

# UNADOPTED

## Stratton Parish Council

Official Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Stratton Parish Council held on  
16<sup>th</sup> March 2021 via a remote Zoom Meeting

### **Present**

Cllrs A Aylott, M Garner, C Hobbs, A Wheeler, and five members of the public.

### **Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Ordinary Meeting of Stratton Parish Council. This was the second remote meeting held by the Council via Zoom, as Covid 19 regulations set by the Government meant that a public meeting could still not be held. Members of the public had the opportunity to register with the Council and join the meeting.

Cllr Hobbs introduced and welcomed the new Parish Clerk, Mrs Michelle Harding who was attending the meeting. Mrs Harding was to take up her appointment with the Parish on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

### **Apologies**

No Apologies.

### **40/20 Public Participation**

Members of the public were requested to submit any questions they may have for the Council in advance of the meeting

Two questions had been submitted:-

From Mr Mike Jury – “Will the council allow 2-way communication between public and council in future zoom meetings. This would allow you to reinstate the second public participation period at the end of the meeting as agreed at a previous council meeting, meaning we could seek any clarification immediately rather than wait 2 months for the next meeting.”

The Chairman confirmed that the Council was very much in a learning phase with Zoom, and that advice had been received from NALC and DAPTC, that Councils needed to ensure control of any meeting, so, for this meeting, no verbal discussion was permitted although members of the public could attend. Depending on how this worked, a decision would be made whether to totally open up any future meetings held via the Zoom platform. It is hoped that a lifting of government restrictions would mean that the next meeting scheduled for May would be held, in public, at the Village Hall.

From Mrs Gillian Slade on behalf of the A37 Action Group, - “I would like to update the Parish Council on recent activity in relation to our communications with Dorset Council Highways Department and to seek comments from the Parish Council.

You will recall that we published to Stratton residents, via Stratton Active, the statement made by Michael Potter, Road Safety Team Leader, on 19<sup>th</sup> November, in response to the feedback we had received from residents. This statement reported that a number of actions had been taken to reduce the risk of skid-related collisions and the efficiency of the drainage at the site had been improved. He also stated that the concerns raised by the community had been considered but that “the decision not to install barriers was not a denial of the concerns raised, but the result of a consideration of a variety of factors which on balance was felt to be proportionate.” He also stated that “as we have taken steps to address this problem, I believe it is reasonable to allow a period of monitoring”.

Since that communication we have written to him to express concern that despite the mobile sign (PVMS) alerting drivers to the danger of ice, cars are continuing to accelerate once they emerge from under the bridge. We further requested the re-installation of the free-standing “ICE” sign alongside the three large arrow signs as traffic emerges from under the bridge. We have had no response to this specific request but the PVMS sign was moved nearer to the bridge.

On 8<sup>th</sup> February we advised Mr Potter of two further incidents which had occurred overnight, when two cars slammed into the wall under the railings and a ballast lorry skidded onto the footpath and demolished one of the chevron signs. He has also not responded to this specific monitoring information.

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Considering the strength of feeling from the residents of Stratton (over 130 responses) regarding these safety issues and calling for greater protection for footpath users”.

We should like to ask the Parish Council:

- what is their view of what has been achieved?
- are they content with Dorset Council’s policy of “look and see”? and
- do any further measures merit being lobbied for?

The Chairman responded that the matter had not been discussed with other councillors, but that he hoped that the previous stated position of the Council would remain. That position was outlined in Minute 65/19 – Highways (Meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> January 2020) “The Parish Council fully supports the idea of carrying out a review of the safety of the A37 and that improvements be made to increase safety. The Parish Council however, wants to work with Highways to get the best result possible and not make fixed demands”

Other Councillors confirmed they felt that this approach was still the right one for the Council to follow. A review meeting was to be held by Highways in the spring of 2021, and the Parish Council had already registered an interest to be involved.

