

MELLS PARISH COUNCIL
(mellsparishcouncil.org.uk)

**Minutes of the remote meeting held via Zoom of Mells Parish Council on
Tuesday 11 August 2020**

01.08.20 PRESENT:

Cllr J Earl – Chair, Cllr John Henderson, Cllr E Costelloe, Cllr H Leakey, The Countess of Oxford & Asquith,
In Attendance: Joy Book, Clerk, Cllr Alison Barkshire – District Councillor
Members of the public: None

02.08.20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Cllr Alan Brady, Cllr V Turner, Cllr S West, Cllr D Seviour, Cllr J Seewooruttun

03.08.20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

04.08.20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

None

05.08.20 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:

- i. **Unitary council update:** The four leaders of the districts have met with the Secretary of State. Current government policy is to dissolve district councils and have unitary councils on two levels – Unitary and regional. The district councils have 8 weeks to put together a business case and submit it although no funding has been provided to do this. Somerset CC would like a 'One Somerset' approach whereas it is probably more realistic to split the area east/west to form two smaller unitary councils due to the size of the county. Somerset is being used as a test case so it is likely that the formation of a unitary council will go ahead. B&NES was initially keen to merge with Mendip DC but they have now withdrawn their support for this and are looking more towards joining greater Bristol.

Some form of consultation will be taking place between September and November but it will not be a referendum. A decision will be made in December. The timeline for a unitary council to be in place is April 2021 for a shadow unitary council with the full unitary council being in place early 2022.

The thinking behind having a unitary authority is to save money and have a 'one stop shop'. However, savings have not been seen in other areas that have become unitary. Mendip DC hope to get more for their money, rather than saving money.

There is currently caps on rates which the district councils can claim but there are no caps for town or parish councils. There is concerns that the services will be passed down to the lower level councils. When this has happened elsewhere, the services have invariably failed and been returned back to the central council.

The government is keen for unitary councils to go ahead but it is feared that there will not be sufficient consultation on the matter. The general public may have more influence on how the unitary council is formed rather than stopping the formation in the first place. Cllr Barkshire suggested writing to the local MP with any objections.

It was agreed to hold an extraordinary meeting on Monday 17 August at 7.30pm to solely discuss this issue.

06.08.20 COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:

None submitted.

07.08.20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 14 JULY 2020

had previously been circulated. The minutes were agreed and pp'd by the Clerk.

08.08.20 MATTERS ARISING

- i. **Superfast broadband:** John Macdonald has been following up with all the companies which may bring a better system into Mells and had submitted the following information.

CDS: (Connecting Devon and Somerset) – Due to the collapse of Carillion, they have had to re-tender. Completion date is by the end of 2023 but there is no guarantee this will include Mells or Vobster

Voneus: Buckland Dinham is supplied by Voneous but there are no plans at present to come to Mells although they are “preparing a major plan for the area”...

Truespeed: Not enough interest had been raised with the household sign ups. Their basic price for broadband is expensive at around £50/month (they have been asked for more flexible pricing). Truespeed is currently supplying Leigh and part of Coleford but have so far failed to live up to promises to bring a service to Chantry.

Openreach: Would wire all of Mells but would make a charge of £140K to do so.

Fibreway: Is a small Midsomer Norton based firm which has been active since 2018. They supply hybrid - ie wireless and/or fibre which they have installed in Foxcote, Shoscombe, Kilmersdon, Norton St Philip, Charlton, Faulkland and Whatley. They are currently preparing a plan based on a fixed wireless supply from Whatley over the Quarry to southern Mells. It is hoped a proposal will be put forward very soon (weeks rather than months) which could be followed by rapid first stage implementation. They will consider Vobster once Mells is supplied. Clare Asquith reported that Fibreway had negotiated with the diocese to use the spire as a means of bringing fibre through the village. Fibreway are also talking to the quarry and the landowner regarding installing a mast.

John Macdonald will continue to work with Fibreway and Openreach as they are the two most likely options.

- ii. **Condition of grass triangle – Bottom Lane:** The Estate has agreed to installing some sort of matting to stop further erosion. Clerk to forward various designs to Clare Asquith.
- iii. **Co-option of councillor:** To be carried over until face to face meetings can take place.
- iv. **Entrance to the Barn:** To be carried forward until restrictions are lifted.
- v. **Website:** Chair to give Clerk contact details of website designer.
- vi. **Alternative uses for telephone box:** To be carried over until the school re-opens.
- vii. **Litter by the pond:** Clerk has contacted Somerset Waste but received no response. To be chased. Clare Asquith will look at larger bin options.
- viii. **Wooden footpath post – Rashwood Lane footpath, Gay Street:** No further information.

09.08.20 HIGHWAYS ISSUES

10.08.20 PLANNING

New Applications:

2020/1505/HSE: Erection of single storey side extension, two storey rear extension and front porch. Demolition of existing garage and outbuildings and erection of garage – Cuckolds Corner, Mells Green – John Earl and Jan Seewooruttun will arrange a site visit.

Mendip Decisions: None

11.08.20 CORRESPONDENCE

- i. **Mells Nursery – Forest School shelter funds:** The application was addressed to Mells and Vobster Trust which had been dissolved around a year ago with the remaining funds of £229.81 being passed to the PC. It was agreed to donate this to the shelter project.

John Henderson suggested that a new Community Benefit Fund should be formed to cover items like the above. This will be discussed at a later meeting. Clare Asquith reported that the quarry is currently very keen to support local projects as they are imminently going to submit an application to extend the quarry. The new benefit fund could be written into and form part of, the planning approval. It was also suggested that Justin Collis, the Community Manager at the quarry, could attend a meeting. Cllr Barkshire queried whether the quarry would be willing to install a footpath along the road in front of the quarry.

12.08.20 ACCOUNTS AND OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS

Balance as at 28 July 2020 - HSBC £19,342.75. Balance as at 19 June 2020 - Barclays £5,316.76.

- i. **Payment of accounts:**

Clerk's Salary (July)		£246.55
Phone line rental	5.50	
Utilities	<u>4.00</u>	
		£9.50
HMRC PAYE (Period 5)		£61.60
Goode & Handy – footpath clearance		£20.00
Martin Moore – defib fitting		£75.00
Andy's Electricals – electricity to defib		£206.40
Spiegel Press – 2 x condolence books for HRH		£110.70

- ii. **Receipts:** None

- iii. **Approval of Section 1 Annual Governance Statement 2019/2020:** Copy had been posted to the Chair prior to the meeting. All approved and will be signed by the Chair and Clerk/RFO.

- iv. **Approval of Section 2 Accounting Statements for 2019/2020:** Copy had been posted to the Chair prior to the meeting. All approved and will be signed by the Chair and Clerk/RFO.

13.08.20 ITEMS TO REPORT / ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

- i. **Western Skip Hire:** There appears to have been quite a lot of activity/measuring taking place along the road by the entrance which has led to speculation a new planning application may be being put together.

14.08.20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday 22nd September 2020 at **7.15pm** in Mells Barn unless restrictions remain in place, alternatively the meeting will be held remotely via Zoom at 7.30pm.

Meeting closed at 8.10pm.

Signed.....

Date.....

Print Name.....