

Somerford Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 May 2023

Holmes Chapel Community Centre, 7.30pm

Present

- Councillor Geoff Bell (Chairman)
- Councillor Trevor Massey (left at 9.20pm)
- Councillor Jeanette Hardman
- Councillor Gwyneth Derbyshire
- Councillor John Leigh (left at 9.20pm)
- Councillor Bill Chorlton
- Mr Carlton Evans – Clerk

Declarations of Interest

- Councillor Hardman – Loachbrook Estate discussions
- Councillor Derbyshire - Loachbrook Estate discussions

59/23 - Election of the Chairman for 23/24

Councillors unanimously elected Cllr Geoff Bell as Chairman for the coming year.

60/23 – Acceptance of office

All Councillors present signed their acceptance of office declarations. The Council noted that Cllrs Simon Hughes and Paul Crompton had been elected unopposed but could not be present and **resolved** that they could sign their acceptance of office declarations at or before the next meeting of the Council.

61/23 - Election of the Vice Chairman for 23/24

Councillors **resolved** unanimously to elect Cllr Jeanette Hardman as Vice Chairman for the coming year.

Part 1 Public Forum

Four members of the public were present (see item 64/23 below).

Apologies

- Cllr Hughes, travel commitments
- Cllr Paul Crompton, travel commitments
- Ward Councillor John Wray, no explanation given.

62/23 Minutes

The Council **resolved** that the minutes of the Council meeting on 17 April be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

63/23 Accounts

See Annex

64/23 Somerford Green Housing Development

Four Representatives from Anwyl and Asteer Planning discussed their proposed Housing Development just to the north of the Radnor Roundabout. They talked through the number of properties, typology and density, parking provision and the landscaping of the site.

Councillors raised concerns about the need for a crossing point over the CLR; whether the parking provision on the site would be adequate; and whether the perimeter grass verges would be damaged by cars and also become a de facto dog walking route regardless of any provision of paved walkways through the centre of the site. They also questioned the location of the play space as this was proposed at the very edge of the site with very few properties able to oversee it.

The Anwyl representatives said that they had agreed with Cheshire East as part of their outline planning permission to provide money for works on the CLR. They had also agreed that CE would use some of this contribution to fund a new CLR pedestrian crossing. There was parking provision which increased for the larger properties and was in line with Cheshire East guidelines. The retention of the PROW through the centre of the site (rather than re-routing) and a more informal route with grass verges and block paving at the perimeter were both requirements of the Cheshire East Design Guide and other policies. Anwyl did agree that they would raise these matters with the planning department including whether there was any flexibility on either surfacing or routing of the pathways to meet these concerns. The Clerk will contact CE Planning to make sure we are alerted once the application is submitted.

65/23 Planning Applications

Update on 23/0207C, Somerford Park Farm expansion. The Chairman noted that another document from Emery Planning had been submitted, largely refuting the objections raised by local residents and the Parish Council. The Chairman will draft a follow up response in due course if needed.

66/23 Cheshire East Ward Councillor Report

No report in Cllr Wray's absence.

67/23 Rhead's Meadows

Councillors noted that the increase in dog waste was an increasing problem and the dog bins provided were not sufficient to cope with it. The Clerk is looking into this with Congleton Town Council. Some additional 'regular' waste bins had appeared at the north entrance but are not provided by Congleton TC and so not likely to be emptied either. Someone had also sprayed the grass at the base of the saplings but it's unknown as to who has done this. Spot spraying of the dock, ragwort and thistles would need to be done again and the Council **resolved** to ask Equator to put forward a proposal as a continuation of their previous contracts. Meanwhile the Council **resolved** to allocate £5,000 in the first instance for spraying and ground maintenance etc. at Rhead's Meadows.

68/23 Blackfirs Wood

Councillors noted that the Himalayan balsam needs pulling and suggested that the 'Friends of Blackfirs Wood' should be contacted and invited to spend half an hour now and then pulling and piling the balsam. The Clerk and Cllr Hardman will publicise this including on Facebook.

The Council noted that improving and extending the internal footpaths was still an option. A local resident had been in touch about the apparent increase in numbers of people using the new perimeter footpath and then the verge outside his property as an informal footpath. The Chairman will draft an email to residents about the footpaths. The resident's email had also mentioned that the rear fence to the wood had been cut in order for residents of the Somerset Reach housing development to take a short cut through to Blackfirs Lane and the Holmes Chapel Road. There were several options but no obvious solution. Erecting a new sturdier fence would not prevent people cutting it again, while installing gates might simply encourage more people to use the shortcut thus compromising the very nature of the Wood. As a first step the Council will seek a quote to see what the costs would be for a replacement fence both with and without gates, and a price per metre to improve existing and install additional pathways. Once received the Council will discuss whether proceed and seek additional quotes.

The Clerk has been in touch with CE Planning Enforcement about the property which had 'annexed' a section of the 10m wildlife corridor/buffer zone to become part of their property and will arrange a site visit with CE officers. The Council noted that the rider of the small electric bike inside the Wood had stopped doing so.

69/23 Highways and A536 Link Road

No additional comments.

70/23 Housing Developments

Cllr Hardman reported on positive developments with Bovis/Vistry who will reinstate regular residents' meetings as early as Wednesday 17th May. There is of course a long agenda. The Clerk will aim to attend these meetings if possible.

71/23 Chairman and Members' reports

One Councillor reported that he did not receive a postal copy of the latest Parish Newsletter. The Clerk will follow up with the printers to make sure they have the most up to date database of properties in the Parish. The Council **resolved** to focus on refreshing the Business Plan for the time being rather than focus on updating and seeking (lengthy) approval for a revised Neighbourhood Plan.

72/23 Clerk's training and qualifications

Cllr Hardman reported on recent discussions with the SLCC about the Clerk's CiLCA qualification. There were a few preparatory courses that were recommended by SLCC and the Council **resolved** to fund these. The target would be to complete the 'Building your Portfolio' and 'ILCA to CiLCA' courses before applying for the CiLCA qualification in the autumn (November). Costs would be shared with Astbury Parish Council. The Council further **resolved** to increase the Clerk's hours to 44 per month to cover this. Cllr Hardman had prepared a spreadsheet to record actual hours worked more systematically.

Cllr Hardman also reported that the Clerk had not taken his full entitlement and the Council **resolved** to make a payment of some £540 'backpay' to cover this.

73/23 Clerk's Report

The Clerk noted that Councils were advised to co-opt to fill current vacancies soon, and the Clerk will send Cllr Chorlton some training material for new Councillors.

The meeting ended at 2150 hrs.

X

Chairman

Annex – Accounts

Account Balance as of 9 May 2023: **£54,267.35**

Payments to approve:

- none

The Council noted the following payments since 17 April:

- £411.81 – ChALC affiliation fee
- £63.00 – TCS Management
- £132.60 - HMRC
- £482.76 – Clerk salary
- £42.07 - NEST pension

The Council noted the following receipts:

- £3,052.59