

Somerford Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 May 2022

Present

- Councillor Geoff Bell (Chairman)
- Councillor Gwyneth Derbyshire
- Councillor Jeanette Hardman
- Councillor Simon Hughes
- Mr Carlton Evans – Clerk
- Ward Councillor John Wray

Election of Chairman for 2022-2023

The Council **resolved** unanimously to elect Cllr Geoff Bell as chairman for the next year. Cllr Bell duly read and signed the acceptance of office.

Declarations of Interest

- Cllr Derbyshire and Cllr Hardman for any Loachbrook discussions.

Part 1 Public Forum

Two members of the public were present. They voiced their concerns about the behaviour of dogs and their walkers and their own privacy. They suggested a 'breaker' fence to protect the area at the back of their garden and notices advising dog walkers to stick to the paths. Chairman Bell pointed out that there were no intended footpaths other than the hard footpath which was designed to make sure that those with pushchairs, mobility scooters etc. could use the Meadows more easily. Some areas especially at the back of neighbouring houses had been more heavily planted with trees which would deter walkers when established but would take a little time. The parishioners repeated that they didn't want to erect their own fence and spoil their view and acknowledged that the wildflowers look lovely at present.

Apologies

- Councillor Paul Crompton (travel)

51/22 Minutes

The Council **resolved** that the minutes of the Council meeting on 20 April 2022 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

52/22 Election of the vice-Chairman for 2022/2023

The Council **resolved** unanimously to re-elect Cllr Paul Crompton as vice-Chairman.

The Council **resolved** to advertise the current two councillor vacancies using the Congleton Chronicle, Facebook, the parish website, noticeboards and on the Cheshire East website.

53/22 Councillor Responsibilities

Councillors agreed their responsibilities for the coming year and these will be updated on the website.

54/22 Register of Interests

Councillors reviewed their Registers of Interests and made any necessary amendments.

55/22 Accounts

The account balance on 1 May 2022 was noted - **£63,828.08**

The Council **resolved** to approve the following invoices:

- £60 – TCS Management (payroll)
- £118 Carbonite online computer backup
- £402.63 – Zurich Insurance renewal
- £240 – Somerford Park Farm room hire

The following payments were noted

- £515.40 – Clerk's Salary
- £400.68 ChALC affiliation
- £870 – TWM traffic control (SIDs device)

56/22 Planning Applications

None

57/22 Financial Regulations

In accordance with NALC guidelines the Council reviewed its Financial Regulations to consider any amendments. They noted some anomalies and that the Somerford Regulations were more restrictive than the NALC guidelines, both in terms of the thresholds above which quotes or estimates were needed and the numbers of quotes and estimates needed. The Council **resolved** that they would strive to give prior approval to larger projects with a

defined indicative financial envelope. Individual invoices within those envelopes would not need to come back to Council for approval but would be noted on meeting agendas.

The Council **resolved** to adjust the thresholds for procurement of goods or services in section 11.1.(h) of the Financial Regulations, in line with the NALC guidelines, as follows:

- £1 - £500 no estimates or quotes will be needed, but the Clerk and Chair will agree in advance of procurement and report expenditure to the full Council
- £500-£5,000 three estimates will be sought, and approval of the full Council (or a designated committee) will be required.
- £5,000-£25,000 three formal quotes will be sought, and the approval of the full Council will be required.

58/22 Rhead's Meadows

The Clerk had approached three contractors about the weeding needed at Rhead's Meadows. John Harding was the only contractor to respond the Council **resolved** to employ John Harding at up to £660 for a day's spot weeding.

59/22 Black Firs Nature Reserve

Cllr Hughes had taken more detailed measurements for the paths in Blackfirs and the verge at the perimeter. On the internal path the lengths were quite considerable and it would be costly to install an additional stretch of path, so a phased approach would be the best option. The Council also discussed the problems encountered by schoolchildren and walkers with the lack of a dedicated footpath outside the reserve.

The Council **resolved** to contact DWH about the fence/hedge at the north of Blackfirs Wood and their intentions for it, and to meet John Harding as soon as possible to discuss the meandering path on the front verge and spraying the Himalayan balsam. The Clerk and Chairman Bell will try to meet Chris Prest from Equator about the next phase of work around the ponds and reinstating the pathways. Chairman Bell will contact the gate manufacturers about refitting the two-way swinging gate and refitting the other two 5-bar gates. Councillors noted the increasing frustration of residents who find people either not clearing up after their dogs or clearing up but leaving their dog bags lying around.

60/22 Housing Developments

Cllr Hardman reported that there had been no progress on rectifying the numerous problems on the Loachbrook estate for several months and no communications on the works needed. Another contractor to replace Matthews and Leigh was being sought to finish off the works, but it does look as if the roads will remain unadopted. Chairman Bell reported on the Bellway storm drain going up Blackfirs Lane and across and down Chelford Road. They had encountered running sand on Chelford Road which has meant a much bigger excavation exercise than planned. Some residents are complaining because of excessive

vibrations and cracks to plasterwork etc., meanwhile Cheshire East are threatening action against Bellway because of the time being taken.

61/22 A536 Link Road

The Council noted that lighting the roundabouts on the road was being discussed but without a clear idea of the value. The temporary speed restriction seems semi-permanent while it's uncertain what works are planned, and it appears there is no enforcement of speed limits along the CLR anyway. Noise is primarily due to hard acceleration then deceleration between the roundabouts and average speed cameras may not detect this. The PCC John Dwyer is very receptive to tackling Cheshire East on problems along the CLR. Councillors noted the advertising banners that were being placed on the fencing and there will be a reminder in the Newsletter and website that fly posting would not be tolerated. They also noted that someone seems to be living in a car on Chelford Road several nights a week.

62/22 Cheshire East Report

Most issues had already been discussed so Cllr Wray had little to add. He will investigate further with Cheshire East Highways what they are planning along Chelford Road in light of the problems Bellway had encountered to get both sides of the story.

63/22 Newsletter

Several possible pieces were discussed including the CGR etc. The Council **resolved** to draft several articles by 6 June, including police liaison, highways, and dog waste.

64/22 Chairman and Members' reports

Two Jubilee benches have been purchased but won't arrive in time for the Jubilee weekend. A few laurel plants will be needed to replace those that have failed at the perimeter of Rhead's Meadows. The Council **resolved** to replace these at a cost of up to £300.

65/22 Clerk's Report

The Clerk had received an estimate that an oak tree celebrating the Jubilee at Rhead's Meadows would cost around £100 but wouldn't be available til the Autumn. He will investigate a report of a faulty gate at Rhead's Meadows. On future meeting dates, Astbury Village Hall is available on 20 June and 18 July. Because of absences the Clerk will investigate if the July meeting could still be held at Astbury Village Hall if postponed by a few days, otherwise a meeting in July will not be held.

The meeting ended at 2205 hrs

X

Chairman