## **41/20 Code of Conduct/ Declaration of Interest**

Chairman reminded Councillors of the need to declare any interest in any of the items to be discussed on the agenda which had not already been entered in the Member’s Register of Interests. There were none.

## **42/20 Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Stratton Parish Council**

Councillors agreed the Minutes of the Zoom Meeting of the Parish Council held on 19th January 2021.

## **43/20 Finance**

A) Income and Expenditure

Details of income received and expenditure made since the previous meeting was circulated:

### **Accounts to 16th March 2021**

Monies in the Village Green account cannot be used for any other purpose

Account	Parish	V/Green	Parish Plan	VAT	Balance
Balance b/f	16,350.99	37,266.83	1,469.56	751.72	54,335.66
Receipts	0.00	328.15	250.00	0.00	578.15
Payments	404.50	0.00	0.00	9.90	414.40
Balance c/f	15,946.49	37,594.98	1,719.56	761.62	54,499.41

Receipts

#### Village Green

NS&I - Interest 328.15

#### Parish Plan

Computer Reserve – Contribution for 2020/21 250.00

Total 578.15

Payments

#### Parish

Harrisons Packaging – Dog Bags 59.40

Computer Reserve – Contribution for 2020/21 250.00

Jetpack – Software security for Web-site 33.00

Expenses – Broadband/Telephone 72.00

Total 414.40

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The Chairman confirmed that the Council needed to adopt a finance policy, for although the parish had a Finance Strategy, it was also required to have a formal finance policy. A NALC standard policy had been received, which needed to be checked against SPC's Finance Strategy for any local variances. Cllr Wheeler confirmed that he felt that several areas were not fully appropriate. Agreed by all to adopt the finance policy, but for it to be checked for any obvious variances.

### B) Budget Monitoring

The budget monitoring position for the current financial year was reviewed and accepted.

### C) New Parish Clerk

Chairman confirmed that Mrs M Harding had been appointed, and that a new format of the contract of employment was being adopted by the Council. This newer NALC approved contract covered more areas in detail than the previous one used by the Council and meant that there was a requirement for the Council to adopt various other specific employment policies. Councillors agreed to adopt the standard NALC policies for Disciplinary, Grievance and Health and Safety.

The Parish Council also needed to consider its position under The Pensions Act 2008 in relation to pension contributions for the new Parish Clerk. The Chairman outlined the various criteria in the Act, and that the new clerk was an 'Entitled Worker' and could require the Council to arrange for them to join a pension scheme. Mrs Harding already has her own pension arrangements and was not requesting the Parish to make any contributions. The decision for the Council was whether or not many any contribution. Agreed by all Councillors not to make any contribution.

### D) Balances in Accounts

Chairman confirmed that as previously discussed that an amount had been transferred to the National Savings account. (Minute 32/20 F) – 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021. An amount of £4,000 had been transferred. Although it should be noted that interest rates had yet again been seriously reduced.

## **44/20 General Maintenance**

### A) Playing Field/Village Green Contracts for 2021/22

As previously agreed, the existing contractor had been contacted and new contracts signed for 2021/22 to cover grass cutting on the playing field and the village green. Prices had only increased by about £20 for each of the areas. (Minute 33/20 B) – 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021. It was noted that an initial cut on the playing field occurred last week, and a cut on the village green this afternoon. Contact had also been made with Waste Services on continuing to empty the dog waste bin on the playing field.

### B) Maintenance List/Progress with Map Stand

The Maintenance list for next year was considered and agreed. Work initially being required on the fence of the play area as a RoSPA inspection was due in May. Also agreed that RoSPA be requested to carry out a safety inspection of the Older Children's play area on the playing field.

The rotten hand rail on the steps going from the Village Green to the parking area as previously reported by Cllr Garner had now been replaced. (Minute 33/20 C) 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

The Millennium Map Stand had now been reinstalled with new European green oak legs. (Minute 33/20 C) – 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021. Considerable interest had occurred with all approving the new design and that the map stand was once more in place on the village green.

Agreed that a new tennis net be purchased for the court on the playing field.

