

Ashill Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held in Ashill Village Hall on Monday 9 September 2022 at 7.30 pm

Present : Cllrs P Varney (Chairman), R Abel, J Crocker (*co-opted as of this meeting*), R Fry, B Pyle, County Cllr S Osborne, District Cllr R Buckler, Mrs J Davidson (Clerk) & 4 members of the public.

19/22 Apologies

It was resolved for apologies with reasons given to be noted from Cllr Harvey.

20/22 Casual Vacancies

It was noted the Parish Council has two Casual Vacancies to be filled by co-option. Mrs C Ball & Mr J Crocker had registered an interest since the last meeting of the Parish Council. Mrs Ball had conveyed her apologies due to being unable to attend this meeting. Mr Crocker was welcomed & it was unanimously **resolved** for him to be co-opted. Prior to the meeting the Clerk had provided Mr Crocker with copies of the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct, Good Councillor Guide & Register of Interests Form. Cllr Crocker completed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office Form which was witnessed by the Clerk.

21/22 Chairmans' Opening Statement

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the 2022 / 23 Parish Council. He spoke of how he would wish to see the development of the way in which the Parish communicates / provides information & this would be discussed in Paragraph 30 / 22 Parish Council Communication. He also spoke about how he would wish to introduce a 'roadmap' document to record the priorities / actions of the Parish Council & he is currently working on this.

22/22 Public Participation

- A resident brought attention to the deterioration of the footpath at the back of Ashton Close which leads to the Church. Cllr Fry agreed she would report this online to the SCC Rights of Way Team.
- County Cllr Sue Osborne spoke of the new unitary Somerset Council which will replace Somerset County Council (SCC) & the four district councils (Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West, Taunton & South Somerset) from 1 April 2023. Local Community Networks (LCNs) are to be established in every part of Somerset & a consultation will begin on 5 September 2022 & close on 17 October 2022. SCC has appointed a new Chief Executive – Mr D Sharkey - who will take up the post with SCC in the autumn & then will become Chief Executive of the new unitary Somerset Council from April 2023.
- District Cllr Buckler spoke of topics which were summarised as being about the A358; Somerset Art Weeks; Climate Crisis & Local Flooding. Cllr Buckler also agreed to provide the Chairman with the hierarchy of who to contact i.e. which Council does what.

23/22 Declarations of Interests / Dispensation Requests

None.

24/22 Minutes

It was **resolved** for the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2022 to be agreed & signed as a true record.

25/22 Planning

The following planning application submitted to SSDC since the last meeting was noted :

Application No.	20/01623/REM
Proposal	Amended Plans / Additional Information
Location	Land West Of School Lane, Ashill.

The Clerk had conveyed a response to SSDC – using delegated authority – having consulted with all members of the Parish Council via email.

26/22 Playing Field

- a) Cllr Fry conveyed appreciation to the 14 residents who had turned out to help maintain the playing field on 22 June 2022. Over 40 hours of labour had been put in to cutting back hedges, painting, carrying out other little jobs & it was felt a huge difference had been made. Cllr Fry conveyed special thanks to Mark Burgess (NHTS timber) for re-felting the shed before the working party had even arrived & kindly donating the materials for that. Appreciation was also conveyed to whoever the person was who had had the hedge cut along the path / top of the playing field hedge.
- b) An email from a resident – addressed to the Clerk & Cllr Fry - was received & noted. Cllr Fry had acknowledged the email, registered the bridleway problems online with the SCC Rights of Way Team & spoken with a landowner with regard to barbed wire concerns. The resident had also asked as to whether a sign could be provided to help people understand the access track to the playing field should not be blocked by parked cars as it is actually a bridleway. It was agreed that Cllr Fry should make arrangements for a 'Field Access Track & Public Bridleway, please park courteously to allow access at all times' sign to be provided.
- c) The Annual Playing Field Inspection Report - 17 August 2022 - from the Playground Inspection Company was received & noted. Cllr Fry reported work to replace the bushes & shackles had commenced on the Wednesday evening of the day the playground inspection had been carried out. This work had not been completed & it was hoped the working party would be able to get back this week as currently only one swing is up. Cllr Fry also reported she is currently exploring quotes / sources of funding for the MUGA & other items for the playing field. Moving forward she would also like to explore the feasibility / funding for the installation of a footpath from the south area near the hedge to provide disabled access.
- d) Cllr Fry advised she had received a quotation of £350 for the installation of a hand railing adjacent to the access steps. Cllr Fry asked for consideration to be given to this & it was **resolved** that Cllr Fry should go ahead with the arrangements for a hand railing to be installed.
- e) The Clerk reported between 5 January 2022 & 24 August 2022 - 5 kWh of electricity had been used – the total electricity charges for this period (including VAT) had been £446.50. Over the past three Parish Council financial years the electricity charges had averaged approximately £340 per annum. A discussion was introduced as to whether – due to the increased costs – the electricity supply should be disconnected. It was agreed that Cllr Fry should explore the implications / costs of disconnecting the electricity supply.
- f) Further to a meeting of a Playing Field Working Group - held since the last meeting of the Parish Council - it was **resolved** to ratify the decision which had been made to order two picnic benches. This decision had been taken in-between Parish Council meetings in the hope that the benches would be in place for the holiday season. However notification had received from the supplier of a delay to the original estimated delivery date & they had still not yet arrived.

