

ENMORE PARISH COUNCIL

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

Attendance: Cllr Cole, Cllr Hopkins, Cllr Comley, Cllr Hucker, Cllr Pay, Cllr Bolt.
RFO: A. Stoye, Clerk: D. McIlroy, A. Hubbard (Footpaths officer)
Members of the public

1. Apologies had been given by Cllr Jackson and Cllr Caswell.
2. There were no Declarations of Interest in relation to any item on the agenda.
3. Cllr Comley expressed his disagreement with the way in which his comments regarding the year-to-date accounts had been recorded in the minutes of the last meeting and asked that this be noted. He felt the minutes did not accurately convey his meaning. Going forward, he felt that he would constantly disagree with how the figures for expenditure were presented. Cllr Cole suggested that Cllr Comley should meet with the members of the Finance subcommittee and with A. Stoye to see if some agreement could be reached as to how to demonstrate the financial position of the Parish Council in a way that was agreeable to all. Cllr Comley agreed to this approach, as did the Council, and therefore the Minutes of last meeting were approved and duly signed.
4. There were no public comments on Agenda Items.
5. There were no new planning applications to consider.
6. Actions arising from minutes of previous meeting.

A) Tenders for work to the new cemetery.

Simon Bowditch, who had submitted the lowest tender for the work on the basis of the original specification, had requested on a revised specification agreed at a meeting between Mr Bowditch and Cllrs Cole, Hucker and Jackson. Cllr Cole reported the new figure at the meeting: £14,509.20 inclusive of VAT (£12,091 before VAT), representing a considerable reduction in cost relative to the original plans. Mr Bowditch assured the Council that this would be the maximum amount. The VAT element of the cost can subsequently be reclaimed by the Parish Council.

It was therefore proposed by Cllr Cole that this tender be accepted, Cllr Comley seconded the motion. The other members of the Council unanimously agreed to this proposal.

ACTION: D. McIlroy to send Mr Bowditch a letter accepting his quotation for the work.

B) Flooding Enmore Road/ Church Lane.

A. Hubbard reported on the problem of water from Enmore Road flooding her courtyard and drive. She noted that, when her conservatory was being constructed, a camera survey was completed to investigate the drain under her land prior to the building work. This showed an intact pipe carrying water. She believes that the pipe may now be blocked and that water from the underground stream rising in Enmore Road in front of the Tynte Arms (which then goes underground close to her property) is now unable to drain away through the pipe, hence creating a flood. The problem seemed to be especially severe during and after the recent heavy rainfall.

As the exact details of the stream and drains are not known to her, she asked for this issue to be investigated. It is not clear whether Wessex Water (who have done an initial inspection but not resolved the problem) or Highways have responsibility for this issue, which is also affecting the residents of Gate Cottage. It was agreed that the Parish Council would write to Somerset County Council Highways department to report the problem and ask for its investigation and resolution. Cllr Bolt suggested the person to contact would be Laurence Hacklin or Katherine Tyson. A. Hubbard thanked the Council for their support.

ACTION: D. McIlroy to write a letter from the Parish Council to Laurence Hacklin/Katherine Tyson on Mrs Hubbard's behalf to strongly request that some investigation be done by SCC.

The subject of flooding in church Lane was also raised.

Cllr Hucker commented that, although there had always been an issue with flooding in that particular area, it has increased in severity since the recent ground works for the equestrian arena and stable block at Parklands. Mr Ingram (of Parklands) commented that there was a stream which also runs across his land which compounds the issue. Mr. Bowditch noted that the ditches on each side of the road were full of debris and therefore water was unable to soak away. He offered, as a first step, to dig out the ditches and remove some of the debris to see if this would improve the water drainage. Mr Ingram accepted the offer and the Parish Council thanked Mr Bowditch. It was left to Mr Bowditch & Mr Ingram to arrange a suitable date.

C) SID update and Traffic Management.

Cllr Comley reported that the new heavy duty poles by Red Cottage and by the Enmore Inn had still not been installed. He had, as requested, moved one of the SIDs before the promised January installation date. Once the poles are in place, he will install SIDs and solar panels to power them. He also remarked that it was proving very awkward to change the battery on the SID by Stone Hall Lane due to its position by the ditch and he hoped that it would be possible to change to solar power as soon as possible.

D. McIlroy read a report from Cllr Jackson. Cllr Jackson had sent a full report to Katherine Tyson (Highways) regarding the varying speed limits through the village and the Parish Council's wish to keep to one 30 mph speed limit throughout the length of the village. Katherine Tyson replied to this report stating it was very difficult to change the speed limits without evidence. She suggested approaching the Police to do a traffic survey, at no cost to the Council, to gather evidence. Cllr Hopkins proposed that this should be requested and the Parish Council agreed.

ACTION: Cllr Jackson to write requesting a traffic survey be done on behalf of the Parish Council.

D) Broadband update.

Cllr Comley also reported that, as a result of his letter in the Enmore & Goathurst Magazine requesting households to register for the Open Reach community programme, he had so far received 30 replies from 101 households in the village, but was hoping for more to send off as evidence of village support.

