

## East Coker Parish Council Minutes 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023

**Attendees:** Cllr Cowen, Cllr Hall, Cllr Sugg, Cllr Carter- Uren, Cllr Comstive, Cllr Walker, Cllr Wintersgill, Cllr Mead & Clerk J. Heggarty.

**Public Attendance:** 1 member of the public.

Meeting commenced at 6.30pm at East Coker Pavilion.

### **23/173 To receive apologies and reasons for non-attendance**

Apologies were received from UC Mike Hewitson, Cllr Warwick- Mortimer and Cllr Wakely, for not attending. Cllr Hodge and Cllr Comstive advised they would be late.

**23/174** There were no declarations of interest in items on this agenda.

### **23/175 To receive and approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

Meeting minutes for the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were approved. **Proposed:** Cllr Hall **Seconded:** Cllr Mead **Vote:** All in favour **Action:** The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chair and Clerk. Clerk to publish.

**23/176** Chairs Report: Cllr Cowen advised that he had been in touch with Unitary Cllr Hewitson about Somerset Council's plans for funding the Citizens Advise Bureau. U Cllr Hewitson advised that there was a 3 year plan in place. They have allocated £629k for year one and £600K for the following two years. Cllr Cowen asked Clerk to contact CAB and advised that they could apply for a grant from ECPC but the maximum amount they could get, if agreed, would be £500.

### **23/177 Public Question Time**

(1) Members of the Public. One member of the public spoke about the possibility of introducing dog training at the recreation ground in the summer 2024. She advised that she is fully insured and accredited. This will be discussed by Cllr at the January meeting.

18.37 Member of the public left

(2) No Unitary Councillors were present.

### **23/178 To discuss and make observations on SC - Planning Applications**

A **15/01000/OUT Location:** Keyford. Nothing to report.

### **23/179 Finance. To approve the following items of expenditure and those paid under delegated powers.**

Clerk had sent finance reports out prior to meeting. She advised that she had queried both the October and November Ranger invoices and was waiting for a revised invoice. Once they arrive these would be paid. She also advised that the Xero basic package was trialled but it did not allow for the number of monetary transactions per month, so it was decided to return to the original package which is now £31.50 pcm.

(18.40 Cllr Comstive arrived.)

**Proposal:** Approve invoices and proceed with payment **Proposed:** Cllr Wintersgill **Seconded:** Cllr Carter-Uren **Vote:** 7 in favour, 1 abstention **Action:** Finance accounts approved for the month and Clerk to pay all invoices.

**23/180** A memorial request had arrived late for an inscription to remember the late Michael Spearing.

Cllrs were happy with the size and wording. **Proposed:** Cllr Sugg **Seconded:** Cllr Comstive **Vote:** All Agreed **Action:** Clerk to update and invoice stone mason.

### **23/181 Matters for discussion and resolution:**

- 1. Ranger Scheme.** Cllr Cowen advised that after attending the Asset and Services Devolution meeting there will be many services that Somerset Council may scrap. The ranger scheme could be one of them. He said that we needed to be prepared for this and other options should be explored for the village ranger. Clerk advised that other Councils have expressed an interest in possibly joining forces to try and source a local ranger. Cllr Sugg said that she thought it only fair to speak to our current ranger before making any decisions. Cllr Cowen agreed and asked Cllr Sugg to speak to the current ranger to let her know that we have to explore other options. This item will be discussed again in the new year.
- 2. Recreation Ground works**  
Cllr Cowen advised that he had looked at the area under the roundabout and said that he thought that jet washing the entire area once the tree is pollarded in the new year would be the solution. Clerk advised that she was chasing a quote for this from Somerset Council. Cllr Carter Uren said that she would ask her partner if they could do it. Cllr Carter- Uren will update clerk to see if her partner is happy to carry out jet washing in the new year. Clerk also advised that she had had a quote for replacing the broken fence beside play area. This was £495.50 +VAT. Cllr Walker added that there

was another fence post broken and suggested this was also repaired at the same time. **Proposal:** Accept quote for work and ask for other post to be added to the job. **Proposed:** Cllr Sugg **Seconded:** Cllr Hall. All agreed. **Action:** Clerk to contact the contractor to proceed with works as per quote and also add the other fence post repair to the job. Cllr Carter-Uren to ask partner to power wash play area once tree had been pollarded in the new year.

**23/182 To receive the Clerk's report.**

1. Agree date and time for budget and Precept meeting in January. Cllr Hodge was not present, so this still needs to be arranged.

