

UNCONFIRMED

MELLS PARISH COUNCIL
(mellsparishcouncil.org.uk)

Minutes of Mells Parish Council held in the Barn on Tuesday 12 November 2024

- 01.11.24 PRESENT:** Cllr John Earl – Chair, Cllr Steve West, Cllr Jan Seewooruttun, Cllr Alan Brady, Cllr David Seviour
In Attendance: Joy Book – Clerk, Cllr Barry Clarke – Somerset Council (left 8.00pm)
Members of the public: 1
- 02.11.24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Cllr Claire Freeman, Cllr Clare Asquith, Cllr Vince Turner, Cllr John Henderson – Vice Chair
- 03.11.24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** None
- 04.11.24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** (See 07.11.24 ii.)
- 05.11.24 APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES HELD ON 8 OCTOBER 2024**
Previously circulated. The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.
- 06.11.24 SOMERSET COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:**
- i. Winter Fuel Payments:** In a move to safeguard vulnerable older residents, Somerset Council overwhelmingly passed a motion to oppose the Government's changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance.
 - ii. Recycling:** Somerset Council has been given the green-light to roll out the collection of plastic bags and wrapping to more than 25,000 households. From October 2024 a further 25,000 residents in and around Wells, Draycott, Frome and Chilcompton will benefit from getting these hard to recycle plastics collected from home.
 - iii. Sale of Disposable Vapes:** The sale of disposable vapes is to be made illegal from 1st June 2025. There are currently 5 million sold weekly, each of which contains a lithium battery which cause frequent fires in recycling trucks and centres.
 - iv. Overspend for year:** This is calculated as ranging from £66 to £169 million as unforeseen issues and demands on finances cannot be quantified.
 - v. Planning:** This is in a dire state at present with applications not being given approval for years in some cases. There is also no enforcement strategy in place. Both issues are hoped to be in a better position in the next year or so.
 - vi. Household support grant:** Grants of up to £1,000 are still available.
 - ix. Council tax relief:** The current relief for those on benefit is under review and it is likely that the single persons relief will also be put under review in the near future.
- 07.11.24 MATTERS ARISING**
- i. Barn lease:** The lease has been agreed and is ready to sign. The parish council will continue as the leaseholders for the Barn.
 - ii. Pavilion lease and future of recreation ground:** Gary Smart, Director, reported that they had met with the Estate who were willing to offer a shorter lease of 10 years with a 5 year get out and a peppercorn rent as they wish to see the recreation ground continuing as such. This offer is more appealing for the directors to take on the lease themselves and would release the parish council from their obligations. However, it was agreed that subject to S137 conditions and ongoing budget constraints, the parish council would be willing to continue their financial support as currently the income from the Recreation Grounds is not sufficient to sustain the long term future although other income opportunities are being considered.

- iii. **Councillor vacancies – Co-option:** Someone is interested but is in the process of moving back to the area so needs to either be resident/work in the area for 12 months or be on the current electoral role before being eligible.
- iv. **Trees overhanging telephone line – Little Green:** Cllr Brady will contact the depot to see if this is on their list.
- v. **Quarry noise:** Cllr West was contacted by a resident one evening regarding the quarry noise at his house. Cllr West agreed that the noise was worse in the garden than on the road which was probably due to the enclosed nature of the garden although he did not believe it was breaking any planning permissions. The quarry will be publishing the results of a noise survey taken with handheld devices in the near future and have recently trialled an electric train. £600k has been spent on improving the rail system this year and another similar is budgetted for next year.

08.11.24 HIGHWAY AND FOOTPATH ISSUES:

- i. **Condition of grass triangle – Bottom Lane:** Awaiting levelling and seeding.
- ii. **Area in front of Vobster Inn:** Cllr Seviour will source the planting barrels.
- iii. **Fast traffic by Claveys Farm:** No further information:
- iv. **Traffic on Holes Lane:** Options are being looked into.
- v. **Speeding vehicles in Vobster:** Clerk to find out the procedure to get the speed limit reduced and whether offering some funding towards the implementation of a scheme would improve the chances of it being moved forward. Cllr Brady will speak to the police.
- vi. **Park Corner:** Another accident occurred on 9 November involving 3 cars with a police presence. Clerk to inform Highways.

09.11.24 PLANNING

- i. **New applications:**
 - 2024/1858/LBC:** Retrospective permission for additional conservation roof lights to north elevation, ground floor timber partition, first floor mezzanine and replacement of flooring at first floor – Vobster Church Studio – For the listed building consent office to decide. No objections.
- ii. **Planning decisions:** None
- iii. **Other planning matters:**
 - a) **Old telephone exchange:** No further information.
 - b) **Quarry applications:** No further information.

10.11.24 CORRESPONDENCE:

- i. **Church of St Andrew – Mells with Vobster Churchyards:** A grant of £2,500 was approved.

11.11.24 ACCOUNTS AND OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS

Bank account: Lloyds: 31 October – £7,439.92
Barclays at 20 September 2024 - £13,470.47

- i. **Payment of accounts – November**

Clerk’s Salary & expenses (October)	£319.57
HMRC PAYE (Period 8)	£76.60
Mells Tithe Barn – hire for meetings (INV 916)	£240.00
Knaptons Hill finger post refurbishment	£460.00
C G Rowe – War memorial hedge and triangle Knapton Hill	£120.00
- ii. **Receipts:** Mells Park Solar Array Grant - £1,000
- iii. **Barclays account – setting up monthly direct debit:**
- iv. **Lloyds bank account charges:** From 14 January 2025, the account will become a Community Account with a monthly charge of £4.25 for account maintenance and varying charges for

other services (10p per direct debit, 7p per BACS payment, 50p per cheque). Although disappointing, the charges are considerably less than the £12/month account maintenance fee that HSBC had charged. The first 100 transactions will be free.

v. **Preliminary budget and precept discussion:** The Parish Council resources will be stretched further next year due to the following expenditure that is new for the coming year:-

- **Bank charges** £4.25/month + additional transaction charges
- **Website charges** (£33/month) and
- **Dog waste and litter bin emptying:** Somerset Council is withdrawing this service for any bins not owned by them. Unfortunately all Mells bins are owned by the PC. The current figure being given by Somerset Council to buy in the service is £12.50/bin per empty. Mells has a total of 10 bins that would require emptying. At this price and continuing the fortnightly emptying schedule, the annual costs would be £3,250!! It is hoped that the two dog waste bins in Fairview would be counted as one as they are side by side and this would reduce the annual total to £2,925. **The Clerk is trying to source a contractor who can provide this service more cheaply as it an essential service.**

12.11.24 ITEMS TO REPORT / ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

- Trees in Vobster graveyard:** Concerns were raised that these may cause an issue as they get bigger and damage the boundary wall. As the church is a listed building the wall is within the curtilage of that listing and therefore care needs to be taken not to damage the wall.
- Damaged bridge:** As the bridge has been in disrepair for a while, the warning orange tape has become entangled with brambles which need removing to ensure the tape is visible and fit for purpose. Clerk to contact Highways.
- Vobster Cross junction:** Clerk to request reinstatement of the give way markings.
- Speeding traffic – Lime Kiln Hill:** Cllr Brady has contacted the local MP requesting calming measures and the police witnessed vehicles approaching the village at a speed deemed to be over the limit.
- Wooden fingerposts:** Cllr Brady is assessing the work required. Somerset Council will supply new posts if required.
- Signs:** Thanks were extended to Cllr Brady for continuing to clean the signs around the village.

13.11.24 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday 10 December at 7.15pm in the Barn.

Meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Printed name: _____