

# CURRY MALLET PARISH COUNCIL

## ANNUAL MEETING of the PARISH COUNCIL

Draft minutes of the annual meeting of Curry Mallet Parish Council,  
held at Curry Mallet Village Hall on Monday May 11<sup>th</sup> 2015.

Present: R J Allard, D R Beck, Mrs A J Clarke, L W Frazer & G K Townrow.

In attendance were Derek Yeomans & Sue Steele (County & District Councillor respectively), (both part-time) & Mr S Dale (prospective Parish Clerk).

### 1178 Election of Chairman & Vice-Chairman:

Mr Frazer was proposed as Chairman by Mr Beck and seconded by Mr Allard; Mr Townrow was proposed as Vice-Chairman by Mrs Clarke and seconded by Mr Allard. There being no other nominations, Mr Frazer and Mr Townrow were duly appointed.

### 1179 Appointments to Posts of Responsibility:

- Mr G D Turner had previously undertaken (see min. 1163.5) to continue as Parish Paths Liaison Officer, notwithstanding his no longer being a member of the parish council. As Mr Turner had considerable experience in this role, as well as good contacts with the County Council's Rights of Way team, his re-appointment was readily endorsed by the Council. (*Mr Turner subsequently withdrew from this responsibility*).
- re Highways, Streetscene & Waste Management, Mr Townrow was re-appointed to this responsibility.
- re Playing Field Inspections, Mr Allard was re-appointed and also undertook to maintain similar regular inspections of the sheep-wash locality (for early identification of any potential blockages to the flow of the stream), and Mr Townrow would be provide a similar Log Book to Mr Allard.
- re Planning Guidance, Mr Turner was amenable to continuing to offer his professional expertise. (*Mr Turner subsequently withdrew this offer*).
- re Personnel Committee – Mr Frazer, Mr Townrow and Mr Allard were re-appointed *en bloc*.
- re liaison with Village Hall Committee, Mr Allard undertook to act in this capacity, albeit without seeking to become a member of the Hall Committee.

### 1180 Acceptances of Office & Registers of Interests:

Acceptance forms were signed by Mr Frazer (as Chairman) and by the other members (as councillors), and these forms would be returned forthwith to the SSDC Democratic Services Manager. Each member was required to complete a Register of Interests form in respect both of their own and those of their spouse, civil partner or cohabitee where such interests were known to the member. These forms were for return to SSDC by June 8<sup>th</sup>.

### 1181 To receive reports from the District & County Councillors on items that may be of interest:

Mrs Steele noted that following the recent election, the District Council now had 22 new members, who would be undergoing training over the next few weeks. Mr Yeomans noted that several long-serving members had failed to secure re-election and that their experience and individual contributions would be greatly missed.

He noted that the County Council had embarked on a new round of seeking tenders for residential and nursing care services, in readiness for the August 2015 expiry of the current block-contract arrangements; the County Council was aiming to recruit probationer social workers, for whom a 3-year training programme was being provided. This initiative should both enhance the County's resources for provision of social care and also give rise to employment opportunities for young people living in Somerset. It was hoped that staff losses to the private sector, post-training, would be minimal. Assistance had been sought from Essex County Council Social Services, a recently much-improved local authority (per Ofsted) to improve the Somerset service performance.

Mr Yeomans expressed some misgivings at the envisaged reductions in front-line policing which could result, over time, in a loss of local awareness regarding incidence of criminal activities against children.

### 1182 Declarations of Interest:

Both Mr Allard and Mrs Clarke declared interests relating, respectively, to the Fieldgate and to the Doble Close planning applications by virtue of their living in nearby residences. These Interests were considered neither personal nor prejudicial to their views concerning these applications.

### 1183 To approve and sign the minutes of the meetings held on April 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 2015:

Both sets of draft minutes were approved, *nem con*, as accurate records and were duly signed by the Chairman.

### 1184 Matters of Report arising from the minutes:

- **re 1163.3 Footpath Improvements, L8/24 & L8/25; Validation Inspection by SCC Rights of Way Staff.**  
Mr Turner had been requested to liaise with the Rights of Way team, for their formal confirmation that the work had been carried out satisfactorily.
- **re 1163.4, Access for Walkers along footpaths L8/13, L8/9 & L8/10.**  
Status of Mr Turner's continuing dialogue with the management of Stud Farm would be ascertained.

