

Priddy Parish Council

COUNCIL MINUTES

A Meeting of the Parish Council held on **Wednesday 2nd September 2020**
at **7:30pm** by Zoom Virtual Platform

Present: Cllrs Alan Adams, Alan Butcher (Chair), Chris Dyke, Juanita Glass, Mark Leach, Rachel Thompson MBE

In attendance: William Newton Newey, Parish Clerk, four members of the public

PPC20/101 **Apologies for absence:** Cllr Andrews

PPC20/102 **Declarations of Interest:**
Cllr Dyke in respect of item PPC20/110i

PPC20/103 **Public Forum**
No members of the public wished to speak.

PPC20/105 **Police Report.**
A report had been received from PCSO Samuel White of the Wells Rural Team of Avon and Somerset Constabulary which had been circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting.
The Clerk was asked to make the details of the property marking event included with the report available on the Parish website.
Councillors noted that five crimes in Priddy were reported but details of only two were included in the report. The Clerk was requested to ask for further detail.

PPC20/106 **Parish Paths Liaison Officer.**
No report had been received despite repeated requests from the Clerk.
It was resolved that the Clerk write to the PPLO and ask if he wished to continue in the role for Priddy.

Cllr Pullin joined the meeting

PPC20/104a **Council Reports: Somerset County Council**
Cllr Pullin joined the meeting.
Cllr Pullin said that most items that he could report on were already widely known. These included the weekly updated from the county council in respect of the Coronavirus pandemic, the return to school and the opposing views as to unitary authorities represented by the county council's One Somerset proposal and the Stronger Somerset proposal by the district councils.
The Chairman said that he believed the move to unitary authorities was central government policy. He was concerned that the county councils and district councils were in dispute as this would impede local consultation. He felt that there needed to be significant local involvement to ensure that an unsuitable solution was not imposed on the county. There was a need for facts and information to support proper discussion of the way forward. The Chairman then went on to comment on the proposal to form local hubs for the delivery of service and how this would affect Priddy. Priddy was a more rural community than its near neighbours and had different priorities and challenges. Cllr Pullin said that no hub arrangements would be made without full consultation and negotiation.
Cllr Pullin left the meeting.

Cllr Pullin left the meeting

PPC20/107 **Acceptance of the Minutes of previous meetings:**
Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 5th August and the Extra-Ordinary Council meeting held on 20th August were agreed as a true and correct record. It was confirmed that the Chairman would sign the minutes when available.

Cllr Killen joined the meeting

PPC20/104b Council Reports: Mendip District Council

Cllr Killen felt that the subject of a unitary authority or authorities for Somerset would dominate debate over the next eighteen months to two years. It was clear that central government favoured unitary authorities but there was a divergence of opinion between the county council and district councils as to how matters should be taken forward. Mendip District Council was to vote on the Stronger Somerset proposal at its full council meeting on 10th September.

Cllr Killen noted that uncertainty over the future had already seen some staff at Mendip District Council resign and seek alternative employment; this would lead to an increase in the time taken to process matters such as planning applications.

Mendip District Council had seen a loss of fees and charges (such as the free car parking) during and after the lock down due to the Coronavirus pandemic as well as the loss of central government funding. The policy of investing in commercial property had slowed but there had been no default on rent in respect of any property owned by the district council. He felt it was inevitable that there would be cuts in 2021 to balance the council's books.

Other topics mentioned were: Mendip District Council had published ambitious plans to increase the network of cycle [multi-user] paths, the re-wilding policy had proved controversial in some areas and the fact that the district council continued to offer support to businesses including those 'on the high street'.

The Chairman made the same observations to Cllr Killen as he had to Cllr Pullin. Cllr Killen said that it was the responsibility of all to do their best for the people of Mendip and Somerset who they represented. He noted that in addition to the debate over unitary authorities there was a move to join with Bristol, North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset in a wider West of England strategic partnership. Cllr Killen noted that the threshold population for a unitary authority was not less than 300,000. He concluded by saying that Mendip District Council would disappear.

Cllr Thompson asked that Cllr Killen should remain for the consideration of the planning case 2020/1162/FUL

PPC20/108 Planning

- a) **2020/1162/FUL** - Erection of an agricultural building Land At 352732 150252 Pelting Drove Priddy Cheddar Somerset

It was noted that this was a re-submission with alterations of the application already considered.

Cllr Thompson felt the building was inappropriate as it stood in the Mendip Hills AONB outside the village of Priddy. The land associated with the application was of small acreage and was not associated with a separate farm. If a building was required, she felt there was a better location. Cllr Thompson also queried the decision-making process that had led to the trees which formed part of the screening of the building. The did not accord with the Mendip Hills AONB planting guide and she felt were not suitable and would detract further from the view of the countryside.

