

**STOKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING
HELD ON 18TH APRIL 2024 AT 7.30P.M IN THE
STOKENHAM PARISH HALL**

PRESENT:**COUNCILLORS:****GAIL ADDISON****LES COWLEY****ADRIAN GOODMAN****CHRIS HART****RICHARD PAIN****LIZ ROBINSON****JULIAN BRAZIL (District and County Councillor)****JONATHAN ANSELL****PAULA DOUST****KIM GREENING****TIM LYNN****SUE PROFFITT****PIERS SPENCE (Chairman)****Also in attendance:****Gill Claydon (Clerk)****APOLOGIES:****COUNCILLORS:****CHARLES ROGERS****1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors were invited to declare any disclosable interests, including the nature and extent of such interests they had in any items to be considered at this meeting. They were also reminded to consider whether in the light of recent activities any items within their Register of Interests should be updated. It was advised that any unforeseen request for a Dispensation would be considered by the Clerk at this point only if there was no way a councillor would have been aware of such before the meeting.

It was acknowledged that District Planning had already given their decision on the application 0920/24/AGR but Cllr Pain noted an interest and Cllr Doust advised that at one time the applicant had a distant family tie.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the full council meeting dated 21st March 2024 were approved by all present and duly signed as a true and correct record.

3. OPEN FORUM

Bob Johnson and Keith Sly were in attendance regarding the building site in Green Park Way being developed by Acorn Developments. They noted the works had ground to a halt and advised that many rumours were circulating as to the root cause. Some said it was due to the buildings being built higher than the permission allowed; others thought the developers had run out of cash; yet others claimed the springs on site were preventing further work due to increased surface water after all the rain. Of note was one drain in Green Park Way, which it was suggested was permanently blocked due to run-off from the site.

The Chairman responded that parish council had no inside knowledge of the reasons for the stoppage: he thought it was unlikely it had anything to do with building heights or other planning matters, but was simply a question of cost and lack of market demand. It was not uncommon for

this sort of thing to happen on larger building sites. Acorn was owned by a group of investors who it was believed were currently putting their money into a site in Exmouth. Everyone felt the site would be better finished than left as was now but it would be done to the developers' timetable. A point raised was that the Health & Safety executive would be monitoring the site so it should comply. Bob Johnson advised he had spoken to a County officer who had been out to look at the drainage on site and indicated they were not happy how the site road was completed.

Andy Chason complained that confusion reigned among dog walkers in Chillington park following the introduction of signs asking owners to keep dogs on a lead around the children's play area. He wanted to know if Parish Council had carried out any consultation before putting up the signs. He claimed, without producing any evidence, that 75% of people in Chillington had dogs and that the Council's signs were thus infringing the rights of the majority of Chillington residents. If Parish Council were so concerned about dogs they should put a fence around the children's play area.

The Chairman responded that Parish Council was not banning dogs, merely asking their owners to exercise restraint around the play area when children were using it. He felt most dog owners, of which he was one, would understand this message and feel it was reasonable to comply. The park in Chillington was a shared space, and sharing meant considering the needs of others. Many children – and some adults – would find the experience of being approached by an off-the-lead dog a frightening one. And no one wanted to see dogs fouling the play equipment, which was an all-too-regular occurrence.

The Chairman continued that dog owners were legally obliged to keep their dogs under control. According to the law a dog is not under control when off the lead. As the landowner, Parish Council had the power to introduce orders to ban dogs but instead preferred a collaborative rather than a heavy-handed approach. It was for that reason that the signs were phrased the way they were: CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA – PLEASE KEEP YOUR DOG ON A LEAD AND CLEAN UP ANY MESS.

