



Stoke by Clare

Parish Council

Minutes of a Meeting of Stoke by Clare Parish Council
held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 20th March 2024 at
The Barn, Ashen Lane, Stoke by Clare

Present

Parish Councillors:

G Dadd (Chairman)

J Blake James

J Kiddy

K Nichols

E Smith

P Vincent

Also present:

Councillor M Rushbrook

Mr & Mrs Casey

Judith Dignum

West Suffolk Council

Parish Residents

Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Apologies for absence: Councillors R McKenny (Parish Council), B Bennett (Suffolk County Council, N Clarke and K Richardson West Suffolk Council)

1. Chairman's Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chairman welcomed those present and received apologies for absence.

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 written updates from County Councillor Bobby Bennett and District Councillors Nick Clarke, Karen Richardson and Marion Rushbrook.

Members' attention was drawn to the importance of reading about Suffolk County Council's proposed devolution deal with the Government and responding to the consultation (running until 26 May). The consultation, together with further information about the proposed deal, are available on [the Suffolk County Council website](#).

It was noted that the Locality Fund for West Suffolk Councillors was expected to continue for the next financial year, with the sum available yet to be determined.

Issues raised by Members of the Public: Parish Defibrillator

Members welcomed Judith Casey, who was the 'caretaker' of the parish defibrillator, with responsibility for its oversight and maintenance. Mrs Casey expressed concern about a range of defibrillator-related issues, to which the Council responded as set out below:

- The Council reaffirmed its commitment to and support for the defibrillator. As agreed previously, the Council would be responsible for payment of invoices

relating to the defibrillator, including annual renewal of the maintenance agreement, and would ensure that this was carried out promptly.

- Members noted with concern ongoing issues relating to power supply outages and expressed disappointment that the Parish Council had not been made aware. Cllr Dadd undertook to liaise with The Barn Committee for further information and asked Mrs Casey to contact the Parish Council if there were further problems. It was agreed to provide Mrs Casey with a copy of The Barn's annual power certificate.
- It was noted that, in the interests of effective communication, Mrs Casey would send copies of future email correspondence to the Parish Clerk and all Parish Councillors.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Casey for attending the meeting and for her dedicated service in connection with the defibrillator. He apologised on behalf of the Council for the recent difficulties, which would be resolved for the future.

Standing Orders re-applied (7.50pm)

3. Declarations of Interest

None

4. Minutes: 24 January 2024

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

Resolved:

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 24 January 2024, for signature by the Chairman.

The following matters arose from consideration of the minutes:

- **Minute 2** (Receipt of Reports and Consideration of Issues Raised by Members of the Public)
The commitment to inform village sports club about the West Suffolk Council Capital Sports Fund was confirmed.

Members noted that the Bowls Club was planning a building project to replace the existing sheds with permanent structures.

Cllr Blake James undertook to source dog fouling signage from the West Suffolk Council website.

- **Minute 4** (Minutes: 13 December 2023)
Cllr Dadd updated the Council on highways maintenance issues at Boyton End / Baythorne End bridge and at Moor Hall. Regarding the former, Cllr Bobby Bennett, at the request of Cllr Dadd, had requested a schedule of proposed works from Suffolk County Council, for sharing with members upon receipt. Concerning Moor Hall, the Chairman had reported flooding issues caused by a blocked ditch to West Suffolk Council (cc Cllr Bennett and Matthew Fox).

- **Minute 5(iii)** (Budget and Precept 2024/25)
In response to Members' concerns regarding the increase in the precept for 2024/25, it was noted that this had arisen in part from the Council's decision not to offset the amount of forecast expenditure for 2024/25 against forecast income. This, in turn, had been necessary due to inflationary increases in the Council's fixed costs, together with a need to boost reserves to the level recommended for small parish councils (i.e. 12 months' Net Revenue Expenditure).
- **Minutes 8** (Club and Society Minutes, including the Bowls Club AGM)
Noting the generous contribution from the District Councillors towards the cost of a new notice board (minute 2 above refers), it was agreed to purchase a board from the company which had supplied the board at the village shop, at an anticipated cost in the region of £1,750. The Board would be installed on the grass area at the entrance to Church Park.

