

Stratton Parish Council

Official Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Stratton Parish Council held on
15th September 2020 at the Stratton Village Hall

Present

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

Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Ordinary Meeting of Stratton Parish Council.

Apologies

Apologies received from Dorset Council Cllr. David Taylor, Colin Jackson and Mike Jury.

16/20 Public Participation

Mrs J. Grocott gave thanks to the Council for the flower tubs at the entrance to the village. Stated that she was a regular using of the playing field for dog walking and that it was good for dog owners to use. See also Minute 21/20 A) – Playing Field.

Also, made comment regarding Note 10 provided by the Parish Council to the site meeting with the Highways Officers and questioned why the Council had stated 'that there appeared to be no real desire in the Parish for an extension of the existing railings, nor is there any desire for erection of safety fences'. And, stated that she felt that the Parish Council was disregarding the safety of pedestrians or cyclists using the footpath, while that was not the view of the Stratton A37 Action group who wanted a physical barrier. See also Minute 23/20 – Highways.

Chairman replied by saying that over the past few years, he had spoken to up to 20 people in the village on this matter and had received no indication of any interest from parishioners for these two specific types of physical barriers and that was why the comment had been written.

Mrs G. Slade questioned and supported the need for safety of pedestrians and others using the footpath alongside the A37. See also Minute 23/20 – Highways.

Also, commented on the playing field and that fencing had been part of the original budgeted cost of the new play-area but had never been erected or followed up and that would keep dogs away from the play equipment. See also Minute 21/20 A) - Playing Field.

Chairman confirmed that the playing field was a designated Flood Alleviation Area and the Environment Agency would not allow parts to be fenced off, which was also the reason why the tennis court had never had a fence put around it.

Mr S Joslin made a general point regarding children's safety, and damage to equipment which had been reported to the Police and that wild animals were involved with the damage. Also referred to recent problems with youths in cars causing problems at night time. That dogs were not capable of causing the damage to the zip wire seat as had been reported. That a neighbour of his had said that wooden fencing could easily be provided and put around the play-area. See also Minute 21/20 A) and B)– Playing Field.

Mr M Bowman was concerned about the water levels in the Wrackle and that recently it had run dry with numerous small fish dying from lack of oxygen. Then when the recent storm hit, the Wrackle flooded, but within a few days was dry again. He felt that those responsible for controlling the water level should have more consideration for the wildlife living in the river.

Chairman replied that this was a responsibility of the land-owner who most years closed sluice gates higher up the Frome to protect the water level in the main river. As such, the Parish Council had no powers to intervene.

Mr A Keep raised a question with regard to Agenda item 9a. The variation of conditions for the building at 7-8 Furbers Paddock. He felt that there were concerns on whether the variations were correct and as applied for. The change from a single to double garage did not look as if it would actually happen, but merely allowed potential for an additional room. Meanwhile the height of the

garage had been increased and this again allowed the possibly for a further room above it. Further concerns regarding parking and access for larger vehicles was also mentioned. His main question was who 'polices' the actual building of new buildings to ensure that planning specifications are followed.

Cllr Hobbs replied that once planning approval had been given by the Dorset Council that the Parish Council had no ability to question the decision made. If the build did not follow the specifications set then it was up to Planning Officers and or Building Control Officers from Dorset Council to monitor and enforce. It was known that these Officers were extremely busy and would not be able to fully follow up on each and every new building unless the non-compliance was pointed out to them. If matters clearly breached planning conditions it was possible for local people to make their own representations direct to the Planning authority and to question the building works being undertaken. See also Minute 22/20 – Planning.

17/20 Code of Conduct/ Declaration of Interest

Chairman reminded Councillors of the need to declare any interest in any of the items to be discussed in the agenda which had not already been entered in the Member's Register of Interests. There were no declarations.

18/20 Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Stratton Parish Council

Councillors agreed the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on 21st July 2020.

