

MINUTES OF STOKENCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
WEDNESDAY 2nd October 2024
Longburrow Hall, Stokenchurch at 7.30pm

Present;- Louise Steele (acting RFO), Cllr Nuthall (Chairman), Cllr Camilla Baker, Cllr Tracy Young, Cllr Racquel Burnham, Cllr John McNeill, Cllr Tracy Ramsden, Cllr Robin Thomas, Cllr Val Jenkinson

8 members of the public in attendance

1) Acceptance of apologies for absence

Cllr Ghost, Pearse, Preece, Adoh, Etholen, D & O Hayday

2) Declaration of interest (Agenda items)

Cllr Nuthall – Item 6a – Bills Payable.

Cllr McNeil – Item 23c – Planning 24/07123/FUL

3) To confirm minutes of 4th of September 2024

The minutes were proposed by Cllr xxx, seconded by Cllr xxx Cllr Thomas abstained.

4) Open public forum

A Parishioner raised concern about the website and its contents. Cllr Nuthall advised that there are issues with the Website and a meeting with the Website administrator will be held tomorrow (3rd October 2024).

A Parishioner raised concerns about the hedge near Tesco's, as although it appears to have been cut, more work needs to be done. Cllr Jenkinson will ask the Assistant Clerk to liaise with the Hedge Contractor – Charlie Fox – to see if something can be done.

A Parishioner raised concerns about the Streetlight near Bangalore being unlit. The Parishioner was asked if it had been reported on Fix My Street, but was unable to confirm. Cllr Jenkinson said that she would investigate.

5) Buckinghamshire Councillors

Cllr Carington advised that;-

Flood Survey for Residents - Following the recent flooding, our Flood Management Team is undertaking an information gathering exercise to help them understand how this flooding has impacted the local community. This form should only be used to collate records of flooding, the team will not be able to provide an emergency response on advice and recovery. Any imminent or current flooding should be [reported via the normal channels](#) which are outlined on the council website. The Buckinghamshire Flooding Survey is on the Buckinghamshire Council Website. Buckinghamshire Council have released an extra £10.5M to deal with incidents in Amersham & the Chalfont's areas.

Pension Credits - With the government's decision to withdraw winter fuel payments from all except those in receipt of pension credit or other means tested benefits, our estimates are that 93% of all Buckinghamshire pensioners could lose this allowance. What's more, the government estimates that only about 60% of eligible people currently claim pension credit countrywide – this means four out of 10 eligible pensioners are missing out on benefits of up to £3,900 a year, including the winter fuel payment. This is a big concern as the days get shorter and colder, and we as a council are encouraging older people and their loved ones to find out if they are eligible and, if so, to apply for pension credit.

[Full details about pension credit, including eligibility requirements and how to apply, can be found on the council website.](#)

This is also a timely opportunity to remind residents about our [Helping Hand service](#) if they are struggling financially. The team can offer emergency support, practical guidance or supply contact details for other organisations that provide food support or specialist advice.

Change to Community Boards - A review of the Community Boards has been undertaken following the outcome of the Boundary Commission Review, which reduces unitary Members from 147 to 97, together with some ward boundary changes.

The Council has agreed to make savings as part of the medium-term financial plan (MTFP) which result in a reduced total budget of £1m from 2025/26. Considering all these changes, a report was considered by Cabinet on 10 September which recommended a new model of 8 Community Boards - a reduction from the current 16 - which will take effect immediately after the local elections in May 2025.

While the model will increase the geographical boundaries for the Boards, they will build on the strengths we have developed in engaging local partners, identifying key priorities for the local communities and drawing in contributory funding. The new Board areas are also coterminous with the new Buckinghamshire Council ward boundaries which will come into effect in May 2025.

In terms of the use of resources, the model will ensure that each Board is able to have a dedicated community board manager and a total sum of £250k will be available for project funding.

