

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STAPLEGROVE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 16TH MARCH 2017 AT 5PM, STAPLEGROVE VILLAGE HALL

PRESENT:

Parish Councillors: Joan Bird, Michael Clark (in the chair), Nigel Coates, Alan Debenham, Ian Talbot, Ros Went

District Councillors: Nick Townsend, Caroline Tucker

Four members of the public were also in attendance.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from PCSO Tony Wearmouth

2. Code of Conduct - Declaration of interests

All the Parish Councillors have a personal interest with respect to the North Taunton Development.

3. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2017

Having been circulated, the minutes were taken as read and signed as a correct record of proceedings.

4. Police Matters

PCSO Tony Wearmouth had sent a report which was read to the meeting. This stated that 28 calls had been received between 16 February and 16 March 2017; this was three more than the same period last year. It was noted that out of this, only four were actual crimes, and eight relate to the same address, where work is being done alongside Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC).

Cllr Talbot reported that a recent break in had occurred recently in Manor Orchard, where a car and safe had been stolen. It was stated that there had been five break-ins recently in the area. The Clerk will raise this with PCSO Wearmouth. (Post meeting note: the other four incidents were spread over a much wider area than just Staplegrove.)

i. Report on speed enforcement figures

At the meeting on 19th January 2017, a request had been made for data from the Speed Enforcement Unit for the speed camera site in Brindle Close. The data shows that the speed camera had attended on 10 occasions in 2016. During this time, 49 vehicles had been detected speeding.

5. Questions from Members of the public re items not on the agenda

i. Speedwatch scheme

A parishioner asked when the Speedwatch monitoring took place, noting that he had seen it recently taking place on a Saturday which was felt to be very positive. Cllr Clark responded that Speedwatch sessions took place at a variety of times, but that 'school run' times were covered more frequently.

ii. Kibby's Field

A parishioner reported that he had talked to the Director of Planning and Development at TDBC about the letter sent by the Parish Council requesting confirmation that Kibby's field would remain part of the Green Wedge. He reported an assurance had been given that a reply would be forthcoming.

iii. Defibrillator training

A parishioner asked if the Parish Council was aware of the defibrillator information event taking place on Wednesday 22nd March 2017. Cllr Clark replied that he was attending the event as the Village Hall Committee were keen to investigate the purchase a defibrillator.

6. Matters Arising

i. Dog signs in Hudson Way play area

The Clerk reported that she had made extensive enquiries about wording for the proposed dog signs in the Hudson Way play area. The following wording was agreed:

'No dog fouling. Toxocariasis from dog faeces can cause blindness.'

This would be accompanied by a 'clean up after your dog' image.

7. Report on meeting with Rebecca Pow MP

Cllr Clark reported that he had had two meetings with Rebecca Pow during February. The first meeting was called by Ms Pow and included representatives from all Parish Councils. During this meeting feedback was collected for inclusion in the Government's White Paper on development. The consensus of opinion was that infrastructure was needed before houses. This included the provision of roads, health care, schools etc.

The second meeting was with Ms Pow and Cllr Stokes (Chair of Kingston St Mary Parish Council). This meeting focussed on the possibility of the developers borrowing money from the Government to ensure the construction of the spine road before the building of any houses. This money could then be paid back as the houses were sold. It was felt that Ms Pow was sympathetic to this idea, and has corresponded with Cllr John Williams about it.

8. North Taunton Development - update

Cllr Townsend informed the Parish Council that John Burton had reported that the promoters are claiming that the development is not financially viable for them in its current form. TDBC have submitted the proposal to a third party who have reported back on viability which may outline alterations that could be made. Using the report, TDBC and the promoters will come to an agreement on how the development might proceed.

District Councillors have been invited to attend a meeting on Thursday 6th April 2017 where they will be able to discuss the development plans with the promoters. The planning committee considering the planning applications could then be heard in May 2017.

Cllr Clark asked if details of what has been agreed after the viability discussions will be circulated to Parish Council's and other interested parties. Cllr Townsend said that he doubts there will be any substantive changes to the plans, so doubts that this will happen. He added that he will inform the Parish Council if further paperwork is made available at the 6th April meeting.

