

BROADWAY PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Broadway Parish Council held in Broadway Village Hall on Tuesday 5th December 2023 at 7.30p.m.

Prior to opening the meeting Cllr Gregory advised that he will be retiring from the council at the end of the meeting, hence stepping down from his role as both Chair and a Councillor.

He also introduced Mrs Kim Larsson as the Interim Clerk following the recent resignation of the Council's Clerk. Mrs Larsson is a clerk to other parish councils in the local area and has agreed to take the role on a temporary basis until a permanent replacement can be recruited.

843. Attendance and Apologies

Present: Cllrs Gregory, Champion, Toms, Preece, Frayne, Neate and Jones;
Somerset Council Cllr Osborne and Mrs Larsson (Clerk)
7 members of the public

844. Apologies: None

845. Public Question Time, Including Somerset Council Cllr Report

A resident raised the issue of the drainage infrastructure, particularly on Suggs Lane where sewer manholes have been overflowing during periods of heavy rain and releasing effluent waste water onto the roads and ultimately into the river. The resident advised that Wessex Water have visited and tested the water but report no evidence of sewage in their samples. Cllr Gregory advised the matter is on the agenda for discussion at item 10a and would be discussed further at that point.

Cllr Osborne advised that Somerset Council have declared a financial emergency and if the budget cannot be balanced a Section 114 notice may have to be issued. Communications regarding devolution of assets and services have been sent to all Town and Parish Councils and they are urged to consider the impact of potential reductions/loss in service when setting their precepts for 2024/25. Measures have been implemented to reduce costs, including closure of part of County Hall in Taunton. In addition, Cllr Osborne reported that schedules of waste collections will be changing next year for efficiency and improving missed collections.

846. Declarations of Interest None.

847. Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 7th November 2023

Minutes were approved unanimously by councillors as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

848. Planning

- a. Application 18/01311/OUT: Land OS 4538 The Pound Broadway Road Broadway Ilminster Somerset - Outline planning application with all matters reserved aside from access for the erection of up to 35 dwellings and associated works.
Following approval of the application at the Planning Committee South meeting on 14th November, a full application is now expected to address all reserved matters. Councillors agreed they would like to engage with developer and hope that a public meeting could be arranged to allow both the Council and residents an opportunity to give feedback on the plans for the benefit of the community as a whole. It was agreed for the Clerk to contact the developer to see if communications can be opened. For information, a written report of the statements made by Parish Council representatives at the planning committee meeting can be found annexed at the end of these minutes.
- b. Enforcement Garage at 1, The Lane: There was no update on the matter. Cllr Osborne offered to follow the enforcement notice up and inform the council of any further information she can establish.

849. Accounts and Financial Information

- a. **Financial Report:** The Clerk explained that due to limited time to prepare for the meeting, the figures in the financial statement had not been checked and verified, but this will be done as soon as possible and circulated to the Councillors.

- b. **Payments:** The following payments were authorised:
 - i. Donations for Christmas light electricity (2022) - £25.00
 - ii. Donation for Christmas lights electricity (2023) - £50.00
 - iii. Richard Baker memorial tree - £42.50
 - iv. Christmas tree - £110.00
 - v. Clerk backdated pay award (see minute 850b.)
- c. **Bank Mandate:** The Natwest Bank mandate requires updating and it was agreed that the address for correspondence will be changed to the Interim Clerk's home address and signatories will be updated to include Cllrs Champion, Toms, Frayne and Neate and remove all other named individuals on all bank accounts. Broadway Parish Council resolve that:
 - if we add or remove Authorised Signatories in the "Add or Remove Authorised Signatories" section on the "About your request" page of the form, the Bank will update our mandate accordingly for the accounts we specify in the form's "About your business" section
 - if we change the Signing Rules in the "Change the Signing Rules on the Mandate" section on the "About your request" page of the form, the Bank will update our mandate accordingly for the accounts we specify in the form's "About your business" section
 - and the current mandate will continue as amended
- d. **Online Banking:** Benefits of online banking were discussed and it was agreed to pursue an application once the signatories on the bank accounts have been updated as all signatories are required to authorise the application with Natwest.
- e. **Financial Reporting:** Councillors wish to develop the financial reporting to have visibility of the position against agreed budgets, earmarked and restricted funds and bank reconciliations on a regular basis. The Clerk will produce a draft and circulate to councillors for review. It was also recommended to have a nominated councillor carry out periodic checks of the bank reconciliations and statements on a quarterly basis, and Cllr Toms agreed to take on this responsibility.
- f. **2024/25 Budget and Precept:** Following Somerset Council's declared financial emergency and request for consideration of devolution of assets and services, the Clerk advised the council may wish to re-visit the decision made in November regarding the precept increase. Councillors were advised to follow the requirements set out in Standing Orders to request rescission if they wish to do so.

850. **Clerk Resignation, Recruitment and Associated Matters**

- a. To note the following:
 - i. Formal resignation of the Clerk, effective 30th November 2023.
 - ii. Appointment of Mrs Kim Larsson as Interim Clerk on a temporary basis.

The Council agreed to form a working group of 3 Councillors to bring a proposal for the process of recruiting a permanent replacement Clerk to the January council meeting for consideration. Cllrs Champion, Neate and Toms will undertake the task, in conjunction with the Clerk.
- b. In a confidential session, the Council agreed the previous Clerks final pay would be to include the backdated amount due in relation to the recently agreed local government pay award, and would be arranged.

851. **Parish Council Website**

Cllr Neate presented information in relation to the existing website and its suitability, advising that it is dated and not fit for purpose. He presented information on options with three alternative providers, all of which are suppliers to other parish and town councils. After discussion of each of the options and their related costs, the Council agreed to progress with the solution from My Council, to include an optional planning application tracker.