### C) Christmas Tree

Cllr Wheeler led a detailed discussion on the financing of the Christmas tree on the Village Green. Various methods of financing the Christmas tree had taken place over the years, but more recently this was being paid for by funds collected from villagers which were destined for other charities. The question of whether the Parish Council should be involved and in what way was discussed. Agreed by all Councillors to consider the question and to discuss the matter further at the next meeting.

## **45/20 Planning**

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An update on the following planning notices which have been received was made:

WD/D/20/003304 – 7-8 Furbers Paddock, Stratton – Erection of new garage. Confirmed that a response had been sent by the Council. With comment being made about the number of constantly changing plans being submitted every two months or so. Decision by Dorset Council awaited.

WD/D/19/003097 – Land Charminster west of Industrial Estate – 82 houses. Position has been checked and confirmed that this planning application had now been approved by the Dorset Council. (Minute 34/20) 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

P/LBC/2021/00595 – Lower Muckleford House, Bradford Peverell – Conversion. This application not in Stratton but borders Stratton. No objections voiced by Councillors.

WD/D/20/003286 – 7-8 Furbers Paddock, Stratton – Variation to Conditions. This application has caused considerable concern to local residents as the letter sent to local householders by Planning Officers was ambiguous, and did not clearly reflect detail in the actual planning application. According to the letter, the whole of the borders of the property were to change from a beech hedge to a 1.8m high close boarded fence. Whereas, the actual planning application indicated that a 1.8m high close boarded fence was requested on the side borders of the property, while the front road side border would remain as a beech hedge.

Councillors agreed that it could support the application, as long as the beech hedge on the road side border was confirmed. If not, it would not support the application and make objection.

## **46/20 Highways**

A) Safety of A37 Road.

Noted that one of the new chevron signs had been knocked down, but that Highways had reinstalled it. Also noted that a further kerb and road clean had occurred and that water drainage was more effective.

B) Verge and Hedge trimming

Following the recent verge and hedge trimming on the bypass, an e-mail had been submitted to Highways making comment about the lack of prior litter picking, and the state in which the road had been left, especially as no subsequent road sweeping took place. Considerable debris from the hedge had been left on the road. A reply has been received, and a more recent notification received of a litter pick to take place on a long length of the A37 including Stratton bypass up to the Somerset border.

## **47/20 Future Policy/Improvements Changes**

After discussion it was agreed that the previous draft on contact details prepared some time ago as part of the Communications policy, would be revisited, especially as a new parish clerk would be in post. Detail on this draft to be checked and once agreed, circulated to every household in the Parish.

## **48/20 Correspondence**

Chairman confirmed that notification had been received from Dorset Council that a Community Governance Review was to take place. As part of the review parishes were asked to consider if they wanted to make any changes. This covered parishes being created, merged, or abolished, increasing/decreasing numbers of Councillors, creating ward boundaries, changes to parish names, correcting minor border anomalies or changing a parish council into a parish meeting.

Councillors were asked whether they wished for Stratton to make any changes or to be merged with any other neighbouring parish, or at least to contact other parishes to consider this possibility. Agreed by all Councillors that the parish should at least consider this position, and that contact be made with other local parishes to see if they wished to discuss the possibilities.

Information received that a new dog bye-law notice had been erected on the Playing Field. The Parish Council has previously not accepted the recommended Dorset Council standard bye-laws on open spaces.

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But after discussion it was felt that this needed to be investigated further, as it was not known whether a new national bye-law had been introduced or whether this was the latest Dorset Council bye-law. The sign at present has been removed.

### **49/20 Items for the next Agenda**

Christmas Tree. Confirmation of bye-laws for dogs. Overriding Finance policy.

### **Date of the next Meeting**

Next meeting should be the Annual Parish Meeting on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May. But this date still to be confirmed, as it is not known whether this meeting can be held in public at the Village Hall. The Annual Parish Meeting has to be held in public.

Meeting closed at 8.40 pm