

NORTH CURRY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 10th January 2024 at 7:30pm in the Village Hall Meeting Room.

Present or comments received: Mrs Tina Stodgell (Chairman), Mrs Jeanne Leader (Vice-Chairman), Mr Graham Cable, Mr Paul Deacon, Mr Mike Dennis, Mr Ian Fugett, Mr Adam Hardwick, Mr Brian Jeanes, Ms Cecilia Smith, Mr Phil Stone, Mr Tony Turner. Unitary Councillors Cllr David Fothergill and Cllr Norman Cavill were also present. Seven members of the public were present.

1. Preliminaries:

To receive and approve apologies for absence: Apologies were received from Mr Wilkins and Mrs Griffiths.

Approve and sign minutes for the previous meeting dated 13th December 2023: Mr Cable proposed that the minutes were a true record; Mr Hardwick seconded, and all were in favour.

Declarations of interest (*Members to declare any interests, including Disclosable Pecuniary interests they have in agenda items that accord with the requirements of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct*): Mrs Leader declared an interest in items 5 and 9, and Mr Hardwick declared an interest in item 4.

2. **Matters arising:** see project tracker. Additionally, Mr Deacon has been continuing to collect updated information for the website, and the Welcome Letter is on Facebook and the website. After a discussion the Chairman proposed not to create and print a leaflet; Mrs Leader seconded, and all were in favour. This matter is now concluded.
3. **County Cllr. Report:** Weekly update being forwarded by email. Cllr Fothergill explained the current state of Somerset Council's finances and the possible cuts that will be made. These include: bus subsidisation, gully and verge maintenance, grants, CCTV, and others. Council tax may also increase. The causes of the current financial problems include child and adult social care, inflation, wages, slow on making planned redundancies, as well as other things. In other news; DIY waste can be taken to recycling centres (please check the rules on doing so), £9.6 million has been received in grants for both phosphate mitigation and health inequalities. There is a big back log with planning applications at the moment, they currently have 29 interim planners. Volunteers desperately needed for the School Appeals Panel. Cllr Fothergill has been working hard on Homes to Inspire, the Shaw Trust charity is accommodating up to 18 persons, saving £2.4 million per year.
4. **To consider a request from North Curry Music Festival for £600 towards their child/family event:** The event will be a Popera House performance with workshops for the children to partake in. Last year the costs of the festival were covered, and a slight surplus was achieved. The festival may be annual as long as there is demand. A discussion was had about whether fundraising was being done, and if there were any ways to reduce costs. Mr Stone proposed £300 towards the Popera House performance; Mr Deacon seconded, and the majority were in favour with 1 against and 2 abstentions (including Mr Hardwick).
5. **To consider legal advice received regarding the North Curry Sport Ltd lease renewal request, and decide on next steps, and decide on volunteers to liaise with the solicitor in creating the draft revised lease:** Mr Brown, the solicitor for the Parish Council, was present to explain his thoughts on the proposed changes to the lease and the next steps. He suggested forming a group of 3 councillors to join him in working on a draft; Mr Dennis, Ms Smith, and Mr Turner volunteered. The Clerk will attend to take minutes. The Chairman proposed to constitute a working group consisting of Mr Dennis, Ms Smith, and Mr Turner, to consider the solicitors letter and next steps, the working group will have a mandate to agree the lease to be brought back to the full Council for approval; Mr Hardwick seconded, and all were in favour apart from Mrs Leader who abstained.
6. **To discuss issues regarding the roads in the Parish, including flooding on Broad Lane and in Newport, and a large section of road edge that has fallen away on Stoke Road near Broad Lane:** The edge of Stoke Road that has fallen away was discussed, as well as a similar situation on Huntham Lane. The Clerk will email Highways to request an assessment and to make the road safe in the meantime, and copy in Cllr Fothergill. Flooding on Broad Lane was then discussed; Mr Jeanes and Mr Stone have been investigating the routes of the water and identifying potential issues and landowners involved. Mr Fugett will join them to form a working group; the Clerk will photocopy Mr Stone's report to go out to residents of Broad Lane when ready. Residents of Broad Lane were present to share their views. Cllr Fothergill shared that Highways has been out

to assess Newport and listed the problem areas that need addressing. Mr Jeanes has also been investigating the ditch by Chapel Close footpath; Highways came out for a site visit, and more investigations are needed to determine where the pipes are and where they go.