You can read the report in full online, as item 8 of the Cabinet agenda:

[Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 10th September, 2024, 10.00 am - Modern Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

6) Finance

The chairman requested an extension for the services of Louise Steele, acting RFO for a further month up to and including 31st October 2024. This was proposed by Cllr Jenkinson, seconded by Cllr Baker and agreed without division.

- a. Bills Payable – These were presented to the Council for approval and were proposed by Cllr Jenkinson, seconded by Cllr Baker and agreed without division.
- b. Monthly Accounts. The monthly accounts for September 2024 were presented to the council for approval. These were proposed by Cllr Thomas, seconded by Cllr Ramsden and agreed without division.
- c. 2025/2026 Budget and year to date budget review. Cllr Nuthall drew the Cllrs attention to the need to consider what things they would wish to see in the 2025/2026 budget which discussed at the next (November) meeting. Cllrs will be asked to consider things that they would like to consider in 12mth/18-24mths/24mths and more. We must also be aware that the budget needs to be presented to Buckinghamshire Council by 31st January 2025 and that part of the submission will also include the Parish precept. Cllr Nuthall reminded Cllrs that the Precept is what we charge the Parishioners and that we have to justify that charge.
Louise Steele (Locum RFO) advised the Council that she had produced 2 budget reviews one being from April 2024 to August 2024 and one from April 2024 to March 2025. The overall analysis showed that despite recent expenditure – Longburrow Hall projects etc; the level of income was buoyant so there were no anxieties in the budget for the year.
It was noted that the Election Expenses £8000 was still outstanding but Louise considered this a normal delay with invoicing so therefore was of no major concern.
It was also noted that Staff Costs were down; utilities were at 90% of budget, whilst the hall was at 13% of budget.
It was therefore recommended that the budget of 2024/2025 be unchanged for 2025/2026. Utilities prices be examined (Fixed Contracts etc;) and that Cllr Jenkinson will discuss with the Assistant Clerk such contracts to see if any savings can be identified.

d. Any Finance Updates:

Longburrow Kitchen Equipment- Cllr Jenkinson advised that she had identified a Beko Fridge Freezer at a cost of £339.00 and asked for Parish Council approval- Cllr Thomas proposed, Cllr McNeil seconded and it was agreed without division.

Cllr Jenkinson then mentioned that there was a need for a new Cooker and whether it was Single Phase or Three Phase the prices were similar. Cllr Nuthall believed that the Hall was Three Phase and that a total of Three Quotes are sought for consideration/approval at the next (November) Meeting.

Cricket Ground Lane quote- Cllr Nuthall reported that she was still confused as to what exactly was required and therefore new quotes would be requested from John Lee in order that this item can be progressed.

7). Local Cycling and Walking.

This item will be deferred to the November Meeting.

8) Green Space Devolution.

Cllr Nuthall advised the meeting that Buckinghamshire Council would be prepared to pay the Parish Council the sum of £4623.84 – which is a 10% increase for the period 1st Jan 2025 to 31st December 2026 to maintain the areas of the village that have been devolved to us to maintain. Approval to accept this increase was sought by Cllr Thomas, seconded by Cllr Baker and agreed by all. Cllr McNeil offered to look at the figures to determine whether or not they were cost effective for the village.

It was mentioned that some hedges in the village were causing concern and Cllr Thomas will check with Charlie Fox on progress. Concern was also raised about the Marlow Road Cemetery and Cllr Thomas & Cllr Nuthall will investigate and liaise with the Assistant Clerk ASAP.

9) Electricity Renewals.

Deferred till Next Meeting.

10) Rural EV Charging.

An email was received by the Assistant Clerk from the Rural EV Charging Co Ltd about the possibility of installing EV Chargers on Parish Council Land. It is noted that there are currently limited sites which would be suitable within the village centre but one of them might be The Memorial Hall Car Park. Part of this Car Park is used by the Library whilst other bits of it are used by Busy Bees.

The Assistant Clerk is to be asked to contact Rural EV Charging Co Ltd to explore installation on the site though this would be limited to possibly TWO Charging Points.