- **re 1163.5, SCC Rights of Way team's Remedial Safety Work to bridge on footpath L8/9.**  
The Rights of Way team would be reminded of the request for this safety work to be expedited. (Replacement of hand rail; first notified October 2014, min. 1109 refers).
- **re 1166, Annual Parish Meeting held on April 21<sup>st</sup>.**  
There was general agreement that Bob Croft had been the most informative and entertaining of guest speakers since this expanded form of meeting had first been introduced in April 2006. The meeting had been well-attended, and indicated that special attention should be accorded by the parish council to obtaining similarly engaging topics and speakers. Mrs Steele noted that David Norris, the SSDC Development Manager, had recently given a most illuminating presentation on planning-related processes to the Fivehead 2015 APM. The provision of refreshments at the Annual Parish Meeting had been raised and would be given consideration. While improving the meeting's ambience, consumption of refreshments could make for a much longer evening and this might diminish levels of interest.  
The statement read out to the meeting by the Chairman of the Village Hall Committee, intimating the entire Committee's intent to resign at their AGM on June 17<sup>th</sup>, had been received with surprise and sadness. In recognition of the parish council's statutory obligations for protecting the well-being of the local community and of its status as Custodian Trustee of the Hall facilities, both the Charity Commission and the Community Council for Somerset had been contacted to establish due process, under the conditions of the VHC's mandate as Managing Trustee, for an orderly and timely transfer of administration. Mr Yeomans recommended an informal gathering as the best means to seek to reconcile differences of perspective in such instances.
- **re 1171, Recruitment of new Parish Clerk & RFO.**  
The Chairman advised that the Personnel Committee, through interview and taking up references, was minded to appoint Mr Shaun Dale as the Council's successor Clerk & RFO, and sought the full Council's endorsement of this recommendation. Mr Dale's employment would commence on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2015, for an average of 3 hours' work per week, at the prevailing NALC payment rate for SCP 15 (£8.613, effective January 1<sup>st</sup> 2015). This appointment, and these terms, were agreed unanimously. Mr Dale was then introduced to the meeting. *(Following the meeting, signed copies of the Contract of Employment were exchanged between Mr Dale and Mr Frazer.)*

#### 1185 **Planning Applications:**

1. **re 15/0136/ADV, Village Sign on Highways land in front of Mallet Court.**  
Mr Frazer noted that the application had received planning authority assent and that the conditions were not onerous; min. 1165.1 refers. It was agreed to form a Volunteers' work party to remove the top-soil and expose the stone sub-strata. Recourse to a mini-digger or a kanga drill might be necessary to penetrate the layers of stone in order to excavate out the base area for the sign.
2. **re 15/01688/FUL, Demolition of an existing single-storey lean-to, erection of side & rear extensions & alterations to vehicle access and parking, No. 1 Fieldgate.**  
It was noted that the application's originally envisaged roof height and slope had been lowered in order to comply with planning regulations, and that the external finishing (rendered & painted) would be consistent with the appearance of all other dwellings of this Fieldgate development.  
Mr Frazer would advise the planning officer that the Council had no observations to make. *(Subsequent to the meeting, the application was approved; Decision Notice dated May 20<sup>th</sup> 2015 refers.)*
3. **re 15/01973/FUL, Erection of a garden room to Old Thatch, No. 13 Doble Close.**  
It was noted that the residents of the directly neighbouring dwelling had been consulted separately and had had no objections. The application details were not considered contentious, so the Council had no Observations to make, and the planning officer would be thus advised by Mr Frazer.
4. **re 15/01244/FUL, partial demolition of existing rear extension/replacement with new, & works to renovate existing building; Lavender Cottage, Higher Street.**  
This application had been considered in all respects at the Council's previous meeting (min. 1165.2), and there were no further Observations to be made.

#### 1186 **Annual Return for 2015:**

##### .1 Internal Audit Report

Mrs Crafter's report dated May 5<sup>th</sup> was reviewed; the absence of any adverse comments was noted. Mrs Crafter had duly completed and signed Section 4 of the Return and had not identified any other risk areas. Mrs Clarke noted that, in her scrutiny of the accounts, Mrs Crafter had sought further elucidation regarding the rationale for the £10.00 payment to N J Dove; this expenditure (for flood-relief work through digging-out James Harris' pond) had been referenced by min. 1071, but without benefit of background explanation. Mrs Crafter had been satisfied by the explanation given.

Mr Townrow noted that Mrs Crafter also had attended the Grant Thornton External Audit Seminar in Exeter, and had considered the seminar to have increased her understanding of local authority administrative processes.

A gift of appropriate value, in lieu of honorarium, would be purchased for Mrs Crafter, by way of expressing the Council's gratitude for her having conducted this year's Internal Audit.

- .2 Notice of Date for Exercise of Electors' Rights (to comply with June 20<sup>th</sup> Audit Date deadlines)  
Mrs Clarke advised that the Notice had been posted on May 9<sup>th</sup> on the 2 notice-boards, to comply with the stipulated 6-week period of notice prior to the Date of Audit.
- .3 Explanation of Significant Variances  
Mrs Clarke notified the Council of those items of income and expenditure (where exceeding £250) for which the amounts in 2014/2015 were greater or less than in 2013/2014 by more than 15%: These items and amounts, (as per boxes 1 - 8 in Section 1 of the Return) were to be set out, with explanations, in the Grant Thornton "What to do now" document; these items were reviewed and agreed by the Council. Two items appearing in both income and expenditure columns, were the £5,600 transfer of National Lottery Sharing Heritage grant to the Magna Carta Committee and the SCC Flood Mitigation grant for the sheep-wash re-building (£1,617 grant & £1,935 cost). Other expenditure items were the much-increased newsletter printing cost and the £510 contribution to setting up the village website.
- .4 Total Fixed Assets  
Based on the updated Register of Assets (see min. 1164.5), box 9 of Section 1 showed a value increase >15%; items contributing to this increase, as reviewed at the Council's last meeting, were again noted to comprise the recently purchased items of street furniture (grit & dog bins), the spraying equipment + ancillaries obtained through the SCC Community Enablement grant, both offset by an adjustment to the valuations to exclude VAT.
- .5 Updated Freedom of Information Publication Schedule  
Updating of the Schedule would be deferred until the contact details for the Clerk & RFO and of the Council's responsibility holders had been confirmed.