As for fencing, there were good reasons why this was not a solution. Which area should be enclosed? Just the swings? What about the climbing pyramid? And the zip wire? What about the football pitch? Any attempt to fence these areas would encroach on the 50 x 50m square essential for the air ambulance night landing site. Cllr Goodman intervened to confirm that this subject had been discussed several times every year for the 14 years he had been a councillor. Parish council had to take action following numerous complaints about dog mess in the play area. Cllr Hart, as Chairman of Chillington Community Association, said this was a space shared by lots of people of different ages. All wanted dogs to run free wherever possible but they needed to be under control in this area. No decision was going to satisfy everybody and all that could be done do was to encourage everyone to share the space equably. Fencing would not work for the reasons outlined, so it depended on the goodwill of people keeping their children under control, those using radio-controlled models keeping their models under control, and dog owners keeping their pets under control. Cllr Addison regularly walked her dogs on the green and had witnessed owners letting their dogs urinate against play equipment, and some of those were parents who were not watching their animals. She said she would not challenge someone exercising a dog off a lead when there was no one else around but if children were playing then common decency said dogs should be kept at heel. All present agreed with this statement, with the exception of Mr Chason, who felt he wasn't being listened to. Bob Johnson asked whether District still had a dog warden who could attend but this was not possible.

Mr Chason left the meeting.

DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr Brazil advised that had County signed a Safety Deal with Government for the budget overspend on children's services. Government would provide £95million as County must currently pay £200million over the next 8 years. £5million per year would be taken from the general budget and added to this would be interest from the £95million provided.

On Devolution a cabinet meeting was held followed by full council the following Monday to look at the deal drawn up which would then be passed to Whitehall. Final approval was hoped to be settled by the beginning of October. With a General Election imminent and new administration in Government this perhaps might change everything.

Cllr Brazil acknowledged that the current County Leader, John Hart, was standing down after nearly 30 years' service and with such a record of commitment his contribution must be awarded much appreciation.

At District Executive meeting there were two main items. Freeport update was that the investment being asked for was £5.5million which had reduced to £3.5million. He had questioned why the land was now only costing £3.5million and how did everyone know this was correct? There would be benefits to South Hams if this was a good example of a Freeport which meant that District must proceed.

District Council was looking to develop a South Hams Festival to be held the last week in June 2025. Those tasked with doing this would be approaching parishes for funding and in turn they would bring performance/art/plays to the parish. There was no culture and arts policy at South Hams and Cllr Brazil felt they should have one and then an approach made to the Local Government Agency for funding to develop the arts, of which there were many in this area.

The matter regarding Green Park Way, raised in Open Forum, was put forward. Cllr Brazil advised that all he knew was that District Planning was aware and had seen notice. He believed they had sent out an officer to look at the mounds but there was little they could do. Cllr Addison advised that some sediment run-off was settling in the drains so the one by Bob Johnson's house could benefit from cleaning. Discussion took place as to where the rumour on building heights might have come from and an aerial photo and statement alluding to increased height was noted but Cllr Brazil felt that this was not an issue in closing the site.

Cllr Brazil acknowledge the clerk's email raising concern on the overlapping closure of the main A379 Carehouse Cross to White House during June and July. He advised it had been sent to highways coordination John Hodgson with a request for feedback.

Cllr Brazil left the meeting after providing this report.

4. PLANNING & PLANNING MATTERS

The applications below were considered at this meeting and the following observations submitted to District:

- 0843/24/HHO Householder application to permit removal of existing timber shed, construction of new dining room & storage to match existing house Kiln House, Kiln Lane, Stokenham – Response 6th May – No comment.
- 0920/24/AGR Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed agricultural woodland storage building 12.18m (L) x 6.09 (B) x 4.95m height to ridge The Cottage, Moyson – There was no consultation input requested by District Planning but as

included on the weekly lists the application was noted 19th March and yet decided as soon as 8th April. It was locally asserted that this land had not been farmed for a considerable number of years and so was not currently in agricultural use. It was questioned how an application could be considered in this manner as this would create a 72sq m barn for only 3 acres and include introduction of a vehicle access surface from the gate. Parish Council felt this had not followed what should be the correct procedure and sought clarification and explanation as to why local knowledge was not invited and how this approval could stand.

