

CURRY MALLET PARISH COUNCIL

ORDINARY MEETING of the PARISH COUNCIL

Draft minutes of the ordinary meeting of Curry Mallet Parish Council
held on Monday January 12th 2015 at Curry Mallet Village Hall.

Present: L W Frazer (Chairman), R J Allard, D R Beck, R M Hughes, G K Townrow, and Mr G D Turner.

In attendance: Sue Steele (District Councillor)(part-time), Ann Collett & Marjorie Hookham (Magna Carta), Sue Chick, Selina Jervis & Peter McKeown (all Play Area), Angie Clarke & Bernie Collett.
(Derek Yeomans, County Councillor, was unavailable to attend)

1123 Public Participation:

Mr Frazer noted, with deep regret, the death on December 6th of Dennis Brice of Virginia Cottage, in his 91st year; Dennis had lived there for virtually all of his married life, since his marriage in 1953 to Kath. His energy and cheerfulness would be greatly missed, as would be the spring bulbs planted in the road-side verge above the cottage. The sale of his cottage and land would be watched with much interest.

Angie Clarke thanked the Council members for their personal appreciation of her work as Parish Clerk, and offered to assist the Council in whatever way might be needed in the interim period before appointment of her successor.

Peter McKeown apprised the meeting of his correspondence with Wessex Water concerning the blockage near Pope's Cross of the main sewer (see min.1122): The letter dated November 21st from Wessex was emphatic that no brand of wipes was suitable for being flushed down a domestic wc, irrespective of statements to the contrary on suppliers' packaging; the Council hoped that Wessex Water would leaflet those households utilising this stretch of sewer to draw their attention to the potential effects of such disposal.

Mrs Steele noted that the re-drafted SSDC Local Plan had been deemed sound by the Government's Inspectorate, and it would be presented on March 5th to SSDC Full Council for approval (see min. 1111).

1124 Declarations of Interest:

No new interests were declared.

1125 To Approve & Sign the draft Minutes of the Meeting held on November 10th 2014:

The minutes, as per the draft circulated to Members, were approved *nem con.* and duly signed by the Chairman. They now would be posted on the village website, circulated to parishioners as requested and to the Duchy Steward.

1126 Matters of Report arising from the previous Minutes:

- **re 1114/1103, Repair to Footpath L8/24 by Parish Volunteer addition of stone-to-dust gravel x 5 tonnes.**
The proposed date of Sunday March 22nd, for a volunteer Work Party, was agreed; Mr Turner would progress the gravel purchase and local storage arrangements. Mr Townrow would seek volunteers via the March newsletter.
- **re 1111, Chapel House hedge-trimming for access to Selby family burial plot.**
Mr Turner and a Work Party would clear the vegetation which presently precluded access to this burial plot; he also would pursue efforts to remind the property's owner of his legal obligations regarding such access. It was noted that there was no obstruction to the Perry family's nearby burial plot.
- **re 1114.2, Access for Walkers across Right of Way footpath L8/13.**
Mr Turner would liaise with the tenant farmer regarding this difficulty in access to & from Crimson Hill.
- **1114.3, Replacement of Dog Bin at Headwell Bottom + Installation of Bin adjacent to Higher Street.**
Mr Turner was given approval to purchase two posts 3' x 3' from Weavo, within a total cost of £50.00 incl. VAT. Ca. 3 hours. labour should suffice for a Work Party session to sink posts and install the bins. Mr Townrow would confirm with County Highways their ownership of the verge at the location designated by SSDC Streetscene (see Mr Townrow's Drainage & Highways report) and the tenant farmer would be contacted thereafter to ensure an agreed understanding re this location.
- **Fieldgate Grit Bin, Suitable Location for Re-positioning.**
Since ownership of the proposed verge area (in front of the Crimson Hill Cottage pump house) was unclear from the County Highways' map, it was recommended that the bin be located on that part of the verge definitely owned by Highways'; the area opposite No 2 Laurel Cottages met this criterion. Mr Allard would inspect to ensure there was no impediment to the farmer's access for cutting his field's hedgerow, and that highway visibility would not be compromised by the bin placement.
- **re 1114.6, Protocol for Public Filming/Recording of Council Meetings.**
Mr Townrow's draft protocol, previously circulated to Members, was approved; the protocol was a pared-down version of that utilised by SSDC. In response to a query, Mr McKeown observed that the Council could conduct its own recording (for validation purposes) by recourse to a smart mobile 'phone (with external power-pack).
- **re 1114.7, Remedial Work to Bridge on Footpath L8/9.**
Mr Turner undertook to effect whatever safety work was within his capability, and to liaise with Les Braunton's SCC Rights of Way team for their collaboration and safety inspection/approval.

