

## Somerford Parish Council

### Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 30 September 2024

#### Holmes Chapel Community Centre, 7.00pm

#### Present

- Councillor Geoff Bell (Chairman)
- Councillor Jeanette Hardman
- Councillor Bill Chorlton
- Councillor Paul Crompton
- Councillor Trevor Massey
- Mr Carlton Evans – Clerk

#### Declarations of Interest

- Cllr Hardman – any Loachbrook Estate discussions
- Cllr Massey – discussion of support to the Chapel (as Church warden)

#### Part 1 Public Forum

One member of the public was present, Cllr R Douglas (Congleton Town Council). Cllr Douglas reported on the latest situation with home waste and recycling centres in Cheshire East, and widespread increases in reports of fly-tipping. He also reported on traffic/speed problems on Brereton Heath Lane and asked the Parish Council to let him know if they have any reports of problems there, or indeed any suggestions for solutions or mitigating measures.

#### 121/24 – Apologies

The Council received and **resolved** to accept the following apologies:

- Cllr Simon Hughes (work commitments)
- Cllr Gwyneth Derbyshire (personal matters)

### **122/24 Minutes**

The Council **resolved** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 03 September 2024 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

### **123/24 - Cheshire East Ward Councillor Report**

No Report in Councillor Wray's absence.

### **124/24 - Clerk Training and Budget**

The Clerk noted he had successfully completed the ILCA to CiLCA qualification, and the next step would be to enrol for the CiLCA qualification. The Council **resolved** that the Clerk should enrol for both the 'CiLCA – Building Your Portfolio' course and the CiLCA qualification itself, at a cost of £250 and £450 respectively. The next CiLCA intake is in December.

### **125/24 - Budget and Precept for FY 25/26**

Councillors considered the current financial situation and precept request for the next Financial Year.

Ideas for future projects/spend included:

- Extending footpaths southwards along Blackfirs Lane using grass mats on the verges. This would strengthen the walkways while preserving the grass and appearance.
- Additional/replacement signage across the parish such as finger posts at the Chelford Road/Blackfirs Lane junction
- Signs at Hall Lane/Hawthorn Lane and Rhead's Lane
- New Boundary Signs on the borders with Hulme Walfield over the River Dane, Somerford Booths at Radnor Bank, the Congleton border at Back Lane, and the Astbury border towards the Wallhill Roundabout
- Information boards or similar (QR Codes) in Blackfirs Wood and Rhead's Meadows
- Additional Notice Boards and defibs at the new housing developments.
- Engaging the services of a lengthsmen for general maintenance and small scale projects, perhaps sharing the cost with neighbouring parishes.

Some of these had been discussed previously and should be possible to implement before the end of this Financial Year. The Clerk was asked to investigate potential costs and the Council will discuss this again at its next meeting. The Clerk will try to mock up what new signage could look like for the junction of Chelford Road and Blackfirs Lane.

### **126/24 Planning Applications**

#### **24/3201C**

9, YEW CRESCENT, SOMERFORD, CW12 4ZG

Proposed single storey rear extension with internal alterations.

The Council **resolved** to raise no objection to this application.

### **127/24 - Policies to Review**

The Council reviewed its Grants and donations policy and **resolved** to increase the limit for individual grants to £1,000. This would be 2% of the current precept.

The Council reviewed its Financial regulations and **resolved** to maintain the 'authority to spend' thresholds as they are now but to defer a final decision on the full text to its October meeting.

### **128/24 - Parish Signage**

Covered under the budget discussion above.

### **129/24 – Possibility of a PSPO for Rhead’s Meadows and Blackfirs Wood**

The Council recognised that although there is a blanket PSPO in Cheshire East covering dog fouling and dogs under control it would be wholly impractical for the Parish Council to try to police it. However, the Council will continue to carry information notes in future newsletters. The Clerk is due to meet the Dog Wardens on 01 October for a site visit and further discussion.

