



Queen Camel Parish Council

MINUTES of the MEETING OF QUEEN CAMEL PARISH COUNCIL

held in The Marples Room at the Memorial Hall
on **Monday 10th September 2018** at **7.30pm**

Present: Councillors **John Brendon (JB)** – Chairman
Chris Bennett (CB)
Andrew Dollard (AD) (after procedural item 5)
Kathryn Grainger (KG) (after procedural item 5)
Bryan Norman (BN)
Kit Stapely (KS)
Simon Stapely (SS) – Vice Chairman
Claire Ward (CW) (after procedural item 5)

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

Procedural Items

- 1. Welcome and introduction** - JB opened the meeting, welcoming all present.
- 2. Public session** – [**Clerk's note:** *In the interests public accountability the public session took place after Procedural item 5 but it is minuted here for the sake of clarity*]. A resident of Wales spoke on behalf of many fellow residents who had recently convened a meeting to address the difficulties and dangers facing residents and motorists alike as a result of increasing numbers of vehicles using Blackwell Lane and Wales Lane to avoid congestion on the A303. They appealed to the Council to press Somerset County Council Highways Department (Highways) to find a solution before someone gets hurt, or worse. Among the points made were the following:
 - Recently the traffic problems have become far more severe than formerly.
 - Satnavs identify Blackwell Lane and Wales Lane as a way of bypassing congestion on the single carriageway section of the A303 which is normal on Fridays and at weekends.
 - Drivers liberated from the frustrations of sitting in stationary traffic often drive recklessly and far too fast along the narrow lanes, endangering themselves and other road users.
 - There have been three head-on collisions recently outside the spokesman's house alone and skid marks in the road bear witness to many more near misses.
 - Drivers including local commuters using the lanes to bypass congestion on the A303 freely admit to ignoring signs warning that the lanes are narrow and unsuitable for through traffic.
 - Walkers, cyclists and horse-riders are particularly vulnerable but motorists are also at risk.
 - On the Friday (7th September) three days before the Council meeting traffic in Wales was blocked for an hour, and this is typical rather than unusual.
 - Some drivers become angry and aggressive when they are caught up in such traffic jams, on occasion entering and even damaging private property in an effort to escape the jams.
 - Large agricultural vehicles based in Wales do not mix well with through traffic using the lanes as

a bypass and their drivers suffer great frustration and delays in consequence.

- The road edges and verges of the lanes are getting badly damaged.
- Recently a vehicle pulling off the road to let another pass almost toppled into the river.
- Emergency vehicles are unable to get through when the lanes are congested.

Residents are convinced that signs will not put off determined drivers and that the only viable solution is to erect a fixed barrier at the junction of Blackwell Lane and the A359 so that Blackwell Lane and Wales Lane are no longer through roads. [See also 04.1, below]

3. Apologies – Zelda Sowerby (ZS) sent her apologies for being unavoidably absent. A member of the public who had put herself forward for co-option and was later co-opted apologised that she would be unable to stay for the whole meeting.

4. Declarations of interest – CB declared an interest in item 06.1 as a Director of the Queen Camel Community Land Trust (CLT).

5. Co-option of new Councillors – Following the resignations from the Council of John Carnegie, Jo Pender-Cudlip and Andrew Hoddinott, and in the absence of a formal request for an election, the Council had appealed for residents to put their names forward for co-option. Three residents did so and gave a short account of themselves (at this and the previous meeting, severally), explaining why they wished to join the Council

It was RESOLVED 5-0-0 [For-against-abstained] that Andrew Dollard, Kathryn Grainger and Claire Ward be invited to join the Council. All three accepted the invitation, signed Declarations of Acceptance of Office and were welcomed onto the Council.

At this point CW had to leave the meeting for personal reasons.

6. Councillor training – It was agreed that the newly co-opted Councillors would attend a training course at the earliest available opportunity.

7. It was RESOLVED 5-0-0 to confirm as correct the minutes of the meeting held on 9th July, 2018.

Business Items

01 [0918] District and County Councillor's report – ML reported that Somerset County Council (SCC) had reduced expenditure by £130m. in the course of the last eight years but is still £7.5m. in deficit. Spending on Children's and Adult's social services (which account for c.70% of SCC's expenditure) is currently c.£1m. over budget every month, largely in response to critical reports from Ofsted. A new Chief Financial Officer intends to reduce the deficit to £2m. by 31st March, 2019.