- **re 1116, County Council's Mobile Library Consultation.**

An explanatory piece had been written by Mr Turner for the November 2014 newsletter, urging parishioners to utilise this service lest it be discontinued. Mrs Steele thought an SCC verdict should be forthcoming in March.

- **re 1118, Sheep-wash Project; Receipt of SCC Flood Mitigation Fund Grant.**

Payment in full amount sought, £1,617. 38, had been received from the County Council in November.

- **Re Annual Parish Meeting; Date Amended to April 20th.**

The APM would now be held on Monday April 20th, a date for which the Main Hall was available; in anticipation of the forthcoming Magna Carta Anniversary Celebrations, members of that Committee suggested Bob Croft, County Archaeologist as a potential guest speaker. The Committee would establish his availability as quickly as possible, in order that an alternative speaker could be secured in good time, should this be necessary. Mr Townrow noted that Phil Scott of Curry Mallet Stores had indicated his willingness to attend and say a few words about his & Jane's plans for their business.

1127 Parish Council Member Vacancy:

It was agreed not to seek to fill this vacancy, given the present proximity to the Parish Council Election on May 7th.

1128 Outdoor Play Area Working Group Report:

The Working Group's Issues & Options Report, having been circulated to members in advance of the meeting, was reviewed; those members of the public interested in this topic were invited to contribute to the discussion.

Mr Turner explained the Group's rationale in formulating its questionnaire, - to establish the potential level of user interest, their preferred location, user willingness to support the Play Area with volunteer effort & financial contributions, and parishioner preparedness for financial support from the council tax (precept).

He read out a response to the Report from the SSDC Senior Play & Youth Facilities Officer, who commended it as having been one of the most comprehensive and well-argued Reports that he had received from a parish; the Council endorsed this sentiment.

From the questionnaire responses, Mr Turner noted that utilising land within the Village Hall curtilage was the most favoured location, being much preferred to any site in the vicinity of the village school. In consideration of these latter locations, it was noted that the school's management was not amenable to ceding any part of the playing field area that it used for recreational activities. Moreover, the landowner's Land Steward had written that the Duchy of Cornwall's commercial remit would most likely preclude any re-assignment (for a Play Area) of income-generating agricultural land when existing open land within its ownership at the Village Hall site provided adequate space for this purpose.

Mr Turner sought the Council's endorsement for the Working Group's proposal that it should present its Report to the next meeting of the Village Hall Committee, on February 4th, and this was agreed. In anticipation of this VHC meeting, the Working Group now sought the Council's agreement to

- its preparation of a Design Brief for the Play Area equipment and surroundings
- providing a long-term financial commitment, in respect both of partial contribution to the routine annual maintenance costs and also to a sinking fund for replacement of the equipment at the end of its useful life.

Having established that preparation of a Design Brief would not require any financial support, and that expertise had been offered (by SSDC, play equipment suppliers and the Duchy of Cornwall) to assist this process, the Council was minded to agree to the Design Brief being progressed. The vote in favour was unanimous.