7. **To decide on a draft concept for the proposed village car park behind Cricket Cottages to take forward for pre-application advice.** Please note: this is still only in a feasibility assessing stage. The four designs prepared by Mr Stone were viewed, and there was a discussion on the best way to proceed as the landowners hadn't agreed to the sale and pre-planning advice will occur a charge. It was decided that the landowners will be shown the four designs with information on the possible size of land that would be needed, to see if they would sell.
8. **To discuss the possibility of purchasing a small piece of land off of Stoke Road, as Somerset Council are selling off some assets:** The small strip of land is between White Street and Manor Lane. It was agreed Mr Stone would make contact with Somerset Council to see if it may be for sale. Cllr Fothergill advised that Somerset Council are currently inundated with requests to purchase land and facilities so delays in response are to be expected.
9. **To discuss possible replacement of the Loscombe Meadow footpath fence and barrier:** No progress yet in asking if the owners of the cows will contribute to costs of replacement. Mr Stone needs more time to investigate materials and costs for the replacement fence. The barrier at the end of the footpath has rotted away and needs replacement, ownership of the barrier is unclear. Mr Stone will speak to the Loscombe Meadow Management Committee to see if they will contribute to the cost of replacing the barrier.
10. **To discuss feasibility of providing a village taxi service:** This item will be postponed until the next meeting as Mrs Griffiths is absent. In the meantime, the Clerk will liaise with the Hatch Beauchamp Clerk to gather information to share with Mrs Griffiths.
11. **To review allotment fees and deposits for April 2024:** The figures were reviewed, and it was decided to leave them as they are for 2024-25. The Clerk and Mrs Leader will arrange a visit to the allotments to inspect the reportedly plots overgrown. Mr Hardwick will speak to the school about their plot.
12. **Finance:**
 - a. **Monthly accounts:** The Clerk presented the accounts, the Chairman proposed to accept them; Mrs Leader seconded, and all were in favour.
 - b. **Payment list:** Mr Hardwick proposed to proceed with the payments; Mr Dennis seconded, and all were in favour. Two Neighbourhood Plan related payments have already been paid as within the agreed budget.

Monthly Payment List - January 2024	Cheque/ BACS/DD	Total	VAT	Due Date
NCVH EV recharge (Inv: 3036)	BACS	£296.81		
SALC training (Inv 2917)	BACS	£35.00		08-Feb
Clerk salary (January)	BACS	£736.10		31-Jan
NCVH room hire (Inv 4176)	BACS	£14.22		
Statamic Neighbourhood Plan website	BACS	£218.09		PAID
Stuart Todd- Neighbourhood Plan support	BACS	£664.10	£132.82	PAID
Viking- toner and stationary (Inv 3546092)	BACS	£232.31	£46.46	
HMRC PAYE (Oct, Nov, Dec)	BACS	£826.84		
BT EV charger line (Inv M016 E&)	DD	£29.27	£5.85	
IONOS Website Builder (Inv 203039701779)	DD	£4.00	£0.80	
IONOS HiDrive (Inv 203039583407)	DD	£3.00	£0.60	
BT office broadband (M006 J7)	DD	£35.94	£7.19	

- c. **To approve the precept proposal for 2024-25:** No changes had been made since last viewed where the draft precept figure was £24,000, but after the news of possible loss of grants from Somerset Council (adding up to £2,460), adding these onto the precept in anticipation was discussed. The current grants are £840 for Greenway playing fields which is very important to them, and £920 split between the three burial grounds in the Parish. A grant for footpaths is also received (£700) but the footpath fund currently has enough in. Mr Jeanes proposed to add another £2,000 to cover the potential loss of grants, making the precept a total of £26,000; Mr Cable seconded, and the majority were in favour with one against.

The table below shows how the increase will affect the amount paid per parishioner towards the precept.

	2023/24	2024/25	Difference
Tax Base	£770.15	£779.65	£9.50
Precept	£20,000.00	£26,000.00	£6,000.00
Band A	£17.31	£22.23	£4.92
Band B	£20.20	£25.94	£5.74
Band C	£23.08	£29.64	£6.56
Band D	£25.97	£33.35	£7.38
Band E	£31.74	£40.76	£9.02
Band F	£37.51	£48.17	£10.66
Band G	£43.28	£55.58	£12.30
Band H	£51.94	£66.70	£14.76

13. Correspondence:

A7520: Mr Deacon forwarded on information about grants for fingerpost refurbishment from CPRE; no grants left this year and unlikely to be any next year due to financial situation. To get the grant we would need someone with Highways training gained in the last two years.

A7521: A request from Friends of North Curry School for £14,500 towards an outdoor cabin classroom. It was decided this can't be considered at the moment due to financial constraints.

