

MINUTES OF STOKENCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
WEDNESDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER
Longburrow Hall, Stokenchurch
7.30pm

Attended by Louise Steele (acting RFO), Cllr Nuthall (Chairman), Cllr Camilla Baker, Cllr Tracy Young, Cllr Racquel Burnham, Cllr Andrew Preece, Cllr Ryan Pearse, Cllr John McNeill, Cllr Tracy Ramsden, Cllr Val Jenkinson

8 members of the public in attendance

Acceptance of apologies for absence

Cllr Thomas, Ghost, Etholen, Carrington

The chairman notified the council that this meeting was being recorded.

2) Declaration of interest (Agenda items)

Cllr Preece & Cllr Jenkinson – bills payable

3) To confirm minutes of 3rd of July 2024

The minutes were proposed by Cllr Jenkinson, seconded by Cllr Ramsden. Cllr Preece abstained.

4) Open public forum

A parishioner asked for an update on the pavement currently restricted by the hedge outside of Tesco's. The clerk will report back. A parishioner requested an update on the damaged lamppost at the top of the drive upon entering Longburrow Hall where an Amazon delivery van hit it. Cllr Preece suggested that in a similar situation we had a few months ago, the Parish Council bore the cost of the replacement and we request the insurance details for Amazon and request that the cost of replacing the lamppost is reimbursed to the Parish Council otherwise we take legal action. A brief discussion ensued with regards to the ownership and responsibility due to the recent development and the road being adopted by Wilber Homes. Cllr Jenkinson to liaise with assistant clerk to investigate further. A parishioner raised concerns over missing posts on the bowling green. This will be covered later in the agenda. A parishioner notified the meeting that polytunnel had now gone up at Mudds Bank just for information as planning permission had already been given.

5) Buckinghamshire Councillors

Cllr Adoh notified the meeting that Buckinghamshire Council are in the process of sending out electoral registrations ahead of the elections next year and encouraged everyone to respond. In addition, a Councillor Surgery will be taking place on 28th September at Stokenchurch Community Library at 10.30am.

6) Finance

The chairman requested an extension for the services of Louise Steele, acting RFO for a further month up to and including 30th September 2024. This was agreed, proposed by Cllr Jenkinson, seconded by Cllr Ramsden.

- a. Bills Payable – This was agreed. Proposed by Cllr Baker, seconded by Cllr Ramsden. Cllrs Preece and Jenkinson abstained.
- b. Monthly Accounts. The monthly accounts for May, June and July 2024 were presented to the council for approval.
- c. May accounts. Agreed. Proposed Cllr Jenkinson, seconded Cllr Pearse.
- d. June accounts. Agreed. Proposed Cllr Jenkinson, seconded Cllr Ramsden
- e. July accounts. Agreed. Proposed Cllr Jenkinson, seconded Cllr Pearse

c. Any finance updates

The acting RFO requested that she would like to do a budget monitoring report. Cllr Preece to send budget documentation across for this report to be produced and discussed at the October Parish Council meeting.

7) Village Green

Cllr Baker referred to a discussion that took place at a previous meeting whereby it was suggested for letters to be sent to Rose Corner residents due to the complexity of the track being used for a number of years to drive over when it is village green. Concern was raised if we were to stop Rose Corner, we would then need to stop people using the track at the Bowling Green which would cause ill feelings by the parish. The Parish Council are spending significant sums of money annually to maintain and repair tracks and suggesting that perhaps we seek legal advice. We have allowed this to happen for years. Cllr Preece agreed and said that a solution could be to contact the Secretary of State for the village green to be changed from mud to tarmac but would it be permitted as also concerned over the increasing annual expenditure in maintaining potholes. Cllr Jenkinson also notified the council of a property along the Bowling Green who is looking to install a dropped kerb and frontage. Cllr Baker said the conservation officer would take a view on this as this is not permitted. The pathway has been there for many years and was installed as the Bake House was insitu and it was a walkway to give parishioners access to the Bake House. There are no rights of way. If someone wishes to drive across the path to enter the property – again the secretary of state would need to be contacted. Enforcement has been notified. Cllr Preece proposed that we enquire with Geoffrey Leaver Solicitors for advice on how best to proceed should we look to apply to the Secretary to State. This was seconded by Cllr Burnham and agreed by the council. Cllr Baker advised against change of use of village green and to try and maintain / solution to continue as is. It was also suggested that we could also hold a public meeting to discuss the situation with residents in the affected areas for suggestions and whether they would be receptive to contributing towards repairs. It was unanimously agreed to wait for a response from our solicitors before proceeding with a discussion with the public.

8) Cemetery approval - John Duncan Hunt (John Lee)

The Cemetery Committee requested the approval of the council for John Hunt for a headstone. An inscription for John Lee was also requested. The committee also reported they had held a meeting to discuss that the Parish Council did not wish to continue to maintain the cremation plots in the churchyard. The church wardens agreed to liaise with Mark Sole and understood it wasn't the council's responsibility and they would do it. This was unanimously agreed by the council.