27/22 Highways / Footpaths

Cllr Fry advised she had been asked by a resident if she could do something about the loss of the Wood Road sign which had been knocked over by a car & removed by SCC Highways. Cllr Fry had reported this using the online form on the SCC website & it is scheduled to be replaced during the next 2 - 3 months.

Correspondence

Somerset Highways - emergency road closure at Old A358, Ashill commencing from 30 August 2022 & expected to last until 9 September 2022

28/22 Health / Environment

- a) Cllr Fry advised she had recently inspected the Millennium Pond area with a member of the Parish & they had removed a dead hazel tree along with other branches. Moving forward she would like to explore the feasibility / funding for bird boxes, a life ring although the pond is currently entirely dry & also a disabled access gate on a spring to replace the current - difficult to manoeuvre - snap shut metal assembly.
- b) Cllr Fry advised a resident had brought attention to the recent theft of good growing trees from the copse between Thickthorn Lane & the A358 (presumably property of Highways) & she had logged this online with the police.

- c) A discussion was introduced regarding incidents of fly tipping on Thickthorn Lane. It was agreed that Cllr Fry should report this matter to SSDC & a 'No Tipping' sign would be provided in order to try to mitigate this.

Correspondence

SSDC – Community Warm Hubs

29/22 Village Hall

- a) Consideration was given to Parish Council facilitating / funding of a structural survey with regard to the proposed Village Hall replacement roof project. Two quotations had been received & it was **resolved** for the quotation of £300 to be approved.
- b) Consideration was given to a request which had been made by the Village Hall Committee for grant funding towards the proposed replacement roof project. It was **resolved** to award a total of £2,000 to include the £300 for the structural survey.
- c) It was agreed that Cllr R Fry & Cllr B Pyle would attend the next meeting of the Village Hall Committee - as representatives of the Parish Council - to be held on 26 September 2022.

30/22 Church

Cllr Pyle spoke of the yew trees which are old & covered in ivy. Cllr Buckler recommended the church should seek advice from the SSDC Officer, Phil Poulton, who is the tree expert for the authority. Dates for the diary were noted as the Harvest Festival to be held on 9 October 2022 & the 'Parish Christmas Tree Carol Singing' is to be held on 3 December 2022.

31/22 Communication

- a) A written report from Cllr Harvey regarding notice board upgrade recommendations was received & considered. It was **resolved** for the recommendations to be approved & the Clerk was instructed to place the order.
- b) The Chairman reported he had met – via Zoom – with a company called TEEC who have experience of providing a website service to Parish Councils. He asked for consideration to be given to the principal of moving the current website arrangements to this new provider. It was agreed to defer further consideration of this to the next meeting of the Parish Council.
- c) A suggestion was made as to whether it was thought the Parish Council should sponsor the print of the November Isle Valley News magazine. It was agreed this could be a positive contribution to the Parish Council initiative of trying to improve Parish communication. It was **resolved** this should be done at an approximate cost of £250 & the Chairman would write an article for the magazine on behalf of the Parish Council.
- d) The Chairman introduced a discussion with regard to whether it was thought the Parish Council should have a logo. It was agreed this was a great suggestion & some thought would be given to ideas to be considered at the next meeting.

32/22 Local Community Networks

Further to the report from County Cllr Osborne - earlier in this meeting - with regard the new unitary Somerset Council. The Chairman advised the Chairman of West Hatch Parish Council - Keith Read – had already contacted him to discuss the proposal for Parish Councils to be formed into LCNs & of how it might be useful for Parish Councils to seek to ensure they are in groups which are relevant to each other.

33/22 Finance

- i) It was noted confirmation had been received from the External Auditor that the notification of exempt status for 2021 / 22 has been received & logged.
- ii) Now that the submission deadline for the 2021 / 22 Annual Governance & Accountability Return has passed the option to opt-out of the next round of the 5-year audit appointments was considered. It was **resolved** that the Parish Council did not wish to opt out of the next round of the 5-year appointments.
- iii) It was **resolved** to appoint Cllr Varney & Cllr Fry as new signatories for the Parish Council bank accounts.

iv) It was resolved for the following payments to be approved :	
Cllr R Fry – Playing Field Expenses	£ 69.08
Mr C Lang – Bus Shelter Roof Repair	£ 945.00
Earth Anchors – Picnic Benches	£1,056.00
Playground Inspection Company – Annual Inspection	£ 120.00
Wonderwall Products - Notice Boards	£ 981.60
Clerks' Salary (July - September)	£ 736.48

33/22 Staffing

The Clerk advised she was intending to resign from her role on a date yet to be determined. She had very much enjoyed working with the residents of Ashill & all members – both past & present - of Ashill Parish Council. She thanked everyone for making her so welcome after relocating from Cumbria to Somerset seven years ago but the time had now come to move back.

34/22 Items for consideration for a future agenda

- New Clerk Appointment
- Village Hall Meeting Report
- Communication – Notice Boards/Website/Parish Magazine/Logo/Parish Social Meeting
- Defibrillator Training
- April / October Finance Report & 2023 / 24 Draft Budget
- Christmas 2022

35/22 Date of Next Meeting

It was confirmed the next meeting would be held on 7 November 2022 at 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 9 : 40 pm

Signed : (Chairman
7 November 2022