7. Financial Report

A. Stoye updated the Council on the latest loan instalment/ repayment and noted that her financial report made provision for this payment. She also noted that the end of the financial year is 31st March and that P. Ingram had volunteered to act as Internal Auditor/independent examiner of the Parish Council's accounts for the year ending 31st March 2023. Cllr Hopkins proposed that P. Ingram be appointed to carry out this work and this was agreed by the rest of the Council.

A. Stoye asked that the Council approve an increase in the hourly rate of pay for the Clerk, reflecting changes to the relevant Local Government pay scale. This increase, which will take effect in April, was proposed by Cllr Hopkins and unanimously agreed by the Parish Council.

A. Stoye noted that she would be finalising accounts for the year ending 31st March 2023 before the next meeting of Council. One of her unresolved issues was how the cost of the poles for the SIDs should be treated in the accounts if the invoice had not been received by the year end, given that they had been ordered and their cost a liability already entered into. It was decided by the Council that, should the work still be outstanding at the end of the year, its cost should be included in next year's accounts rather than the current year's.

8. Tracking budget: funds spent, reserve allocation and loan repayment.

Cllr Jackson had requested a comparison of actual spending versus the budget for this year (the latter prepared by the previous Clerk). This comparison had been provided in A Stoye's financial report. A Stoye commented on the figures, some of which (clerk's costs and expenses, and insurance) were lower than budget, whereas a number of other costs, such as Traffic Management, had not been allowed for at all in the budget.

As the revised tender figure for work at the future cemetery had not been provided in advance of the meeting, it had not been possible to provide updated figures for reserves. However, the Council currently has in the region of £20,000 in its bank accounts, which is sufficient to cover the costs of the cemetery parking and still maintain reserves covering both the recommended minimum of 25% of precept and provision for the potential cost of a contested election (c £1,500).

No reply had been received from the Government Debt Office in response to a request for updated repayment costs (estimated as c £5,500 using that day's interest rates) nor to some questions about the practicalities of full or partial repayment. A. Stoye commented that, in her opinion, now she had the new information about cemetery costs, full repayment of the outstanding loan cannot be afforded, but that partial repayment should be kept under review as it is likely to be beneficial to the Parish Council's finances.

9. Approval of Payments.

All payments expected to be made before the next Council meeting were either payroll or already authorised. A Stoye noted that there might be some out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the Clerk to be reimbursed. Any such payments will be reported to Council and are likely to be small in amount.

10. Coronation celebrations - street party/use of jubilee field.

Following an email from Sedgemoor regarding celebrations for the Coronation, A. Stoye applied for a road closure outside the Church in Church Lane on Sunday 7th May. She took the view that failure to apply without delay would limit the choices available for any community celebration, but that a number of alternative venues could be considered. A. Stoye offered off-road car parking on her land for any events at or near the church. There is to be a short church service on the Sunday of the Coronation weekend and it was felt by those present at the Council meeting that a Community lunch after the service would be appropriate. Cllr Jackson had suggested that a committee be set up to make the arrangements, including liaison with interested parties such as the Parish Council, the Church and the village hall, but that anyone willing should be welcomed. To that end it was decided that A. Stoye would convene a meeting of volunteers to discuss arrangements and spread the workload. The main practical concern was the availability of toilet facilities and it was decided that booking some portaloos should be a priority given likely demand for the Coronation weekend. The Parish Council agreed to meet their cost (up to a maximum of £200) as part of their support for community-building activities within the parish.

S. Faux and M. Ingram (representing the village hall) agreed to help and Cllr Hopkins undertook to find a helper who would liaise with the church.

ACTION: A. Stoye to convene a working group to organise a community event at lunchtime on 7 May, with all encouraged to help as much as possible.

11. Councillor vacancy.

No interest had been shown to members of the Council or the Clerk regarding the vacancy. Cllr Comley suggested that a direct approach to those living in the village might produce better results.

12. Report from Somerset Bus Partnership and Footpaths Officer.

A. Hubbard briefly gave her report and noted that a scheme with £2 fares had been rolled out around Somerset (for those with buses!). She had been contacted by Somerset Bus Partnership to discuss via a phone call Enmore's public transport problem but as yet has not heard anything indicating progress.

She also reported that a kissing gate would replace a deteriorating stile on the footpath from Church Lane towards Barford (through the grounds of Enmore Castle West) and that volunteers organised by Sedgemoor would cut back the overgrowth by the school. She also noted that there is a right of way from Frog Lane to the golf clubhouse that was not signposted and is barely used due to the hazards of the golf course itself. She requested that the Parish Council and Enmore Park Golf Club meet to discuss this public right of way and signage.

13. Parish Council website content/ forwarding of emails from Clerk to Councillors.

D. McIlroy enquired whether the Councillors considered there was adequate information on the website, whether there should be anything added, and whether the volume of emails forwarded to members of the Parish Council were of appropriate content and amount. The councillors were happy with the present information.

There being no further business, the meeting closed 8.40 pm

NEXT MEETING Tuesday 2nd May at 7.30 pm in Enmore Memorial Hall

Signed:Date:

Chairman of Council