

## KINGSTON SEYMOUR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Kingston Seymour Parish Council held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2011 at 7.30pm in the meeting room, Village Hall

*There were no Declarations of Interest under the Code of Local Government Conduct.*

### Public Participation Time

*None.*

### Present:

Councillors Cathy Cooke (chairman), John Harris, Fred Malton, Mike Sewell, Rebecca Stockwell and Mike Wallis. Leonie Allday, Clerk.

#### 1. Apologies for absence

Councillor Paul Cox, family commitment; Local Member Councillor Tony Moulin; Carolyn Hills, Parish Liaison Officer; PC Paul Morris; PCSO Cathryn Turner.

#### 2. Community Safety and Police Report

PC Morris had e-mailed indicating that he had no criminal incidents to report. There had been one reported incident of a dog being out of control but no criminal offence had been committed and therefore no prosecutions were brought forward.

#### 3. Minutes of meetings:

- (i) Bi-monthly 15 November 2010
- (ii) Planning 11 December 2010
- (iii) Planning 8 January 2011

These were agreed to be true records of the meetings and were duly signed by the Chairman.

#### 4. Matters Arising

- (i) Meeting of 15 November 2010:

**(a) Item 4(a) – use for telephone box** – No report

**(b) Item 4(b) – Village Hall noticeboard** - RS reported that it was on the agenda for the next Hall Management Committee meeting (17 February). She had obtained a number of quotations for a replacement board. She would report to the next Council meeting.

Action: RS

**(c) Item 4(c) – War memorial – commissioning of conservator's report** – The Clerk apologized that there was again no report.

Action: Clerk

**(d) Item 4(d) – Railings, Back Lane** – The undergrowth had been cut back, except for the overhanging tree, with which MW and MS would deal. It was agreed that the Clerk should write to residents whose land abutted

the ditch to suggest that they take advantage of the opportunity to do any necessary clearing work before the railings were painted.

Action: MS, MW, Clerk

**(e) Item 4(e) – Odours – sewage works** – The Clerk had forwarded an update from Elliott Rohun; the tanker loading unit would be commissioned in the week beginning 24 January. The covers to the slurry storage tanks had suffered storm damage and were to be made more robust; this work was due for completion by May.

**(f) Item 4(i) – Emergency Services – Bullocks Lane** – LA (in her private capacity) was investigating a possible change of postcode and would be contacting all residents shortly.

**(g) Item 7 – Consultations** – The Clerk had sent responses as authorized. She had not received comments sent by FM on one of these documents; he would re-send these and it was suggested that she should send the comments even though the deadline for responses had passed.

Action: Clerk

(ii) Meeting of 8 January 2011

**(h) Waste and Recycling problems** – The Clerk had not yet received a response to her comments to North Somerset Council. There had now been further instances of missed collections and she was asked to log these also. There was some evidence that, despite the exceptionally severe weather, in view of the volume of complaints, NSC intended to take a hard line with the contractors.

Action: Clerk

5. Financial / Administrative Report:

(i) Routine payments

The Clerk reported that the balance on current account was £4525.04 (of which, £569.31 was earmarked for Parish Plan). The balance per cash book was £4407.57, the difference being an unrepresented cheque for £117.47. No Monies had been received since the last meeting. Cheques had been issued as follows: Somerset Web Services £663.29 (first half, village website set-up); KN Office Supplies £117.47 (printer supplies).

Payments were due as follows: Hannah Sorrell £40 (Remembrance wreath); KSA £66.25 (grant to PO, 3 months); SLCC £95 (annual subscription 2011); Clerk £726.70 (November / December, calculated as below); Clerk £18.99 (expenses). It was proposed (MS, seconded JH) and unanimously agreed that these payments should be made.

The Clerk further reported that the balance on the Business Reserve Account was £3617.90 (£1000 of this being the remainder of the Parish Plan grant).

(ii) Membership of ALCA (Avon Local Councils Association)

Prior to the recent SGM, the Council had decided that the uncertainties were such that it would be prudent to withdraw from membership, as it was possible that the organization would collapse. In that event, the Parish Council would seek membership of the Somerset Branch. CC said that since the motion put at the SGM differed from that agreed at the recent AGM, she had abstained. JH had voted against it. However, it was noted that a way forward for ALCA had now been agreed and since ALCA would remain in operation, membership of another Branch was not constitutionally possible. A temporary suspension of Standing Order No. 36 was proposed (MS, seconded JH) and unanimously agreed, in order for the Council to reconsider the matter.

