

ALLER PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 11th July 2022
at 7.30pm, Aller Village Hall

Present:

Mr G Tucker

Ms J Peppard

Ms E Dunton

Cllr R Wilkins

7 Members of the public.

Miss E Meecham (Clerk)

The meeting commenced after an Open Session for Aller residents, no items were raised.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for absence** – Apologies were received from Ms Vernoit and Cllr Stanton
2. **Declarations of interest** – None declared.
3. **Minutes of last Parish Council Meeting** – The minutes of the last meeting were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.
4. **Co-option of Councillors** – Peter Gear and Judy Brown both expressed an interest in co-option onto the council, they were both duly co-opted.
5. **Chairman's announcement – vision statement.** – Mr Tucker set out his vision for the way forward for the Parish and for the Parish Council. Mr Tucker believes that the forthcoming change from two-tier local authority to a Unitary Authority represents an enormous opportunity for the Parish and would like the Parish Council to align itself with numerous policies of the current District Council and upcoming Unitary Council, including environmental, climate change, Economic and Health & Wellbeing. Mr Tucker is particularly keen to ensure that the residents of Oath aren't ignored. Mr Tucker noted that the Village Hall has been very ably served by a few people but for a very long time and anticipates that there will be a role for the Parish Council going forward to engage and support the running of such a valuable asset. The same is to be said for the Recreation area where there are opportunities to engage further to help align with the wider policies. Mr Tucker would encourage everyone to keep a close eye on the evolving Local Community Networks, something that Aller Parish Council have been a fore-runner of for some time, with the lengthsman scheme and the shared speed indicator device. Mr Tucker shared a number of ideas for the Parish and Parish Council to consider. Mr Tucker proposed that a survey with pre-aid response envelopes could be undertaken to ask the Parishioners what they want to see in the Parish, at the Village Hall and at the Recreation Area. Ms Peppard and Ms Dunton explained that they were both very excited by the ideas and both support the possibility for the survey. Ms Brown asked how the Parish Council could best engage the younger members of the Parish, and other age groups, and suggested the possibility of a launch event in the Village Hall alongside the survey. Cllr Wilkins expressed that he was very enthused that the Parish Council want to grasp the opportunity and appreciates that they are trying hard to not be Aller-centric and to try and engage the children/youths of the village. Cllr Wilkins expanded on the topic of the Local Community Networks, explaining that a recent Council meeting had cleared up some previous confusion.
6. **Election of Vice Chair** – Mr Tucker suggested that this be deferred for the time-being, as much of the Parish Council are still beginning to understand the role of the Council, Ms Dunton seconded the proposal and it was agreed unanimously.

- 7. District and County Councillors reports** - Cllr Wilkins explained that there have been two full Council meetings so far following the elections, the first agreed the new Leader and the Cabinet, the second focussed on the the finance arrangements for finding a new Chief Executive Officer for the Council.

Cllr Tucker reported that there is still a lot to be done, but that SSDC are trying to get things cleared up before the point of handover. The Planning Service is still causing concerns and issues, some planners are taking positions in other authorities due to the uncertainty of their futures. There is also uncertainty on the investments previously made by SSDC, on the £142million of investment the gross return is 6.9%. The ongoing refresh projects across the District have been badly impacted due to the cost of building materials increasing exponentially.

8. Planning

Applications – Due to his position as a District Councillor Mr Tucker explained that he could not be involved in the discussions regarding the planning applications.

22/01258/HOU, Oath Hill Farm Wickmoor Stathe Langport, Partial demolition of single storey rear extension and erection of two storey rear extension. – Ms Peppard outlined the proposals for the benefit of the councillors and the meeting. Ms Peppard proposed that the Parish Council support the application, Ms Dunton seconded the proposal which was agreed unanimously.

22/01837/HOU, Oath Hill Farm, Wickmoor, Stathe, Langport, Renovation and refurbishment of existing stable building to create an annexe. – Ms Peppard outlined the proposals for the benefit of the councillors and the meeting. Ms Peppard proposed that the Parish Council support the application, Ms Brown seconded the proposal which was agreed unanimously.

- 9. Aller Recreation Area – presentation by Rupert Little** – Mr Little thanked the Parish Council for the ongoing financial support that keeps the Recreation Area afloat. Mr Little explained that the play equipment has been installed for some time and was beginning to show its age. The Woodland area has developed but needs some attention. Mr Little believes that more members of the Parish should be engaged to help. Mr Little explained that approximately £20,000 will need to be found to make the necessary updates and maintenance to the play equipment. Ms Peppard queried whether there may be local or national grants available to help. Mr Tucker asked the clerk if there were any ring fenced funds within the Council's accounts, the clerk confirmed that there were, but the exact figure was unknown at that exact moment. Mr Tucker gave an update on the ownership/management of the area.

