

Notes from Meeting of Ston Easton Parish Council – 12 October 2021
at 7.30pm

Meeting Held in Clapton Village Hall.

Present:

Tom Osborne (TO) (Chair), Tom Killen (TK), Ainslie Davis (AD), Pete King (PK), Julian Carver (JC), Steve Huckle (SH).

Not Present:

Rob Winkworth (RW)(Apologies received)

Secretary: Anthea Brooks

Multiple attempts were made to run the meeting as a hybrid meeting with the secretary joining via Zoom through a laptop and speakerphone along with 2 members of the public. Unfortunately bandwidth issues meant that connection was established then lost repeatedly. It was agreed that the public meeting would continue and Steve Huckle volunteered to take extensive notes and record actions in order for Anthea Brooks to produce a minuted record after the meeting. The minutes are therefore a transposition of the notes taken at the meeting by SH.

21/10/01 - EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

TO declared an interest in Item /07iii Planning application 2021/1560/FUL

21/10/02 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The meeting was well attended by members of the public with 2 additional people trying to join via zoom who subsequently made the journey from Ston Easton to attend when they realised there were technical issues. The pressing issue for the members of public who attended was concerned with HIGHWAYS and the chairman therefore invited public participation and input on that subject later in the agenda.

21/10/03 - MATTERS ARISING

i) STRAPSTONE LANE ENFORCEMENT

█ said that in addition to the Illegally occupied former explosives store closest to Thickthorn Lane, the occupant has caged off the turn in area to the second former explosives store closest to the A37. This area is an essential pull in point to allow traffic in the very narrow highway that is Strapstone Lane to pass and avoid vehicles otherwise having to reverse around a double bend. This amounts to obstruction of the public highway and needs to be formally reported to Highways. Mike Pullen is required to report back to the Parish Council to inform the latest enforcement position.

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This was reported to the enforcement team (DATE TO BE INSERTED BY ANTHEA). The occupant has a number of aggressive dogs the smallest of which regularly escapes to bother walkers and there is great concern over how the occupant disposes of foul waste and other rubbish. The noise of an electrical generator is also a nuisance and carries some distance.

ACTIONS:

MIKE PULLEN TO REPORT TO PC ON WHAT ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO DATE.

CLERK TO REPORT OBSTRUCTION OF STRAPSTONE LANE PULL IN TO HIGHWAYS

ii) VILLAGE SIGNS

PK has the necessary bits and pieces to do the outstanding work to repair the signage, including the central spigot for the wonky fingerpost in Clapton on the junction of Zion Hill/Clapton Road/Greenditch Lane.

ACTION: PETE KING TO CONDUCT THE REPAIRS AS SOON AS HE IS ABLE TO DO SO

iii) TRIMMING OF VERGES

It was agreed that this work was not required at this point in time. If the mild weather continues and there is further growth of hedgerows and verges the need will be reviewed at the next meeting.

NO ACTION BUT REVIEW AT NEXT MEETING

iv) DRAINS

Greenditch Lane in Clapton has been power cleaned as have the drains around the Zion Hill Langleys lane junction and the drains closest to Clapton along Clapton Road. Drains continuing to need attention are the drain under the road at Whitebridge Cottage (Blockage of this in 2017 contributed to flooding of Whitebridge Cottage at that time). Also the drain opposite the stone wall in Langleys Lane. (Exact position to be clarified between the clerk and the chair)

ACTION: CLERK TO TAG THESE DRAINS FOR ATTENTION BY MDC

v) CALENDAR OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that the lack of a published list of future meeting dates was causing councillors great difficulties by having to agree short notice mutual availability which risks councillors not fulfilling their attendance obligations if they are unable to make two or more of such short notice changes.

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The next meeting will be in the second week of December and subsequent meetings will be in the second week of every other month Thursday is preferred for Ston Easton dates but Clapton has recurring bookings on Monday and Thursdays so only Tuesdays or Wednesdays are viable when Clapton is a venue.

