

**MINUTES OF STOKE SUB HAMDON PARISH COUNCIL**  
**EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD ON**  
**THURSDAY 5 MAY 2016 IN THE READING ROOM**  
**NORTON SUB HAMDON**

**16/054 PRESENT:**

**Members:** Mrs Barbara Brooks (Chairman), Mr Neil Bloomfield, Mr Hugh Donovan, Mr Chris Earl, Mr Brian Evans, Mrs Marilyn Hart, Mrs Rebecca Merrick, Mr Graham Middleton.

**Others:** Mrs Sylvia Seal (District Councillor), Mrs Sarah Moore (Clerk), Mary Ostler (Neighbourhood Development Officer, SSDC) and 6 members of the public

**16/054 APOLOGIES:**

Mr Paul Spearpoint (Vice Chairman), Mr Malcolm Uhlhorn and Mr John Bailey (County Councillor)

Cllr Brooks asked Councillors to be mindful of the seven principle of public life listed in the code of conduct when considering the item for discussion and resolution at this meeting.

**16/055 DECLARATION OF INTEREST:**

There were no declarations of interest.

**16/056 THE METHODIST CHURCH, WEST STREET:**

Cllr Bloomfield raised a point of order on why the meeting was not held in Stoke sub Hamdon. Cllr Brooks explained that there were no facilities available as they were all fully booked that week. Cllr Bloomfield asked why the meeting could not be held in the Working Men's Club. The Clerk pointed out that under *Stoke sub Hamdon Parish Council Standing Order 3(a)* 'Meetings shall not take place in premises which at the time of the meeting are used for the supply of alcohol, unless no other premises are available free of charge or at a reasonable cost' and the Reading Room was available at reasonable cost. The Clerk also point out that there is no legal requirement for a Parish Council to hold a meeting in its parish.

Cllr Brooks explained that as part of the Community Right to Bid process, the Parish Council Project Team have drafted, reviewed and agreed a Business Case for a potential bid for the purchase of the closed Methodist Church in West Street. This had been circulated to Councillors along with the summary cover paper ahead of the meeting.

Cllr Brooks explained that the reason this Extraordinary Meeting had to be called was because the Project Team had just learnt that newly issued grant application guidelines require that they had to be submitted by 11<sup>th</sup> May for the quarterly decision, and any decisions taken at the normal monthly Parish Council meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May would not enable those application deadlines to be met.

Cllr Brooks explained that 3 quotes for surveyor's fees and solicitor's costs were currently being obtained in line with grant application guidelines from the Architectural Heritage Fund.

Cllr Brooks commented that she had been made aware that some residents who were against the project were stating that the processes the Council had followed were not sufficient, illegally carried out, and our figures inaccurate. This was totally untrue. A Senior Solicitor at SSDC had formally confirmed that a poll or referendum was not in fact required under the Community Right to Bid legislation. Our consultation processes met all the required criteria. Cllr Brooks referred the meeting to an email she had received from SALC (Somerset Association of Local Councils) following initial submission to them of the feasibility study, details of the whole consultation process including the letter drop to all houses inviting

residents to attend the public meetings, and all procedures to be carried out. The email confirmed that it was an absolutely textbook approach, and it was very refreshing to hear of a parish engaging in such an open and comprehensive way.

Cllr Brooks then asked councillors for their comments on the provision of additional facilities.

Cllr Middleton asked to go through the Business Case and Appendices:

