

MELLS PARISH COUNCIL
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A meeting of Mells Parish Council took place on Tuesday 8 March 2011 at Mells Barn.

1. **PRESENT:** Countess of Oxford & Asquith, Mr E Costelloe (Chairman), Mrs M Jennings, Mrs J Mann, Mr C Tye, Ms R Wallace (Vice Chair), Mr S West and Miss H Wynter.

The Clerk was in attendance. The Somerset County/Mendip District Councillor and four residents also attended.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** There were no apologies for absence.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** Clare Oxford declared an interest in Item 11 and the Vice Chair in Items 6(e) and 7(d)

4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING** held on 18 January 2011 had been circulated. It was resolved that the minutes be adopted. The minutes were then signed by the Chairman.

5. **MATTERS ARISING**

- a) **Police Community Support Officers' Steering Committee:** In the absence of Abi Blanche-Martin the Clerk read extracts from the PCSOs' Report for February 2011.

Vince Turner arrived at this point.

- b) **Signpost at Woodlands Ends:** Mr & Mrs Dick at The Pound had declined Jeff Bunting's offer to keep their boundary foliage cut back to reveal the finger post indicating Great Elm and had requested that it be removed. Jeff Bunting had confirmed that County Roads will fund its removal and relocation to another location within the parish with new destination arms. A sign indicating the direction of Great Elm will be attached to an existing post on Lime Kiln Hill and a further sign on a short post will be installed very close to The Pound boundary wall, both funded by County Roads.

Parish councillors will consider possible new locations for the finger post including replacing the finger post at the top of Lime Kiln Hill, destroyed by a hedge cutter, on the other side of the road from its original site.

Clerk requested to ask Jeff Bunting to select new signs at Woodlands End as sympathetic to the surroundings as possible.

- c) **Secure storage of council's minute books:** Parish minute books are now securely stored at the Somerset Heritage Centre near Taunton where they can be accessed on request.
- d) **Feasibility of footpath across Mells Green:** Clare Oxford had met with Becky Askew and had agreed arrangements to install an all-weather fenced-in footpath leading from Little Green to Mells First School, following the lines of

the existing perimeter fence. The quarry had agreed to provide a grant to cover all costs. A further meeting would be arranged before work commenced.

- e) **Extra bags of de-icing material:** Vince Turner confirmed that he had collected eight more bags of salt and was storing them pending their emergency need in the Parish.
- f) **Conduit Lane flooding:** The Estate had authorised County Roads to undertake remedial works to alleviate the drainage problems on the bend.
- g) **Blocked gullies at Woodlands End:** reported to County Roads.
- h) **Upper Vobster pothole repairs:** reported to County Roads.

6. REPORT FROM COUNTY/DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Matthew Ellis asked to be kept informed about unfilled potholes. Filling criteria had been reduced to 35ml depth. Funding had been withdrawn from Coleford Youth Centre which had not been well used. It was being sold to a youth charity which needed young volunteers to help take the task on. It was hoped that Coleford Recycling Centre would remain open with reduced hours. According to the Mendip Local Development Framework Core Strategy draft plan for consultation Mells was a primary village but in line for up to ten residential units which would have to be financed by a private developer. Library funding had been reduced over the county but its distribution had not yet been decided. Frome Library was not under threat of closure.

Councillors raised questions about the problems of rural litter. Cllr Ellis suggested reporting severe problems to Mendip DC who should respond within 48 hours. The Parish Council thanked Matthew Ellis, who was retiring in May as district councillor, for his services to Mells in that capacity.

7. PLANNING

- a) **Replacement of windows, doors, glazed screen and internal alterations, Rectory Stables, Gay Street, Mells:** Mendip DC approval granted.
- b) **Proposed felling of trees in a conservation area, The Old Forge, Little Green, Mells:** Parish recommended approval.
- c) **Lawful development certificate for a proposed garden room, Brierley, Little Green, Mells:** Mendip DC approval granted.
- d) **Alterations to house and ancillary buildings etc, Wadbury House, Mells:** Mendip DC granted approval and listed building consent with conditions.
- e) **Re approval with conditions for change of use of land from agriculture to equestrian use and construction of a stable block and ménage for private use, Virginia Cottage, Upper Vobster:** The Chairman advised that the original planning permission had not been opposed by the Parish Council but that it had not been invited to make observations regarding a subsequent application relating to floodlighting. When neighbours in Vobster and particularly at Page House in Newbury voiced concerns about the extreme light levels the Chairman had written to complain that Mells Parish Council had not been notified about a potentially contentious issue, thus making a mockery of public consultation. Mendip DC had responded that the lighting was a merely technical matter. The owner of Page House had made a formal complaint to Mendip DC and this appeared to be the best way forward.
- f) **Construction of a sloping driveway and a retaining wall, Meadowbank, Top Road, Mells:** Mendip DC approval granted with conditions.

- g) **Demolition of retaining wall, Meadowbank, Top Road, Mells:** Mendip DC approval granted with conditions.
- h) **Proposed works to trees and hedges in a conservation area, Hillside, Mells Green:** Mendip DC had no objections.

