

Shapwick Parish Council

Minutes of a virtual meeting on Zoom held on 21 July 2020 at 7.00pm

20/21/13 Present: Brian Norris, Martin Davies, Jerome Hayes and Sally Richardson

20/21/14 In Attendance: Sue Williams (Clerk)

20/21/15 Also Present: County Councillor David Huxtable and District Councillor Duncan McGinty

20/21/16 Apologies for Absence

There were apologies from Laura Anderson, Nigel Phillips and Sue Sellick.

Villagers' Open Period

Villagers were asked to make written submissions prior to the meeting to aid the flow of the virtual meeting. One email relating to HGVs through the village had been received.

20/21/17 County Councillor's Report

County Cllr. David Huxtable – reported on a Shapwick related item - Signage at the Lime Kiln junction – he has asked the Highways department to escalate the painting of the SLOW road marking as well as the junction white lines.

He also reported that he was waiting to hear from Liam Gill – Assistant Highways Service Manager – regarding Northbrook Road repairs once the farmer had responded. Martin Davis queried why the farmer is being contacted. County Cllr. Huxtable said the farmer had been contacted because Highways believe the ditch to be his property. Jerome Hayes said the issue lies with the culvert under the carriageway which has collapsed – both the farmer and Highways have tried to unblock it but to no avail. Cllr. Huxtable said that if it is the culvert then he thought it should be a Highways repair and he would contact Liam Gill again. Martin Davis said it is better to fix it during the dry season.

Covid-19 – very fortunate that Somerset has a low number of cases – only six new cases in the last week. County Council now has powers to enforce local lockdowns if necessary. Coronavirus will be with us for a long time so need to be vigilant.

20/21/18 HGVs through Shapwick

Since the previous Parish Council meeting volunteers from the village had carried out two HGV surveys. Plus there has been an email stream between interested parties.

Brian Norris said that much of the recent content of the emails seems to be centred around the plant on the south side of Burtle Road which appears to be operating illegally without permission. He queried who has the authority to stop the operation.

County Cllr. Huxtable said that the operation of the plant comes under Mendip District Council (MDC). District Councillor Matt Martin is working hard with MDC on this matter but is making little progress at present. He said it is the plant is the problem - the HGVs are a symptom.

Brian Norris said another issue appears to be the advisory route. County Cllr. Huxtable said that Shapwick is not an approved HGV route but there is no easy solution as vehicles have to access sites.

20/21/18 cont'd

Brian Norris asked if there was any point volunteers carrying on with the HGV surveys. County Cllr. Huxtable said additional surveys would add more evidence and felt that surveying the junction at Burtle Road is key as it would show where the lorries coming through Shapwick are actually going. Burtle Parish Council is also going to complete surveys from its side.

7.25pm David Huxtable left the meeting

Brian Norris asked councillors present what is the next course of action.

Sally Richardson said that villagers are emphasising the point that the site does not have a licence to operate so this needs following up.

Brian Norris said there appears to be confusion as to which council has the authority to enforce so it would be prudent to write to both – SCC and MDC and ask District Cllr. Duncan McGinty for support from Sedgemoor District Council (SDC).

Sally Richardson asked if the operation could be halted if there is no licence in place. Brian Norris said he thought the business only had a licence to store peat – he said the concern is that if action is not taken then the operation will become the norm.

7.30pm District Cllr. Duncan McGinty joined the meeting.

Brian Norris welcome District Cllr. McGinty to the meeting and asked where enforcement responsibility lies.

District Cllr. McGinty said the planning and enforcement responsibility issue lies with MDC – MDC can stop the activity or elicit a planning application from the operators. Additionally as the operation relates to a wood product the SCC regulation committee have a responsibility. District Cllr. McGinty said he would bring together other affected district councillors and bring the matter up with the leader of MDC.

Brian Norris proposed that the PC write to MDC and SCC to raise concerns about the company operating outside a licence. Unanimously agreed.

20/21/19**On-Going Matters**

a) Dog Fouling Signs – Signs purchased – Chair, Clerk and Nigel Phillips to liaise regarding location and fixing.

b) Northbrook Road Culvert – see 20/21/17. Clerk to follow up with County Cllr.

c) Village Sign – Now quarries have reopened the slate has been purchased – lettering to be completed.