- **Appendices, SSDC Letter of Support:** Cllr Middleton asked what the emailed correspondence was that was referred to in the letter. Cllr Brooks asked Mary Ostler to clarify. Mary Ostler said that these were offers of support to the consultation. Cllr Middleton asked what type of support. Mary Ostler said that this was office support.
- **Appendices, SCC Letter of Support:** Cllr Middleton asked for clarification on the type of support. Cllr Brooks said that this was for office and general advice.
- **Business Case, p14 (h) – Hamdon Job Club:** Cllr Bloomfield said that Martock already had a job club so is there a need for one in Stoke and would there be an additional cost of employing a member of staff. Cllrs Brooks and Donovan said that this was just a potential development opportunity and cost is irrelevant at this stage. Cllr Bloomfield commented on the Our Place project and the cost to Martock's precept and would the Hamdon Job Club have the same effect on Stoke's precept. Cllr Brooks said that this potential project was not intended to be a replica of the Our Place project in any way: just the provision of a meeting room where job seekers who lived this side of the A303 could meet and get advice.  
Cllr Brooks pointed out that if the Parish Council successfully purchased the Methodist Church it would be owned by the Parish Council as an asset, but the services would be run by a charitable trust which would be resident led and resident managed. However the charitable trust would be fully accountable to the Parish Council under a Management Agreement. Even though the Parish Council may borrow the money to buy the building it would be an asset which could be sold in the future. Although many people may not be aware of it, it had recently been established that the Memorial Hall is not owned by the Parish Council, it is owned by the Hall's Charitable Trust, therefore any extension that is built would be owned by the hall trustees and not the parish.
- **Business Case, 2.1 – Feasibility Study:** Cllr Middleton questioned the comment about the storage problems and asked if the Hamdon Youth Group actually needed their pool table and table tennis table and whether could they do without those items for a period of time. Cllr Donovan said to ask the HYG and said that he had been advised that HYG attendance had gone down since they had had to move to temporary accommodation without their pool table and table tennis tables.
- **Business Case, 2.1 – Feasibility Study bottom p2:** Cllr Middleton asked for clarification on what the minor improvements were. Cllr Brooks said that the pews needed removing, the heating grilles attached to the pews taken away, another toilet provided and any Accessibility Audit recommendations carried out. Cllr Brooks said the Parish Council would be seeking a SSDC Community Grant for the improvements. Cllr Middleton said that the wording 'little cost' should be changed to 'some cost'.
- **Business Case, 2.3 – Potential Future Users of the Facility:** Cllr Middleton stated that there is no list of who the potential users would be other than those listed on p13.
- **Business Case, 3.1 – Extension to Memorial Hall, Para. 5:** All the bullets points mentioning the relevant processes also relate to the Methodist Church as well. Cllr Brooks explained that no major structural changes would be made to the Methodist Church and there would be no new construction, therefore the timescales were totally different and much shorter.

- **Business Case, 3.2.1 – The Property – Situation Para 2 bullet point 2:** Cllr Middleton commented on the use of the farm track at the rear of the property. Councillors agreed that this would be subject to approval.
- **Business Case, 3.2.4 – The Property – Fit for Purpose:** Cllr Middleton said that far as he was aware Somerset County Council was not providing funding for the youth at present. Cllr Brooks asked Mr Hulett, who was in the public area and who is secretary of the Hamdon Youth Group, to clarify that point. Mr Hulett said that the Safe & Welcoming Standard was awarded through Somerset County Council and the grant is provided annually. Initially the grant was for £5,000 but last year it had reduced to £3,500. The funding is still there despite it diminishing each year. Cllr Middleton mentioned the Parish Council grant of £3,000 p.a. which funds the youth worker. The Clerk pointed out that the Parish Council had resolved to increase this grant to £3,250 in 2017/18 and 2018/19 at the December 2015 Parish Council meeting (*see minute ref: 15/141*).  
Cllr Middleton also questioned whether it would be fit for purpose if there is only one toilet and mixed gender groups were using the building. Councillors noted that it was intended to provide additional toilets in the plan, for which a SSDC grant would be sought.
- **Business Case, 3.3 – Benefit Analysis of the Options, Para 4:** Cllr Middleton said it cannot be stated that funding a youth worker significantly reduced the amount of anti-social behaviour in the village. Cllr Donovan said that by having a youth worker there is also a mentoring process so it cannot be ruled out that a youth worker is not a contributing factor.
- **Business Case, 5.3 – Community Funding – Increase in Precept:** Cllr Middleton said that he had worked out that with an interest rate of 2.54% on a 20 year loan the increase on a Band D rate would be £16.39 not £13.90. Cllr Middleton asked how this figure was calculated. Cllr Brooks said the interest figures came from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) table and that the annual amount is calculated automatically. The £13.90 figure was the figure calculated by SSDC based on the interest total.
- **Business Case, 6.3.2 – Planned Income, p 12 Business Model:** Cllr Middleton asked about the certainty of the development opportunities; the schools in the area may not be full thus impinging on the need for youth activities. Cllr Evans commented that Yeovilton Air Base is currently expanding as the army are now in situ. Cllr Donovan commented that there is potential housing development in the village which is likely to bring in more families.
- **Business Case, 6.3.2 – Planned Income, p 13 Business Model (b&c):** Cllr Middleton said that the Brownies and Guides currently meet in the Memorial Hall.
- **Business Case, 8.1 – Project Sustainability, Parish Council Support:** Cllr Middleton said that the wording should be changed from ‘will provide’ to ‘should be mindful of providing’.