Cllr Debenham asked if the District Councillors are able to examine the viability figures. Cllr Townsend said that they do not, as they are not experts in this area. However, they can ask questions with regard to what the viability criteria are.

Cllr Clark asked if Cllr Townsend felt that the TAU2 policy was inviolable. Cllr Townsend replied that he could not reply without reservation. He added that unless the spine road was seen as an arterial route, he doubted that funding was likely to be forthcoming. Cllr Clark stated that he had spoken to Rebecca Pow about the spine road linking up with existing roads to create an outer ring road, thereby making it an arterial route. He requested that the District Councillors are voluble about the need for a better road network.

9. Report on Meeting re. proposed merger of Taunton Deane and West Somerset councils (23 January 2107)

Cllr Talbot had attended the meeting and reported that there were about 35 attendees, with five Parish Council representatives. Cllr Williams had presented the case for the proposed merger, and it was clear that the driving factor is finance. There is currently co-operative working going on between the two councils and this is felt to be effective.

The three options that have been considered are:

1. Introduce new ways of working, continue to share staff, the two councils remaining as separate, democratically independent authorities (Saves £2.6m a year);
2. Introduce new ways of working, but have a single new district council, one set of officers and councillors serve the entire geographical area of the current areas (saves £3.1m a year – an extra £0.5m a year over option 1 to further help protect valuable front line services and keep Council Tax at reasonable levels);
3. The two councils progress change on their own, a separation of the joint working arrangements, offering very different outcomes for the communities they serve, based on what the individual councils can afford.

The preferred approach is option 2.

The possibility of gaining unitary status was raised as an option, however, Cllr Williams felt that there was insufficient time to do this as savings needed to be made as soon as possible. It would not be ruled out in the future though, although it might be more complex post-merger. It was also noted that Somerset County Council (SCC) were against the idea of a unitary authority.

All of the feedback received on the proposed merger has been included in a submission to the Secretary of State. The timescale for the decision is not known.

It is projected that if the merger goes ahead, the council will be based in Taunton, as it is the County Town, and is where SCC is based. Deane House has sufficient capacity for additional staff.

10. Highways matters

i. Road surface in Corkscrew Lane

Cllr Talbot noted that part of the road was top dressed late on in summer 2016. The surface has already been stripped and is now quite dangerous.

The Clerk will contact SCC Highways to report this.

ii. Parishioner concerns about pedestrian crossing near Post Office

The Parish Council has been contacted by a Parishioner who has raised concerns about safety on the crossing of Staplegrove Road, near the Post Office. She reports incidents of traffic failing to stop, and only just stopping at the red light. This information has been passed on to the Police.

PC Gear notified the Parish Council that static red-light cameras are managed by the Criminal Justice Department in Somerset. He has also asked that this issue is raised at a meeting of the Road Safety Partnership and Local Authority, and will report back to the Parish Council.

11. Report on works in The Grove

i. Planned works

Following the Parish Council's biennial tree report, work has been carried out to fell a small number of trees. A decay test has also been carried out on a sycamore (tag no. 0429) which showed the tree to have a small cavity at around 20cm, with the rest of the wood appearing to be sound. An additional visit in May was recommended to look for signs of the *Kretzschmaria deusta* fungus.

ii. Works requested by Western Power Distribution

The Parish Council have been contacted by a contractor working on behalf of Western Power Distribution. They have asked for permission to cut back trees in The Grove which are close to an electricity supply line. The Parish Council have agreed to this, but have not yet heard when this will take place.

iii. Trees overhanging Parishioner's land

A parishioner contacted the Parish Council with regard to trees from The Grove which overhang their garden. The Clerk consulted the Tree Officer at TDBC and met with the parishioner. As the trees are growing from within the Conservation Area, it was noted that a notification of works would have to be completed before any pruning work could be undertaken.