852. **Local Community Network (LCN)**

Cllr Neate reported that the financial position of Somerset Council was discussed at length, and that in 2024/25 the budget deficit will be £100 million, £70 million of which is related to adult social care. He advised that there will be no budget transfer from Somerset Council to towns and parishes to assist with costs of devolved services. The next LCN meeting is scheduled for the 18th January 2024.

853. Previous Outstanding Items

- a. Suggs Lane Sewer: Further to comments from the resident in public voice, it was suggested that a working group be set up with residents, with a Parish Council representative member. It was agreed for Cllr Frayne to take the Council’s representative role, and he will liaise with residents and come back to a future meeting with a proposal for progressing the matter.
- b. Speed Indicator Device: No update at present. Cllr Preece will continue to pursue this.

854. Items for Report

- a. Memorial Tree: The Council offered thanks to all who were able to attend the tree planting in memory of Richard Baker.
- b. Elm Close parking: The Council are aware of concern regarding parking by unauthorised vehicles, however, advised they have no power in the matter as the land in question is privately owned. It was suggested the residents contact Abri who should be able to offer assistance.
- c. Horton and Broadway Youth Group: The group have extended an invitation to an evening in February for voluntary organisations. Cllr Preece has agreed to attend.
- d. A resident has been in touch regarding a hedge at Standerwick Orchard which is in need of attention as well as the pathway which is covered in moss. Cllr Champion suggested looking into removal of one row of the hedge to reduce its width and prevent it encroaching on the path in future. Quotations for the required works will be sought.

855. Items for the next meeting: 2024/25 Budget and Precept; Clerk Recruitment; Grass Cutting Contract; Vardens Pond Maintenance; A358 Position Statement Draft by National Highways

856. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 16th January 2024, at 7.30pm at Broadway Village Hall

Before closing the meeting Cllr Gregory wished to take an opportunity to express how much he has enjoyed working with the council and feels a lot has been achieved in the last 4 and a half years.

Cllr Champion also thanked Cllr Gregory on behalf of the rest of the council for all his contributions and wished him all the best in his retirement.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.39pm.

Signed

Date

Annex 1.

Application 18/013141/OUT

Parish Council statements made at Planning Committee South on 14th November 2023 by Parish Councillors Peter Gregory (note 1) and Steve Neate (note 2)

Speaking note 1

Chairman, at the meeting of this Committee in July the Parish Council argued that no consent should be given to the application for up to 35 houses at the Pound until the flooding from the Suggs Lane sewer into the Ding and adjacent property had been discussed at a meeting with Wessex Water. That meeting on 3 November agreed that the problem stemmed from surface water getting into the sewer and so overloading it in periods of heavy rain. The flooding is increasing in frequency and Wessex Water have yet to come up with a costed and approved plan to deal with it. What is needed is a larger sewer to connect Horton and Broadway to the Water Recycling Plant and for the plant to be increased in capacity, since it is not operating within the terms of its licence. Wessex Water declared that this was not something they planned to do, preferring instead to deal with the surface water problem.

That strategy is impractical, given the number of properties in Broadway and Horton from which rainwater flows into the foul drainage system. So, at the moment, there is no solution and the problem will worsen because of the increasing number of rain storms and the plans to connect more new houses to the system.

The Planning Department say that this is not a matter for the determination of this application since consent would require Wessex Water to ensure that the infrastructure needed was available. As I have said, it cannot be. So if you confirm your grant of consent, you do so in the knowledge that you will be contributing to the continuing and worsening of an unacceptable public nuisance, river pollution and risk to private property. Additionally, you need to ask yourselves what is the community benefit accruing from this development. It cannot be the provision of open market and affordable housing, since Broadway has had a significant increase in its housing stock of both kinds in recent years and more is already consented or is soon to be.

Speaking note 2-Landscape

The plans included in the officer's report show the site as a large green field set in a landscape which, to the north, south and south west, is composed of similar open fields and hedgerows. The site is at the brow of a gradient dropping 50 metres for over 400 metres to the south.

On this exposed slope of open country, the developer intends to construct 35 dwellings, 30 of them 2-storey. In assessing the scheme for 46 houses the landscape officer objected to the landscape harm that would be caused, to the erosion of the character of the village's rural setting, projecting a housing mass into the countryside contrary to the local settlement pattern. It would also result in the loss of open space providing the historic separation of Hare Lane properties from Broadway village.

The 2019 officer's report argued, but without the support of a professional landscape assessment, that the reduction in the number of houses would sufficiently mitigate the damage likely to be caused. It also referred to the mix of properties elsewhere in the village, though this is in fact irrelevant since no other part of the village has a large group of houses on so exposed a site.

The officer's report also fails to address the anomalous juxtaposition of a large estate and the linear pattern of housing on Broadway Road and is silent on the landscape officer's concerns about removing the historic separation of the main village from the linear pattern of housing in Hare Lane. References in the officer's report to other non-linear housing to the north of Broadway Road fail to acknowledge the brownfield nature of the sites or to the absence north of Broadway Road of any housing estate of anywhere near comparable size to that proposed at the Pound.

The 2023 officer's report addresses none of this. In particular, it does not advise you on the latest assessment of the landscape harm this development would cause, because no such advice is available. What we do know is that much of what the landscape adviser objected to in 2019 is still relevant to the slightly smaller development before you today and cannot be mitigated by the current scheme.

The result is that you have before you a proposal which damages the village landscape, erodes the village's rural setting and conflicts with the local settlement pattern to the harm of the countryside.

Until you have advice before you which challenges this, or suggests ways in which the application might be further amended to mitigate its harmful impact, you should not confirm your grant of consent.

End of statements.