



# Stoke by Clare

## Parish Council

### Minutes of a Meeting of Stoke by Clare Parish Council held at 7.30pm on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at The Barn, Ashen Lane, Stoke by Clare

#### Present

##### Parish Councillors:

G Dadd (Chairman)	R McKenny
J Blake James (Vice Chairman)	E Smith
J Kiddy	P Vincent

##### Also present:

Councillor N Clarke	West Suffolk Council
Councillor K Richardson	“
Councillor M Rushbrook	“
Two members of the public	
Judith Dignum	Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

**Apologies for absence:** Councillor K Nichols (Parish Council)

#### 1. Chairman's Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chairman welcomed those present and apologies for absence were received.

#### Suspension of Standing Orders (7.32pm)

Upon the motion of the Chairman, duly carried, Standing Orders were suspended to allow public questions and the receipt of reports.

#### 2. Receipt of Reports and Consideration of Issues Raised by Members of the Public

##### Reports

The Council received with thanks a written update from Cllrs N Clarke, K Richardson and M Rushbrook (West Suffolk Council). It was also noted that Cllr B Bennett (Suffolk CC) had provided information about summer safety, to be circulated by the Clerk.

The following issues were noted:

- The Community Chest funding round for 2024-2025 was now open and may offer a funding opportunity for the village pub, expected to re-open shortly (see below).
- West Suffolk councillors were each to be allocated a locality budget of £2,800.
- The Council expressed support for the provision of a new (chargeable) car park in Clare, on which work was continuing.
- Consultation on the planning application for a solar farm at Wixoe had commenced today.

##### Issues raised by members of the public – The Lion Public House

Councillors welcomed two members of the public, Jackie and her daughter Sophie, who addressed the Council on their plans to take over the lease of The Lion public house, currently vacant. Improvement work (mainly cosmetic) would commence on 31 July,

with opening due in eight weeks. Although there would be no food offering initially due to the cost of updating the kitchen, the aim was to introduce this in future. As the leaseholder had expressed uncertainty about the pub's long-term viability, village support would be crucial to allay their concerns and assure the pub's survival. Residents would be informed of progress via social media and the village noticeboard.

The Council was delighted to learn about the plans for the pub, which was a much-valued village amenity. Members thanked Jackie and Sophie for attending the meeting and wished them well, assuring them of the Council's support.

### **Standing Orders re-applied (8.00pm)**

#### **3. Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **4. Minutes: 19 June 2023**

Upon the motion of Cllr Smith, seconded by Cllr McKenny and duly carried, it was:

##### **Resolved:**

That the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 19 June 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The following matters arose from consideration of the minutes:

- **Minute 4** (Minutes: 22 May 2023)
  - i Members received an update on progress towards repair of the Village sign, noting confirmation from the Council's Insurers that it was not covered under the existing policy. A preference was expressed for restoration, rather than complete renewal, and it was agreed that the work would be carried out by Cllr Vincent, with costs to be reimbursed by the Parish Council. Cllr McKenny undertook to supply a base to secure the sign to the ground, and to liaise with others working on the sign about reducing the weight of the roof.
  - ii The Chairman confirmed that he had liaised with the Council's grounds maintenance contractor regarding grass-cutting in the cemetery.
  - iii Arrangements were in hand to display a new sign for the defibrillator, kindly provided by Judith Casey.
  - iv The Chairman advised that repair work to the roundabout in the play area was due to commence on 31 July. Following an error in the installation cost originally quoted by the supplier, it had been agreed that the Parish Council would pay 50% of the additional amount.
- **Minute 8** (Progress on Village Issues): the Clerk agreed to liaise with Cllr Bobby Bennett regarding implementation of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) on the A1092. The Council would expect a full refund of its financial contribution (£2,000) were the ETRO not to proceed. Following complaints about continued speeding on the A1092, enquiries would also be made about the results of the speed survey commissioned by Cllr Bennett.

## 5. Accounts and Audit

### i. Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

The Clerk updated the Council on the latest position regarding the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2022/23.

While acknowledging the importance for all authorities to exercise effective governance and be held to account, councillors expressed some frustration at the complexity of the AGAR process for parish councils with a modest precept.

### ii. Financial Overview 2023/24 as at the First Quarter Stage

The Council received the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) setting out the Council's current and forecast financial position as at the first quarter stage.