Cllr Leach also felt that the tree planting was inappropriate. Although not a material consideration in respect of the application, he was also concerned about possible future conversion to a non-agricultural use.

Cllr Dyke noted that the trees would grow to be bigger than the barn. She too queried the need for the barn and asked if it could not be smaller and in a more appropriate location.

Cllr Glass was disappointed that the revision of the plans did not include the relocation of the proposed barn. Cllr Adams concurred with this view.

The Chairman noted that the Mendip Hills AONB had also opposed the granting of permission for the barn, citing the impact on views. The AONB had

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cited the planning policies to which the development was contrary. The Chairman also noted that the barn had been reduced in size but still remained a significantly large building.

At a vote it was resolved unanimously to object to the application.

The Clerk as asked to include references to the Mendip Hills AONB response and tree planting guide in the Council's response to Mendip District Council.

Cllr Killen left the meeting

Planning Cases Decided

The following decisions were noted

- b) **2020/1356/AGB** Application for prior notification of agricultural development for a proposed building. Dale Farm Dale Lane Priddy Wells Somerset MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL has decided pursuant to the above legislation that PLANNING PERMISSION IS REQUIRED for the proposed development.
- c) **2014/0829/FUL** Application to vary conditions 2 (Occupation) and 1 (Approved Plans) on planning approval Ubley Hill Farm House Ubley Drove Charterhouse Cheddar BS40 7XN

PPC20/109 **Clerk's Report**

a) **Strimming Additional Areas**

The Clerk had requested a quote for including the areas in front of the boundaries of St Cuthbert's Farm and the New Inn / New House in the normal pattern of strimming. The cost had not yet been received. The Clerk noted that the decision not to cut these areas more than annually was to allow them to become a wildlife corridor and encourage the growth of wild flowers. The Clerk also noted that the contracts for Strimming and mowing the Village Green were due to be re-tendered. It was agreed that a Finance Committee meeting should be held in November to consider these tenders and other matters such as the budget and precept for 2021.

PPC20/110 **Parish Council Matters**

a) **Car Parking**

There was a wide-ranging discussion which included enforcement of Village Green Byelaws, legislation regarding the use of village greens, personal approaches to those parking on the Green and exemplar parking. The way in which the Village Green Byelaws were displayed was to be revisited but options such as poles or chains around the Green were rejected. It was noted that an issue existed with parking in other areas of the Parish, particularly at Charterhouse but it was not the Parish Council's role to police highways. It was resolved that the existing signage referring specifically to car parking would be removed.

It was also resolved that the Clerk approach the contractors responsible for mowing and strimming the Village Green to clear the build up of soil and plants which was obscuring the kerbs of the village Green.

b) **Damage to the Village Green by motor vehicles**

This had been reported to Cllr Glass by a resident. The Chairman noted that this was more of an issue in the winter when the ground was wetter and softer. There had been similar issues of damage at Priddy Pool.

The use a surveillance camera was discussed and Cllr Thompson informed the meeting that there was a code of conduct about the use of cameras (cctv and surveillance) by local councils. The Clerk opined that there would be a need for signage. No action would be taken in respect of camera surveillance.

It was noted that dealing was this issue was difficult unless the relevant authorities were present at the time that the damage was done.

c) **Relocation of Flagpole**

A request had been received that the flagpole should be removed from its current location to one nearer the hurdle stack. Cllr Dyke noted that the current flagpole had been cited in its current location as this had been the position of a

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previous flag pole some one hundred years earlier. It was also noted that the flagpole had been set in deep, concrete foundations and would be difficult to move.

The view of the meeting was that the flagpole should remain in its current location.

d) **Mendip Farmers' Hunt Meets**

The Chairman reminded the meeting that the Council had discussed the Opening and Boxing Day meets on the village Green with Mendip Farmers' Hunt earlier in the year. He was now concerned about the Meets and the current Covid-19 restrictions. Cllrs noted that there were restrictions on the number of people who could gather at any one time and that there were heavy penalties for those organised illegal gatherings. The lawful use of the Green by the Hunt and its established use from the period before the Green was registered was also noted. There was a concern that the Council should not condone an illegal or poorly controlled gathering or held jointly responsible for an illegal one. Marshalling and control of any event was vital. Reference was made to various of the Village Green byelaws, such as trading, and that permission to waive the byelaws should not be granted.

It was resolved that the Chairman would draft a letter to the Hunt asking how they intended to proceed with the Opening and Boxing Day Meets.