- 1108/24/FUL Application for change of use from self-contained residential unit for ancillary family use to dwelling house Copperfields, Tanpits Lane, Chillington – 17th May – Parish Council raised concern on the substandard internal and external space provision within this site that was not regulation compliant. If this was to be permitted it would require a condition that it remain a locally affordable, full-time residence and not be permitted as holiday accommodation.

PLANNING CORRESPONDENCE

Nothing further.

5. INTERNAL AUDIT AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

It was AGREED as follows;

- (a) the annual internal audit report – APPROVED.
- (b) and action any recommendations or findings therein before approving the Annual Governance Statement – No findings or recommendations requiring consideration.

6. ACCOUNTS AUDIT STATEMENT

It was AGREED as follows;

- (a) the Accounting Statements 2023/24 were duly completed and emailed to all councillors ahead of the meeting for consideration – AGREED
- (b) the Accounting Statements were acknowledged and it was asked if they should be signed and dated within the meeting – AGREED.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

The working party reported on comments from reviewing known flood-prone zones on the parish land ownership map. It was AGREED that site specific visits would take place to assess and inform input on proposals to deal with changing weather patterns, increased rainfall and the effects of global warming on local farming, fishing, land and properties together with the strain on community services and highways. It was noted that there was a reserve pot within the budget for works to areas requiring more drainage maintenance and assist landowners to allow new openings or re-engineering of areas to try to alleviate climate change run-off around the community.

Cllr Brazil arrived at the meeting here and gave his report above at this point before leaving.

8. REPORTS

- Cllr Proffitt – Noted that vulnerable land that had possibly been considered for development had been sold to Prospect House Management Company and she was hopeful this would keep the land as it currently stood.
- Cllr Doust – She had been requested to seek local input on the Wind Project Charity. Stokenham School did not pay anything to take part in this activity but had to provide transport for students which they are struggling with as they could not provide teachers to accompany them. Year 6 were offered this activity after they finished SATS but the school needed parent ‘power’ to help provision. Costs for 5 weeks transport were £1500. The

uptake was not means tested as if transport was arranged all were expected to take part. Ten primary schools in the area had been offered participation. It was noted that Singing Paddles offered an on the water experience to the school and such provision cost was supported by Rotary funding. Parish council wished more information on where most funding for this venture came from seeking clarity about contributors and a breakdown as to why the Wind Project wished to raise £40,000 this year, before placing this item on the agenda to consider a grant.

- Cllr Ansell – The finger post at Dunstone Cross was pointing downwards and it was felt that such a maintenance task would not be quickly responded to so he would repair.
- Cllr Hart – Was concerned that the uprights to the Chillington Playing Field goals had been removed. The contractor had carried out maintenance works at the play area and it was felt that he might have taken these to de-rust and paint so would be asked.

CLERK'S REPORT

- Lucy from Citizens Advice wished to pass on her thanks to parish council for the £500 grant.
- Various Road Closures for the main A379 Carehouse Cross to Chillington had been received and it had been asked why works could not overlap with one closure.

9. FINANCE

Balances were provided and the below transactions were approved:

Current £896.79

Savings £134,097.92

Received

Savings Account Interest £117.48

SHDC – 1st Precept 2024/25 £23137.50

Payments:

HMRC – Apr £239.42

DCC - Apr – Pension £434.65

Claydon - Apr Wages £1350.60

Citizens Advice – Grant £500

The Wine Society - APM Wine £89.75

Claydon - APM Sundries £16.85

Parcel2Go – Delivering accounts to internal auditor £4.44

SHDC – Election charges May 2023 £343.29

Hawthorns Accounting Sers. – Audit £206.50

Devon Association of Local Councils – Annual Subs £672.70

10. NEXT MEETING

The next full parish council meeting would be held on 16th May 2024 commencing at 7.30p.m in the Wesley Smith Room, Stokenham Parish Hall.

Meeting finished: 9.06p.m.

Signed Chairman Dated: 18th April 2024.