A7522: Email from Highways about a resident wanting to replace a bollard by the Borough Post bus stop. The Clerk will ask what material can be used, and state that we are still looking into it.

A7524: Subscription renewal reminder from CPRE; it was decided to continue with the basic £36 per year membership. The Clerk will organise the renewal.

14. Committee /Delegate reports:

Tree Warden (PS): Mr Stone has found a good-sized bird cherry for Queen Square Garden for £40. The silver birch also needs to be looked at.

Footpaths (PS + PD): The Bristol gate from Rights of Way has now been installed on Borough Lane.

Flood Warden (CV): The ditch parallel to Lockyers to Windmill Hill footpath continues to be a problem; the pipes need clearing, with the pipe closest to the Methodist Chapel needing enlarging. Flooding on Stoke Road is a big issue with several cars being abandoned and people stranded either side of the road. The ditches and gullies need to be cleared to allow faster drainage. The combination lock on the flood gates has been smashed again!

North Curry Sports Ltd (PS): Mr Stone has explained the importance of looking after field edges to protect biodiversity.

Environment Group (PS): The group are providing a grant for fruit trees to improve biodiversity as the Parish. There is a committee meeting coming up to discuss the biodiversity policy.

Neighbourhood Plan (JL): More information will be put in the pink sheet each month. A table has been booked for the May Fair to demonstrate reaching out in as many ways as possible.

15. Publicity Inputs:

Will include the call for volunteers for the Schools Appeal Panel, a reminder about fly tipping, and the importance of keeping drains clear. Mrs Leader will also write a small section about the Neighbourhood Plan.

16. Matters for Discussion:

Mr Hardwick: Has begun investigating Councillor email addresses and an initial quote is £4.90 per email address per month which includes access to Share Point, Teams, and Microsoft Office. This adds up to around £750 per year. More options will be investigated for the next meeting. Mr Hardwick will be happy to manage the email addresses once decided.

Mrs Leader: Nine Acre Lane bungalow building site has not been sorted as promised, and is deteriorating further. The Clerk will get in contact with them again.

The meeting closed at 10:16pm.

North Curry Parish Council - Project Tracker/ Matters Arising

Project	Latest progress	Still to do
Helland to Huntham drove		Liaise with involved parties to re-open.
Lime trees, Church Road		Phil to speak to residents concerned and share the management scheme.
D-Day 80th Anniversary Beacon		Adam speaking to local veterans to see if they'd like to organise something.
Wrantage and Moor Lane SIDS	<i>New Wrantage post has been installed in the wrong location- Paul is liaising with Highways to fix this.</i> Moor Lane post and SID are installed.	Need post from Highways to relocate Wrantage West SID. Two new posts expected in Spring 2024.
Broad Lane flooding	<i>Letter has been sent to Wessex Water. Brian and Phil have visited and identified possible issues.</i> Response received from Wessex Water.	Brian consulting with landowners.
Queen Square line markings	Line markings have been done in Queen Square.	Waiting for roundels to be done, large back log. 30mph roundels are showing again on Stoke Road- need to be burned out.
Queen Square Gardens tree work	Replacement tree has been decided upon- white bird cherry tree.	Date for work to go ahead.
Neighbourhood Development Plan	Steering group terms of reference have been agreed, as has consultant. Initial funding of £5,000 from CIL agreed. Official Designation has been received and can be seen on the SC website.	First mailshot to residents with January pink paper. Working towards launch date of 1 st May (APM), collating ideas for first survey with launch target of June.
Welcome Leaflet	<i>Paul has been contacting groups and organisations listed in previous version to update contact info.</i> Paul has made final welcome letter.	<i>Continue contacting organisations, groups, and businesses.</i> We have passed on details of new and revised contacts, for village groups, to website. We have a new welcome letter and I propose we forget a leaflet?
Cricket Cottages potential car park	Contact has been made with the landowner to begin establishing whether the land may be for sale. Initial contact has been made with Highways to discuss feasibility.	Preliminary informal discussions are underway with Highways and the land owner. Decide on a draft design for pre-application advice on feasibility.
Windmill Hill obstruction	<i>Another response from Highways; the obstruction has their permission.</i> After being stolen, the sign has now been replaced.	The drain will be covered by Highways.
Inter-Parish Tug of War summer 2024	Initial meeting was held, lots to plan but under control.	Next meeting in February. Event will be Saturday 29 th June 2024.
Fingerpost maintenance- Borough Post and Queen Square	Borough Post sign has been restored and looks good.	Paul will clean and paint Queen Square fingerpost. Waiting for better weather.
Allotment produce box	Budget has been agreed- £300.	Paul to construct.