19/20 Finance

A) Income and Expenditure

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

Accounts to 15th September 2020

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

Account	Parish	V/Green	Parish Plan	VAT	Balance
Balance b/f	14,184.85	38,748.74	2,034.71	31.91	54,936.39
Receipts	300.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	300.00
Payments	109.12	63.91	0.00	10.00	183.03
Balance c/f	14,375.73	38,684.83	2,034.71	41.91	55,053.36

Receipts

Donations for Bench – Family members & friends 300.00

Payments

Parish

Tom Gamwell – Website Support 100.00
Postage 9.12

Village Green

Groves Nurseries – Grass Seed 13.91
AG Tree Services – Felling Tree 60.00

Parish Plan

Nil

Total 183.03

B) Budget Monitoring

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

C) Section 137 Grants

The Section 137 grants process is to be started and advertised with a closing date of 31st October 2020.

D) Vacancy - Parish Clerk

Cllr Hobbs gave an update on the position of appointing a new Parish Clerk. One person did come forward and an interview was arranged only for that person to withdraw on the day of the interview. Since then another person has shown an interest and details have been sent to them and arrangements were being made to set up an interview (Minute 60/19 F) – 21st January 2020 and Minute 8/20 I) – 21st July 2020)

20/20 General Maintenance

A) Playing Field - Branch

Confirmed that arrangements had been made for one errant branch to be cut down, as it was resting on a resident's garden fence. That work now completed.

B) Playing Field Gullies

The two gullies in the playing field had now both been strimmed and cleared. Councillors gave thanks for the excellent job done.

C) Alms-houses' bench

The replacement bench had now been installed by the Alms-houses. Councillors confirmed that they were happy for families to put plaques on the bench remembering two long standing Stratton residents – Mrs Gladys Gould and Mrs Maureen Lloyd. The plaques to be fitted shortly.(Minute 23/19 F) – 16th July 2019, Minute 34/19 E) – 17th September 2019, Minute 48/19 C) – 19th November 2019 and Minute 9/20 E) – 21st July 2020)

D) Village Green Hedge cutting

Cllr Wheeler confirmed that the cutting of the village green hedge was to take place on Friday 18th September.

E) Current Maintenance issues

A review was made of the maintenance list. A number of actions had now taken place, replacement of noticeboard posts, installation of new zip wire seat, removal of concrete base for old skateboard ramps and seeding of that area. The wire on the zip wire slide had also been tightened.

21/20 Playing Field

A) Review allowing dogs on playing field

The Parish Council needed to review its previous decision to allow dogs to use the playing field area. This decision had been made two years ago and was at variance with byelaws introduced by authorities in Dorset, which generally prohibited dogs from public areas which contained children's play areas. Concern was being felt about the amount of local social media being made about dog mess on the playing field and damage to the zip wire seat potentially by a dog. Various comments were made and Councillors had a long discussion over the merits and problems faced with trying to keep two areas of the population happy. Eventually agreement was reached that signage on the entry gate would be checked and a 'Dog on Leads Only' sign put up. All dog owners were to be encouraged to ensure they tidied up behind their animals. See also Minute 28/20 vi) Public Participation where this matter was discussed further and the decision amended.

B) Damage to Zip Wire Seat

Chairman confirmed that a new zip wire seat had been installed in early July, but by the 28 July considerable damage had occurred to it. Mostly puncture marks that closely resembled teeth marks. Photographic evidence was held by the Parish Council and the damage shown to PCSO Sarah Pilcher when she was checking other reported concerns raised about activities late at night on the playing field. All Councillors were saddened that someone had possibly allowed their animal to damage a seat on equipment which had been built at great cost for the enjoyment of children.

22/20 Planning

An update on the following planning notices has been received:

WD/D/20/001182 – 7-8 Furbers Paddock, Stratton Variation of Conditions- Approved 29 July 2020 by Dorset Council. See also Minute 19/20 – Public Participation.

WD/D/19/003097 – Land Charminster west of Industrial Estate – 82 houses. No comment made by Parish Council as initial statement in relation to this application was made in February 2020.

23/20 Highways

Safety of A37 Road.

Chairman referred back to the point raised by Mrs J Grocott under Public Participation. On checking his own notes prepared for the site meeting with Highway Officers, it was quite clear that the Parish Council had made adequate safety requests for pedestrians and cycle users of the footway. Note 11 specifically indicated the need for safety and suggested the use of High Containment Kerbs to prevent vehicles from sliding off the road and thus stopping them crossing the footway. Even the conclusion in the notes highlighted the need to 'provide considerable extra protection to cyclists on the cycle track as well as pedestrian users'. See also Minute 16/20 – Public Participation.