8. **LETTERS FROM SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL**

- a) **Re final phase of SORT IT Plus:** Cardboard and plastic bottle recycling had now been resumed. It was hoped that other kinds of plastic would eventually be able to be reprocessed.
- b) **Re Reports from SCC meeting and Somerset Waste Partnership workshop to discuss closure of Coleford Recycling Centre:** Noted.
- c) **Re Reduction in SCC youth provision 2011/12:** Noted.
- d) **Re Application to upgrade footpaths FR4/56 & FR 10/9 to bridleway:** A Report giving an opportunity for the Council to comment was circulated. Councillors noted its recommendation that, since bridleway use had already been established, the footpath should be upgraded and publicly maintained.

9. **LETTERS FROM MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL**

- a) **Mendip Local Development Framework Draft Core Strategy:** Noted.

10. **LETTERS AND REPORTS**

- a) **From the Earl of Oxford & Asquith:** A letter from Raymond Oxford was read out in response to a letter of condolence sent by the Clerk on behalf of the Parish Council.
- b) **Community Council of Somerset:** it was agreed that an annual subscription of £35 would be an unnecessary expense.
- c) It was agreed to pay the affiliation fee of the **Somerset Association of Local Councils** for the year 2011/12 of £142.52, representing a total of 519 electors.

11. **ELECTIONS**

- a) It was noted that, were there to be a poll, parish elections would be combined with elections for Mendip DC and the national referendum on the voting system on 5 May.
- b) All councillors present indicated their wish to receive a nomination form.
- c) Two residents had expressed an interest in becoming a parish councillor.

12. **RECREATION GROUND**

- a) Mells Parish Council resolved to assign the Recreation Ground lease between the Trustees of Viscount Asquith's 1999 Settlement and Mells Parish Council to Mells Sports & Recreation Company Limited – Company Registration Number 7492293 – and to bear the costs of this said transaction in full.
- b) Mells Parish Council resolved that notwithstanding the assignment of the Recreation Ground lease to Mells Sports & Recreation Company the Parish Council will undertake to indemnify the Company in respect of all rental payments and insurance premiums.

- c) The Chairman advised that Mells Sports & Recreation Co Ltd had now been registered and that its first meeting to accept its assignment of the lease would now take place following the passing of the above two resolutions.

13) WHITE BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS

- a) A draft costing and plans for the preferred ‘hybrid’ wood and steel design with resin bonded gravel on the footplate, together with copies of the original three designs, were circulated.
- b) The Parish Council considered whether it would be appropriate to go ahead with a project to replace White Bridge at a time of economic downturn when the existing bridge was not yet in need of replacement. The Council decided that a new, well designed bridge could, with suitable grants, become the impetus for the regeneration of the surrounding area and also commemorate the Diamond Jubilee. White Bridge was well used by walkers and school children but the area, at the centre of the village, had visually deteriorated in recent years and needed attention. The Estate was asked to formulate a plan for the enhancement of the area.
- c) John Mann’s budget costing of £13,500 for a new bridge was considered extremely reasonable and concern was expressed that rising raw material costs may render this unfeasible in the near future. The Vice Chair would seek Trustees’ views with regard to possible funding from the Mells & Vobster Trust for a joint community venture with the Parish Council, an option which might no longer be available if the scheme were shelved for the time being. Clerk to make enquiries about further funding from outside bodies to spread the costs.
- d) Mr John Mann was thanked for all his work in preparing the design, plans and costings for the project.
- e) Clerk to contact Robert Coate at Somerset CC about the replacement of a missing vertical rail on White Bridge.

14) DISTRIBUTION OF GRANTS

- a) It was agreed not to make a grant to Victim Support.
- b) It was agreed to made a grant of £100 to Age Concern Somerset

15) ACCOUNTS

- a) Hedleys Solicitors LLP
(Professional charges re incorporation of Mells Sports & Recreation Co Ltd) £320.00
- b) JK Costelloe
Clerk’s salary – December (paid by standing order) £ 259.20
January (paid by standing order) £ 259.20

16) RECEIPTS: None

17) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- a) It was agreed to re-elect Bryon Axford, Shirley Inch and Monica Jennings as nominative trustees of Mells Charities.
- b) Helen Wynter agreed to remove the poppy wreaths from the War Memorial.

- c) The Vice Chair expressed concern that no official communication had been received in Mells regarding the new travellers' site at Coleford. Clerk to take up with the District Councillor.
- d) Steve West asked the Clerk to request the Mells Park land agent to have the trees opposite Halecombe Quarry cut down completely and offered to meet with him to explain the problem with sightlines.
- e) The Clerk was making enquiries with Somerset CC re the availability of a grant for the annual cutting back of footpaths within the Parish.
- f) David Thomson, SpeedWatch Co-ordinator, was still trying to find new recruits to help restart the scheme.

18) DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 5 April 2011 in Mells Barn.

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