ACTION: CLERK TO AGREE DATES WITH CHAIR ALONG THE ABOVE LINES OF DISCUSSION AND PUBLISH IN VILLAGE NEWSLETTER & PARISH MAGAZINE PLUS FOR NOTICEBOARDS AFTER BOOKING VENUES WITH VILLAGE HALL CONTACTS.

vi) PUBLICITY

Discussion took place around the best avenues of publicity. It was agreed that the Parish Website is becoming more important as a community focus and the PC and Clerk will strive to ensure that it contains the most up to date PC documentation Minutes etc. Social Media sites established during lockdown are proving an excellent way of communicating widely and quickly but we recognise not all residents use social media or the internet, The Clerk will ensure that information is provided to the Parish Magazine and a Parish Newsletter.

ACTION: CLERK TO ACTION AS ABOVE DISCUSSION & LIASE WITH TOM KILLEN REGARDING A NEWSLETTER

vii) PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH PLANNING APPLICATIONS

TK reported that in future the PC will need to be able to respond to Planning Applications by meeting and reporting the PC decision within 14 days. We need to be transparent and publish decisions and records of meetings which will be extraordinary meetings.

SH said that such a demand upon our response time needs to be matched by the performance of the MDC Planning department which he felt was poor, in particular there was a failure to keep the Planning Portal up to date. It was often offline and a number of local applications have not been updated as to the latest position for weeks or even months. Such public information should be up to date in order to maintain transparency and he believes it to be a statutory requirement.

ACTION: CLERK TO BE MINDFUL OF THE RESPONSE TIME REQUIREMENT TO CALL SHORT NOTICE AND TO CLARIFY IF THE 14 DAY RESPONSE TIME IS WORKING DAYS OR CALENDAR DAYS.

21/10/04 - FOOTPATHS

Anne Huckle reported:

Points to note since Last Report (All reference numbers refer to “EXPLORE SOMERSET” WEBSITE.

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- The EXPLORE SOMERSET Website is highly recommended as it allows the user to zoom in to a high level of detail to see individual footpath signs, gates stiles and other furniture and to report issues which are then highlighted to the Area Path Liaison officer and to Anne to investigate. A few volunteers have worked to keep overgrown access clear but Anne encouraged any path users to think about taking a pair of secateurs with them to cut back brambles etc and help keep the network accessible. The website can also be used on a 4G mobile Smartphone as you walk to show via GPS where you are.
- Footpath 19/5/1 Bridge #4167 at the bottom of Golf Course off Lower Hay Street has been replaced. Stile #34374, adjacent to the bridge accessing the golf club, should be replaced by a gate in the next couple of months.
- SCC Area Warden has had a very good meeting with the Golf Course Grounds Manager who is very aware of the footpaths over the course and would like to make them easy to follow and as safe as possible for golfers and walkers. He has a detailed aerial map to determine where the legal lines run and he will be installing waymarking.
- Stile #38202 Footpath CL 19/16 off Greenditch Lane has been replaced with a Kissing Gate.
- Fence/Field Gate #38212 Footpath CL 19/16 off Greenditch Lane has been replaced with a Kissing Gate.
- Stile #38209 Footpath CL 19/16 off Greenditch Lane has been replaced with a Kissing Gate.
- Footpath CL19/16 railed fence has been replaced by two pedestrian gates.
- Footpath CL19/19 a new finger post marking the path has been put in opposite the Crown Inn Clapton.
- Footpath CL 19/10/1 from Langley Lane to Hillers Wood a new kissing gate has been installed.
- Article published on Parish Web Page with links to Explore Somerset and PPLO Handbook.
- Grateful if Landowners and their contractors would refresh familiarity with the ploughing and cropping guide for landowners and farmers in relation to ploughing cross field paths and field edge paths (produced in partnership with the NFU and the Country Land and Business Association).
- One of SCC area wardens has recently stepped down at short notice and as a result the warden covering our parish, has temporarily an even larger area to cover and all issues are being prioritised as per the Rights of Way Inspection Manual using a risk based prioritisation, cross referencing the potential severity with the path category to determine the issue priority. Thus, it is unlikely works that are not safety critical will be addressed quickly. In my view the only safety critical issues in the Parish that I

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have seen is bridge 4590 on path CL19/11, but I doubt this is a much-used path so unlikely to be high on the priority list for SSC.