9) Approval for churchyard trees.

Cllr Jenkinson notified the council that there is an issue with an Ash Dieback tree and has made attempts together with the assistant clerk to contact Sally Clark at Bucks Council and requested the help of Cllr Adoh to assist. It was also reported that two further trees are very overgrown and require cutting back.

10) Quote for repairs to Longburrow Hall roof.

Cllr Jenkinson reported that further deterioration of ridge tiles on the main roof and replacement tiles on both ends of the building further to the original quotation provided. The loose tiles are a safety risk. It was proposed by Cllr Preece, seconded by Cllr Pearse to approve the quotation received by CR Caine for the sum of £1340. Cllr Baker declared an interest in this item.

11) BT upgrade at Longburrow Hall

Cllr Jenkinson reported that the BT Wi-Fi has been upgraded due to continuing issues with the internet in the office and the hall. The upgrade needed to take place due to the installation of the cameras and speed dial switch for the alarm as the new system is digital, so the phones are now on the digital system. If we fail to upgrade the speed dial switch, the alarm will not activate.

Cllr Ramsden requested that it was recorded that she wished to thank Cllr Jenkinson for her efforts and hard work over recent works with the roof repairs and upgrades in the office.

12) Camp trees etc.

It has been reported that we have had instances of anti-social behaviour of youths damaging trees (saplings) situated behind the MUGA. The bench has also been removed from this area and chained to the railings next to the play area. The caretaker has also reported sexual activity taking place. The bushes in front of the MUGA are very overgrown and of concern. This was agreed. It was proposed by Cllr Baker, seconded by Cllr McNeill.

It was unanimously agreed to remove the damaged saplings and to also cut back the bush outside the front of the MUGA.

13) Solar panels – Postcombe

The council acknowledged the information received but offered no comment.

14) Churchyard hedge cutting quote

Cllr Jenkinson informed the council that we are now able to cut the hedges back. Cllr Jenkinson to contact Charlie Fox to organise for the hedges to be cut back. It was also requested by Cllr Preece for Charlie to review all the hedges and if outside of his remit to provide a quotation for the additional works. Cllr Ramsden suggested two quotations if we need additional works.

15) Hall Insurance

It was proposed by Cllr Preece, seconded by Cllr Baker and agreed by the council to accept the renewal of the annual Insurance by Gallaghers for the sum of £7732.91 including tax. The quotation has increased year on year by approximately £400 and deemed reasonable by all.

16) Monthly Farmer's Market

An email was received from a market trader to reinstate the monthly market on the common - this was unanimously agreed by the council to commence in 2025.

17) Cooker / Fridge freezer in Longburrow Hall kitchen

Cllr Jenkinson reported that the fridge in the hall for use by the hirers needs replacing and suggested a fridge/freezer is purchased to replace the fridge. In addition, the cooker is playing up intermittently and due to the length of time the oven has been in the hall, the council should look to replace the cooker for use by the hirers. Cllr Jenkinson to obtain quotations for both the replacement fridge freezer and the oven and to be a subject for the October Parish Council meeting.

18) Posts around the Commons

Cllr Nuthall referred to the recent installation of the drop post outside of the fleur and it was noted by the contractor that there were a substantial number of posts down, missing or damaged around the Fleur common, Fete Common, Kings Common and Bowling Green. Cllr Nuthall suggested another post survey and suggested that a review of the posts is carried out. Cllr Jenkinson suggested whether the assistant clerk could incorporate the checks with his weekly walkabout of the village. Cllr Preece suggested reviewing the finances to see how much we have in the budget for the post repairs. Cllr Preece has photographs/notes from the last survey which he will forward on and then this can be referred too to obtain a quotation for the works in time for the annual budget review process. Louise Steele, acting RFO requested that this would be useful as about to conduct a budget monitoring exercise to establish where our finances stand year to date and moving forward. It was agreed for the survey to take place and Cllr Jenkinson offered her assistance with this.

Cllr Ramsden raised concern over the recent installation of the new dropped post installed on the Fleur Common and at a recent car club meeting, car owners had experienced problems with the post as it is catching the underneath of cars as they cross over onto and off the common. Cllr Nuthall said she would have a look and liaise with the contractor.

19) HR Committee

Cllr Preece raised his concerns over the HR Committee and wished for the HR Committee decisions to be brought to council and fully ratified in council. Cllr Preece raised concerns over a recent HR Committee with councillors not fully appointed as committee members and he had reported his concerns to the Monitoring Officer due to the exposure he felt the council maybe subjected too.

Cllr Nuthall referred to an HR Committee took place between Cllrs Nuthall, Preece and Jenkinson on 7th May 2024. The contents of this discussion were circulated to councillors on the 9th May 2024 at 4.47pm whereby councillors were notified that Cllr Thomas had been asked to join the HR Committee following this HR meeting.