CC and JH reported on the SGM and JH on the measures taken since then by the Executive Committee, on which for the time being he would remain. He confirmed that there appeared to be no risk of financial exposure in the coming 12 months as reserves were sufficient to cover all potential liabilities, even if no membership income was received. After a brief discussion, the following motion, which had been advertised as required, was passed:

*“Following the decision of the Special General Meeting on 1.12.10 that the Avon Local Councils Association should continue to exist, though in a more modest form, and the assurance of the Way Forward working party that the available funds, even assuming a much reduced membership, would be more than adequate to pay for the cost of winding up the organization at any time within the next year, Kingston Seymour Parish Council resolves to renew its membership for the year commencing 1 April 2011 and to review the situation in November 2011.”*

The Clerk would advise the Secretary of ALCA accordingly.

Action: Clerk

(iii) Annual Parish Meeting – 7 April

After a brief discussion it was agreed that this would be an appropriate occasion on which to hold the formal launch of the Parish Plan and Village Website. The Clerk would check the legal situation with regard to the possibility of opening the bar after the formal close of the meeting (and possibly beforehand).

(iv) Budget 2011-12

CC asked the Clerk to make a brief statement and then invited comments from councillors. MS and JH expressed agreement with the recommendation that, recognizing the difficult economic operating environment and respecting the sensitivities of parishioners, the precept should be maintained at its 2010/11 level for this year. FM disagreed, having established that a number of small councils were planning quite significant increases in their precepts in order to progress improvements in their parishes. He felt that parishioners would be willing to pay a little more if they could see some tangible results and suggested adding an additional £1000 to the amount for furthering Parish Plan actions. MW also felt that the precept should be increased, but in order to make some provision against the likely cost to the Council of repairs to the War Memorial, which it was known had to be done. The Clerk commented that The budget was conservative and there was very little slack in it, apart from the election, but that was to be funded out of reserves. It would almost certainly be necessary to raise the precept quite significantly the following year, both (in the event of a contested election) to start to rebuild reserves, and to provide for repairs to the war memorial / further spending on Parish Plan actions. However, even taking all those factors into consideration, she considered that it would be difficult to defend an increase at this particular time.

CC, on behalf of PC, reported to the Council a matter that he had raised with her. He had received representations from parishioners suggesting that as the Clerk’s salary was such a large element in the Budget, there should be a review of the hours worked to see whether savings could be made. CC reminded councillors that a comprehensive review had been completed only a couple of years ago, and that the Clerk’s hours and duties were also regularly reviewed as part of the annual appraisal process. It was inevitable and usual that in a small council the Clerk’s salary constituted a high proportion of total expenditure, and the Government’s Localism agenda was likely to give local councils (and therefore clerks) more to do. Regular reviews were healthy, but she felt that the timing was inopportune, as the election was so close. It would be more appropriate for the new Council to conduct a further review after a year or so of “bedding in”.

JH commented that as a result of the previous review positive steps had been taken to help and support the Clerk and to relieve her of some duties. He said that there was a price to be paid for having a competent and very experienced clerk, but that it was a real benefit to the community. The Clerk commented that councillors’ willingness to take on some tasks had helped; despite the ever-increasing demands on clerks, for the last two years (and for the first time ever) her hours worked had remained constant rather than rising. There was still a significant gap between the hours paid and those worked so no savings could be made without reducing the

workload by a very large amount. However she felt well-supported and less isolated than at some times in the past.

RS questioned how good the Council was at PR; she felt that many parishioners probably had little understanding of the role or activities of the Council or Clerk. CC suggested that the website would probably help.

It was proposed (JH, seconded MS) that the Council should (as in 2010/11) precept for £8300. This was agreed by a majority of 4 votes to 2. The Clerk would submit this to North Somerset Council accordingly.

Action: Clerk

(v) Village Website

RS reported that the structure was about 80% complete and that it would shortly go live to a limited number of people so that the various sections and pages could be populated. It was envisaged that residents would be able to begin using it before the official launch at the Annual Parish Meeting, which would improve the quality and usefulness of the demonstration on that occasion and enable some feedback to be given.

The web address would be [www.kingstonseymour.org.uk](http://www.kingstonseymour.org.uk). This domain name would be free for the first year and £15 +VAT per two years thereafter.

(vi) Parish Plan

CC asked RS and LA to report on progress. It was noted that there had been a problem with the map; the OS-based mock-up was neither informative nor user-friendly in its present form and a re-think was required. RS tabled an example of a hand-drawn map and another which used a combination of computer and manual design. It was thought that the best compromise might be an accurate, annotated hand-drawn map alongside the OS base map. CC would approach Sarah Harris and if she was willing to take this on a detailed brief would be prepared.

Action: CC, RS, LA

(vii) Local Elections, May 2011

The Clerk drew attention to the Democracy Pack available on the ALCA website and asked the Council if she should allow for a slot on the agenda for the next full Council meeting, so that any interested parishioners could come along and find out more about the role of a councillor. She would confirm the Election timetable with the Electoral Registration officer at North Somerset Council, and advise councillors of the critical dates.