A progress report will be provided at the Next Council Meeting.

11) Recycling New Rules

IT has been brought to the attention of the Council by the Assistant Clerk that new Rules for recycling at businesses are due to take effect from 31st March 2025. This will require a greater separation of waste/recyclable items, which will require additional containers.

The Council will therefore ask the Assistant Clerk to contact our Waste Contractor for advice and whether or not they are able to supply the necessary containers. In addition the Assistant Clerk is to be asked about obtaining prices for suitable containers for internal use.

A progress report will be provided at the Next Council Meeting.

12) Street Lighting

Following a report of Street Lights out in Gardens Close, Chiltern Ridge, Church Street and Slade Road, a quotation for repairs/replacements has been sought. A quotation from SparkX for the replacement of lanterns at 4 Gardens Close, 2 Chiltern Ridge, 103 Slade Road and the repair or make safe the light column at 18 Church Street has been submitted to the Council for the sum of £1241.98 + VAT = £1490.38. It was proposed by Cllr Young and seconded by Cllr Jenkinson that we approve this expenditure and this was agreed without division.

13) Swilleys Pond and Mudds Bank updates.

Concerns were raised about the presence of buildings and the general condition of the area known as Swilleys Pond and that as the Parish Council is the landowner something needed to be done to ensure that there was no further deterioration of the site. It was agreed to email Julian at Stoken Estates who are the leaseholders with our concerns. It was also mentioned that we (Stokenchurch Parish Council) had raised this with the Enforcement Officers some 4months ago but have yet to receive any response.

With regards to Mudds Bank mention was made of the condition of the area and, a parishioner advised that the occupant of the camper van had recently passed away.

14) Litter Pick New Date

CLlr Burnham advised the Council of the New Dates for the litter pick which subject to availability at Longburrow would be Saturday 2nd and 23rd November 2024 between 10.00 to 12.00hrs. Cllr Nuthall offered to arrange one of them, whilst Cllr Burnham would arrange the other.

15) Finance Committee/Working Party

Cllr Nuthall advised that, due to the absence of the Council appointments list, there was no accurate list of Finance Committee/Working Party and accordingly expressions of interest were sought. After a short discussion the following Councillors; Nuthall, Baker, Burnham, Thomas and Young came forward. These were proposed by Cllr Jenkinson and seconded by Cllr Ramsden. A date for the next meeting of the Finance Committee/Working Party is to be arranged.

16) H R Committee Terms of Reference.

The proposed H R Committee Terms of Reference was then discussed and it was proposed by Cllr Young and seconded by Cllr Ramsden that it be adopted by the Parish Council. This was agreed without division and will be uploaded onto the Parish Council Website.

Stokenchurch Parish Council

H R Committee

TERMS OF REFERENCE

(a) Purpose

The purpose of the **H R Committee, which is a Standing Committee**, is to oversee the organisation, employment, management and terms and conditions of employment of the Council and by virtue of its role as a Standing Committee is able to make decisions without ratification of full council approval.

(b) Membership

The H R Committee shall comprise of four (4) Councillors

The H R Committee quorum is three (3) and the H R Committee shall meet in each Committee cycle and/or as required.

(c) Functions

The **H R Committee** will be responsible, in conjunction with the Clerk to the Council or other professional advisers, for:-

- developing HR strategy
- developing and reviewing of HR policies and procedures
- staffing levels and structure

- job descriptions/person specifications
- overseeing staff recruitment, selection and appointment
- staff vetting
- staff retention
- determining or reviewing staff conditions of service and general terms of employment
- salary grading and pay including annual staff review and other remuneration matters
- leave entitlements including annual holiday, sickness, statutory entitlements and special leave
- special conditions relating to a specific post or individual
- allowances, expenses and subsistence
- working hours
- pension arrangements
- sickness absence management
- trade union membership recognition
- staff performance review/appraisals
- operation of the Council disciplinary, grievance, capability, grading and appeal procedures and equal opportunities policy
- health, safety and welfare of staff
- any other matters delegated to the **H R Committee** or deemed relevant to these terms of reference

(d) Specific Sub-committees or Panels

Smaller and specifically focussed Sub-committees should be set up to deal with confidential personnel matters such as capability, discipline or grievances as provided for in the relevant Council procedures.