Concerning the grass cutting service, Members noted that a recent change in invoicing practice by the contractor, West Suffolk Council, had led to the Parish Council falling slightly into arrears. Although resolving this would involve payment of two annual invoices in a single financial year, Members were keen to regularise the position as soon as possible. Noting that the additional one-off expenditure could be met from within the General Reserve, it was agreed that the 2023/24 invoice should be settled in full upon receipt, expected in Autumn 2023.

Commenting on grounds maintenance in general, Members undertook to liaise with the contractors regarding their offer of an additional cut in October. Additionally, responding to Cllr Clarke concerning a review of the service to be undertaken by West Suffolk Council, the Chairman highlighted the importance of engaging with and seeking the views of Parish Councils.

#### Resolved

1. To note the forecast financial position of the Council's budget as at the first quarter stage of the 2023/24 financial year.
2. To pay the 2023/24 invoice for grass cutting in full when received during the current financial year, funding to be drawn from the General Reserve as required.

### iii. Bank Reconciliation

The following were noted by the Council and signed by Cllr Dadd as Chairman of the Finance Committee:

- Revised Bank Reconciliation to 31 May 2023, indicating a net bank balance of £30,478.41 (resolving an error noticed after the Council's previous meeting).
- Bank Reconciliation to 30 June 2023 (date of the latest bank statement), indicating a net bank balance of £30,478.11.

### iv. Accounts for Payment

Accounts for payment in the sum of £1,786.44 were authorised (as set out in an appendix to these minutes), and cheques signed accordingly.

## 6. Annual Diary

The Council expressed support for a draft annual schedule of council commitments and tasks presented by the Clerk. The draft schedule would be sent to councillors for comment, following which a final version would be prepared.

## 7. Defibrillator – Future Arrangements

The Council considered future support arrangements for the Community Defibrillator following the end of the current managed solution agreement on 31 October.

Expressing satisfaction with the service currently provided by the Community Heartbeat Trust (CHT), councillors indicated their support for entering into a fresh agreement with them, subject to confirmation on cost and other matters of detail. Members also agreed that a training/public awareness session should take place later in 2023.

The Council expressed grateful thanks to Judith Casey for acting as custodian of the defibrillator, ensuring that this valuable village facility was always ready for use.

Upon the motion of Cllr Kiddy, seconded by Cllr Smith and duly carried, it was:

### Resolved

That, subject to confirmation on cost and other matters of detail, the Council enter into a new managed solution agreement with the Community Heartbeat Trust upon expiry of the existing agreement on 31 October 2023.

## 8. Parish Noticeboards

### 9. The Barn Committee Minutes

Consideration of the above items was deferred in the absence of Cllr Nichols..

## 10. Correspondence

- i. **Appointment of Parish Council Representative to The Barn Committee:** appointment of a representative to serve on The Barn Committee, required following the recent elections, would be considered at the next meeting.
- ii. **Royal British Legion Tommy Statue:** it was agreed not to proceed with purchase of a statue at this time, position to be reviewed upon receipt of a specific request.

## 11. Date of Next Meeting

Noted that the next meeting of the Council would take place at 7.30pm on Monday 4 September 2023 at The Barn, Ashen Lane, Stoke by Clare, CO10 8JA:

## 12. Urgent Business

None

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Signed.....

**Chairman**  
**4 September 2023**

Appendix

**Stoke by Clare Parish Council  
Accounts for Payment Authorisation, 24 July 2022**

**AUTHORISED**

	<b>Cheque No</b>	<b>To Whom</b>	<b>Amount £</b>	<b>Authorised</b>
1.	587	Playdale Playgrounds Ltd – deposit re repairs to roundabout*	696.66	08/07/23
2.	588	HMRC – Employer NI Contribution Q1	292.00	24/07/23
3.	589	<b>Street Cleaner salary</b> a. Salary June '23 b. Salary July '23	116.28 116.08	
		<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>232.36</b>	“
4.	590	<b>Parish Clerk salary</b> a. Salary June '23 b. Salary July '23	273.50 273.50	
		<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>547.00</b>	“
5.	591	Cllr G Dadd - reimbursement (frame for defib. notice)	18.42	“
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,786.44</b>	

\* For confirmation – approved since last meeting