The section of track closest to the road would be tarmac to prevent stones/mud on the main road. This would then be his main access and he would not use the present track.

Areas of concern were then raised by Mr Evan's neighbours:

They were worried about the dominance of the proposed site in relation to their homes; also the invasion of their privacy, space and security. They were also concerned about prospective increased noise from the site. There was no mention of lighting on the original application but any lighting installed on the site would affect their property. The neighbours also remarked that allowing this application might set a precedent within the village for other similar developments. Enmore is in close proximity to the Quantock Hills, an AONB site, and a rural setting. They considered that the proposed application would have a drastic effect on their quality of life and it had already caused much distress and anxiety. However, they stated that they had no concerns regarding the application for a new driveway. Another neighbour remarked that due to the location of the top two pitches, these would overlook their bedroom window and they were therefore concerned about loss of privacy.

Cllr Jackson commented that there was nothing in the planning application about any form of lighting for the site – therefore what type of lighting would be envisaged? She asked for the minutes to record the concerns regarding light and screening. She hoped that hedges and extra planting would be allowed to reduce the impact of light and noise from the site.

Cllr Hopkins reminded all present that the Parish Council could only make observations and record matters of concern. Cllr Hopkins then summarised the issues on which the Parish Council could comment: width and position of entrance to site (on which Highways have already submitted their comments to the planning department), the arrangements for waste, the loss of hedgerows/screening and, finally, whether the rural setting was in fact suitable for a caravan site.

Mr Evans stated that, having heard the concerns at the meeting, he would be amending his application. A letter from the Parish Council is to be submitted to the planning department outlining there was no concern with the proposed driveway itself, but there were concerns regarding the caravans in respect of their presence and the effect on the neighbours.

Mr Evans thanked the Council for permitting him to speak and Cllr Hopkins thanked everyone for their input.

7. Actions arising from the previous meeting minutes.

7.1 Speed management update.

An email had been received from K. Tyson (Highways) advising that she would be advertising the revised TRO for the Enmore Speed Limit review in the next few months. She will send the final plan to the parish council prior to it going out for official statutory consultation.

Cllr Fergusson commented on the poor state of repair of the existing road signs which will need to be replaced when the speed management programme is completed. D. Mcilroy commented that she has not had a response from Cllrs Caswell & Bolt regarding who is responsible for the cost of replacement (Enmore Parish Council or Somerset Council) but would continue to investigate.

ACTION: D. Mcilroy to contact Cllrs Caswell & Bolt on behalf of the Parish Council.

7.2 SID update

Cllr Comley reported that he had sent the damaged SID back to the manufacturer and hoped to have the repaired equipment back in 7-10 days. All but £100 of the ex VAT cost of the repair (estimated as £1244.84+£248.97 VAT) will be covered by the insurance claim, which at this point has been accepted in principle. The insurance claim will be finalised once the cost of the SID repair has been confirmed.

A further heavy-duty pole has been ordered and is expected to be installed towards the end of the current financial year. Once installed, it is intended that the battery-powered SID will be upgraded to solar-powered, significantly reducing regular maintenance (charging batteries). Cllr Comley again reported that when displays are visible the SIDs are effective in slowing the traffic down but when turned off the traffic speed increases immediately.

With the data available it can be seen that speeding generally occurs between 7am-10 am and 4pm-7pm. Cllr Comley has requested that police with speed cameras visit Enmore during these times to provide a police presence and act as a deterrent. At this point it was unclear whether the police had taken any action but Cllr Comley agreed to contact them again. Cllr Comley mentioned that at present the equipment available to Speed Watch volunteers does not always capture all the necessary details. Dan Cox, from the police, was investigating whether there was any new equipment available.

ACTION: Cllr Comley to contact Dan Cox for updates and to request a visit.

7.3 Broadband update

Cllr Comley reported that the Openreach roll-out programme has been put on hold. No further details are available.

7.4 Wilding Cemetery update/ New cemetery

An update had been provided by Cllrs Jackson and Hucker prior to the meeting. Cllr Jackson noted that Jem Gibson (AONB) had met with the school to explain the use of the iNaturalist app which children could use to look at wildlife in both the churchyard and cemetery. A hedge survey had been undertaken and 4-5 farmers have been approached with a view to sharing information about best practice in relation to the maintenance of the hedges around their fields.

The churchyard group had applied for a grant towards planting and are to hold a planting session this weekend.

The future civil cemetery/Jubilee Field has been planted with the fruit trees donated by the villagers and two seats have been delivered and are currently waiting to be embedded in place. However, the inclement weather has so far prevented the start of groundworks and installation of the seats.

The term 'Wilding' was being revisited and another name was being sought as a more user-friendly title for the initiative.

The Parish Council thanked all those in the village who had contributed towards the plants and benches for the future cemetery/Jubilee Field and asked that this be noted in the minutes of the meeting.

7.5 Flooding in Enmore Road

Following a letter of complaint written to L. Hackling (Asst Highways Service manager) a site meeting has been arranged for November 15th at 11am with L. Hackling and Cllrs Hopkins and Hubbard to view the issues reported in the letter.

7.6 Lack of acceptable surface structure in Church Lane

Following a letter of complaint written to L. Hackling, D. Mcilroy has received confirmation that Church Lane will be closed on December 4th to allow patching repairs to the road.

8. Finance report/ approval of payments

A. Stoye had circulated her finance report prior to the meeting. She gave a brief account regarding the landscaping accounts for the civil cemetery and that, as a result of the grant awarded, donations and reclaiming VAT, the net cost to the Parish Council was expected to be of the order of £100. She thanked all who supported the project.