Derivation of the questionnaire responses (individual parishioners *cf.* entire households) was queried, insofar that council tax was levied per household, and that the Council would need to justify any financial commitment on the basis of a significant number of households being in favour of this Play Area and its costs. The questionnaire data showed that there had been 54 individual responses from Curry Mallet, and that 42 were in favour of the Play Area but 4 were not. From an *ad hoc* assessment of the overall responses, by members of the Working Group, it was deduced that at least 25% of Curry Mallet households were in favour of the Play Area. It was accepted though that every household had had the opportunity to complete a questionnaire to express their views, had they so chosen.

After much discussion regarding a suitable sum to be allocated annually from the precept, a proposal to commit up to £1,000 each year (dependent on the need to supplement volunteer fund-raising), for the duration of the equipment's useful life, was agreed upon unanimously. Based on the Report's projections, an annual sum of £240 would therefore need to be raised by volunteer activities, and the Working Group considered this amount to be readily attainable. It was noted that this financial commitment by the Council should assist the Working Group in their endeavours to secure from external grant-giving organisations the overall capital costs of £10,000 + VAT.

1129 Magna Carta Committee Report:

Mrs Hookham reported as follows,-

- .1 Peter Sinclair, Chairman of the Magna Carta Barons' Association had invited representatives from the French port town of Le Havre to attend the 800th Anniversary Celebrations in London (the Lord Mayor's reception) and in Curry Mallet, insofar that Guillaume Malet, a companion of William the Conqueror, hailed from this town, and Guillaume's descendent was William Malet, the Magna Carta Guarantor. The Committee were seeking an ambassador from Curry Mallet who could progress the formation of a cultural link with Le Havre.

- A translation of the Le Havre invitation acceptance letter was passed to Members. It was hoped that a Curry Mallet household might provide accommodation over the June 13th/14th weekend for the Le Havre delegation.
2. SSDC had approved the Committee's application for a grant to have 2 'village entry' signs designed, fabricated and installed, referencing the parish's Magna Carta lineage. These signs would be placed at the east end of Marshway and the west end of the road to Hatch Beauchamp respectively, as per the previous approval by the Council (see min. 1117). This grant for the 'village entry' signs would help defray the £250 per sign charge from County Highways (in lieu of seeking from them a special licence for these installations); the necessity for similar charges, for moving the existing signs to new locations below Old Star Farm, on Beer Street, and on Rockway, by the lay-by, would be checked with Highways.
A separate application would be submitted to SSDC for a 'village sign' to be erected on the Marshway verge to the west of Mallet Court. Mr Townrow would obtain confirmation that County Highways owned the land on which the village sign would be sited, and elicit their approval for this installation. He would also liaise with SSDC Planning to establish what planning approval processes were needed for the 'village sign'.
 3. Mrs Hookham displayed the parish's vellum facsimile copy of the original Magna Carta document purchased through the Heritage Lottery Fund grant to the Barons' Association. A glass-fronted frame would be made, in order to protect the vellum from direct contact with curious fingers.
 4. Current balance on the Committee's account was £6,142.07; a cheque to the value of £49.14 (incl. VAT) was signed as payment for protective boxes for the parish children's gift mugs. At the February Council meeting, the Committee would submit a claim for re-imburement of costs associated with attending the November 26th meeting of the Barons' Association.
 5. The Taunton Racecourse management had agreed to designating one of their April 2nd races as the "Curry Mallet Magna Carta Celebration Chase".

