

SOMERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Somerton Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 3 September 2024 at The Village Hall, Cottage Road, Somerton at 7.00pm.

Present: Cllrs J Clift, K King, D Shuker (Chairman), R Starling, P Young, P Beard and D Crane.
Also present: Nicola Ledain – clerk, 2 members of the public.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies as all councillors were present.

2. Declarations of Interest

- a. Cllr Starling declared a personal interest in item 6c on the agenda as a user of the Parish Staithe & Boat Dyke adding that before he had declared a pecuniary interest as a contractor who carried out work at the cost of the Staithe Charity, however, he had ceased this work and had no intentions of doing any further paid work for the Charity.
- b. Cllr Beard declared a personal interest in item 6b as she was a Poors Trustee.
- c. Cllr Shuker declared a personal interest in item 6b as he was a Staithe Trustee.

3. Public Speaking

There was no public participation.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

- a. The minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2024 were agreed and signed by the Chairman subject to the below amendments;
 - Item 5e – to change to “Blocked roadside ditch, Common Road, north side”.
 - Item 7: to change to “The Chairman informed that he had received letters forwarded from the previous Clerk, one from HMRC regarding an outstanding payment and the second from a debt collection agency regarding another outstanding payment owed to HMRC. The Chairman further informed that he and the Vice Chairman had issued and signed two cheques to settle the payments. Cllr. Starling, whilst supporting the payment of the outstanding amounts complained that the action had not been proper in that all Councillors should have been informed of the situation. An extraordinary meeting could have been called and the payment i.e. the issuing of the cheque, undertaken as normal with the public aware and present. The Chairman disagreed and stated that the Council’s Financial Regulations permitted him to make such payments if they had to be made promptly.”
 - Item 7f: to add “Cllr. Starling questioned why there had been a 2-week delay in Mr. Bird receiving his payment which was approved at the previous meeting. It was informed that in future, approved payments/cheques to Mr. Bird would be posted in stamped addressed envelopes brought to the meetings.
 - Item 8 – to change to “Cllr. Starling raised that a member of the Public had brought to his attention on the 11th June 24 that the Parish Council had failed to ensure that all planning applications are dealt with in time as stipulated in the Council’s Planning Protocol. This was in reference to the Broads Authority Application BA/2024/0162/HOUSE H. Two other outstanding planning applications were also discovered but, fortunately, the Parish Council were able to comment within the stipulated time for planning applications. Cllr. Starling suggested that the Council’s Planning Protocol includes the following additions;
 1. That the Parish Clerk and the Chairman and/or the Vice Chair, undertake to monitor the Broads Authority and Great Yarmouth Borough Council websites’ planning portals each week to check whether any planning applications have been submitted for Somerton.

2. That the Parish Clerk undertakes to circulate all emails sent to Somerton Parish Council to Councillors whether they relate to planning matters or not.
3. The Parish Clerk's response of the Council to applications will be copied to all Councillors after a draft response has been agreed by all Councillors. Reference was made to Application 06/24/0107/HH to Great Yarmouth Borough Council re 8a Collis Lane, proposed single storey extension which records discrepancies on the Borough Council's website in that the location is given as the Parish of Fleggburgh and that this should have been picked up if the Borough's website was properly monitored. Cllr. Starling requested that a copy of the Parish Council's response to this particular application be circulated to all Councillors.
4. 'Best serving the Parishioners' will include displaying a copy of the planning application's site notice on the Parish Notice Board. If an extraordinary meeting is subsequently called for in accordance with the Planning Protocol then a notice of the meeting will also be displayed on the Notice Board and copied to all Councillors. The Chairman stated that there was not room on the notice board to display site notices. Cllr. Starling replied that these notices had been displayed on the notice board previously.
- b. The minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2024 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

5. Matters for reporting from previous meetings

a. Barclays and online banking

The Chairman reported that he has full access to the PC's accounts. Cllr Clift and Cllr Starling also confirmed that they have access to the parish council account. Cllr King reported that he had not heard anything from Barclays since his application was sent off.

The Chairman also reported that, having spoken to Norfolk Association of Local Councils, the new financial regulations (approved in May 2024) include a provision to allow the clerk the remit of being a signatory on a bank account, which was a requirement of Barclays particularly.

b. Right of way application (North end of Coronation Lane to Wind Turbine Track to Mill Lane, Martham) Update from County Council

Cllr Starling has reported that it was still pending with the Norfolk County Council and were awaiting further information. Cllr King also reported, that he would follow up the request to get footpath no 8 reinstated in the village. This would be on the next agenda.

c. Low Road - No through Road sign

There was no further information on the provision of more prominent 'No Through Road' signs.

d. Update on review of traffic concerns and possible solutions from NCC

There had been no update regarding the possible solutions for Somerton, such as a 20 mph speed limit, and the clerk would follow this up.

e. Blocked roadside drainage ditch (Common Road, north side)

Cllr Starling confirmed that NCC have the correct documentation in place to carry out the work, however, nothing had been done yet. So far 6 months had passed since he had first raised this matter. Councillors agreed with the proposal to notify Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance if the ditch is not unblocked by the County Council by the 16th Sept. 2024.

f. Nuisance Lights

The clerk was still awaiting a response from GYBC regarding their stance on nuisance lights. In addition, it was reported that there had been some 'search' type lights roaming the sky from the Hemsby direction and it was agreed to find out more about them.