#### 1187 **Magna Carta Committee Report:**

- .1 Curry Mallet Stores would be hosting a tea party on Wednesday May 13<sup>th</sup> for the elderly of the village.
- .2 Installation of the commemorative village-entry signs was being progressed by Mr Frazer, - in particular with the fabricator, Shelley Signs, and with South Somerset Highways (Keith Rendell) re the posts for the signs.

#### 1188 **Parish Council Election May 2015:**

- .1 Each elected candidate's completed Electoral Commission's Expenses Form was for submission to the SSDC Democratic Services Manager by June 8<sup>th</sup>, including "nil return" forms; the publication date of the Election was noted to have been March 18<sup>th</sup> 2015 and Curry Mallet candidates' expenditure limit was £612.90.
- .2 A SALC new councillor's training session was scheduled for Friday July 17<sup>th</sup>, at Edgar Hall, Somerton, and Mrs Clarke would attend.
- .3 Mr Frazer would write an article for the June issue of the parish newsletter to advertise the 2 vacancies for new council members. Expressions of interest should be notified by June 8<sup>th</sup> to the Chairman, so that the elected members could consider the various applications prior to the June 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. It was hoped that the successful candidates could also attend the July 17<sup>th</sup> SALC training session.

#### 1189 **Finance:**

- .1 the following invoices and expense claims were approved for payment, and then cheques were signed
 

SALC Annual Affiliation Fee for 2015/2016 x £79.49	#490
Aon UK Ltd. (annual insurance premium renewal, commencing June 1 <sup>st</sup> 2015) x £230.40	#491
Triangle Training Ltd (for April 26 <sup>th</sup> basic first-aid course) x £315.00 + VAT	#492
Village Hall Committee hire charge (for basic first-aid course) x £60.00	#493
To Mr Townrow re travelling expenses (for Grant Thornton Exeter Seminar) x £9.67 incl. VAT	#494
To Mrs Clarke for 7 hours' work (up to May 6 <sup>th</sup> ) re preparation of year-end accounts x £60.00	#495

Mr Townrow noted that the costs of the First-Aid Course were to be borne equally between the parish council and the Magna Carta Committee (under its grant stipulation for training). As Mr Yeomans had paid his own £35.00 course costs, the residual apportionment would be £170.00 (excl. VAT) from each source. Mr Townrow expressed some concerns regarding the quality of the Local Councils service now offered by Aon as brokers; hitherto a good working relationship had existed between the Council and their Mr Jim Weeks (who had visited Curry Mallet in August 2013), but their new *ad hoc* "call-centre" arrangements appeared unsatisfactory in respect both of ready access by 'phone and also their personnel's ability to resolve or respond quickly to queries regarding atypical cover provisions not well-defined in the policy.
- .2 New cheque signatories to the Council's bank account  
Mrs Clarke was appointed a signatory, and Mr Dale would be required to become a signatory "for access purposes only" to enable him to administer the accounts; Mr Dale undertook to obtain a new mandate form from Lloyds Bank in Taunton, so that these amendments could be executed forthwith. A letter would be required from the Council authorising Mr Dale to receive copies of the bank statements and to conduct transfers between accounts.  
Status of the bank mandate form already in circulation, for the addition of Mr Beck & Mr Allard to the list of authorised signatories, would be chased by Mr Allard.

**Items of report from Members:**

- .1 Mr Beck was thanked for his progress to date in re-painting the sign post finger-arms.
- .2 Mrs Clarke drew the Council's attention to the recent death of Ginny McKeown of Doble Close, and the Council expressed its condolences to her husband Peter and her family.
- .3 Mrs Clarke noted with dismay that the newly installed post for the dog bin on Higher Street had been knocked sideways with a heavy force; a similar fate had befallen the post for the Headwell Bottom dog bin post, leading to anxieties that malicious damage was the cause in both instances. Straightening and bracing of both posts would be undertaken.
- .4 Mr Townrow referred to his October 2014 Highways Report (point 3) regarding the Council paying for early season verge-trimming by a private contractor along the main access routes to and from the village centre; To that end, he had contacted Mr Westley Harris of Curry Rivel who had previously undertaken similar work on behalf of County Highways and therefore had the requisite insurance cover and Highways' permission to work on the roads. Mr Harris had indicated his willingness to undertake this work, at his normal rate of £300 per day + VAT, and Mr Townrow had supplied him with a map identifying the key stretches of verge to be cut. Further to min.1159.3, this expenditure was approved by the Council and Mr Frazer would liaise with Mr Harris during Mr Townrow's forthcoming period of absence.

**Date of next Meeting: Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2015 at 7.30pm, Curry Mallet Village Hall**