

ALLER PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Saturday 24th September 2022 at 9.30am, Aller Village Hall

Present:

Cllrs Dunton, Tucker, Vernoit

Cllr M Stanton

2 Members of the public.

Mrs K Larsson (Clerk)

Prior to the commencement of the open session and meeting, Cllr Tucker asked to take a moment to reflect on and acknowledge the lifetime of service of Queen Elizabeth II, remembering a number of important events that occurred during her reign including building the Village Hall and securing the recreation field.

The meeting then commenced after an Open Session for Aller residents, where the idea of a community produce facility was mentioned. This was addressed during agenda item 10.
No further items were raised.

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies for absence** – Apologies were received from Cllrs Brown, Geary, Peppard and County Cllr Wilkins.
- 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. Parish Council Vacancy** – There is currently 1 vacancy on the Parish Council. The vacancy is advertised on the village noticeboard; Cllr Tucker encouraged anyone who would like to contribute to the parish to consider coming forward to join.
- 5. District and County Councillors reports** - Cllr Stanton explained that the financial situation continues to be a concern. The Director of Finance predicts that the situation will improve in 3-5 years and will improve when Hinckley point business rates become payable. In the meantime, it is expected there will be cuts to some services. Cllr Stanton reported that 4 care homes have closed leading to a reduction of 80 beds, although the main issue is there are not enough care staff in social care, including child services and the NHS.

Cllr Tucker reported that the usual monthly Area North meeting had not taken place. The Scrutiny and Audit Committee have met, and their work is concentrating on preparing for amalgamation of services to the new unitary authority.

Planning is facing issues with staffing as many planning officers are moving to private practice and there are lots of contract staff being used. Phosphate recovery is still slowing the planning process.

Staffing is an issue within call centres, with wait times having increased from approximately 4 minutes to 10 minutes, due to a lack of operators.

Revenue and benefit services are also struggling, with an average wait of 59 days for a payment, against a target of 21; and there is a lack of housing officers.

Cllr Tucker advised he has requested the publishing of two reports of interest. The first in relation to vulnerable historic buildings, of which 50% of those identified are within South Somerset. The second is in relation to section 106 payments. An update will be provided following publishing of the information.

6. Finance

6.1 Finance statement [Clerk] – The clerk presented the up-to-date income and expenditure spreadsheet.

6.2 The following cheques were raised: Clerks expenses - £36.26, SALC Membership - £116.97, Allotments - £257.50, G Wagen James - £81.60, Jubilee celebration - £98.53, Village maintenance - £264.89, Clerks Salary, HMRC. – All payments were all unanimously agreed by councillors.

7. Community Engagement

7.1 An exercise to provide an overview of the current communication channels was undertaken by Cllr Brown and presented by the Clerk in her absence. In addition to the website, the Parish Council currently has an active Facebook page which has limited use. There are two other village Facebook pages, which are not managed by the Parish Council, although information from the official page is shared as appropriate. It was noted that the Aller Village News page use is increasing steadily.

It was agreed that Cllr Dunton would work with the Clerk to update and maintain the website and social media platforms.

Methods of communication with those not online, such as a regular newsletter, to be further considered and discussed at the next meeting.

7.2 A parish logo was developed by a resident with proposal to use this on all parish council correspondence and online presence. Councillors agreed unanimously to use the new logo.

7.3 Notice Boards: The noticeboard at Oath has been renovated and is actively in use, as is the Aller board. The recreation ground board needs renovation, and it was suggested to move the board to a more suitable location. Removal and renovation were supported by all councillors; a new location is to be considered further as well as considering suggestion of an additional notice board.

8. Parish Survey – The Parish Council are keen to canvass the views of residents and a survey has been compiled to be distributed to every household in the parish. To encourage as many responses as possible, it is proposed to include a stamped, addressed envelope for the completed surveys to be returned. Councillors agreed unanimously with the production of the survey and associated costs of printing and return envelopes.

