

West Crewkerne Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting of West Crewkerne Parish Council held at Clapton & Wayford Village Hall on Tuesday 11th March 2014.

(7.00 p.m. – 8.00 p.m.)

Present:-

Members

Mrs J Borland (Chairman)
Mr H Ploszek

Mrs S Swaffield
Mr S Wetherall

Also Present:-

Mrs A Cox, Democratic Services Manager, SSDC (acting as Clerk)
County Councillor John Dyke
District Councillor Sue Osborne.
10 members of the public

1. Apologies for Absence (Agenda item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr F Broom and Mr J Wyatt.

2. Public Open Forum (Agenda item 2)

Mr D Yeomans said that despite the persistence of the Parish Council, the Assistant Highways Service Manager had only agreed to an inspection of the roads in the parish with parish councillors in the spring. He provided several photographs of potholes in the roads at the current time in Woolminstone.

The Chairman advised that she had written to the Mr John Osman, the Leader of Somerset County Council, regarding the state of the roads in the Parish and the lack of action by the Highways Department. She read out the e-mail response from Mr Osman which is attached to these minutes.

She confirmed that she would accept Mr Osman's offer to meet with the Highway Service Manager and report back to the next meeting of the Parish Council. She also confirmed that she would ascertain the criteria as to how the Highway Department determined when to resurface a whole road or just continue to fill potholes.

It was noted that Somerset County Council required photographic proof of damage to vehicles caused by potholes (with photographs of the potholes) and copies of receipts for repair in order to claim damages from them.

Some discussion ensued on the clearing and jetting of drains in the parish and concern was expressed that the workmen operating the jetting wagons were not trained in operating the jetting equipment. It was suggested that either a resident or Parish Councillor accompany the workmen to identify the drains requiring attention.

In response to a question, it was noted that there were no specific regulations relating to the cutting of hedges next to highways although the hedge clippings should be cleared to prevent them from blocking drains and gullies.

County Councillor John Dyke offered to follow up a report that an SCC road contractor had recently offered to tarmac a resident's drive with the excess tarmac from pot hole repairs.

3. Declarations of Interest in items on the Agenda (Pecuniary or Non-Statutory Interests) (Agenda item 3)

There were no declarations of interest in items on the Agenda.

4. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 14th January 2014 (Agenda item 4)

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14th January 2014, having been previously circulated, were approved and signed as a true record of the meeting, subject to the following amendment:-

Page 180 – Highway Matters (Agenda Item 9) – the word 'level' to be replaced with 'proximity'.
Sentence to read:

"Mrs Swaffield asked if anyone was monitoring the **proximity** of the river adjacent to the road into Clapton as she was concerned that if it rose higher then it could wash away part of the road. It was noted that the Highway Authority were aware of this."

5. Matters arising from the Minutes (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman advised that the pothole reported in the road outside Maiden Beech School had been repaired however, it appeared to be breaking up again.

She also advised that the Crewkerne Burial Board would be discussing the annual contribution from West Crewkerne PC at their next meeting.

6. Parish Plans (Agenda item 6)

The Chairman advised that prior to the March Parish Council meeting she had been in contact with Mrs A Pyke asking for a timescale when all residences in the parish could receive either a hand delivered or postal invite to an open morning at the village hall regarding a parish plan. Mrs Pyke was unable to attend the Parish Council meeting that evening but would be in touch when she had any specific lead time. Flyers could then be printed advertising the event. Availability for use of the meeting room had already been checked with the village hall booking clerk, and Zoe Harris, Neighbourhood Development Officer at SSDC, had agreed to provide support on the day if she was able.

7. Planning Matters (Agenda item 7)

The Chairman advised that no new planning applications had been received in the Parish since the last meeting in January 2014. She advised that she had received a letter from the

Planning Officer regarding the application for a garage and store at Manor Grange, explaining why the application had been approved following the Parish Councils concerns as to the size of the building.

- A) **13/04983/FUL MANOR GRANGE, HEWISH, CREWKERNE TA18 8QT:** The erection of a double garage and store (Revised application to 12/00027/FUL) (GR 342097/108520) – application permitted with conditions
- B) **13/04846/FUL MANOR BARNS, HENLEY CREWKERNE TA18 8PQ:** The erection of a single storey extension with rooms in the roof space (GR 343899/107633) – application permitted with conditions.
- C) **13/03398/LBC HEWISH MILL FARM, HEWISH, CREWKERNE, SOMERSET TA18 8QX.** Alterations, conversion, and restoration of the Mill and Miller's House to include replacement link extension, and two storey extension to Miller's House. (GR 341932/104942) – No decision on District Council website.
- D) **13/03397/FUL. HEWISH MILL FARM, HEWISH, CREWKERNE SOMERSET TA18 8QX.** Alterations, conversion, and restoration of the Mill and Miller's House to include replacement link extension, and two storey extension to Miller's House. (GR 341932/104942) – No decision on District Council website

8. Highway Matters (Agenda item 8)

Mr Anthony Bowie said that bollards had been erected outside the Old Bakery which were forcing traffic to drive wide of them into the middle of the road. He said due to their position, they may be accidentally struck by a vehicle. The Chairman agreed to take this up with the Highway Authority.