21/10/05 - HIGHWAYS

This subject was the most pressing for members of the public who attended from Ston Easton who wanted the strength of feeling about speeding traffic and the transit of heavy lorries through the village which causes them to cross onto the opposite carriageway at the “S” bends. Residents are extremely concerned. It is difficult to convey the strength of feeling amongst residents in these minutes but the PC were provided with harrowing accounts of small children being blown sideways by the airwash from HGVs as they pass within a few feet of Mums taking their children to the school bus. Now that Ston Easton Park has closed access to locals on foot, there is no option for those that live North of the bus shelter than to use the footpath which is itself in a poor condition in places. Residents said that the PC had taken an action at previous meetings to engage with Highways to open discussions about options for ensuring safety for residents and road users. When a village representative contacted Highways they said there had been no contact with the PC and therefore residents felt let down.

An additional frustration is that speed limit signage has been damaged and knocked around by heavy vehicle air wash which it would seem makes enforcement of any limit problematic due to the possibility of a driver claiming that the limit was not clearly signed.

Although residents have and continue to collect photographs after accidents (9 incidents within a 4 week period), there is a need to support this with hard data. A community speedwatch is primed but requires signs to be made available so that speedwatch operatives can signpost their presence. 3 x signs at £34 each are required. The PC undertook to raise this later under “Finance”.

It was very clear that Mike Pullen needs to be engaged on this as a matter of priority. It would be beneficial if he was able to bring someone senior enough from the Highways team to be empowered to take actions forward at a time when the traffic is heavy (around 4.30pm when the school bus arrives would be a good time) and stand by the road to experience just how potentially dangerous it is. At the very least a special meeting between Mike Pullen and SE Village representatives needs to be held.

ACTION: HIGH PRIORITY – CLERK TO GET A DATE FOR MIKE PULLEN TO BRING HIGHWAYS REPRESENTATIVES TO THE ROADSIDE IF POSSIBLE – OTHERWISE HE NEEDS TO COMMIT TO MEETING WITH VILLAGE REPRESENTATIVES TO DISCUSS THE A37 ISSUES.

21/10/06 - REPORTS FROM DISTRICT & COUNTY COUNCILLORS

- i) Mike Pullen was not available and had not provided a specific report.
- ii) Tom Killen reported that “One Somerset” – The single Unitary Authority for Somerset and the transition toward that, is dominating the current council’s strategic thinking. Inevitably this is impacting upon delivery of frontline services as Senior Officers take up much of their time with issues of future structure, ward boundaries and getting equal levels of representation in those areas.

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Currently District representatives such as Tom represent @2,000 people whereas in the future this will be @5-6,000 as pressure increases to reduce the number of councillors from the present 55. There will be a drive to create a new culture and the impact upon staff currently in post will create great uncertainty, although there will be different opportunities that will inevitably arise.

Parish Council Elections are due to take place in 2023 but this is out of synch with the expected Unitary Authority elections. There is a call to align these elections to achieve economy of scale from a single election day.

Local Plan – There is no 5 year housing supply in place. The Housing Inspectorate has declared that 550 homes are needed in the area (Really???)

The 50 homes scheduled for Underhill Lane will be those that affect the Parish most directly. Due to the geography these homes will have no road access to Clapton other than via MSN. Naturally all of the service pressures (GPs, schooling) will fall upon the neighbouring authority which is the case with the White Post proposals also which will place those pressures upon Westfield.

Other points to note are the ending of current Grant Schemes and actions around climate change.

21/10/07 - PLANNING

- i) **2021/1688/FUL Replacement Dwelling at Two Oaks Underhill Lane** – This application had already been passed without any opportunity for the PC to comment.

SH asked how this escaped our scrutiny as he would have welcomed the opportunity to comment. AL expressed the same concern

ACTION CLERK TO INVESTIGATE TIMESCALES AND NOTICE OF THIS APPLICATION AND REPORT BACK TO PC.