Cllr Nuthall referred to the **PC minutes of 1st May** when the order of business was discussed and confirmed appointments to committee. There appears to be no resolution that was passed in these minutes and the only reference to council appointments was under item 7 with the reference:

Council appointments

Please refer to list of council appointments

No resolution is clearly indicated and as such the council were never sent a list of the council appointments by the clerk.

Addition of councillors to the HR Committee

On the 31st July 2024 at 12.45 Cllr Nuthall sent an email to Cllrs Thomas and Jenkinson with the following message that was read out to the meeting which clearly indicated that it was requested that Cllrs Thomas and Ramsden were ratified in council at the September meeting.

NALC Parish Council meetings Item 74 (b) whereby it states no statutory minimum members, but best practice suggests no less than 3 which we are adhering too. This also ties in with LTN 22 Disciplinary and grievance arrangements, a third person was required and as per the email sent to Cllrs Thomas and Jenkinson requesting that this was formally ratified in the September meeting. Also refer to **LTN22 Committees and Sub Committees**, which also shows that we are complying with Local Authority, NALC & Stokenchurch Parish Council Policies and Procedures.

In addition, and further to advice taken from the Monitoring Officer, the HR Committee requested to sign up to the Civility and Respect project and pledge. As a result of this, Cllr Thomas has prepared the terms of reference for the HR Committee which had been circulated to all councillors ahead of this meeting. This is in line with section 102 of the local government act 1972.

Rescission of previous resolution

Reference the Parish Council meeting and minutes from 3rd April 2024, item 14, any other business (report only).

14. Any other business (report only)

Cllr Preece clarified that a Standing Committee, is a committee that stands alone from the council and meets on a regular basis. Where these committees have 'delegated authority' BALC state that then, taxpayers have the right to attend these meetings and agendas and minutes will need to be prepared. What we currently do, is have working parties, which are informal meetings and then any decisions then come to full council to be ratified. Council unanimously agreed that for the next year all committees will be Working Parties which will make recommendations to Full Council.

It was noted that this part of the agenda is to report only not make decisions. Secondly, reference made to the SPC Standing Orders item 15c where it states the following:

RESCISSION OF PREVIOUS RESOLUTION

15. (a) A decision (whether affirmative or negative) of the Council shall not be reversed within six months save by a resolution, the written notice whereof bears the names of at least 7 members of the Council.

b) When a special resolution has been disposed of no similar resolution may be moved within a further six months.

c) This Order shall not apply to rescinding resolutions moved in pursuance of the report or recommendation of a committee.

NALC guidelines, Parish Council meetings, item 21 regarding "Any other business and schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972

21. The summons must include the agenda for the business to be transacted at the meeting. The agenda should set out the order in which the items will be transacted. A council cannot lawfully transact any business which is not included on the agenda. **As such, the item 'any other business' should not appear at all or should simply be used as a peg on which to hang the exchange of urgent information. Additionally, the item could be used to allow genuinely urgent issues to be raised but no decisions should be taken in respect of issues so raised (other than to ensure that they are dealt with properly at a forthcoming meeting, with due notice having been given)** and no expenditure should be approved as a result of issues raised under 'any other business'.

The HR Committee proposed that the resolution taken at the 3rd April 2024 is dismissed or failing that rescinded reference working parties with the exception of the HR/Staffing Committee being a standing committee under the proposed terms of reference and as part of the NALC suggested civility and respect project.

Power to discharge their functions.

It is also noted that under NALC guidelines councils' power to discharge their functions item 26 that councillors do not have a right to know all aspects of council business and cannot claim an automatic right to see all council documentation and information.

Cllr Nuthall requested the following proposals are considered by the council for ratification:

For council to formally ratify Cllrs Thomas and Ramsden to the HR Committee

For council to formally ratify the proposed terms of reference for the HR Committee

For council to ratify the proposal to dismiss the resolution taken on 3rd April meeting or propose to rescind the resolution passed in council on 3rd April with regards to working parties and to make the HR Committee a standing committee.

For the council to adopt the civility and respect pledge as per NALC recommended guidelines.

Cllr Preece responded referring to Cllr Thomas's document regarding decisions made by the council and suggests that this has not happened. In addition, Cllr Preece's recent discussions with the Monitoring Officer have suggested that the council take governance training. This was noted.

The proposal for Cllrs Thomas and Ramsden to be added onto the HR Committee was agreed. Proposed by Cllr Baker, seconded by Cllr Jenkinson. Cllr Preece requested his objection was noted.

The proposal to formally ratify the HR Committee as standing committee was deferred due to Cllr Preece raising a query over the terms of reference and whether it was full ratification to council or delegated responsibility.

The proposal to dismiss the resolution taken at the 3rd April and for the HR Committee to become a standing committee was agreed.

Proposed by Cllr Burnham, seconded by Cllr Jenkinson. Cllr Preece requested his vote of no objection to be noted.

The proposal to adopt the civility and respect pledge as per NALC recommended guidelines was agreed. Proposed by Cllr Burnham, seconded by Cllr Baker.