



Queen Camel Parish Council

DRAFT MINUTES of the **MEETING** held in The Marples Room
Of the Memorial Hall on **Monday 12th November 2018** at **7.30pm**

Present: Councillors **John Brendon (JB)** – Chairman
Chris Bennett (CB)
Andrew Dollard (AD)
Kathryn Grainger (KG)
Bryan Norman (BN)
Kit Stapely (KS)
Simon Stapely (SS) – Vice Chairman

In attendance: **Mike Lewis (ML)** - District and County Councillor
Patrick Pender-Cudlip (PPC) - Clerk
17 members of the public

Procedural Items

- 1. Welcome and introduction** - JB opened the meeting, welcoming all present.
- 2. Public session** - A number of members of the public commented on or asked questions about the future of the former site of Countess Gytha School (the Old School site or OSS) and the Queen Camel Community Trust (CLT) project (the Project) to acquire it for the community as an Education and Enterprise Centre. The following points were made and questions asked:
 - Are the CLT's proposals to purchase, develop, market and manage the OSS viable and sustainable?
 - On 11/9/2018 Queen Camel Parish Council (QCPC) expressed support for the Project subject to the provision of a Business Plan. Has a viable and credible Plan now been provided?
 - In the absence of such a Plan, can QCPC continue to support the Project?
 - If as reported South Somerset District Council (SSDC) is considering lending the CLT £¼m. to purchase the site, how will the CLT repay the loan?
 - Is it true that the Project cannot go forward without the support of the village and, if so, will the Parish Council call a Village Meeting [properly termed a Parish Meeting] so that residents are given a chance to express their views?
 - Events like the CLT's forthcoming Drop-In Event on 24/11/18 are useful for passing on information but proper consultation requires a Village Meeting so that residents can discuss and debate the subject publicly, fully and freely.

At this point the Chairman pointed out that any six or more registered electors can call a Village Meeting, as can the Council itself or its Chairman. The Clerk made some further procedural points:

- Six or more electors can convene or call a Village (Parish) Meeting just by writing to the Clerk.
- The Council Chairman (if present) has to chair Village Meetings, or if not the Vice Chairman. If neither is present those attending the Meeting would elect a Chairman.
- The Council meets the necessary costs of Village Meetings, like hiring the hall.
- Apart from these two elements the Council as such has no necessary connection with or responsibility for Village Meetings.

A resident asked:

- Would the CLT, SSDC and Somerset County Council (SCC) be attending the proposed meeting?

The Clerk explained that those convening the meeting had the right to set the Agenda and they were entitled to invite whomsoever they wished to attend.

Residents continued with further points and questions:

- Does anyone in the CLT have sufficient business expertise and knowledge to set up and run the Project successfully?
- There are other local projects such as the Church roof, pavilion, and tennis court which require support from the public purse and if the CLT were also to look to the local community for financial support it could cause serious problems.
- Is it feasible for the CLT to produce a viable Business Plan and the requisite funding in time to meet the reported deadlines of a commitment to buy by 21/12/18 and handover by 31/3/19?

JB reported that a few days earlier he and some other Parish Councillors had attended an informal meeting with CLT Directors who had emphasised the following points:

- The CLT is fully focused on developing a Business Plan which is very much a work in progress.
- CLT Directors fully appreciate that the Project requires a robust and viable Business Plan, not least because anyone approached for grant or loan support would need to see it.

JB added a few further observations of his own:

- The CLT has applied for various different loans for different elements in the Project.
- The proposed SSDC loan is envisaged as a facilitating or bridging loan though it might be converted into a long-term loan if circumstances required.
- The CLT is an independent organisation but to obtain grants and loans it would need appropriate community support, so it is up to the CLT to produce evidence that they have this support.
- A Village Meeting is one possible way of gauging village opinion although those attending such a meeting would not necessarily be fully representative.
- It is up to the CLT to show how it will acquire the requisite managerial expertise for the Project.
- It is for residents themselves to judge which village projects to support and whether or not to take this one-off opportunity to acquire a unique site for the community.