The survey will be hand delivered from 1st October, and the Parish Council would request responses are returned by the 31st October, with a view to presenting findings at the November meeting. Parish Councillors will also attend the Big Breakfast in the Village Hall on 29th October to answer any questions about the survey.

9. Village maintenance

9.1 Completed Tasks – Several tasks have been carried out since the last meeting including renovation of some finger posts, pathways and some footpaths attended to as well as renovation of the Oath notice board.

9.2 Autumn work programme – Cllr Tucker identified two locations on public footpaths where he proposed installation of Bristol gates to assist pedestrian access whilst maintaining security for livestock. The first location is on “Coffin Path” where one side of the drove is a standard farmers gate (the opposite is already a Bristol gate). The second location is further along the same path, where there is currently a wire with a hook across the footpath in place of a gate. Cllr Tucker proposed purchase of two gates, via Glastonbury Town Council at a cost of £400, which is a reduction from the average cost of c£650. Cllr Vernoit questioned whether there were any grants or other funding available to cover such costs, but Mr Tucker explained that there is little resource available for such works and that the wait for any application would be long and not guaranteed. **Councillors voted unanimously in favour of purchasing the gates from Glastonbury Town Council.**

9.3 **Renovation of Bere Corner Fingerpost** – The finger post is in dis-repair and a quotation was sought via Somerset Forge to renovate the post. Somerset Forge provide a specialist service, and due to this it has not been possible to seek other quotations on this occasion. They have recently completed refurbishment work for Huish Episcopi Parish Council. It was suggested that as the sign also serves the parish of High Ham, they may be willing to contribute the overall cost. The quotation to refurbish the fingerpost at a cost of £1070.00 was agreed unanimously. Cllr Tucker will approach High Ham to see if they are willing to contribute.

10. Community Produce Facility – Cllr Tucker started by noting he was saddened to see the telephone box from the pub garden having been removed, and the Parish Council not having had an opportunity to purchase it. The garden space at the pub is owned by the Parish Council and would like to see this utilised to support the local community. A member of the public in attendance at the meeting presented the idea of using the space to provide a facility to share the abundance of fresh produce that some residents had to offer, by means of erecting a shed or phone box for example. The space could potentially also be used to house a noticeboard and books as has been seen in other parishes. Cllr Tucker will investigate possible options for housing, including a replacement telephone box.

11. Highways

11.1 **Diversion of footpath L 1–6** Parish councillors had no objections to the proposed diversion.

11.2 **Traffic Calming** – Cllr Dunton reported continued concerns with speeding vehicles through Aller and vehicles mounting pavements where the road is not wide enough to pass in both directions. It was agreed that Cllr Dunton, in cooperation with Cllr Stanton, would engage with Rebecca Vaughan from SSDC Traffic Management to review and make suggestions for improvements. It was noted that the speed indicator device, which is shared with Long Sutton Parish Council, will be sited in the village shortly.

12. Local Community Networks – Details of the proposed LCN areas have been circulated with the supporting information. Councillors were encouraged to submit their views via the online consultation.

13. Aller recreation area – No updates to report.

14. Aller Village Hall – Cllr Vernoit reported she had been approached to become Chair of the Village Hall Committee and has taken up that role. There is also a new treasurer and secretary in place. Cllr Vernoit will continue to be the PC representation for the Village Hall.

15. Aller burial board – There is an upcoming interment of ashes, full details are to be confirmed.

16. Correspondence – The Somerset Association of Local Councils have announced two new appointments, one of which being Ann Diment as Health & Wellbeing Officer. Cllr Tucker would like to invite Ann to an informal meeting to discuss opportunities to support the Health & Wellbeing programme.

17. Any other urgent matters - None

18. Date and time of next meeting – 14th November 2022, 7:30pm.

Clerk: Kim Larsson – 59 Spurwells, Ilton TA19 9HP