12. Discussion of a Local Development Order at M5 Junction 25

TDBC are asking residents, businesses and other stakeholders to give their views on a Local Development Order to deliver the new strategic employment site at Junction 25 of the M5. The consultation period runs from Wednesday the 1st March to Friday the 31st March 2017 and feedback can be given online at <http://consultldf.tauntondeane.gov.uk/portal/j25/j25>

Cllr Debenham reported that he disagrees with development on that site, as the area contains historic hedgerows and valuable habitats. Cllr Clark noted that money has already been earmarked for this development so it was likely to go ahead and that it would increase the availability of jobs in the area. Cllr Talbot raised concerns about the likelihood of increased congestion around Hankridge Farm.

13. Review of documents

i. Standing orders

ii. Financial Regulations

iii. Internal Financial Controls

The Parish Councillors reviewed these documents and were happy that no amendments needed to be made.

14. Proposed dates of future meetings

The Clerk circulated the proposed dates of future meetings as outlined below.

- 18th May 2017 – starting at 6pm, to include annual meeting of electors etc
- 20th July 2017
- 21st September 2017
- 16th November 2017
- 18th January 2018
- 15th March 2018
- 17th May 2018 – starting at 6pm, to include annual meeting of electors etc

It was noted that meetings start at 5pm unless otherwise specified and are followed by a meeting of the Staplegrove Playground Trust.

15. Planning applications

The Chairman talked through a paper giving details of planning application received and decisions made since the last meeting. It was noted that a decision had been made on 7th March 2017 by the First Secretary of State to dismiss the appeal against the decision of the Taunton Deane Borough Council to refuse permission for application 34/16/0010. (Full details can be viewed at <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/ViewCase.aspx?caseid=3161791>)

16. Financial matters

a. January and February 2017 Bank reconciliations

The Clerk circulated the details of the bank reconciliation for January and February 2017, which had been checked and certified by an independent person.

b. Receipts and payments since last meeting

	£
Receipts: Santander bank interest (January)	5.44
HMRC – VAT repayment	572.96
Santander – bank interest (February)	5.46
Payments: TDBC - photocopying	8.44
Donation to Citizens Advice Taunton	50.00
Helen McInnes – January salary and expenses	379.43
HMRC – January tax	6.20
TDBC - photocopying	9.88
Gareth Machell – SW Stumpgrinders and Tree Services	430.00
Staplegrove Village Hall – room hire	84.00
Information Commissioner – Data Protection Register	35.00
Helen McInnes – February salary and expenses	367.50

c. Budget Statement as at 28th February 2017

The Clerk circulated the Budget statement as at the 28th February 2017.

d. Precept request 2017/2018

The Clerk reported that this had been agreed.

17. Correspondence

- SCC have notified the Parish Council that there will be Temporary Traffic Restrictions in place on Sunday 2nd April 2017 due to the Taunton Marathon and Half Marathon. The Clerk will put a link to this information on the Parish Council's website.
- SCC and TDBC have contacted the Parish Council to help in informing the public about the forthcoming elections. The Clerk will put information on the Parish Council's notice boards and website to assist with this.

18. Any other Business

- Cllr Bird reported that she has been asked to raise concerns about parking in Rectory Road with PCSO Wearmouth, as there are concerns about cars causing an obstruction.
- Cllr Townsend highlighted the availability of free Wi-Fi in Taunton, Wellington and Wiveliscombe, provided by TDBC.

- Cllr Townsend noted that a Councillors' briefing had been held regarding the development of Firepool and Coal Orchard, and that the proposal should be coming before planning committee in the near future.
- Cllr Tucker noted that she would contact David Fothergill at SCC again with regard the possibility of double yellow lines on Bindon Road, near Chaplins as it was felt to cause a dangerous obstruction, particularly so when the NIDR was opened.

19. Date of next meetings

The next meeting of the Parish Council, will be held on Thursday 18th May 2017 at 6pm and will include the annual meeting of electors.

The subsequent Parish Council meeting will be held on Thursday 20th July 2017 at 5pm.

A meeting of the Staplegrove Children's playground Trust will follow both these meetings. All meetings will be held at Staplegrove Village Hall.