



Stoke by Clare

Parish Council

**Minutes of a Meeting of Stoke by Clare Parish Council
held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 13th December 2023 at
The Barn, Ashen Lane, Stoke by Clare**

Present

Parish Councillors:

G Dadd (Chairman)

J Kiddy

K Nichols

E Smith

P Vincent

Also present:

Councillor K Richardson

Judith Dignum

West Suffolk Council

Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Apologies for absence: Councillors J Blake James and R McKenny (Parish Council), B Bennett (Suffolk County Council), N Clarke and M Rushbrook (West Suffolk Council)

1. Chairman's Welcome and Apologies for Absence

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

Suspension of Standing Orders (7.37pm)

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

The Council received with thanks written updates from County Councillor Bobby Bennett and district Councillors Nick Clarke, Karen Richardson and Marion Rushbrook.

Cllr Edwin Smith updated Members on progress regarding flooding at Boyton End, on which he was liaising with Cllr Bennett. The situation was now causing road safety concerns due to further deterioration following the recent severe weather. Cllr Smith had been asked to re-report the problem via the Highways Reporting System and advise Cllr Bennett afterwards. Cllr Dadd had also undertaken to contact Suffolk Highways.

Standing Orders re-applied (7.37pm)

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Minutes: 19 October 2023

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

Resolved:

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

The following matters arose from consideration of the minutes:

- **Minute 8 (War Memorial Maintenance)**
Cllr Kiddy updated the Council on two options for the repair/renewal of the War Memorial, including restoration of the name carving. One option involved sanding back the surface while the other, considerably more costly, consisted of carving the names onto granite and attaching the granite to the Memorial. Cllr Dadd undertook to investigate whether a grant may be available towards the cost of the second option.

5. Minutes: Finance Committee (7 December 2023)

The Council received the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 7 December 2023, which contained recommendations to the Council.

Concerning the proposed Budget and Precept for 2024/25, the Council agreed to note the Committee's recommendations and defer final consideration until the January meeting, pending the confirmation of certain issues of detail (including the cost of the Grounds Maintenance contract).

It was noted that, in addition to the existing contractor, there had been two unsolicited expressions of interest in providing a grounds maintenance service to the Council. Following a detailed discussion on how to proceed, Cllr Dadd undertook to liaise with the three potential suppliers and present costings to the Council's January meeting.

Resolved

1. To receive the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 7 December 2023.
2. To note the Finance Committee's recommendations concerning the Budget and Precept for 2024/25, with a final decision to be made at the Council meeting in January 2024.
3. To approve the following documents:
 - a. The Financial Risk Assessment
 - b. The Asset Register, as amended.

6. Finance and Audit

The Cashbook was available for inspection.

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.

ii. Budget Monitoring Statement to 30 November 2023

No report.

iii. National Salary Award 2023/24

Resolved:

To apply the recent pay settlement agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services to the salaries of the Council's employees with effect from 1 April 2023.

(This represents a flat rate pay increase of £1,925 per annum, applied pro rata according to the number of contracted hours for each employee.)

iv. Bank Reconciliation

The Bank Reconciliation for the period 1 October to 30 November inclusive (date of the latest bank statement), indicating a net bank balance of £26,135.11, was noted by the Council and signed by Cllr Dadd as Chairman of the Finance Committee: Cllr Dadd also signed the associated bank statement.

v. Accounts for Payment

Accounts for payment in the sum of £8,691.18 were authorised (as set out in an appendix to these minutes), and cheques signed accordingly.

7. A1092 Experimental Traffic Reduction Order (ETRO) - update

Receiving an update on the project to bring an Experimental Traffic Order along the A1092 to restrict lorry traffic through Clare, Cavendish and Stoke by Clare, Members were delighted to learn that the scheme was now being designed by Suffolk Highways in preparation for implementation. Members expressed thanks to Cllr Bobby Bennett for her persistence in continuing the work originally begun by Cllr Mary Evans.

8. Club and Society Minutes, including the Bowls Club AGM

The Council considered raising awareness of local clubs and societies, and aiding transparency, by publicising their minutes (or a summary of proceedings).

Facebook was proposed as one way of achieving this, together with the provision of an additional noticeboard or boards, for which grant funding may be available towards the expected cost of £1,400. It was agreed that the first board should be located in Church Park, with a second board in Chapel Street should funds become available.

9. Asset of Community Value Update – The Lion Public House

Considering the current situation at The Lion following the recent change of leaseholder, the Council was pleased to note that things were going well with good customer support and positive plans for events in the New Year. Ultimately, decisions regarding the pub's long-term future would be a matter for its owners, Admiral Taverns.

10. Grant Application: Stoke by Clare Parish Church

Upon being put to the vote, it was agreed to defer consideration of this item until the next meeting when final decisions would be taken concerning the Budget and Precept 2024/25.

11. Stoke by Clare Community Facebook Page – proposed administrative changes

The Council's approval was sought for proposals which would allow authorised users to post direct onto the Stoke by Clare Community Facebook page.

Resolved:

4. To adopt the proposed scheme for enabling authorised users to post direct onto the Stoke by Clare Community Facebook page, subject to approval of a Council social media policy.
5. To invite the following local clubs and organisations to nominate a representative to become an authorised user, if they so wish:
 - Village Hall Committee
 - Village Clubs (Bowls, Football and Tennis)
 - Village Shop
 - Village Charities
 - The Lion Public House
6. To request the Parish Clerk to prepare a draft social media policy for presentation to the Council's next meeting.

12. Correspondence

Parish Christmas Lunch: Noting that the Village Hall Committee was experiencing challenges in attracting funding for the annual Parish Christmas Lunch, Members directed the Committee towards the possibility of applying for assistance from the Locality Fund held by each District Councillor. Members clarified that the Council would not be able to provide financial support were such a request to be made.

13. Dates of Future Meetings

Resolved:

That meetings of the Council be held during the following weeks in 2024, exact date to be confirmed subject to the availability of the Barnl. All meetings to take place at 7.30pm at The Barn, Ashen Lane, Stoke by Clare, CO10 8JA.

- Weeks commencing 22 January, 18 March, 20 May (APM / APCM), 17 June, 22 July, 9 September, 21 October and 9 December

14. Urgent Business

None.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.

Signed.....

Chairman
24 January 2024

Appendix

**Stoke by Clare Parish Council
Accounts for Payment Authorisation, 13 December 2023**

AUTHORISED

	Cheque No	To Whom	Amount £	Authorised
1.	607	Street Cleaner salary Oct/Nov 2023	232.36	13/12/23
2.	608	Parish Clerk salary Oct/Nov 2023	547.00	"
3.	609	Pryke Building Ltd (Village Sign)	473.00	"
4.	610	Post Office Ltd (for West Suffolk Council – grounds maintenance 2023) (Revised invoice)	6,968.62	"
5.	615	K Dadd – Remembrance Day wreath	25.00	
Reissue of cheques for previously authorised payments*				
6.	611	HMRC – Employer NI (Q2)	292.40	"
7.	612	SALC – payroll service to 30/09/23	82.80	"
8.	613	G Dadd - One Suffolk webhosting (reimb.)	60.00	"
9.	614	Trustees of Hon A Loch (Allotment field rent)	10.00	"
		TOTAL	£8,691.18	

* Original cheques were not received by payees