Mr H Ploszek asked that his thanks be recorded to Mr D Yeomans, Mr B Beeson, Mr R Franklin, Mr J Pyke, Mr G Sansum, Mr M Wilson and Mr L Graham-Gleed for assisting in the clearing of drains within the parish during the winter months.

9. Reports from Councillors, Including District and County Councillors (Agenda item 9)

Mrs S Osborne, District Councillor, reported that:-

- SSDC had set their budget for 2014/15 and had frozen their portion of the council tax for the forthcoming year.
- The District Council were concentrating on having their Local Plan adopted and it was hoped that it would be agreed at a Council meeting that week to put the final amendments to the Planning Inspector.
- The District Council were still working on a Retail Relief and Retail Reoccupation Relief scheme in relation to Business Rates.
- The applicant for a planning application for 110 houses on Land at Goldwell Farm, Yeovil Road, Crewkerne (the CLR site) had lodged an appeal against non-determination of the application.

- The Government were allocating £140m to repair flood damaged roads and she had written to County Councillor Harvey Siggs to ask for part of this to be allocated to road repairs in West Crewkerne.

Mr J Dyke, County Councillor, advised that:-

- It was very important for the District Council to have an adopted Local Plan in place in order to defend against planning applications such as the CLR site in Crewkerne.
- The recent flooding in Somerset had affected all departments within the County Council with many staff assisting local residents to cope with the waters. An Action Plan with £100m of flood alleviation schemes had now been produced.
- Somerset County Council had also set their budget for 2014/15 and had frozen their portion of the council tax for the fourth successive year.
- Spending on Adult Care services in Somerset was rising as the population aged.
- He had allocated £500 of his Community budget to Clapton Village Hall and had also contributed towards dementia classes at the Henhayes Centre in Crewkerne.
- The Library in Crewkerne would be closed for two days whilst wheels were attached to the book shelving to allow greater flexibility to use the space in the building.

10. Finance (Agenda item 10)

The Chairman advised that a request had been received from Crewkerne Town Council for a contribution towards repairs to the Chapel roof at the Crewkerne Cemetery. The full cost of the repairs was £10,292 + VAT and a suggested contribution was £350.00. This amount was proposed and seconded and agreed by all Councillors present.

It was agreed to pay the following remittances:

1. Somerset Association of Local Councils - Six copies of the Good Councillor Guide - £10.00
2. Crewkerne Town Council – contribution towards Crewkerne Cemetery repairs - £350.00

11. Correspondence (Agenda item 11)

The following correspondence received was noted:

- An update letter from Connecting Devon and Somerset Broadband – to be placed on the Parish website.
- Notification from Somerset County Council of the Somerset Minerals Plan formal consultation taking place from 03 March to 14 April.

12. Date of next meeting (Agenda item 12)

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Parish Council would be held on Tuesday 13th May 2014 at Clapton & Wayford Village Hall at 7.00 pm.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

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Chairman

E-mail received 11th March 2014

Dear Julia

Thank you for your email of the 4th March. I appreciate the concerns you have raised and must first assure you that we have systems in place to ensure that we, the people of Somerset, get good value for money from our Highway Service and that appropriate governance of our practices and procedures is in place.

As the Highway Authority, Somerset County Council has a statutory duty under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highway network, ensuring that the highways are safe and that the public can use them without obstruction. To do this we have to look at our network as one entity. To ensure a consistent countywide approach a formalised Inspection System that prescribes the frequency of inspections and the method of assessment, recording and actioning of defects has been adopted (the Inspection regime also assists in providing the evidence for defence in any case of litigation brought against the County Council where a lack of adequate maintenance has been alleged by a third party).

It is Nationally recognised that it would be unreasonable for the highway to be in perfect condition with no defects and therefore intervention levels are established which relate to the type and use of road or footway. Defects greater than the established intervention level are considered to present a greater risk of an accident and are deemed Safety Defects. These intervention levels are accompanied by the inspection regime to enable defects to be identified. This can often lead to works being undertaken to one safety defect but a neighbouring pothole is left untouched. Each highway authority must establish its own standards and inspection frequency but will obviously take heed of case law and other authorities' experiences.

In addition to our planned inspection we provide a reactive service whereby issues raised by highway users are similarly inspected and any resultant works commissioned in alliance with our intervention levels and timeframes for repair.

The works themselves and the materials used are compliant with national regulation and governance. Operatives are trained to the levels required by the New Roads and Streetworks Act (NRSWA) and the County Council undertakes regular auditing of works to ensure compliance.

To ensure we get good value for money pothole repairs our included in our schedule of rates and performance criteria is set to ensure our Service Provider undertake the works efficiently. Should they not do so, 'Low Service Damages' can be claimed which financially penalise the contractor.

With regard to your concerns regarding specific issues in West Crewkerne, I applaud the proactive nature of the Parish Council and its existing working relationship with the Area Highway Office. I have discussed your concerns with Scott Davies, the Highway Service Manager, who is more than happy to meet with the Parish Chairman to provide a greater insight into our working practices and to also look at ways of developing a more integrated

service moving forward. Scott is contactable by means of telephone 0845 345 9155 or through email at countyroads-southsom@somerset.gov.uk.

I trust my response goes some way to providing you with the assurances you require. The delivery of highway services in Somerset is a large and complex task but one that aligns itself to best practice whilst be open and flexible to change.

Regards

John Osman
Leader of Somerset Council