A CLT representative commented on some of the points raised and explained the CLT's position:

- A possible loan to the CLT of £250k. had been on the Agenda of a SSDC Executive Committee meeting on 1st November but at the last minute SSDC decided to postpone the discussion until a later meeting so that the property could be independently valued.
- The CLT Drop-In Event on 24th November will run from c.10am until late afternoon so as to give as many residents as possible the chance to attend. There is likely to be a discussion session (or several sessions) to give residents an opportunity to voice their own views.
- The CLT informed SCC of its serious interest in the Old School site in December 2015 or earlier. Since then SCC has twice put the site up for auction and twice been obliged to withdraw it, but it was only in June 2018 that thanks to the good offices of our County Councillor Mike Lewis the CLT Directors were able to meet the SCC Leader to discuss their proposals.
- The CLT had been trying to negotiate a Community Asset Transfer whereby SCC would transfer the site to the CLT at a very substantial discount but in February 2018 SCC announced that it would not accept less than £250k., having previously suggested £200k.
- In August 2018 CLT Directors met officers of the SCC Property Division who set deadlines for the sale of the Old School site:
 - Exchange of contracts (and 10% deposit) by 21st December 2018

- Completion by 31st March 2019.
- The CLT commissioned and has very recently received a 124-page building and site Survey.
- The CLT is working hard on the preparation of a Business Plan.
- The CLT has received feasibility grant funding of c.£21k. to pay for:
 - The building and site Survey
 - A professional Business Plan, currently comprising 19 pages and 19 spreadsheets; much of this should be on public view at the Drop In Event on 24th November.
 - A planning application if the project goes ahead.
- Currently the CLT has six sources of possible grant funding for a variety of different purposes including post-purchase refurbishment of the site.
- Currently there is a mismatch between SCC's expectations and the proposed SSDC bridging loan but if the CLT grant bids are all successful and paid in a timely manner there will be no requirement for a SSDC bridging loan.
- CLT Directors have investigated and visited over a dozen similar community ventures including the Literary & Scientific Institute in Bridport and the Red Brick Building near Glastonbury; the Project is very modest compared to many of these.
- Queen Camel is a 'hub' whose facilities like the school, the surgery and the village shop serve many people from further afield. The Project is similar and would not be viable if it did not serve the wider community.
- The CLT has kept the Parish informed over the last two years via reports in the Parish Council minutes and representations at Annual Village Meetings.

[Clerk's note: After completing two priority items of procedural business the Council brought forward its own Agenda item on the Old School site. In accordance with normal practice and for the sake of clarity this is minuted in the order of the original Agenda, as item 06[1118]1 below].

On another subject, a resident asked whether the Council had organised anything to commemorate the end of the First World War, 100 years ago, and was told that it had not.

- 3. Apologies** - CW had sent her apologies for being unavoidably absent.
- 4. Declarations of interest** - CB declared an interest in item 06.1 as a Director of the Queen Camel Community Land Trust (CLT).
- 5. Appointments to Council Committees:**
It was **RESOLVED 7-0-0 [For-against-abstained]** that **Andrew Dollard join the Finance & Risk Committee and Kathryn Grainger join the Planning Committee.**
- 6. Neighbourhood Watch liaison role:**
It was **RESOLVED 7-0-0** that **Kathryn Grainger be appointed to liaise with Neighbourhood Watch.**
- 7. Footpath Warden and Environment Warden:**
It was **RESOLVED 7-0-0** that **Kathryn Grainger be appointed Footpath Warden and Environment Warden.**
- 8. Councillor training** - It was noted that the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) is not offering Councillor training courses at the moment, possibly because the existing Parish Councils will be dissolved in May when new Councils will be elected. However new Councillors were reminded that most of the information they need to carry out their responsibilities effectively can be found in the *Good Councillor Guide* issued to all Councillors.
- 9. It was RESOLVED 7-0-0 to confirm as correct the minutes of the meeting of 10th September, 2018.**
It was RESOLVED 7-0-0 to confirm as correct the minutes of the meeting of 24th September, 2018.

Business Items

01 [1118] District and County Councillor's report - ML reported that:

- A trust has been set up to run Castle Cary Library using volunteer staff.
- Negotiations are going on to secure the future of the Sports Centre at Ansford Academy after the current contract for running it expires on 31st March 2019.
- SCC Highways (Highways) has been asked to reconsider its decision to charge parishes for topping up roadside bins with grit (rock salt). [**Clerk's note:** *Highways has since agreed to top up bins free of charge, probably for this year only. 25kg. sacks of rock salt can be purchased for £4.74 and collected from the Highways depot in Yeovil*].
- SSDC's *Transformation* (reorganisation) programme will be going on until September 2019.

02 [1118] Crime and Safety - Two crimes of violence and one each of theft and criminal damage were reported for Queen Camel for August-September 2018.