Cllr Brooks thanked Cllr Middleton for his comments.

A discussion was held on residents’ views given to members verbally. Cllr Middleton said that he had received mostly negative feedback. Cllrs Donovan and other councillors said that on the contrary most of the views they had received were positive. Cllr Brooks said that this was the very reason why not just one but two public meetings had been held where voting could place, where a wider range of views could be sought from people right across the village, and surely that was a better reflection of residents’ views, than tiny samples. Those meetings had produced a majority view in favour of the project, and councillors should be mindful of that view when coming to their own decision tonight.

Cllr Middleton also raised concerns about the cost and spending. Cllr Donovan commented that Cllr Middleton had been invited to assist with the business case as Chairman of Finance

Committee but had refused. Cllr Middleton said that he had previously explained that he was not in favour of the project. Cllr Donovan stated that the Project Team would have welcomed his input, positive or negative. Cllr Brooks concurred and said that as Cllr Middleton was Chairman of the Finance Committee she was disappointed that he chosen not to participate, and had put his personal views first.

Cllr Merrick asked Cllr Middleton that as he was concerned about the amount of money being raised, would he support putting an extension on the Memorial Hall and would his views still stand? Cllr Middleton confirmed that he was still concerned about the amount of money to be spent on either option. Cllr Donovan asked whether Cllr Middleton saw the Methodist Church as a depreciating asset. Cllr Middleton said yes.

Cllr Bloomfield asked if there was a Plan B if the church council did not accept the Parish Council's offer and sold the building as a residential property.

Cllr Brooks said that if the proposal failed then the village has to have another meeting to discuss the way forward whether that is to put an extension onto the Memorial Hall. However, it is not within the Parish Council's legal ability to build an extension as the Hall is owned by the charitable trust. Cllr Middleton reminded members that when the Methodist Church closed Cllr Brooks stated that the Parish Council would need to look at extending the Memorial Hall. Cllr Brooks agreed that she had at the time, but that was before the true ownership of the Hall had come to light in ascertaining whether there were any restrictions on building on the land.

Cllr Hart said that she would be very concerned with spending or borrowing a large sum of money on extending a building the Parish Council did not own. Cllr Middleton agreed with this comment.

Cllr Brooks passed around copies of the grant application forms for discussion.

- The Architectural Heritage Fund: The Parish Council will be eligible for all legal, planning and professional costs. The form needs to be submitted by 11<sup>th</sup> May and requires a large amount of information. The AHF also requires 3 quotes for surveyors and 3 quotes for solicitors. The solicitors' quotes must include prices for work on conveyances, overage clause and charitable trust paperwork.
- SSDC Community Grant: The form needs to be submitted by 11<sup>th</sup> May. The grant will not be eligible towards the purchase but can help with funding for disability access etc.  
Mary Ostler commented that SSDC would provide an access report free of charge.
- NALC/DCLG (Public Works Loan Board) – Pre-Approval for Borrowing

Cllr Middleton congratulated the working party on getting the paperwork and additional information together in such a short space of time.

Cllr Brooks explained what the next process would be. Cllr Brooks said that she and the Clerk would meet with SALC for assessment of the paperwork for the loan. SALC will then forward this onto the DCLG for approval. Once the pre-approval has been given then the Parish Council will have 12 months in which to draw down the loan. If the bid is successful, SALC will ask the Parish Council to complete another form for the precise loan amount which would go for resolution at another Parish Council meeting. The final stage is for the Chairman and the Clerk to ring the PWLB to request for the money to be drawn down.

There were no further questions so Councillors were invited to consider the Resolutions being proposed in the cover paper.

**IT IS RESOLVED** that the Parish Council approves the Business Case document submitted to this meeting.

Proposed: Cllr Hart

Seconded: Cllr Evans

5 Agreed; 1 Against

**IT IS RESOLVED** that an application for grant funding be completed and submitted to the Architectural Heritage Fund by 11<sup>th</sup> May to cover the costs of all professional fees required for the bid process

Proposed: Cllr Donovan      Seconded: Cllr Merrick      5 Agreed; 1 Against

**IT IS RESOLVED** that an application for grant funding be completed and submitted to South Somerset District Council by 11<sup>th</sup> May for a Community Grant for support towards meeting improved accessibility and disabled access in the building.