Action: Clerk

6. Consultations:

(i) National Grid consultation re policy on undergrounding of cables

After a brief discussion it was agreed that the Council would take no action, but continue to maintain a watching brief on the situation.

(ii) NSC Consultation on school admission arrangements for 2012-13

MS advised that he had looked briefly at this; he had established that there would be no change to Kingston's allocated primary or secondary schools. He reported that even when the schools are federated there will be a requirement to apply for entry to the junior school even though attending the infant school; this seemed to constitute an unnecessary and inappropriate hurdle for parents. In due course he would prepare a draft response which could be circulated to the Council for comment before submission.

Action: MS, Clerk

(iii) NSC – invitation to towns and parishes to make proposals for additional dog control orders

It was noted that North Somerset Council periodically invites local councils to make proposals for additional dog control orders. Following localised but strongly-expressed concerns over dog fouling, and a recent problem arising from a dog felt to be not under adequate control, it had been decided to place this matter before the Council for discussion. RS gave a brief summary of the recent incident and identified the various pieces of legislation to which dog-owners are subject. Understandably, rules were much more stringent in urban areas than in rural ones, but it appeared that North Somerset was out of step with the majority of councils, many of which had introduced authority-wide orders requiring dogs to be on leads on all highways, as well as in well-used areas such as churchyards and playgrounds. However councillors did not consider that such controls would be either necessary or desirable in a village such as Kingston Seymour, and it was proposed that the Clerk write to the effect that the Council did not wish to propose any orders and would resist any attempts to impose blanket restrictions of the type in force elsewhere.

Action: Clerk

7. Planning

The Clerk reported as follows:

- (i) Update on planning applications previously considered:
  - *The Old Farmhouse – revised plans for single storey rear extension – LB consent granted*
  - *The Penns, Middle Lane – stable block - refused*
  - *Land adjacent to Honeymead, Back Lane – replacement equipment store – consent with conditions*
  - *Gout House Farm - Boundary fencing and screening of oil tank – decision awaited*
- (ii) Update on applications awaited
  - *Yew Tree Farm – replacement windows – no report*
- (iii) Update on alleged breaches of regulations / compliance / enforcement / appeals
  - *Briar Cottage – enforcement notice issued requiring demolition of house or submission of retrospective planning application for house as built*

The Clerk was asked to request a copy of the enforcement notice.

Action: Clerk

8. Roads

(i) Routine maintenance

It was noted that the Lampley Road sign at Lampley Bridge had still not been replaced. The Clerk was asked to contact Yatton PC to see whether they could expedite matters.

Action: Clerk

(ii) Footpaths – PROW officer visit

RS did not know whether this had taken place: MW thought that it had but had received no feedback from Adrian Phillips. RS would follow this up.

Action: RS

9. Reports of other meetings and in-service events attended by councillors / clerk:

- (i) ALCA SGM 1 December – See item 5(ii) above
- (ii) NSC – Town and Parish Development Management Workshop 8 December – CC reported that this had as usual been useful; she would obtain and circulate a copy of the overheads used.

10. Forthcoming meetings and events:

- (i) Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 7.30pm - LAF meeting, Winscombe – JH would attend. He informed councillors that he was now vice-chairman and also the “buddy” responsible for liaison with three parish councils, including Kingston Seymour
- (ii) Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 7.30pm – PCAA meeting, Felton – CC would attend
- (iii) Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 7.30pm – ALCA NSG, Abbots Leigh VH – JH and the Clerk would attend

11. Correspondence & Information

Some 45 items had been notified and those of interest or relevance would be circulated. A planning application had recently been registered and the Clerk would contact councillors regarding dates for a meeting.

Action: all

12. Members' Concerns

**(a) Flooding of lanes as a result of heavy rain and poorly maintained verge / ditch drainage** – JH suggested that when discussing planning applications the Council should consider the implications of piping sections of ditch. The increasing incidence of this practice was sometimes responsible for poor drainage and hence flooding in wet weather. It was noted that gullies across verges were often no longer maintained; North Somerset used to do this as well as individual parishioners. Residents could be encouraged to dig and maintain gullies. The Clerk would mention this in her next village magazine article.

Action: Clerk

**(b) Chinese lanterns** - MW commented on the increasing use of Chinese lanterns at weddings and parties; the wire supporting structure that fell to the ground was a hazard to livestock. People could be encouraged to pick up wires if they saw them whilst out walking. It was noted that it was possible to buy lanterns with biodegradable supports. This too could be mentioned in the next magazine article.

Action: Clerk

**(c) Tractors** - MW had been asked what the Council was doing to address the concerns about tractors speeding (or perceived to be speeding) that had been raised in responses to the Parish Plan survey. CC said that she would follow this up with the appropriate working group.

Action: CC

*The meeting closed at 10.15pm*

*Date of next meeting: **Wednesday** 16 March 7.30pm*