02 [0918] Crime and Safety - [**Clerk's Note:** *In July one Public Order offence was reported and there were two reports of Anti-social behaviour*]

03 [0918] Update on Fingerposts – CB had been looking into the practicalities of purchasing and fitting traditional, cast-iron 'fingers' and would bring three quotations to the Council's November meeting.

04 [0918] Highways matters:

1. Traffic problems on Blackwell Lane and Wales Lane: Councillors have great sympathy with the residents of Wales and share their concerns [see *Procedural* item 2, above]. The Clerk was instructed to press Highways to find a solution to what is becoming an increasingly serious problem and to contact SatNav companies whose customers are ill-served when a route through Wales is shown as a viable way of bypassing congestion on the A303.

2. High Street:

i. Corner by the Iron box – A resident had sent an eye witness account of a lorry mounting the pavement, plus a photograph showing the wheel marks on the narrow pavement which

dramatically illustrated the dangers facing pedestrians there. Highways had responded to previous approaches by advising the Council to seek an SCC Small Improvement Scheme via the local County Councillor but ML explained that currently no SCC funds are available for this kind of project. CB and PPC were asked to approach the neighbouring landowners about the possibility of diverting the footway onto their property on the other side of the roadside wall.

- ii. **Speed Indicator Device (SID)** – PPC was asked to approach Sparkford, Marston Magna and West Camel Parish Councils with a view to sharing a SID with all four parishes. PPC reported that West Camel had already expressed interest in such a scheme.
 - iii. **20mph speed limit** – PPC reported that Highways would require more than anecdotal evidence even to consider extending the 20mph speed limit along the whole High Street. He added that traffic speed data garnered via a SID might help make a case for such a limit.
 - iv. **Road markings** – It was agreed that the new *School* road markings by the Old School site are redundant but they might help to slow down traffic and removing them would be costly.
 - v. **Tarmac deposits at the pinch points** – Highways is in touch with the party thought to be responsible for the unauthorised tarmac deposits.
 - vi. **Car parking in the Conservation area** – JB will be approaching interested parties in search of a solution to current parking problems.
3. **West Camel road** - PPC will approach the school authorities, Highways and retailers to gauge support for 'Wig wag' flashing speed reduction signs outside the school and their likely cost.
4. **A303 Sparkford to Ilchester dualling scheme** - The Council's major concerns are:
- i. Heavy traffic flows and congestion on the High Street and West Camel road caused by traffic trying to get round congestion on the A303 during the construction phase.
 - ii. Avoidable environmental damage and extra costs incurred by the Highways England (HE) proposed design for the Hazlegrove junction.
 - iii. Avoidable environmental damage and extra costs incurred by HE's refusal to retain the carriageway of the existing A303 as a local road alongside the new dual carriageway.
- PPC was asked to include a summary of these concerns when registering the Council as an Interested Party for the Planning Enquiry [**Clerk's note: This has now been done**]. The presentation of an alternative junction design was discussed at some length. A resident's email highly critical of the A303 proposals was received too late to get onto the Agenda but it will be on the Agenda of the November meeting.
5. **Church Lane** – Councillors will produce plans and photographs for PPC to use as evidence to convince Highways that blocked drains really are a problem.
6. **Kerb at Hill View** – PPC will press Highways to complete the safety audit and install the much needed dropped kerb at the foot of the hill by the junction with Gason Lane.

05 [0918] Planning Applications.

1. Planning Committee:

- i. The Planning Committee had not met since its inception because no Planning Applications requiring consideration had been received by the Council.
- ii. The Council had received and acknowledged a notice of intent **18/02621/AGN** in respect of a lean-to extension to an existing cattle building at Camel Hill Farm.
- iii. The Planning Committee arranged to meet on 24th September to consider a newly received Planning Application.

2. Neighbourhood Plan:

- i. The Council was told about a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) meeting where the draft Neighbourhood Plan marked *Confidential* was presented to Councillors able to attend.
- ii. **It was RESOLVED 7-0-0 to remove the *Confidential* designation and to hold an extraordinary meeting of the Council on 24th September to review and approve the draft Plan.**

Once the draft had been approved it would be forwarded to South Somerset District Council (SSDC) for a 'health check' and to see whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment would be required. [Clerk's note: *In order to save time SSDC officers very kindly agreed to start checking the draft Plan even before it had been approved by the Parish Council*].