- ii) **2021/2062/FUL Application for Conversion of a Barn on Land at Manor Farm**

All PC members had seen the application and examined it. AL declared that it was very lacking in detail. Particularly regarding waste water disposal. The proposal seemed to be for a package plant on land that did not appear to belong to the applicant. Access issues were not clear, particularly where the residents of the development would park. There are shared responsibilities and access obligations that apply to the neighbouring property that are not made clear in this application. JC reported that services to his property are under the entrance to this proposal and disruption to these services was not covered. JC also expressed concern that proximity to his working dairy farm and the milking parlour in particular may cause unacceptable noise levels for anyone living in the property, as would the fact that it backs up to the pub skittle alley and the very narrow nature of the development would require insulation levels to prevent this noise that is not detailed in the application.

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A vote recommended 3 against and 0 support for the application with 3 abstentions.

Reasons for not supporting this application:

1. Waste Water provision is not sufficiently clear. The proposed package plant does not appear to be on land belonging to the applicant. There is NO fallback to connect to a public sewage network as none exists within 800 yards of the property
2. Proximity to the neighbouring farm's milking parlour and the neighbouring pub skittle Alley is highly likely to cause unacceptable noise levels to the residents of the proposed development.
3. There is evidence of previous recent flooding of this area and seepage of slurry from the neighbouring farm (this was the original farm entrance).
4. Shared access issues have not been sufficiently addressed. Parking provision in particular is unclear as it is not believed that the entire area shown on the plan is wholly owned by the applicant.

iii) 2021/1560/FUL – Sub Division of Existing Dwelling (Formerly known as Dutch Barn – Langleys Lane

The application is made by Tom Osborne – Chair of the PC. TO left the chair and the room and handed the chair to TK. Before leaving TO was invited by TK to outline the reason for his application.

TO said that the original application was for a 7 bedroom home but that this was hard to market for letting and therefore two smaller properties were more marketable for rental purposes.

SH made a statement regarding the application after TO had left the room, declaring it to be sensitive due to the fact that it was originally brought to this PC in 2017 as a clear single dwelling application, but that it had been completed as two separate properties, without reference to the Parish Council and without a retrospective planning application being submitted. SH found out that it had been completed as 2 separate properties when a constituent said they had seen it marketed online with Cooper & Tanner. Agents photographs showed the interior of the building including the ground floor of one end of the building which was passed on the plans as a double garage which was now clearly living accommodation. The original application was in fact for a single property with 4 bedrooms and a double internal garage being shown on the original floor plans which were approved. No floorplans ever showed 7 bedrooms.

This had placed SH in an uncomfortable position since locals had been aware of the conversion to a single property but not 2, which with the additional plot next door being developed made now 3 separate dwellings on that site.

SH had raised this issue with TO by e-mail prior to the June PC meeting and asked him to raise the point himself at the meeting which he subsequently did saying that the matter was in the hands of his planning consultant. However no further progress was reported to the next PC meeting (regarding the planning application at the CROWN in Clapton). When still no retrospective planning application had been submitted by the end of August it seemed

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clear to him that a formal application for retrospective planning was not going to be forthcoming unless the issue was brought to the attention of the Planning Enforcement Team and so he took this action in order for them to adjudicate and in order to take the matter out of the hands of the PC and maintain transparency.

SH discussed the sensitivity, timelines and location with Julian Thomas in the Enforcement Team who could find no pending applications for the site. He agreed that as it stood this was a breach of planning and would assign it to a member of the Team. Martine Hall subsequently advised me that she was the case officer. It seems that this action has now forced the retrospective planning application being considered here.

SH said that he felt that TO had placed the PC in a difficult position by completing the development significantly differently to the plans that he bought before the PC and which the PC had supported and generating an additional property on the site. SH felt this was now placed before the PC as a "Fait Accompli". Although not a material consideration against a retrospective application SH suggested that PC members must demonstrate to those they represent, that they abide by rules and procedure. It is difficult for PC members to make judgements about Planning Enforcements elsewhere (such as Strapstone Lane) when their own developments have breached planning rules.

SH also raised a question regarding the supporting paperwork to the submission as TO had not ticked the box in section 24 declaring the applicant is not "Associated with the Authority" TK was able to clarify that TO did not need to tick this section and that although an elected member of the PC and Chair of the PC he was not associated with "The Authority" as he himself (TK) would need to declare as a District Councillor.