- 10. Aller Village Hall** – The meeting received a report on the Village Hall. The Village Hall committee are currently struggling, and the Parish Council may need to engage more than they have in the past. The Village Hall have a limited number of regular users currently. One member of the public present put forward a suggestion for more arts based groups/meetings for various age groups to be held at the hall, which she would be willing to help with. The meeting received information regarding the village trust, the deed for which is very unclear. With the issues with the committee there are doubts over the future of the hall, as such some of the long-term bookings, the school etc, are in jeopardy. There is an emergency trustees meeting next week and a leaflet will be distributed to the villagers setting out the crisis of the committee. A discussion was held over the ways that additional help for the committee can be found. Mr Tucker emphasised that the Parish Council very much want to help the Village Hall to come through the issues.

- 11. Aller Burial Board** – Ms Peppard has taken the lead and gave her thanks to Mrs Lockyer for her support, this was echoed by the Parish Council. Ms Peppard reported that two requests had been received regarding the internment of ashes and the placing of a headstone. Ms Peppard explained that she has concerns over the upkeep of the cemetery grounds and wondered if there was flexibility within the timings for maintenance visits. Ms Peppard will call James Pring and discuss additional works and try to arrange a pre-internment visit.

12. Village maintenance

- 12.1 Finger posts** – Mr Tucker reported that the sign for the village by Shires Garage has been adjusted to point in the right direction, however, it is very rusty and needs reporting to Highways. Mr Tucker reported that he is renovating the other finger posts one at a time.
- 12.2 Hemlock growth on the Recreation Field** – A report of hemlock on the walkway adjacent to the field has been received. Signage has been erected and any pieces that were immediately likely to be brushed against have been removed. The plant is best pulled in the autumn but a method of keeping it cut/strimmed in the long-term is required.
- 12.3 Cemetery path** – The membrane of the path has scuffed through and is now a trip hazard. Mr Tucker proposed that approximately £150 would be required to trim the membrane and purchase additional stone. Mr Gear seconded the proposal which was agreed unanimously.
- 12.4 Signage in Oath** – The village of Wick has recently had some welcome signs installed and a discussion was held that the residents of Oath might wish to have something similar installed. Mr Tucker asked the Council if this was something that they wish for him to investigate further, an initial quote for £333 +VAT for two signs has been received. Ms Peppard suggested that subject to the views of the residents being sought this should be continued.
- 12.5 Purchase of a battery powered strimmer** – Mr Tucker would like the Parish Council to consider the purchase of a battery powered strimmer/bush cutter.
- Ms Brown raise the issue of the level of maintenance required at the recreation area, for example the footpath, signs, notice boards etc are looking sad and tired.
 - The notice board in Oath requires replacement plastic.
 - Ms Brown pointed out that although its commendable that Mr Tucker has offered to do many of the maintenance item within the parish, he shouldn't feel obliged to.

13. Finance

- 13.1 Finance statement [Clerk]** – The clerk presented the up to date income and expenditure spreadsheet. The meeting was also informed that the clerk had given notice of her intention to resign on 5th August.
- 13.2 Cheques for authorisation – Clerks expenses - £20, G Wagen James invoices x 2 (£169.20 and £169.20), Internal Audit £50, Clerks Salary, HMRC.** – The payments were all unanimously agreed, including the items for maintenance for Mr Tucker.
- 13.3 Online banking.** – The benefits of online banking were discussed, the clerk noted that the ability to see bank transactions online would be very useful.

14. Highways – Mr Tucker noted the issue with marked up potholes on Aller Drove, the clerk is to chase them.

15. Community issues

- 15.1 Communication** – The meeting discussed the website and the ongoing administration, particularly with the departure of the clerk. Ms Dunton agreed to pick up the administration in the short-term, with instruction from the clerk. The clerk needs to bring the website up to date with the new councillors and arrange training for Ms Dunton.

16. Councillors development programme

- 16.1 SALC training** – Ms Peppard is booked onto the Roles and Responsibilities session, other Councillors are encouraged to book onto one (through the clerk).
- 16.2 Councillors social** – Mr Tucker suggested that the Council would benefit from getting together in a social setting to get to know each other better.

17. Correspondence for information [to be tabled] – Mr Tucker ran through the email received from Mr Mayor setting out the ongoing work for the Council.

18. Any other urgent matters raised by permission of the Chairman – None.

Mr Tucker thanked the clerk on behalf of the current and previous councils for her work over the last 13 years.

19. Date and time of next meeting – 12th September 2022, 7:30pm.

Clerk: Emma Meecham 15 Meadow Road, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 5PB