g. Annual appraisal for the Clerk

The Chairman reported that the annual appraisal for the clerk had been undertaken on the 20th August. It was reported that initially the appraisal would be communicated to the Council, which had recently become the Staffing Committee. However on taking advice from the County Officer of Norfolk Association of Local Councils the reinstatement of a Staffing Committee as a sub-committee was more appropriate and this would be a future agenda item.

h. Website tidy up

It was reported that the website had been updated as requested.

i. Annual Governance Statement 23/24 – Confirmation of figures

Further to the extraordinary meeting on 23 July 2024 where the figures had been discussed, the figures were explained and the full accounting paperwork had been circulated on 19 July 2024 ahead of that meeting. The carry forward figure was confirmed as being £11,838.

j. Parish Council Payments & Financial Regulations Regulations – NALC advice

Further to the previous meeting where it had been reported that outstanding payments to HMRC and a debt collection agency had been made, Cllr Starling reported that he had taken advice from Jimmy Miller at the Norfolk Association of Local Councils who had emailed on the 10th July as follows “Regarding a debt with the HMRC, it will need to be paid. However, it is good practice to make sure that all councillors are aware that a payment is to be made and will agree to it”. Furthermore, Mr. Miller stated “that amounts are included on the agenda and on the minutes for full openness and transparency. Finally, your council’s financial regulations must be available on the council’s website”. It was agreed that these actions would be taken and if a circumstance were to arise again which needed a quick payment, an email would be sent to all councillors.

6. Matters for reporting from previous meetings.

a. Placing of dog waste bins

The Chairman confirmed that GYBC did not offer a dog waste bin collection service however he had contacted a company who could offer the service in the local area. He had also spoken to the organiser of a dog exercise field in Martham who confirmed that a satisfactory collection of dog waste was offered. Firm quotations for a suitable bin and a regular collection service would be obtained for consideration at a future meeting. This would include insurance costs plus any possible planning requirements etc.

b. Nomination of two trustees to the Poors Trust

Cllr Shuker reported that the clerk had received two nominations. Cllr Starling raised a concern that he wasn’t aware of the names in advance of the meeting and there was a discussion about procedural matters for nominations. Cllr Starling also raised objections on the grounds of both non-residence in Somerton and conflict of interests for one of the nominees. One nominee (Mike Lees) was proposed and seconded. No proposal for the second nominee was made. It was agreed that future nominations for trustees should be accompanied by more information.

c. Nomination of one trustee to the Staithe and Boat Dyke Trust

Cllr Young proposed Ian Hedges, with a seconder from Cllr King. With 4 in favour and 2 abstentions, the nomination would be taken forward. Cllr. Starling Abstained.

d. Refurbishment of bus shelters

Cllr King reported that one of the bus shelters were overgrown with ivy and it was agreed that the landowner should be contacted. Cllr King was thanked by the rest of the council for all the work he had carried out. Cllr Starling proposed that this item should be considered at the next meeting

e. Refurbishment of Parish Noticeboard

The Chairman reported that the noticeboard needed some attention as the varnish had degraded. The work would be undertaken on a voluntary basis.

f. Communication with Parish Council

It was agreed that emails sent to the parish council e-mail address would be acknowledged within one week.

7. Financial matters

- a.** The financial statement was received and noted. Bank statements for the current financial year were available for examination. The current account balance was £6031.90 and the deposit account balance was £7943.87
- b.** Receipts received were interest of £21.44 on the deposit account since the latest statement.
- c.** The following payments were agreed;
 - i. Nicola Ledain – clerk salary August and September: £414.78 (chq no. 200040)
 - ii. HMRC Q2 (July, August, September): £155.60 (chq no. 200042)

iii. Ross Bird – grass cutting: £506.00 (chq no. 200041)

8. Policies

- a) The planning protocol was amended as follows;
 - The Broads Authority and Great Yarmouth Planning Portals would be monitored by another member of the council.
 - The responses to planning applications which were sent by email by the clerk would be copied into all councillors.
 - Site notices would be placed on the noticeboard.
- b) The Equality and Diversity Policy was approved.
- c) The Grievance Policy was approved.
- d) The Sickness Absences Policy would be deferred to the next meeting.
- e) The Complaints Procedure was approved.

9. Planning

There were no applications to consider.

10. Highways Matters

a. Pothole opposite the Lion on Martham Road

The Chairman had notified NCC highways that the edge of the road surface opposite the Lion Pub had degraded recently leading to the formation of a large pothole. The notification had been acknowledged.

11. Correspondence

The council considered the following correspondence;

- a. Email about the continued interest in FCLT consultation
The chairman reported that he had met with a representative of FCLT to enquire where conversations had reached with the parish council, purely for personal information. An extraordinary meeting of the parish council to meet with FCLT would be organised in due course.
- b. FOI request from Cllr Starling regarding GYBC planning application
The chairman reported that Cllr Starling had submitted an FOI request to the council for the information regarding planning application 06/24/0107/HH and the Council's response to it. This was because he had asked for this information at the July meeting and had not received any response to subsequent emails to the Clerk. The Clerk informed that the information had been emailed to Cllr Starling earlier this afternoon.

12. To receive items for the next agenda

The Lion public house usage. Replacement of Cottage Road sign. To consider removing the benches from the bus shelters, footpath no 8, Sickness Absence Policy,

13. To note the date of next meetings: Tuesday 5 November 2024

Meeting finished at 9.16pm