



Minutes of a meeting of COTFORD ST LUKE PARISH COUNCIL held in the Community Centre, Bethell Mead, Cotford St Luke, commencing at 18.30 on Thursday 18th July 2024.

PRESENT

Cllrs. S. Draper-Gammon (Chair), M. Best, L. Birch (Vice Chair), T. Freeman, P. Grover, G. Hand, J. McCrea.

In attendance: Locum Clerk K. Sheehan and eleven members of the public.

27/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies from Somerset Councillors Rigby and Sully, and from the local PCSO were noted.

28/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None.

29/24 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2024

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 5 June 2024 were AGREED as a true and accurate record.

30/24 PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

A member of the public commented that it was disappointing to see continuing negativity on social media forums, particularly contributions from anonymous posters. They expressed hope that this would stop and enable everyone to move forward in a constructive and positive way. They asked whether the Code of Conduct applied to ex councillors. Cllr. Best confirmed that the Code of Conduct applied to conduct of councillors while in office.

The Chair noted that currently Cotford St Luke Parish Council did not have a social media account(s) and had no immediate intentions to start using social media, but that this would be kept under review and revisited if necessary.

31/24 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM:

a. Somerset Councillors

Cllr. Best reported that:

- Somerset Council had agreed to renegotiate the Suez waste contract, meaning waste collections across the county would continue unchanged.
- The authority's financial position was somewhat improved, meaning reliance on reserves had decreased. The programme of redundancies was continuing and commercial investments were being sold.
- One planning applications currently live – a tree application relating to Park View, no objections



b. Representative(s) to Taunton Local Community Network (LCN)

Cllr Best had attended the recent LCN meeting on behalf of CSLPC and reported that the Highways subgroup was worth attending due to the direct access to Highways Officers. The next meeting of the Taunton LCN would be held in Cotford St Luke Community Centre on 7 October 2024, time tbc.

c. PCSO

Cllr. McCrae reiterated apologies from the PCSO, who had sent a written report, noting that:

- Out of 152 calls to 999 or 101 in June, 11 were for Cotford St Luke.
- These calls involved harassment (3), public order (3), criminal damage (2), malicious communication (1), criminal damage to a vehicle (1) and theft (1).
- There were 4 reports of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) for Cotford St Luke in June.

Some discussion took place around recent instances of ASB in the village. Residents were urged to report every instance to the police to help them better target resources around the village.

32/24

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

a. To receive a verbal update on the progress with the Annual Return for 23/24, internal and external audit arrangements

Cllr. Best reported that he was due to meet with the internal auditor the next day and would report back following that meeting.

b. To receive a verbal update on progress with bank account access and signatories

It was noted that councillors had been successfully set up as signatories on the HSBC account used for reserves. The application to change the signatories on the main Unity Trust bank account was in progress, but confirmation that the application had been successful not yet received. All suppliers and contractors had been advised of the situation.

c. To adopt an updated Code of Conduct

d. To adopt an updated Complaints Procedure

Items c. and d. were AGREED en bloc, noting that Councillors would be attending a training session in the near future which would briefly cover the Code of Conduct but if more detail was required a bespoke session could be arranged with Cll Best.

33/24

PARISH CLERK RECRUITMENT

To receive a verbal progress report and consider extending the deadline for applications

Councillors noted that one application had been received. In order to encourage further applications it was AGREED to extend the closing date until the end of August, and remove the specified salary banding from the advert, instead pay to be dependent on experience.

34/24

COUNCIL MEETING DATES 2024-25

The following meeting dates were AGREED:

No regular meeting in August 2024

Thursday 19th September 2024

Thursday 17th October 2024

Thursday 21st November 2024

December 2024 – tbc, depending on progress with the budget

Thursday 23rd January 2025



Thursday 20th February 2025

Thursday 20th March 2025

Thursday 17th April 2025

Thursday 22nd May 2025

Meetings all starting at 7pm in the Community Hall.

35/24 VILLAGE SIGNS

To consider quotation and approve locations for 'Welcome to Cotford St Luke' signs

It was AGREED to pay Somerset Council £900 to install two village entry signs, one on the Bishops Lydeard side of the village, the other on the Norton Fitzwarren side of the village.

36/24 WEBSITE

To consider quotations for a website upgrade

A quotation from the existing website provider for a reskin, reorganisation and newsletter plugin for £640 was AGREED. As part of the work, the website would move to a .gov.uk domain, in line with best practice, with the option for Council email addresses to also change at a later date.

Photos of the village would be welcomed for the website and better delineation between the responsibilities of the Community Association and Parish Council would be achieved via these works.

37/24 AMENITIES AND ASSETS

a. To receive a verbal progress update on the tennis courts

Cllr. Hand reported that:

- He had been investigating court usage and spoken with regular court users.
- Approximately 80 court keys were in circulation, and it was acknowledged that better ways to access the courts should be investigated. If the padlock was damaged or removed, all the keys would immediately be made redundant.
- The possibility of including pickleball lines on the courts was noted, and would be consulted upon in due course.
- The posts and winding mechanism required repair, and the surface needed weedkilling and possibly further improvements.

Following discussion about the scope of the tennis courts improvements, it was AGREED that:

- Cotford St Luke PC would seek to undertake tennis courts improvements going forward and gather quotes to understand potential costs involved;
- The Clerk was asked to contact security gate companies for quotes for smart access solutions;
- Cllr. Best would speak to the existing weedkilling contractor to see if the courts had been overlooked, or if they could be added to the contract.

b. To receive a verbal progress update on the MUGA

Cllr. Best reported that one of the top fence panels of the MUGA had been broken and had been removed. A quote for its replacement had been obtained but not in time for agreement at this meeting and would therefore come to September's meeting for agreement.



c. To consider the painting and varnishing of the Parish noticeboards

A quote of £120 to refurbish all three noticeboards was AGREED.

38/24 MATTERS OF REPORT (verbal reports for information only)

Cllrs Grover and Freeman reported that they had been following up on environmental issues around the parish, to establish where existing contracts were in place if frequency of grass cutting was sufficient. They were still collecting information about other areas of the contracts, with a view to identifying areas which needed to be added. Several hedges were overgrown, and they had also started to investigate drainage issues. Cllr. Best confirmed that he had spoken to Somerset Council Highways who confirmed their responsibility extends only to any issues with culverts under roads. Moving forwards, Cllrs Hand, Grover and Freeman agreed to continue to liaise to gather further information.

Cllr. Birch reported that she was obtaining prices for bleed kits to be located around the parish and that this would be on the September council meeting agenda.

Some discussion took place around the possibility of leaving some areas of grass to grow to encourage biodiversity – this would be reviewed for future growing seasons.

39/24 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Thursday 19th September 2024, 19.00, Community Centre.

The meeting closed at 19.55.

Signed:

Dated:

CSLPC18July2024