SH Proposed that the PC do not discuss this planning application further and that the matter is left to the District Planning Committee to make a decision based upon the facts and that the PC would not add any comment to the application. He felt this was the best way to demonstrate transparency in this case, but that the statement that he made about the circumstances of the application and of his own actions in referring the matter to Planning Enforcement remain in the minutes of the meeting as a matter of public record.

This proposal was seconded by PK

ACTION: The Clerk will NOT complete the section for PC comment as a statutory consultee and let the District Planning Committee decide the case based upon the facts.

iv) The CROWN INN Clapton 2021/1138/FUL

JC said that he thought this had gone to appeal due to the application taking so long to be considered. However SH received the following update from Lorna Elstob Planning Officer – Development Management subsequent to the meeting:

20 October e-mail

With regards to the above application there is no update to provide over and above the information that is available on our website. There are 2 outstanding objections to the application and I am

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waiting for the applicant to decide how they wish to proceed. All information we receive is published on our website and is available for public view.

ACTION: CLERK TO MAINTAIN THIS AS AN ITEM UNDER PLANNING UNTIL POSITION IS RESOLVED AS THERE IS SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC INTEREST IN CLAPTON

21/10/08 - FINANCE

The Finance Statement was seen by all councillors prior to the Meeting and the statement was agreed by all present.

i) Application for Grant by SE Village Hall for £2380

Rick Fitzsimonds was invited to brief on the application for this grant. The Grant is for the compacting and surface finishing of the car park area outside the hall. Because the hall is situated adjacent to the playing field and the Multisport court, the car park is used by members of the public using the fields and court for recreation, dog walking etc and it is not solely a hall car park. This was therefore not specifically a request for funding from the hall, it is more seen as being of benefit to the wider community using the range of facilities there.

The request is based upon a quotation supplied by Pennys and excludes VAT.

PK discussed a number of options to get stone and aggregates from other suppliers or donations and he will research these further as will Rick. There was a proposal from PK that the PC buys the stone/aggregate as it is for a communal village facility and supportable, also the PC is able to claim back VAT which will buy more for the outlay. If this is not possible a £2000 cash grant was suggested. This was seconded by TK

ACTION: PK and Rick will research other suppliers to get down the cost and this CLERK TO RINGFENCE £2000 for this expenditure.

ii) GET ACTIVE Grant for 725.40

The GET ACTIVE representative explained that they were not eligible for assistance under any of the COVID schemes but had not been able to fund raise. The money was required to meet the obligation of inspection and Insurance to allow the facility to continue in use.

TK proposed supporting this and paying the grant and this was seconded by SH.

ACTION: CLERK TO PAY GRANT OF £725.40 to GET ACTIVE SE

iii) Insurance Premium Payment - £361.39

Proposed AD Seconded by JC

iv) Defibrillator Pads - £46.19 To Steve Huckle

Proposed AD Seconded JC

v) Wreaths - £60

Proposed TO Seconded SH

vi) Tim Candy for Verge Cutting

Proposed TO Seconded JC

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vii) Contribution to Magazine Printing £50

Proposed PK Seconded SH

viii) Clerks Expenses £633.20

Proposed AD Seconded PK

Additions:

- ix) Paul Clayton? £130 to replace glass in SE telephone box £130

Proposed AD Seconded AD

- x) 3 x Speedwatch Signs for Ston Easton Village Speedwatch = £102 (3 x £34)

Proposed by SH seconded by PK

21/10/09 - AOB (Matters of Report)

Dog Bins. A member of the public asked about the Dog Poo bins that were promised for Ston Easton play area/village hall.

PC members believed that these had been approved at a previous meeting and expenditure was ringfenced.

ACTION: CLERK TO CHECK EXPENDITURE WAS APPROVED AND PURCHASE IF THIS IS THE CASE. IF NOT REPORT BACK TO PC FOR APPROVAL OFFLINE IF NECESSARY.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING Wednesday 8th December SE village Hall (To Be Booked)

Notes taken by Cllr Huckle.