03 [1118] Updates:

1. Fingerposts - CB is obtaining quotations for their refurbishment.
2. Neighbourhood Plan - SSDC is sending the Plan out to Statutory Consultees for comment.
3. Welcome Packs – Distribution of Welcome Packs and Information leaflets will be agreed between Neighbourhood Watch and the Parochial Church Council (PCC).

04 [1118] Highways:

1. **Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs):** Councillors heard details of SID costs, features, locations and possible cost-sharing with West Camel and Sparkford Parish Councils.
2. **Blackwell and Wales Lanes:** ML reported that there have been discussions between him, a resident of Wales, SCC Highways and Highways England to find possible solutions to the problems caused by through traffic using the lanes to bypass congestion on the A303.
3. **A303 Sparkford to Ilchester dualling scheme** – nothing fresh to report. [**Clerk's note:** *A report on a subsequent flurry of communication between the Planning Inspectorate, Highways England and neighbouring Parish Councils will be delivered to an extraordinary Parish Council meeting on 10th December, for information and possible action as appropriate*].
4. **Culvert near the bridge** – maintenance responsibilities for the whole culvert is currently being discussed by SCC and the CLT.
5. **Highways Winter Service** – Highways is reducing its road-gritting service but will maintain its current programme in the parish, gritting the A359 and B3148 (Marston-Sherborne road). It was noted that the parish currently holds a small stock of rock salt (c.20 x 25kg. bags).

05 [1118] Planning:

1. **Planning Committee** - Councillors noted the minutes of the meeting of 24th September.
2. **Planning applications** – No new applications or updates have been received.

06 [1118] Councillors' reports and motions:

1. Old School Site:

- i. It was noted that the CLT is an independent organisation responsible for its own funding. It neither could nor would go ahead with the Project or apply for an SSDC bridging loan unless it had secured sufficient grant funding to purchase and develop the site.
- ii. While JB and other Councillors were speaking in favour of a Village Meeting the Clerk received a petition from more than six residents asking for such a Meeting to be called and

Councillors agreed that this seemed the best way forward.

- iii. It was suggested that for the CLT to gain the public support it needed to attract grant funding it would have to provide the public with more information about its plans.
- iv. Councillors acknowledged the huge amount of time and effort which CLT Directors had devoted to the Project but also understood public concern about its viability.
- v. It was noted that legally speaking the CLT is answerable to its (40+) members but CLTs generally also consider themselves directly accountable to the broader community.

It was RESOLVED 7-0-0 to support the calling of a Village Meeting on Thursday 6th December. It was RESOLVED 7-0-0 that, following the Village Meeting and if circumstances required, an extraordinary Parish Council Meeting would be held on 10th December.

- 2. Car Park opposite the Mildmay** - After discussions with the parties concerned BN has secured their agreement to an arrangement to keep the car park open.

It was RESOLVED 7-1-0 to approve in principle an annual contribution of £100p.a. to keep the car park open and available for residents and visitors alike, subject to the Finance Committee scrutinizing the legal terms and conditions and finding them satisfactory.

07 [1118] Other reports and motions: none

08 [1118] Clerk's report - nothing to report.

09 [1118] Finance - Councillors noted the minutes of the meeting of 10th September.

10 [1118] Correspondence - SSDC Council Tax workshop, Connecting Devon & Somerset, Friends of Mudford Action Group, NALC newsletters.

Southern Waste Partnership - reminder that Recycling Centres now recycle plastic food containers

Sparkford Copse Trust - It was noted that Ridge Copse is not neglected but because it is an Ancient Woodland the Trust manages it with a light touch. In contrast Wyvern Copse, Millenium Copse and Sparkford Copse itself are more closely managed.

11 [1118] Advance Notices - none

12 [1118] Agenda items for the next regular Council meeting: Filling the casual vacancy, Councillor contact details, Community Benefit fund, Cleaveside House, Grants and donations, setting the budget and precept, commemorating Remembrance.

13 [1118] Matters arising post-Agenda - none.

14 [1118] Next meetings:

December 10th - Extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council, 7.30pm in the Marples Room.

January 14th, 2019 - Regular meeting of the Parish Council, 7.30pm in the Marples Room.

December 10th - Meeting of the Finance and Risk Committee, 6.30pm in the Marples Room.

The meeting finished at 9.17pm

Signed:

John Brendon, Chairman

[10th December, 2018]