Following the site meeting details had now been received by the Parish Council from Highways on a list of proposed safety improvement works. These works will start on the 5th October and include additional drainage works; resurfacing the road to give a positive texture and better skid resistance; producing a camber to allow water to drain off the road; reviewing existing hatching and line markings and studs to change the alignment of the road; tree and vegetation clearance to improve visibility; changing signage to provide warnings both on the approach to and exit from the bridge. Also included will be countdown lines on the road (but not rumble strips which are noisy) and larger chevrons to replace the existing ones. No promise had been made however, of any physical barrier, although Highways had promised a review to be held in the spring to see how effective the improvements had been. Councillors accepted the works promised and hoped that this would indeed help improve the safety of this section of road. (Minutes 57/19 and 65/19 A) – 21st January 2020, Minute 12/20 A) – 21st July 2020)

24/20 Future Policy Changes/Areas of Improvements

A) Contact with other Parish Councils.

Contact points with other Parish Council's in the Charminster St Marys Ward has been collated and a draft letter prepared ready to go to them.
(Minute 11/20 – 21st July 2020)

B) Communications.

A draft communication and guidelines policy was presented to the Meeting by Cllr Hobbs. The details of each type of communication employed by the council were fully explained, exploring how they interlinked, encompassing what was currently taking place with what extra areas would be included in the future. After hearing all of the areas covered, Councillors felt that no alterations were required and agreed to adopt the policy with immediate effect. All Councillors voted to adopt the policy.

Chairman confirmed that a suggestion had been made by Mr Colin Jackson regarding remote meetings. The majority of councillors had supported the position that this Council desired to meet in public and be seen to be doing its work openly. Remote meetings did not fully support this objective and for this reason remote meetings had not been included in the policy. (Minute 2/20 – 21st July 2020)

25/20 Tree Report – Review Actions

Chairman confirmed that all actions previously marked in the Tree Report as 'urgent' or required on 'safety grounds' had been carried out. Councillors now needed to prioritise those actions which had been marked as 'desirable'. After some debate, it was agreed to recontact AG Tree Services, the author of the report, to see if they felt there was any advantage in carrying out work in any specific order. Cllr Wheeler was shortly to see AG Tree Services and would ask them for their comments. Councillors agreed to await comments from AG Tree Services. (Minute 9/20 G – 21st July 2020)

26/20 Correspondence

Confirmed that all relevant information received by the Parish had been circulated to Councillors.

27/20 Items for the next Agenda

New Parish Clerk, Tree Report – review, Precept.

28/20 Public Participation

Comment made on several issues.

i) Mrs G Slade questioned the position of the cycleway improvement once the Wessex Water pipe was removed. Chairman confirmed what the Parish Council understood the position to be that no Government capital funding was now available for Phase 3 of the cycleway. Phase 4 to the west of Stratton had been done as a maintenance improvement, and although there were some design issues still on Phase 3 there was an understanding that improvements would still be carried out. (Minute 12/20 B) and D) – 21st July 2020)

ii) Mr M Bowman questioned the timing of the Wessex Water progress and when the temporary pipe would be removed. Chairman confirmed that so far Wessex Water had passed no information to the Parish Council on timing or date of completion.

iii) General comment made regarding the ability to clearly hear discussions during the meeting. Chairman confirmed that the Hall's PA system would be made available for the next meeting.

iv) Mr S Joslin requested clarification of who owned the playing field and why it was called by different names during the meeting. Chairman confirmed that the area was constructed primarily as a Flood Alleviation Area. It legally belonged to the Parish Council who maintained it and were able to use it as a playing field.

v) Mr M Bowman made comment about a bull being present in the meadow which also contained the footpath across to Bradford Peverell.

vi) Several comments were made showing concern about the decision to restrict dogs on a lead only on the playing field. This was felt to be unfair to all users who did take close control of their animal and cleaned up after them. After a further round of discussions by Councillors it was agreed to change the ruling from earlier in the Meeting to say the 'Dogs under Control of their Owners at all times'. See also Minute 21/20 A)

Date of the next Meeting

Ordinary Meeting – 17th November 2020 in the Ashley Hall at 7pm

Meeting closed at 9.15 pm