1130 Finance:

1. The Council approved the setting of the Precept for 2015/2016 at £3,725 (*ie.* excluding the SSDC grant of £240), and Mr Frazer would return the completed form to SSDC Finance before the January 31st deadline; Mr Townrow was thanked for his paper setting out the variables which impact on the calculation for the Band D charge per household and, for the period 2012/2013 – 2015/2016, how each year's Band D figure had evolved.
2. Retrospective Council authorisation was given for payments made since the November meeting, *viz*
 #472 for £201.60 incl. VAT to Glasdon Ltd. in respect of 2 dog bins (ref. min. 1114.3)
 #473 for £103.48 to Philip Tucker in respect of November newsletter printing; the former Clerk would liaise with Beercrocombe Council's Clerk regarding an overall amount to be re-imbursed for 2014/2015 print costs.
 #474 for £30.00 incl. VAT. To Devon County Council re Play Area questionnaire printing (ref. min.1114.5).
3. The following invoices were approved for payment; -
 #465 for £65.20 to HM Revenue & Customs in respect of final PAYE contributions re the former Clerk's remuneration; Mrs Clarke had cancelled her monthly Standing Order on the Council's account for her salary.
 #476 for £11.99 incl. VAT to Mr Townrow ref his vouched expenses re Christmas Cards (min. 1117) & Log Book for routine inspecting of the Sheep-wash locality (to demonstrate the Council's duty of oversight).
 #477 for £26.00 incl. VAT to Mr Turner ref his Order #23676099 for a software package to analyse the Play Area questionnaire responses.
4. The former Clerk was noted to have reconciled her Cash Book entries with the Council's bank account balances as at December 31st; the balances were £2,861.29 (Deposit Account) & £1,968.27 (Current Account), giving rise to an overall balance of £4,829.56 which continued to include elements from the Play Area (from 2012 Jubilee Celebrations), NHW and residual amounts from 2 flood grants awarded in 2013.
5. Mr Townrow was given authorisation (up to £32.00 incl. VAT) for purchase a new Minute Book.
6. Mrs Crafter had indicated her willingness to act as Internal Auditor, - for the Council's 2014/2015Accounts; she had asked that the Council be made aware of her role as book-keeper to Curry Mallet Community Fund, which covered the village web-site and the Short Story Competition, insofar that the Council had given grants to the web-site. No conflict of interest was adjudged from Mrs Crafter's involvement with the web-site and her acting as auditor to the Council.

1131 Personnel Committee & Recruitment of Clerk:

Mr Frazer had received an expression of interest from a person living in Huish Episcopi, and details would be sent.

1132 Members' Attendance at Forthcoming Meetings:

Mr Townrow would attend the SALC Area South meeting on January 26th at Charlton Musgrove.

1133 Correspondence:

A letter had been received from the local branch of Citizens Advice Bureau, requesting a donation from the Council to help defray its costs; as the CAB had helped various Curry Mallet parishioners to resolve issues causing them personal hardship, it was agreed to make a donation of £40 (1% of total precept) at the February Council meeting.

1134 Items of report from Members:

1. Mr Hughes referred to the County Council's consultation on subsidised rural bus service provision; the sole route impacting Curry Mallet was the Thursday 608 service to Ilminster which, from mid-May, might be

altered in status to “demand response transport” (as were the existing Tuesday and Friday Langport services). As requested, Mr Hughes had completed the consultation questionnaire on behalf of the Council and would write a short piece for the March issue of the newsletter.

- .2 Mr Townrow reported that British Red Cross were running certificated First-Aid for Adults courses in Taunton in March and May; of the parish’s presently certificated first-aiders, Celia Hawkins and Grant Turner wished their accreditation to be renewed, but Neil Crafter did not. Angie Clarke had also expressed interest in attending. A piece, seeking interest from a fourth volunteer, would be written up for the March newsletter.
- .3 Mr Townrow’s Highways & Drainage Report dated January 11th was noted; the not-inconsiderable achievement in 2014, by parish volunteers providing 117 hours’ labour for footpath, ditch and drainage work, was applauded. Anecdotal observations, both from County Highways management and from Hatch Beauchamp residents, had suggested that Curry Mallet enjoyed a good reputation as a pro-active parish much given to a strong self-help ethos.

Date of next Meeting: Monday February 9th, at 7.30pm, Curry Mallet Village Hall.