

Stoke sub Hamdon Parish Council

No.7 North Street Workshops, North Street, Stoke-sub-Hamdon, TA14 6QR

Clerk: Mr Neil Bloomfield,
clerk@stoke-sub-hamdon-pc.gov.uk

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting 6pm Tuesday 16th January 2024 No. 7 North Street Workshops

- Present** Cllr M Phillips (Chair), Cllr Michael Foley,, Cllr Suzanne Nelms, Cllr Moira Hulett, Cllr Middleton (post 24/009 Cllr Dullaghan, Cllr Lewis, Cllr Gould)
5 members of the public including Cll.Mr Bailey
- 24/001** **Recording of meetings**
The chairman announced the meeting was being recorded and attention was drawn to the Councils policy on recording meetings.
- 24/002** **Apologies for Absence.**
Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Holder. **AGREED**
- 24/003** **Declarations of Interest**
Members gave standing declarations as per the register of interest which is available from the Clerk.
- 24/004** **Election of Chairman**
Owing to the resignation of Cllr Burton the Council were required to elect a chairman for the remainder of the municipal year.
Being the only nomination Cllr Michael Phillips was **ELECTED**:
4 in favour
0 against
1 abstention.
- 24/005** **Declaration of Acceptance of Office**
Cllr Phillips signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office form witnessed by the Clerk.
- 24/005-1** **Election of Vice Chair**
The Vice Chair having been elected Chairman left a vacancy. Being the only nomination Cllr Michael Foley was **ELECTED** to Vice Chairman of Council:
3 in favour
0 against
2 abstentions

24/005-2 Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Witnessed by the Clerk Cllr Foley signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office Form

24/006 Approval of Minutes.

Council Resolved to accept the minutes of 8th November 2023 subject to amendments.

Lyn Foley not present. "seated" on page 2

AGREED

24/007 Standing Orders (SO) – Motion to Amend

Council considered the following amendment to Standing Orders by adding:

8(b) Causal Vacancy. Co-option by Written Ballot

Voting to fill casual vacancy by co-option may be by written ballot if:

- two Councillors, present at the meeting, make such a request to the Clerk,
- the request must be made prior to the agenda item to co-opt commencing.

Ballot papers will be completed in public session. Votes will be counted by the Clerk and witnessed by the chair of council. Ballot papers will not be retained by the council after the result is declared. If no request for written ballot is made, then voting will be by show of hands.

S.O. 8(b) is reserved for co-option of casual vacancies only and will not be used for any other vote in council, committee, sub-committee or working group.

Council **RESOLVED** to amend Standing Orders by adding section 8(b) with the above **text**:

AGREED

ACTION: Clerk

24/008 Casual Vacancy

Council to note the resignation of Cllrs Burton & Cllr Merrick.

24/009 Co-option to fill Vacancies.

No election having been requested. The council could proceed to Co-opt.. Three applicants were present, Rachael Lewis, Martin Dullaghan & Paul GOULD. Each candidate said a few words about themselves.

Council **RESOLVED** to Co-opt the three (3) candidates to serve as Councillors until the next election. Voting by show of hands.

AGREED

24/010 Declaration of Office

The new councillors signed their Declaration of Acceptance of Office Forms witnessed by the clerk before taking their seats.

24/011

Committees

To consider nominations to restore The Planning and Finance & Resources Committees to previously agreed numbers. Council may wish to defer a decision until at least some of the current vacancies are filled. The planning committee have yet to meet. To agree a forward diary for the planning committee for remainder of 23/2

Council **RESOLVED** to defer this item until all vacancies were filled.

AGREED

24/012

Council Policies

Council considered the following policies for approval.

- a) Safeguarding Policy
- b) Document Retention Policy
- c) The National Association Local Councils (NALC) Respect Agenda.

Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the Safeguarding Policy as written.
Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the NALC Respect Agenda
Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Document Retention Policy subject to email retention being increased to 3 years.

AGREED

ACTION: Clerk

24/013.

Banking Mandate

The Clerk reported a combination of resignations and the Banks rather antiquated authorisation system reduced signatories to the working account below minimum requirements. As a result, council were unable to process payments for a period of time. Several signatories left council in quick succession and the banks. The banking mandate will be aligned with Finance Regulations 5.5 allowing the Clerk/RFO to make urgent payments via online banking. Such payments will be limited to 12 in any 12-month period with a single payment not exceeding £1,000.

Council **RESOLVED** to approve the banking mandate to increase the number of signatories to 8 on the Lloyds Accounts and amend Financial Regulations to set a limit of clerk authorised payments under Sec.5.5 to 12 in any 12-month period.