### **130/24 - Update on the new website and emails**

The Clerk will explore with the service provider how to resolve problems accessing the new email accounts and advise accordingly, and will recirculate the email set-up instructions. He will also see if web searches could automatically direct searchers to the new website rather than the old site.

### **131/24 - Somerford Chapel Support**

Cllrs discussed whether the laying of grass mats had improved parking arrangements. The general feeling was definitely yes, though some drivers were still getting used to using the reinforced area rather than other areas of the lawn, and some people are finding the walking surface rather 'spongy', though this should improve as the mats settle in and the grass takes over. There are already plans to hold an additional Christmas service there on 15 December, thanks to the improved parking.

### **132/24 - Rhead's Meadows**

Cllrs noted that there had been some fly tipping by the entrance gate, which has since been reported via 'Fix my Street'. The Clerk will arrange a sign to advise people that 24hr access is required at the gate. The Clerk will chase the Cheshire Wildlife Trust who had agreed to propose a costed maintenance plan for the Meadows.

### **133/24 - Blackfirs Wood**

Some parishioners had expressed concern that the paths through the Wood are becoming overgrown. There is a balance between encouraging natural growth and wildlife while still making the Wood easily and safely accessible to walkers and others. As with Rhead's Meadows, the Clerk will chase the CWT who had agreed to propose a costed maintenance plan for the Wood. It was clear that some parishioners were tackling the Himalayan balsam as encouraged on our website.

### **134/24 – Bin/Speed Signs**

The Council **resolved** to purchase a mix of additional stickers for residents to affix to their bins encouraging drivers to slow down etc., at a cost of some £250.00.

### **135/24 – Highways**

Nothing further to report.

### **136/24 – Housing Developments**

Cllr Hardman reported that she had been contacted by a housing association (Aspire) who own some of the properties on the Loachbrook estate with a view to discussing residents' concerns. Their involvement could help strengthen relationships with Bovis/Vistry and clarify responsibility for tackling problems. Workers appear to be marking up the roads ready for topping off, regardless of any disputes with their contractors about drainage etc.

### **137/24 - Chairman and Members' Reports**

Chairman Bell reported on the recent passing of former Councillor Kath Wainwright. The Council recognised Kath's great support to the Parish and observed a minute's silence in her memory.

### **138/24 Clerk's Report**


Given the increasing number of face to face interactions between councillors, residents, developers etc., the Clerk will look into purchasing lanyards to identify councillors and the Clerk.

A young parishioner had offered to volunteer her services around the parish as part of completing the Duke of Edinburgh award. The Clerk is discussing activities and areas of focus with the young person's parents, particularly at Rhead's Meadows and Blackfirs Wood.

The Police and Crime Commissioner, Dan Price, has agreed to attend the Council's meeting in December and the Clerk has invited neighbouring parishes to attend.

The Clerk reminded Councillors that it is time to start preparing the next parish council Newsletter, which will be another opportunity to advertise the current Councillor vacancies.

**The meeting ended at 2050 hrs.**

 Chairman
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## Annex

### Finances as of 20 September 2024:

Account Balance: **£42,256.40**

### Payments to note since 31 July 2024:

- £40.00 – ICO annual fees
- £54.78 – NEST, Clerk Pension
- £41.25 – HCCS Room Booking
- £159.77 - HMRC
- £159.97 – HMRC
- £620.50 – Clerk August Salary
- £41.25 – HCCS room booking
- £54.78 – NEST, Clerk Pension
- £1,820.16 – Grassmats parking reinforcement
- £1,048.80 – Grassmats parking reinforcement
- £6,999.60 – Grassmats parking reinforcement
- £300.00 – Clerk CiLCA Training and enrolment fees

### Receipts since 31 July 2024:

- £2,859.19 – VAT reclaim
- £25,000.00 – precept, second tranche
- £1.30 – Lloyds share dividend

### Payments to approve:

- £None