

Somerford Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 15 January 2025

Holmes Chapel Community Centre, 7.00pm

Present

- Councillor Geoff Bell (Chairman)
- Councillor Jeanette Hardman (vice-Chair)
- Councillor Simon Hughes (arrived 7.10pm)
- Councillor Paul Crompton
- Councillor Trevor Massey
- Councillor Bill Chorlton
- Mr Carlton Evans – Clerk

Declarations of Interest

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

Part 1 Public Forum

One member of the public was present, Congleton Town Councillor Robert Douglas. He spoke about the very large amount of unused s106 monies held by or not collected by CE Council; proposals for the location of polling stations; and CEC's plans to raise council tax by 9.99%. On the first, Congleton Primary School had approached the Somerford Clerk to see if they could access some of these monies. Although the school is just across the border in Congleton West, many pupils are likely to live in Somerford. Cllr Douglas and the Clerk will work together to see what could be done for residents of both Somerford and Congleton West. On the second, the CE proposals for polling booth locations were sub-optimal for both Brereton and Somerford residents, and he (and the Clerk) had made representations to CE about this. The Council took note of the CE proposals on Council Tax which would not be popular for residents.

016/25 – Apologies

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

- Cllr Gwyneth Derbyshire (family commitments)

17/25 – Minutes

The Council **resolved** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 16th December 2024 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

18/25 – Accounts

See Annex 1

19/25 - Cheshire East Ward Councillor Report

No report in Councillor Wray's absence.

20/25 - Budget and Precept for FY 25/26

Councillors considered the budget and ambitions for the parish and agreed to request a precept for the 2025/26 Financial Year of £53,210, which equates to a Band D equivalent of £51.16. This is an overall increase of 2%, or the equivalent of £1 per household per year compared with 2024/25.

21/25 - Planning Applications

None received.

22/25 - Policies to Review

The Council reviewed its Health and Safety Policy and **resolved** to adopt it unamended.

23/25 - Rhead's Meadows

The Clerk reported that the Cheshire Wildlife Trust had put together a maintenance proposal which would include CWT employees and volunteers. It was somewhat incomplete as they had not quoted a price for some aspects such as weeding etc. The Clerk will contact them and also invite other contractors to bid for the work.

24/25 - Blackfirs Wood

As with Rhead's Meadows, the CWT had put together a maintenance proposal and the Clerk will invite other contractors to bid also. The strands of barbed wire at the perimeter fence that some parishioners had complained about have been made safe.

25/25 – Highways

Cllrs expressed concern at the number of thoroughfares that had not been gritted in the recent snow and ice, and the fact that CEC were not currently proposing to change their existing gritting routes/schedules. The Clerk will continue to challenge CEC since the changing population in the Parish means that there are different travel patterns. This is particularly the case for Blackfirs Lane which is now a main pedestrian and vehicle route for Congleton High School pupils living at the new (Somersetford) housing estates.

26/25 – Housing Developments

Cllr Hardman reported on her site visit with Sarah Russell MP to show her the full extent of the problems on the Loachbrook Estate. Ms Russell offered to write to both United Utilities and Bovis/Vistry to seek explanations for the lack of progress on completing the estate and urge them to address all the outstanding works. Vistry had said they are preparing to select a Management Company despite the fact that the estate works are not complete, and seem now to be proposing to hand over 'control' of the estate to a residents' committee. It is not clear how this could complement the role of the proposed Management Company.


27/25 - Chairman and Members' Reports

Cllrs noted that the Christmas Lights at the Chelford Road/Blackfirs Lane junction had been impressive. However, as the fir trees grow the Council may need to top them or arrange other equipment to install the lights each year such as a telehandler with platform. Alternatively some other temporary structure could be erected and dressed instead. The Council discussed options for road names for the five roads on the proposed Anwyl Estate and the Clerk will write to CE Council with some suggestions.

28/25 Clerk's Report

Nothing further to report, matters already covered under other items on the agenda.

The meeting ended at 2125 hrs.


Chairman

Annex 1 - Accounts

Finances as of 01 January 2025:

Account Balance: **£33,515.87**

Receipts since 01 December 2024:

- £nil

Payments to note since 01 December 2024:

- £71.45 - NEST, Clerk Pension
- £1,597.86 – Congleton TC, dog bin emptying
- £240.23 - HMRC
- £774.57 - Clerk Salary plus mileage and expenses

Payments to approve:

£nil