AGREED

ACTION: Clerk

24/014

Allotment Fees and Charges

Finance & Resources Committee recommended the annual rent, currently £17 per full plot should be abolished commencing January 2024. The £25 returnable deposit scheme should be amended to a non-refundable payment of £50 p.a. per allotment holding. Existing allotment holders will be expected to bring the £25 in place up to £50 within the calendar year. Members were concerned an increase to £50 would cause financial hardship to multi-allotment holders.

Council **RESOLVED** to abolish the annual allotment fee of £17. The current refundable £25 deposit would become a single non- returnable payment for the continuous term of the tenancy agreement.

AGREED

Tenancy agreement requires updating and sending out to current holders.

ACTION-CLERK

24/015 Draft Budget 2024/2025

The Clerk presented the draft budget and explained the difficulties in assessing potential cost implications for the precept due to anticipated cuts by the unitary authority. Cllrs were advised the budget layout had been changed and the earmarked reserves (EMR) had been made more relevant to councils' commitments with allocations based more closely on current costs. Annual payments to EMR's should be index linked as a minimum to protect their real terms value. Council was asked to consider any changes and a final budget would be brought to the next council for approval.

Any outstanding liabilities should be notified to the Clerk immediately.

24/016 Direct Debit & Payments

Council considered creating multiple direct debits but the issue of only being able to take one signature. Consideration to authorising the clerk to sign DD on behalf of councils.

Council **RESOLVED** to defer this item to the next meeting to allow enquiries to be made with Lloyd's bank regards accepting single signature.

AGREED

24/017 Account Balances and Schedule of payments.

Council to note.

Account Balances as at 05/01/2024

Lloyds Business Acc xxxxx860	£55,324.30
Lloyds BB Inst Acc xxxxx260	£44,239.68

Most recent balance data

Melton Building Soc.	£ 33,428.98
Cambridge & Counties	£ 23,026.17

Invoices Paid by Standing Order*/Previously approved:

Evis Ground Maintenance (October)		£ 750.00*
Bank charges		£ 8.70
Cloudy IT	Monthly M/Soft 365 Licence fee x11	£ 60.68*
Stable Print	November Newsletter	£ 210.00
Reimburse Lyn Foley	Fire safe for office (reissue chq)	£ 257.98
Donation	Leonardo (AWASA)	£ 100.00
Public Works Loan Boar	HYFC Loan (November)	£4,774.85
<u>Total</u>		£6,162.21

Payments to be noted/agreed by resolution.

(1) Authorised by finance committee

(Standing orders/salary pre resolved)*

Somerset Council-	Lengths-man scheme (Full Year)	£ 3,844.70
Stable Print *	Dec Newsletters	£ 210.00*
Evis GM *	Nov Ground Maintenance	£ 750.00 *
Cloudy IT *	Office 365	£ 60.68 *
Royal British Legion(1)	Wreath	£
100.00		
Salary Payment	Clerk(1) Interim Payment	£2,000.00*
	Sub total	<u>£6,965.38</u>

December Payments for noting (regular payments pre approved)

(Payment Made under 5.5 Financial Regulations)

		B/F	£3120.68
Evis GM	December Ground Maintenance		£750.00*
Cloudy IT	Office 365 user licences		£ 60.68*
Stable Print	January Newsletter		£ 210.00*
Lloyds Bank	Service Charges		£ 8.70*
EDF Energy(2)	Unit 7 utility		£ 188.50
	<u>Total payments (Oct-Dec)</u>		<u>£4,338.56</u>

Council **RESOLVED** to approve the payment schedule.

AGREED

24/017-1 Financial Regulations-Urgent Payment

Council asked to note the following payment authorised by RFO

Payment made 09/01/24

HMRC PAYE Underpayment 2022/23 &

RT1 Payment 2023/24.

£522,53

Council **noted** the urgent payment

NOTED

24/018 Debit Card

Council **NOTED** the issue of a Debit Card being issued to the Clerk and further noted the daily limit of £500.

NOTED

24/019 Financial Software

The Council **NOTED** the purchase of the Scribe Accounting software system at the following cost:

One off setup charge:	£479.00
Monthly subscription:	£55.00 (£660 Pa)

NOTED

24/020 Motion to Exclude the Press & Public
Council **RESOLVED** to the nature of the following items the press and public are to be excluded as public discussion of these items would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential/sensitive nature of the business to be transacted.
Sec.1 The Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960.

AGREED

24/021 Major Spending Review
The uncertainty surrounding future service provision requires council to consider its current spending including grant allocations for this and the coming years. It is recommended a medium to long term view is taken focusing on value for money, community need for services and savings to increase available funding. Consider changes to the EMR balances ensuring they are fit for purpose.
Members will receive a confidential paper in advance of the meeting.

Council **DEFERRED** this item to the next meeting.

AGREED

24/022 Correspondence
Council to consider a report sent to council and other items of correspondence received.
Members will receive a confidential paper in advance of the meeting.

Council **DEFERRED** this item to the next meeting

To note date of next meeting TBA