5. Finance and Audit

The Cashbook was available for inspection.

i. Budget Monitoring Statement

The Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer gave a verbal update.

ii. Appointment of Internal Auditor for the Financial Year 2024/25

The Council received a report by the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer concerning appointment of an internal auditor for the 2024/25 financial year. Members noted that the Finance Committee, in carrying out the annual review of internal audit in December 2023, had found the existing provider, SALC, to be effective, commending them especially the help and advice provided. The fee quoted by SALC for providing internal audit services during 2024/5 was £274.

Upon the motion of Cllr Nicholls, seconded by Cllr Blake James and duly carried, it was

Resolved:

To appoint Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) Internal Audit Service to undertake internal audit work for the Council during the 2024/25 financial year, at a cost of £274.

iii. Bank Reconciliation

The Council noted the Bank Reconciliation for the period 1 January- 1 March 2024 inclusive (date of the latest bank statement), indicating a net bank balance of £24,607.04. Cllr Dadd, as Chairman of the Finance Committee, signed the document, together with the associated bank statements:

iv. Accounts for Payment

Accounts for payment in the sum of £1,389.90, approved by Members and paid since the last meeting, were noted. New payments in the sum of £1316.49 were authorised and cheques signed accordingly. Total payments approved since the last meeting were therefore £2,706.39, as set out in an Appendix to these minutes.

6. Adoption of Social Media Policy

The Council received a report by the Clerk and RFO presenting a draft social media policy for consideration. The policy was an integral part of a scheme approved by the

Council previously to allow authorised users to post directly onto the Stoke by Clare Community Facebook page.

Members agreed to adopt the policy subject to an amendment to the list of organisations eligible to nominate authorised users and the appointment of a second Page Administrator (Cllr Nicholls) as a means of increasing resilience.

Upon the proposal of Cllr Edwin Smith, seconded by Cllr Justin Blake James, put to the vote and duly carried, it was:

Resolved

To approve and adopt the social media Policy attached as Appendix A to the report, subject to an amendment to the list of organisations eligible to nominate authorised users and the appointment of a second Page Administrator (Cllr Nicholls) as a means of increasing resilience.

7. Review of Parish Council Policies

Deferred until the next meeting.

8. Correspondence

Elections 2024: the Council noted that the election for the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner would take place on Thursday 2 May 2024

Allotments: Cllr Dadd advised that allotment tenants had expressed their intention to advise the Council in writing of their concerns in relation to the tenancy agreement. Noting that the allotments were experiencing a high level of vacancies, Members agreed to consider the tenants' concerns alongside other current issues, including suggestions for improving the allotments and making them more attractive, and the management of empty plots.

The Record – 40th Year Edition: Cllr Jane Kiddy confirmed that she would prepare and submit a contribution on behalf of the Parish Council.

9. Date of Next Meeting

Noted that the next meeting of the Council will be the Annual Parish Council Meeting, taking place on Wednesday 22 May 2024. The meeting will commence at 7.40pm or on the rise of the Annual Parish Meeting occurring at 7.30pm on the same evening, whichever is the later. The venue for both meetings will be The Barn, Ashen Lane, Stoke by Clare, CO10 8JA.

10. Urgent Business

None.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Signed.....

**Chairman
22 May 2024**

Appendix

**Stoke by Clare Parish Council
Accounts for Payment Authorisation, 20 March 2024**

AUTHORISED

	Cheque No	To Whom	Amount £	Authorised
	Payments authorised since last meeting (for information)			
1.	620	Pryke Building Ltd – VAT omitted from invoice 926	94.60	18/02/24
2.	621	ICO – Date Protection Fee 2024-25	40.00	“
3.	622	SbC Bowls Club – refund re new power supply	910.80	“
4.	623	Bell Landscapes – work to village sign	344.50	“
		Sub-total	1,389.90	
	Payments approved at the meeting			
5.	630	Street Cleaner salary Feb 2024	116.08	24/03/24
6.	625	Parish Clerk salary and expenses		“
	a.	February salary	£273.50	“
	b.		£12.00	“
	c.		£59.99	“
			345.49	
7.	626	Reimbursements to Cllr Dadd		
	a.	Coronation tree	£55.00	“
	b.	Commemorative plaque	£48.95	“
	c.	Replacement lime tree (Vill Green)	55.97	“
			159.92	
8.	627	R.A. & J. McKenny: instal renovated village sign	600.00	“
9.	628	Hon A Loch Settlement no 2 (rentals)	35.00	“
10.	629	Community Action Suffolk (webhosting)	60.00	“
		Sub-total	1,316.49	
		TOTAL	2,706.39	