Approval of payments as requested for :-

- * Insurance premium to Zurich of £241.00 (which is the same as last year),
- * the Clerk's salary (the monthly amount depends upon the number of hours worked),
- * Open space maintenance/gardening work undertaken by Cllr Hucker on behalf of the Parish Council (£414.00 for the period 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023)
- * Reimbursement to herself for purchased tree stakes for new cemetery (£36.48, of which £6.08 is reclaimable VAT - net cost £30.40)
- * Reimbursement of Cllr Fergusson for Neighbourhood Watch signage (£39.85, of which £6.64 is reclaimable VAT - net cost £33.21)
- * A SALC training course undertaken by Cllr Hubbard on responding to planning applications (£25.00),
- * Repair costs for the SID (the net cost to the Council will be £100 after the VAT has been reclaimed and the insurance claim has been paid - see 7.2 above).

She informed the Parish Council that at present the Council was running under the expected budget for the year. A. Stoye noted that work should be started on next year's budget, as final decisions about the precept for next year have to be made at the January 2024 meeting, and she asked councillors to think about possible new projects and expected spending during the 2024/25 financial year.

Cllr Hopkins thanked A. Stoye for her detailed report and the Parish Council approved all the payments listed above.

9. Request for financial support for churchyard maintenance

Revd E. King had asked if she might briefly talk about the request made for the Parish Council to provide some financial support towards the upkeep of the churchyard of St Michael & All Angels, Enmore.

(Cllr Hopkins withdrew and Cllr Jackson, as Vice Chairman, chaired this part of the meeting)

Revd King said the churchyard was a quiet place in the village for the community to use. She gave a brief report on how other churches in the benefice supported the upkeep of their churchyards, in some cases by using volunteers and in others part of the cost was met by grants from the relevant parish council. However, Enmore Church at present funds the full cost of the upkeep of the churchyard and struggles to do so as the PCC's finances are currently running at a deficit. There had been some volunteers to help with maintenance in the past but it was noted that it was always the same people.

There then followed a discussion about the various avenues that could be sought to provide funds, which Revd King said she would investigate. Cllr Jackson mentioned that there had been increased efforts to increase the use of the Church within the Enmore community, particularly through the groups within the Wilding Enmore Initiative and with the School. She also noted that the Enmore Angels Choir, a recent addition to the Church, had done some fundraising for the Church.

D. Comley asked that his personal comments on this item be specifically recorded and are noted below, as sent to the Clerk:

1. *Why don't C of E incorporate financially support your needs?*
2. *C of E have an investment fund of around £13 billion , a net worth of £, 23 billion and growing at a rate of £,500 million each year for the past five years.*
3. *There are 16000 churches and if all were in debt to the tune of £,3000 then just 10% of this annual growth would clear this debt.*
4. *We are 5 parish councillors who represent around 250 residents and need some justification in order to agree to the request .*
5. *Typically only six people attend Sunday service and at the recent choir recital there was Michael's wife , the vicar's daughter and a lady from Bridgwater.*
6. *I suggested that the vicar should make an appeal via the magazine so that true supporters could help. D. Comley*

A. Stoye commented that in the past the Parish Council had given some money towards this expenditure, but these payments were discontinued once the costs of purchasing and maintaining the land for a new civil cemetery had been taken on by the Parish Council. It was proposed by A. Stoye that no decision in relation to this request should be made until close to the end of the financial year, when the Council's financial position would be clearer, and that this request might be reconsidered at the March 2024 meeting. This proposal was accepted by the parish councillors, and it was noted that this delay would give the PCC time to consider other approaches to mitigating the cost of churchyard maintenance. Revd King thanked the council for allowing her to raise this topic.

10. Report from Somerset Bus Partnership and Footpaths Officer.

Cllr Hubbard apologised for not circulating her report prior to the meeting. However, her main cause for concern was the lack of signage for the public right of way across Enmore Golf course. She had drafted a letter, at the request of Cllr Hopkins, on this subject, which had been circulated to the parish councillors. Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that this letter should be signed by the chairman and sent to the Golf Club Chairman.

Cllr Fergusson had been told that the planning application from the golf club was imminent but as yet nothing had been received by the Clerk.

11. Road safety around Enmore School.

This item was raised at the last parish council meeting due to the ongoing problems associated with traffic congestion around the school during school drop off/collection times and during special events held at the school. Mr Macrae (Enmore School's headmaster) had been invited to attend this meeting to discuss the concern and possible solutions. Unfortunately, he was unable to attend due to another meeting. Therefore, it was decided to arrange a meeting convenient to him at the school.

ACTION: D. Mcilroy to liaise with Mr MacRae for an alternative date for a meeting.

12. Report on Neighbourhood Watch.

Cllr Fergusson reported that he had ordered Neighbourhood Watch signs to attach to poles in the area to act as a deterrent. These have not yet arrived. He also reported he is receiving information from Avon & Somerset police regarding crimes in the vicinity of the parish, but that none has as yet pertained to Enmore.

13. Provision of Sandbags for Enmore.

The Parish Council had received an enquiry about how/where to obtain sandbags in the event of imminent flooding. D. Mcilroy contacted Somerset Council, who informed her that they do not routinely provide sandbags, but limited numbers may be available on request by telephone (0300 123 2224) subject to availability and proof of address. Quantities may be limited in times of emergency.

14. LCN update.

The minutes of the last LCN meeting were circulated prior to the Parish Council meeting. A representative from Enmore Parish Council to attend the next LCN meeting is to be confirmed at a later date.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.10 pm

NEXT MEETING Tuesday January 2nd 2024 at 7.30 pm.

Signed:Date:
Chairman of Council