A Recruitment and Selection Panel should also be set up for example to appoint a Clerk comprising of the interview panel (of perhaps three Councillors and a professional adviser if required) who are involved throughout the recruitment and then the selection process.

(e) Confidentiality

Parts of the meetings of this Committee will be confidential to the members of the HR Committee with the press and the public excluded where appropriate.

Adopted 02 October 2024 - Item 16 – Stokenchurch Parish Council Agenda.

17) Allotment Update.

Cllr Thomas advised the meeting that due to various circumstances, the Allotment Renewal notices which would normally have been sent out in September for payment in October – The Allotment Year being October to September – have been delayed.

In view of this delay, Cllr Thomas felt that it might be better, and more logical if the Rental Period be changed from October to September to the Calendar Year (January to December,) and asked for the council to consider this so that the Allotment Year would become 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2025.

Cllr Baker proposed that this be adopted, Cllr McNeil seconded this proposal and it was agreed without division.

Cllr Thomas will arrange for all Allotment Holders to be notified and the information will also be uploaded onto the Parish Council Website.

18) Kings Hotel Update.

Nothing to Report

19) Best Kept Village.

Cllr McNeil had been reading through the judges' comments on Stokenchurch and although we had received a Merit Award, it was felt that we must do better next year. It was noted that in places there were brambles which needed cutting, a lack of planters, condition of various refuse bins – which raised the question of the regularity of their emptying, a lack of street maps, and in view of forthcoming regulations as well as improving the environment perhaps we needed some Can Crushers.

Cllr McNeil was thanked for his observations and it was mentioned that with regards to planters etc; one of the main problems was ensuring an adequate and regular water supply. With regards to the emptying of bins, Cllr Carington offered to investigate.

20) Health & Well being Day.

Cllr Ramsden brought the Councils attention to the recent Health & Well Being day which was held on 18th September at Lane End. This involved Blood Pressure Testing, the availability of Heat Blankets from Octopus Energy and British Gas and details of the Patient Participation Groups. Cllr Ramsden wondered if something similar could be held in Stokenchurch.

21) Locking Post Fleur Common.

Deferred till Next Meeting.

22) Christmas Lights in Village

The costs of any lighting – Solar Panel Lights etc; would be a question of Funding and adequate Electrical Supplies

23) Planning

a) 24/06930/FUL - Application for: Householder application for construction of part two storey, part single storey wide and rear extension and loft conversion with rear dormer and front and side roof lights, the widening of existing hard standing to the front of the property and the widening of the existing dropped kerb. (Alternative scheme to pp 24/05252/FUL)

1 St Francis Road, Studley Green, Buckinghamshire HP14 3UZ – Lawrence Hansen.

No Comment proposed by Cllr Jenkinson, seconded by Cllr Burnham and agreed without division.

b) 24/06952/ADV - Application for: Display of 1 x externally illuminated totem sign and 1 x non-illuminated gantry sign (Part retrospective)

Wycliffe House, Jones Way, Horsley's Green, Buckinghamshire – Audley Group

Objection proposed by Cllr Jenkinson, seconded by Cllr Baker approved Cllr Ramsden abstained.

c) 24/07123/FUL - Application for: Householder application for single storey side and rear extension with new roof design to accommodate loft conversion.

22 New Road, Stokenchurch, Buckinghamshire, HP14 3RT – P Siek.

No Objection proposed by Cllr Thomas, seconded by Cllr Baker and agreed Cllr McNeil abstained.

24) Any Other Business (Report Only)

Cllr Baker raised concerns over the state of the walkway by The White House between Church Street and Lower Church Street.

25) Item/s for Next Agenda

Finance

Meeting Closed 21.23hrs.