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e) **Children's Road Safety Poster Competition**

Cllr Leach said that the advertisements for the competition had been posted and asked Cllrs to continue to promote the competition. He asked councillors who had not nominated a judge for the competition to do so to the Clerk.

f) **Traffic Calming Measures**

The appearance of speed indicator displays (SIDs) was queried and the meeting was informed that the Police had decided to put up the equipment after having been approached for advice about road safety. It was likely that the SIDs would change location in the Parish. The displays had not been fitted with data collection units, though this was possible and would provide data for further discussions.

Cllr Adams said that the bend at Pincross was sharper than the previous bend in Wells Road. The Pincross bend did not have road deviation signage where as the other bend did have signage. He wondered if this might be part of the solution to perceived speeding issues at the Pincross. He still felt that the introduction of a 30mph speed limit was unlikely due to the low accident record in the area.

The possibility of creating an Advisory Group to assist the Council address the subject of traffic calming and road safety in the Parish was discussed. This group would consist of councillors and other residents.

It was resolved that the Clerk should prepare draft Terms of Reference for a Traffic Calming Advisory Group.

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It was further resolved that Cllr Adams would chair the Group.

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g) **Mendip [Multi-user] Paths**

Cllr Adams noted that the proposed paths did not run through the Mendip Hills and seemed primarily to link settlements in lower areas. Cllr Thompson said that it was important the recreational use of such path was recognised and that there was need to provide such paths as an alternative to class A and B roads on the Mendip Hills

Mendip District Council had proposed a series of meetings with parish and town councils to discuss the Mendip Paths initiative.

It was agreed that Cllr Thompson would represent the Council at one of the proposed meetings

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h) **Community Fibre Partnership (BT Openreach)**

This scheme had been drawn to the Council's attention by a resident. It was

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felt that Voneous and Truespeed internet service providers had both failed to provide full coverage of the Parish. The scheme would require the Parish Council to register an interest and then encourage individuals to register an interest. If sufficient interest were generated the Parish Council could then apply for a grant to help with the cost of fibre optic connections. The scheme applied to those who were unable to obtain internet speeds of more than 10mbs. It was believed there was cap on the cost of provision of £3,440 per property.

It was resolved that the Clerk should register an interest in the Community Fibre Partnership on behalf of the Parish Council.

i) **Ebborways Campsite**

Councillors had received a written statement about the Campsite and Covid-19 precautions and felt this answered the points that had been raised.

j) **Changes to Current Planning System and Planning for the Future white paper**

Cllr Thompson was concerned that the nature of the special landscapes was not overlooked and that Priddy as entirely within the Mendip Hill AONB should make comment. Cllr Leach said he felt it was important that as much influence was brought to bear on planning departments during the period of change and uncertainty relating to the creation of a unitary authority / authorities in Somerset. He was concerned that there appeared to be a loss of low-cost housing in the proposals but he felt that many of the points required responses which would be beyond the skill set of parish and town councils.

It was resolved that the Chairman would draft a response to the planning consultations for circulation to councillors before submission.

k) **Communicating with the Parish Council and Councillors**

The Chairman wished to stress that the first point of contact for the Parish Council was the Parish Clerk. The Council was a corporate body and this should inform how individuals interacted with the Council and its councillors.

PPC20/111 **Financial**

a) **To receive accounts and a bank reconciliation.**

The accounts and bank reconciliation were noted.

To authorise the following payments

b) **Major Maintenance for Strimming of the Village Green and other Areas £230.00**

The payments having been approved, the Clerk would send the cheques and paperwork to the Chairman and Vice Chairman for signature.

PPC20/112 **Matters of Report**

a) **Public Transport Provision in Mendip**

The Clerk drew Councillors attention to a survey by Mendip District Council's Scrutiny Board access working group into public transport across Mendip, aiming to identify the significant gaps. The questionnaire had to be completed by 1st October and the Clerk asked if any comments could be forwarded to him to enable him to complete the survey.

b) **Somerset Climate Emergency Community Fund 2020-2021**

The Clerk had circulated of new grant scheme, announced by Somerset County Council, under which funds would be available to help local communities take positive action to help Somerset become carbon neutral and mitigate the impacts of Climate Change. The scheme would be open to bids from City, Town and Parish Councils and the period for bids to be made would be six weeks from 1st October.

This would appear on the agenda for the next Parish Council meeting.

c) **Recycle More Pilot (Mendip)**

As part of a programme of online Parish Forum events for councillors and clerks, Mendip District Council had organised three question and answer

All

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sessions on the Recycle More pilot that was due to commence in Mendip on 26 October. Information had already been circulated by Somerset Waste Partnership.

PPC20/113 **Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 7th October 2020

This meeting would also be held virtually on the Zoom platform

The meeting closed at 9:25pm.

William Newton Newey, Parish Clerk

8th September 2020