

## **Somerford Parish Council**

### **Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 20 May 2024**

#### **Holmes Chapel Community Centre, 7.30pm**

#### **Present**

- Councillor Geoff Bell (Chairman)
- Councillor Jeanette Hardman
- Councillor Paul Crompton
- Councillor Simon Hughes
- Councillor Bill Chorlton
- Councillor Gwyneth Derbyshire
- Mr Carlton Evans – Clerk

#### **063/24 – Election of the Chair for 24/25**

The Council unanimously elected Cllr Geoff Bell as Chair for 24/25 and he duly made and signed his declaration of acceptance of office.

#### **064/24 – Election of the vice-Chair for 24/25**

The Council unanimously elected Cllr Jeanette Hardman as vice-Chair for 24/25 and she duly made and signed her declaration of acceptance of office.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

- Cllr Chorlton – Loachbrook Estate discussions
- Cllr Hardman – Loachbrook Estate discussions
- Cllr Derbyshire – Loachbrook Estate discussions

#### **Registers of Interest**

The Clerk urged those Councillors who had not yet done so to review their Declarations of Interest and send copies to him so they can be published.

#### **Part 1 Public Forum**

No members of the public were present.

#### **065/24 - Apologies**

- Cllr Trevor Massey (conflicting engagement)
- Ward Cllr John Wray (conflicting engagement)

### **066/24 Minutes**

The Council **resolved** that the minutes of the Council meeting on 15 April 2024 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

### **067/24 Accounts**

**See Annex 1**

### **068/24 Planning Applications**

**24/1317C** - 8 Chelford Road, Somersetford

New single-storey garden room in rear garden for non-habitable domestic use. Permission required as flat roof is 20cm taller than permitted development limits.

The Council **resolved** to raise no objection

**23/2713C** - Land north of the Congleton Link Road ('CLR') known as Somersetford Green, Congleton (the Anwyl development)

The Council expressed its disappointment that although Anwyl had submitted 30 or 40 additional documents none of them appeared to address the concerns raised by the Parish Council. The Clerk will write again to the planning department reiterating the Council's views.

### **069/24 – Cheshire East Ward Councillor Report**

No report in Cllr Wray's absence.

### **070/24 - Spring/Summer Newsletter**

The Clerk reminded the meeting that a draft was online awaiting edits from Councillors and urged them to make their contributions as soon as possible. He will re-send a link to the document for further editing.

### **071/24 – Policies to review**

The Council reviewed and **resolved** to re-adopt the Financial Regulations, the Equality and Diversity policy and the Freedom of Information policy, subject to some minor edits. The Council noted that another template for the Financial Regulations is expected imminently from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) which would correct the previous version issued only recently.

### **072/24 - Somerford Chapel Support**

Councillors discussed what further support the Parish Council could offer to Somerford Chapel. Cllr Jeanette Hardman reported on the meeting she, Cllr Massey and the Clerk had had with the Rev Anne-Marie Naylor and the Treasurer, Mrs Goodier. Anne-Marie had been very supportive and grateful for the interest shown by the Parish Council, either to support maintenance of the fabric of the building or help increase use of the Chapel for activities in addition to the normal Sunday services, but all agreed that vehicular access needed to be tackled first as it is the main obstacle to any new projects. The Clerk will investigate the costs of installing grasscrete or similar at the car parking area and the Chair will speak to the landowner about possible installation.

### **073/24 Rhead's Meadows**

The Chairman reported that the new whips had been planted and the grass is being regularly mown by John Harding and Sons, and the new bench donated by a parishioner has been installed.

### **074/24 Blackfirs Wood**

Chairman Bell reported that the Himalayan balsam on site was much better controlled than in previous years. Councillors noted that there had been some chatter on social media about horse riders using the newly installed perimeter paths, depositing horse muck and potentially damaging the surface. However, the Council felt this was a relatively minor issue and there was no way the Council could – or indeed should – police its use.

### **075/24 Highways**

The Council noted again that noise from speeding vehicles at inappropriate times on the CLR is still a problem and causing a nuisance for local residents. This should be reported to Cheshire East Council through the 'Fix my Street' portal, and the Clerk will contact the new Police and Crime Commissioner to discuss this further. Cllr Paul Crompton and Ward Cllr John Wray will continue to investigate the possibility of deployment of noise cameras. The Council will return to the question of additional signs, finger posts etc. around the parish.

### **076/24 Housing Developments**

Cllr Hardman reported that the roads on the Loachbrook Estate were due to be tarmacked the following day, the ironwork had already been done, and Fiona Bruce MP had agreed to raise the matter of poor progress with the works in Parliament. Cllrs noted that the Sandy Lane Community Park is being maintained and well used.

## 077/24 Chairman and Members' reports

Items already covered above – no further reports.

## 078/24 Clerk's Report

The Clerk reminded the Council that the September meeting would be on 30<sup>th</sup> September, and as agreed all future meetings would commence at 7pm. He had collected some of the offcuts of the plastic edging used for the paths at Blackfirs Wood and will make a payment/donation to the Parish Council account to cover the costs.

## Part 2 – no public or press present

The Council **Resolved** that in accordance with the Public Bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960 as extended by the Local Government Act 1972, section 100, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for discussion of the following items on the grounds that the publication of the matter would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of its confidential nature.

## 079/24 – Clerk's Annual Performance Assessment

The Council discussed the Clerk's performance during FY 23/24 on the basis of a recent appraisal. The Council were pleased with the Clerk's performance and on that basis **resolved** to approve his salary progression to spine point 22 on the NALC pay scale, with effect from 1 April 2024. The Council encouraged the Clerk to complete his ILCA to CiLCA training as soon as possible and **resolved** to pay the Clerk (between June 2024 and February 2025) for the additional hours of training which had been agreed previously.

**The meeting ended at 2200 hrs.**


Chairman

## **Annex 1 – Accounts**

### **Finances as of 30 April 2024:**

Account Balance: **£57,399.02**

### **Receipts since 31 March 2024:**

- **£25,000.00** – precept

### **The following Payments since 31 March 2024 :**

- **£49.35** – NEST, Clerk Pension
- **£979.00** – DJM Nurseries
- **£559.36** – ChALC affiliation fee
- **£528.00** – Parish Online subscription
- **£20,000.00** – Equator, Blackfirs Wood landscaping phase 1
- **£66.00** – TCS Payroll Management Services
- **£141.00** – HMRC
- **£41.25** – HCCS Room Hire
- **£561.88** – Clerk Salary

### **The Following Payments were approved:**

- **£496.07** – Insurance Renewal
- **£1,302.60** – Equator tree planting at Rhead's Meadows
- **£23,706.28** – Equator landscaping at Blackfirs Wood
- **£345.00** – Shona Amies, website hosting/maintenance
- **£2,250.00** – Jonathan Douglas, various works around the parish