20/21/20**Local Government Reorganisation**

Brian Norris asked councillors to comment on the recent document received from SALC. Jerome Hayes said he had previously thought it was a good idea but having seen what is happening in other unitary authorities it has the potential to be a costly option. He said he felt Shapwick would be better served by a district council structure.

District Cllr. McGinty said the idea of a unitary authority was first put forward eleven years ago – the people of Somerset voted 82% against it. Over time contexts have changed – SCC is in a difficult position financially and having the ability to provide certain services. SCC has recently received damning reports regarding provision of services. Maintaining the status quo is not an option so alternatives need to be looked at. District Councils believe that a unitary bid will not serve the people of Somerset to the level they deserve – the model relies on Parish and Town Councils providing services – the ability is not there for small Parish Councils.

20/21/20 cont'd

District Councils are preparing alternative proposals which will be submitted to the minister when invited.

Jerome Hayes said it is a big debate and asked whether it would be pushed through during the pandemic.

District Cllr. McGinty said SDC's focus has been on protecting peoples' lives over the last few months. The government has realised that Covid has put a strains on finances and is looking for local solutions.

Brian Norris said that perhaps now is not the time to make a response to the SALC document.

District Cllr. McGinty said that Parish and Town Council should be an integral part of the discussion process as there should not be a presumption that they will take up the leftover services.

Councillors agreed that it is important to be included in the debate.

Brian Norris said that recent months have shown the value of community but that is very different from being given the task. There are lots of positives from being local but would need to have a voice in the debate. Suggested the best approach would be to draft own response.

Jerome Hayes said a face to face meeting for discussion was needed.

Brian Norris proposed that everyone should review the documents and then come together for a socially distanced outside meeting to discuss.

Sally Richardson said the full council need to be present.

It was agreed to make a response once a separate meeting has been held.

20/21/21

Housing Needs in Shapwick – Land to the west of Mill Lane

Brian Norris recapped on the housing needs assessment carried out in 2018. Since then the PC has been waiting for the Estate to make decisions on the land it holds within the village. Recently a proposal has been made by the landowner of land to the west of Mill Lane to develop the existing barn and provide some additional affordable housing – subject to planning and costs. Pre-planning advice has been sought from SDC in conjunction with the housing team. The next stage would be design and a site meeting. SDC has suggested the Housing Needs Assessment is rerun to gain up to date information.

Martin Davis said this seems to be a feasible option especially as no other proposals have been made.

Jerome Hayes said he agreed. The land behind the village hall could remain open green spaces. He said it would be important to reopen the Housing Needs Assessment to see the current picture.

Brian Norris asked councillors for agreement to rerun the survey. Unanimously agreed. Clerk to contact SDC.

20/21/22 Polden Hills Neighbourhood Watch Group Co-ordinator

A volunteer is required. It was agreed that a message would be posted on the village Facebook page to find a volunteer.

8.18pm Jerome Hayes left the meeting.

20/21/23 Finance

a) Cheques for Signature HMRC £142.80 (Chq 893, PAYE), SALC £128.02 (Chq 894, annual subscription) and Mrs S E Williams £403.71 (Chq 895, salary and expenses).

b) Internal Audit The Clerk reported that Michael Dukes had inspected the books and records as an independent internal auditor and had signed the report.

c) Annual Governance Statement Councillors reviewed the Annual Statement of Governance and Brian Norris proposed that a 'yes' response should be given to each question. Seconded by Sally Richardson. Brian Norris to sign the Statement of Governance on behalf of the Parish Council.

d) Accounts for the Year ended 31 March 2020 the Clerk presented the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020 together with the explanation of variances and bank reconciliation. Martin Davis proposed that the accounts be accepted. Seconded by Sally Richardson. Unanimous. Brian Norris to sign the Accounting Statements on behalf of the Parish Council.

e) Audit In line with the decision made in 2018 (minute 18/19/5f) and this being the third year in the cycle the accounts will be presented for a limited assurance review.

f) Electors' Rights Clerk to publish notice

20/21/24 Date of Next Meeting

Date of next PC meeting will be 15 September 2020.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Signed.....

Date.....