Cllr Middleton asked for an amendment to the statement by removing 'by 11<sup>th</sup> May'. This was agreed.

**IT IS RESOLVED** that an application for grant funding be completed and submitted to South Somerset District Council for a Community Grant for support towards meeting improved accessibility and disabled access in the building.

Proposed: Cllr Earl      Seconded: Cllr Hart      5 Agreed; 1 Against

**IT IS RESOLVED** that the Parish Council approves the completion and signature by the Chair and Parish Clerk of the pre-approval loan form to be submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) via SALC for a 20 year fixed term loan from the Public Works Loan Board for approval up to a maximum of £150,000, to be repaid from the parish precept annually.

Proposed: Cllr Brooks      Seconded: Cllr Donovan      4 Agreed; 1 Against; 1 Abstained

**IT IS RESOLVED** that following receipt of pre-approval from the DCLG, a written bid is submitted by the Chair and the Parish Clerk to the agents Greenslade Taylor Hunt for the purchase of the Methodist Church, West Street.

Proposed: Cllr Evans      Seconded: Cllr Donovan      4 Agreed; 1 Against; 1 Abstained

If the Council's bid is successful, **IT IS RESOLVED** that the appropriate professional firms such as surveyors and solicitors are engaged and briefed for both the purchase and the setting up of the Charitable Trust to manage the facility.

Proposed: Cllr Merrick      Seconded: Cllr Evans      5 Agreed; 1 Against

If the property purchase is successful, **IT IS RESOLVED** that the Church freehold is owned solely by the Parish Council, and that a Charitable Trust is set up consisting of service user Trustees to manage, operate and maintain the building, reporting back to the Parish Council on a defined basis as set out in a Management Agreement between the Council and the Trust.

Cllr Middleton queried the term 'service user' and it was agreed to remove that term.

If the property purchase is successful, **IT IS RESOLVED** that the Church freehold is owned solely by the Parish Council, and that a Charitable Trust is set up consisting of Trustees to manage, operate and maintain the building, reporting back to the Parish Council on a defined basis as set out in a Management Agreement between the Council and the Trust.

Proposed: Cllr Evans      Seconded: Cllr Merrick      Agreed unanimously

If the property purchase is successful **IT IS RESOLVED** that the Parish Council adjusts the budget for the financial year 2016/17 to ensure that the first half yearly interest payable is ring-fenced, together with the same level of financial support for the Methodist Church on operating costs and asset reserves it makes for the Memorial Hall.

Cllr Middleton suggested changing the word 'adjusts' to 'include in' and questioned whether the level of support should be the same as the Memorial Hall as the trustee set up for the Methodist Church is different, and would be more in line with the Sports and Recreation Trust. Cllr Middleton therefore suggested changing the wording from 'Memorial Hall' to 'Sports and Recreation Trust'. After discussion, this was agreed.

If the property purchase is successful **IT IS RESOLVED** that the Parish Council include in the budget for the financial year 2016/17 provision to ensure that the first half yearly interest payable is ring-fenced, together with the same level of financial support for the Methodist Church on operating costs and asset reserves it makes for the Sports and Recreation Trust.

Proposed: Cllr Evans

Seconded: Cllr Merrick

Agreed unanimously

If the property purchase is successful **IT IS RESOLVED** that the Parish Council's budget for the coming financial year 2017/18 makes sufficient provision to ring-fence the amount of loan interest payable, together with the same level of financial support for the Methodist Church on costs and asset reserves it makes for the Memorial Hall, and that this arrangement will become a permanent feature of all future budgets.

As with the previous resolution statement it was agreed to remove the wording 'Memorial Hall' and change it to 'Sports and Recreation Trust'

If the property purchase is successful **IT IS RESOLVED** that the Parish Council's budget for the coming financial year 2017/18 makes sufficient provision to ring-fence the amount of loan interest payable, together with the same level of financial support for the Methodist Church on costs and asset reserves it makes for the Sports and Recreation Trust, and that this arrangement will become a permanent feature of all future budgets.

Proposed: Cllr Evans

Seconded: Cllr Merrick

Agreed unanimously

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.10pm.