It was RESOLVED 5-0-2 to accept Dorset Planning Consultant's quotation of £2,588.45 for the next stage of the Neighbourhood Plan, with possibly as much again for the final stages depending on what is required by the relevant authorities.

It is expected that these costs will be met out of *Frontrunner* funds held by SSDC.

06 [0918] Councillors' reports and motions:

1. **Old School Site** – It was reported that the Community Land Trust (CLT) was maintaining its efforts to acquire the site for the community and that SCC is offering the site for a discounted price of £250k., with contracts to be exchanged by Christmas and completion by 31st March 2019.

It was RESOLVED 4-0-0 that the Chairman would write a formal letter on behalf of the Council supporting the CLT's efforts to acquire the Old School site.

2. **Youth** – KS sought Council support for a plan to revive the Youth Council with the support of residents, possibly making use of Council reserve funds ring-fenced for Youth projects.

It was RESOLVED 7-0-0 to support this initiative which would be publicised in The Camels Magazine.

07 [0918] Other reports and motions:

1. Footpaths:

- i. PPC reported that the SCC Rights of Way team are overwhelmed with work and are unlikely to be able to confirm the registration of footpaths any time soon.
- ii. It was agreed that PPC would write to SCC Rights of Way to thank them for strimming and mowing the Henshallbrook footpath and ask when they would be taking the promised action to repair or replace sub-standard, broken or missing stiles.

iii. [Clerk's note: *Following the meeting KG volunteered to take on the posts of Footpath Warden and Environment Warden. This will be on the Agenda of the November meeting*].

iv. **It was RESOLVED 7-0-0 to order 200 sets of the Parish walks leaflets.**

2. **Flood Committee (FC)** - The Council noted the minutes of the FC meeting of 26th July. CB pointed out that the Road Closure team report to the Police, not to the Council or to any Parish Group.

3. **Crab apples** – The Council agreed that it would be appropriate to express formal thanks to a resident who has cleared up crab apples from around the bus shelter throughout the season.

08 [0918] Clerk's report – nothing to report.

09 [0918] Finance:

1. **Community Benefit Fund** – the Council agreed to defer detailed consideration of possible uses of the fund until its next meeting.
2. **It was RESOLVED 7-0-0 that the Council contribute £5,000 from the Community Benefit Fund to the Church Roof Appeal, to be paid when the contract is placed.**
3. **It was RESOLVED 5-0-2 to transfer £1,000 from General Reserves to a Ring-fenced Reserve to be available to support any bid for the Old School site backed by the Council, reaffirming a Council**

decision taken in November 2016.

4. **Finance & Risk Committee** – The Council noted the minutes of the Committee meeting of 9th July and heard a brief oral report of the Committee meeting of 10th September.
5. **Insurances** – SS would be discussing insurance valuations and sums insured with the Council's insurers and would report back to the Council.
6. **Online banking** – Deferred to the next regular Council meeting.

10 [0918] cCrrrespondence – emails from residents concerning traffic in Wales (*Procedural* Item 2), the dangerous corner by the Iron Box (4.2.i) and the A303 proposals (4.4); Southern Waste Partnership newsletter.

11 [0918] Advance Notices: none

12 [0918] Agenda items for the next regular Council meeting: Filling of casual vacancy on the Council; appointing Councillors to Council Committees; appointing a Footpath Warden; appointing an Environment Warden; considering detailed submissions to the A303 Planning Enquiry; updates on fingerposts, SIDs, Wig Wag signs, Neighbourhood Plan, the Old School site, Online banking, the Community Benefit Fund, Deeds in the possession of the Council and Council Insurances.

13 [0918] Matters arising post-Agenda: none.

14 [0918] Next meetings – Extraordinary meeting, Monday 24th September 2018 at 7.30pm; next regular meeting Monday 12th November 2018 at 7.30pm; Planning Committee meeting, Monday 24th September 2018 at 7.15pm - all in The Marples Room.

The meeting finished at 10.05pm

Signed:

John Brendon, Chairman

12th November, 2018