



Minutes of a meeting of Cotford St Luke Parish Council held in the Community Centre, Bethell Mead, Cotford St Luke, TA4 1HZ on Thursday 19th September 2024, commencing at 19.00

Present:

Cllr S Draper-Gammon - Chair, Cllr L Birch – Vice Chair, Cllr M Best and Cllr T Freeman
In attendance six members of the public and Helen McGladdery – Parish Clerk and RFO

43/24 To receive and approve apologies for absence.

Apologies receive from:

Cllr J McCrea – holiday
Somerset Cllrs Sully and Rigby, and Local PCSO

44/24 To receive declarations of pecuniary or personal interests in items on the agenda and any dispensations.

None recorded.

45/24 To approve the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 18 July 2024

The amended draft minutes of the meeting were Agreed as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.

Action: The Cllr Birch to add to the website

46/24 Public Open Forum:

Concerns were raised from residents as listed below:

1. Fly tipping in ditches.

Action: Add agenda item in October to discuss purchase of a sign

2. Unable to find Community Association contact information – resident advised at meeting where to find this information.

3. Himalayan Balsam overgrowth – resident advised if a local group was set up to tackle this, it would be supported by PC.

4. Requested “Hard Path” was given a proper name – suggested maybe run a competition with suggestions.

5. Query over culvert ownership Burges Close – resident advised an agenda item to discuss culverts this evening.

47/24 To receive reports from:

Somerset Councillors – Cllr Best gave a verbal update detailing the continuing poor financial situation at Somerset Council, adult and social care costs have risen by 45% and Children’s services by 17%, but Government funding has not risen by these amounts causing a shortfall. 1000 staff are being made redundant and there are currently a lack of planners causing a backlog on planning application decisions.

Representative(s) to the Taunton Local Community Network – Cllr Best attended in July on behalf of Cotford, it was agreed that Cllr Birch would attend the next meeting.

Cotford St Luke Neighbourhood Policing Team – Report distributed to Councillors

48/24

Finance & Governance:

To approve the accounts for payment up to 31st August 2024 as listed.

In the absence of a Clerk, Cllr Best advised he had taken control of the finances until a new Clerk was appointed. The previous Clerk had failed to reconcile and submit the Annual Accounts and Audit, so Cllr Best requested an extension from PKF Littlejohn (External Auditor) and had several meetings with the internal auditor (Jill Larcombe)

The Accounts for payment were approved by Councillors.

To report the bank reconciliation for August 2024 has been completed.

The bank reconciliation was circulated to Councillors in advance and was approved at the meeting.

To approve the Annual Governance statement for 2023/24

The Annual Governance Statement was reviewed by Councillors and signed by Cllr Best (acting RFO) and the Chair. Cllr Best will also compile a report to accompany the Annual Governance Statement

Action: Cllr Birch to add all the above financial information to the website

49/24

To receive and approve report of the Internal Auditor and note issues raised.

The internal auditor identified 19 issues in her report and an action plan will be put in place to resolve these matters moving forward.

Councillors approved the report.

Action: The Clerk to start working through the issues raised

To formally approve the internally audited accounts for 2023/24.

The Accounts were approved by Councillors.

To approve the Annual Return for the year ending 31 March 2024:

To approve the Accounting Statements.

The accounting statement was approved by Councillors.

To authorise the signing of the Annual Return.

Councillors approved the signing of the accounting statement and was signed by the Chair and Cllr Best

To confirm arrangements for the period of elector's rights. Public notifications will be placed on noticeboards and the website.

The dates of period of elector's rights were agreed by Councillors.

Action: Cllr Draper-Gammon to add the notice to the noticeboards and Cllr Birch to add to the Website

To adopt a Co-option Procedure.

The attached co-option procedures were adopted by Councillors.

Action: Cllr Birch to add to the website

50/24

Planning Applications:

To consider the following current applications: none at time of publication.

None received.

To note the following determinations: none at time of publication.

None

51/24

Cotford St Luke flood defence system: ditches, culverts, attenuation ponds and floodplain:

To discuss proposal to commission an independent survey of the entire Cotford St Luke flood defence system (all ditches and culverts, attenuation ponds and flood plain).

Concerns over flooding, inadequate and overgrown ditches and blocked culverts were discussed. It was agreed that the new Clerk would make enquiries with Somerset Council, to see what support is available before investigating a private survey. Further quotes will be obtained for future reference.

Action: The Clerk to contact Somerset Council

To discuss proposal for the PC to contact all landowners who have responsibility for maintaining the ditches and culverts to establish regular maintenance cycles (in order to ensure the village is safe from flooding during the coming autumn/winter).

It was agreed by Councillors to continue to establish ownership and responsibility for maintenance.

- Action:**
1. The Clerk to establish which sections have riparian responsibility
 2. The Clerk to write to any residents who have riparian responsibility, to advise them of what is expected
 3. The Clerk to write to any other authority/landowner to seek clarification of works schedule for any works

52/24 Councillor responsibilities: to confirm areas of responsibility including representative to LCN.

Open spaces/play areas/ Rights of Way – Cllr T Freeman

Finance and Planning – Cllr L Birch

Admin/ Website/ Social media – The Clerk

Communication and Police liaison – Cllr McCrea

53/24 25th Anniversary of Cotford St Luke: to consider options for village celebrations.

It was agreed to look at all the local organisation to form a working party.

54/24 Bleed kits: to consider quotations for the provision of bleed kits.

Councillors agreed to purchase 2 bleed kits at a cost of £199.99+VAT each from Avon and Somerset Police to be installed next to the two defibrillators currently sited in the Parish.

Action: The Clerk to liaise with Cllr Birch to arrange the installation

55/24 Amenities and assets:

Tennis courts: to discuss and approve allocating budget for repair/maintenance work.

Councillors agreed to allocate a budget of £5,000.00 for repair/maintenance work and to look at a digital entry system. All costs will be brought back to a future meeting for approval.

Multi Use Games Area (MUGA): to consider quotations for repair.

Standing orders were suspended for this item, as the area requires a specialised firm to carry out the repair, and the repair was deemed urgent on safety grounds.

Councillors approved a quote of £580.00+VAT from Callaghan fencing to carry out the repair.

Action: The Clerk to liaise with Cllr T Freeman to arrange the repair

Standing orders were reinstated.

Grassed areas: to agree a proposal for for a one-off cut in October, prior to the contracts for next year being renegotiated to include areas that have been being missed.

It was agreed to compile a list of areas requiring an additional cut and to obtain a quote from Countrywide for this additional work.

- Action:**
1. Councillors to advise the Clerk of the areas requiring additional cuts.
 2. The Clerk and Cllr Freeman to liaise with Countrywide to obtain a quote.

Playground inspection arrangements: to review current arrangements and confirm contract for 2025.

Councillors agreed to review the report for any safety concerns.

Action: Cllr T Freeman to raise any matters of concern to the Clerk to enable her to obtain quotes for the work

Shelter location: to discuss the future of the shelter.

The Parish Council has received correspondence from the Police and Somerset Council with reports of anti-social behaviour at the shelter and graffiti. Councillors agreed it would be important to talk to local residents to seek their views.

Action: Cllr Birch to add an article to the website, requesting comments to the Clerk.

56/24

To receive Matters of Report (verbal reports from Councillors for information only).

It was noted that the previous Parish Council may have registered an interest in taking on certain areas within the Parish.

Action: The Clerk to contact Somerset Council to find out which areas were requested

57/24

Next meeting: Thursday 17th October 2024, 19.00, Community Centre.

Attachment:

1. Co-option procedures



Co-option procedures

When a casual vacancy arises the Parish Council will notify the monitoring Officer, and will display the co-option notices on the Parish Council noticeboards and Website within a reasonable time*

If a poll has not been claimed within 14 days, the Parish Council are free to co-opt to fill the vacancy.

The procedure for co-option:

1. Once an enquiry has been received, The Clerk will check confirmation from the resident that they are eligible for co-option.
They must be on the electoral role, live or work within 3 miles of the Parish, be over 18 and not have a criminal record.
2. Once eligibility has been confirmed, The Clerk will forward a copy of the SALC publication "Becoming a Councillor" to the resident
3. They will be asked to provide a brief CV to the Parish Council
4. The Parish Council will invite them to attend a Council meeting, to observe the process of a meeting
5. After attending the Council meeting, if they wish to proceed with becoming a Councillor, The Clerk will invite them to attend a meeting with The Clerk and The Chair to explain the role of a Councillor, expectation and the powers of a Parish Council. This will be an opportunity for the resident to ask any questions.
6. Then they will be invited to attend the next Parish Council meeting, where the currently Councillors will vote on who they wish to co-opt to the Parish Council
7. Once co-opted the New Councillor has 28 days to complete the Declaration of Interest form and return to the Monitoring Officer

* LGA 1972 s87