**23/183 Receive correspondence from the Somerset Council.**

**1. Somerset Council Asset and Service Devolution**

Cllr Cowen advised that he attended the Asset and Services Devolution meeting. He said that Somerset Council will not be providing a lot of services which we have normally received. This would include road gritting, dog waste and rubbish bin emptying, verge cutting, weed spraying, grass cutting of any assets owned by SC and possibly the ranger scheme.

This would clearly have an effect on the village as funds would have to be found from the ECPC precept. The clerk advised that at the moment SC undertakes the Tellis Cross play area grass cutting, cutting area at Natter Garden (junction of Mill close), rubbish and dog waste bins emptying, annual weed spraying, verge cutting, it also provided the Ranger (paid for by the PC) with all equipment. Cllr Comstive suggested that the dog bins (8) and rubbish bins (2) could be removed to try and keep costs down. Cllr Walker said he thought that this was not a good idea as people would just leave waste were the bins used to be. Cllr Hall said that signs could be made to inform and encourage people to take all dog waste and rubbish home. These items would be discussed further at the budget and precept meeting.

**23/184 To receive and discuss Parishioner Correspondence.**

1. Email received from East Coker Society seeking permission to place a notice board behind the PC 's board at Lower Wraxhill. There were no objections to this. **Proposed:** Cllr Sugg **Seconded:** Cllr Wintersgill. **Vote:** All Agreed **Action:** Clerk to update East Coker Society
2. Email received from church requesting a Councillor to do a reading at Carol Service on the 17<sup>th</sup> December. Cllr Walker volunteered for this.
3. Curb stones beside East Coker village stream. Clerk had received an estimate for repair of curbs beside the stream near the Helyar Arms. Cllr Mead said that these had since been marked and looked like they may get repaired by SC in the coming months. Cllr Cowen said this item should be revisited, if necessary, after giving SC more time to carry out the necessary repairs.
4. Email received requesting refund for a grave space which was purchased in 2014. £700.00 was paid by the individual but it was proposed that only £600 would be refunded to cover all the admin costs. **Proposed:** Cllr Carter-Uren **Seconded** Cllr Mead **Vote:** 7 in favour 1 abstention. Clerk to contact owner and arrange payment.
5. Clerk advised she had received an email from a parishioner, asking if lighting could be changed at night at the Pavilion. Cllr Walker and Cllr Sugg both said that this is not possible due to the defibrillator being located there. The light is also not on all night as mentioned by the parishioner. **Action:** Clerk will update Parishioner.
6. Email received regarding broken garage door of lock up used by the football club. **Action:** Cllr Mead will see if he can repair it.

**23/ 185 Working Groups**

1. **The Pavilion Modernisation** Cllr Comstive advised that due to costs, the spec of the proposed modernisation needs to be changed. The working group are in the process of getting 3 contractors to design new plans with manageable costs. The working group will have a meeting in the new year and report back after that.
2. **SIDS.** Cllr Walker advised that we are still waiting for dates for the posts to be installed. He is also investigating companies that run the chapter 8 courses which enable individuals to install and move SIDS safely.
3. **Parish Communications**  
Cllr Sugg requested that a communication was put out, asking people to try and avoid using the dog waste bins and take it home and dispose of in their rubbish, as these would not be emptied over the Christmas period
4. **Cemetery Working Group**

- a. Quotes for clearing of trees at the cemetery. Clerk advised that 3 quotes from Arborealists had been received. Cllr Cowen said that 3 large trees which were included in the original tree report were on private land and therefore could not be included in the tree works undertaken without the landowner's permission. Cllr Sugg suggested to write to the landowners to find out if they wish to have the trees removed when the other work is being undertaken. Cllr Cowen said he would do this. Cllr Mead also advised that before anything could progress that a badger survey would need to be carried out. Cllr Comstive advised that he knew of a company that would do this and that he would be happy to contact them. **Proposal:** Accept lowest quote for tree works which is from ARB Tree and Garden Services, Cllr Cowen to write to the owners of the 3 large conifers to see if they wish to have them removed and Cllr Comstive to organise for a badger survey to be carried out. **Proposed:** Cllr Sugg **Seconded:** Cllr Comstive **Vote:** All in favour.

5. **Wellbeing.**

- a. **100 Club.** Cllr Wintersgill advised that she had around 20 people interested in signing up to the 100 club which is due to start in February 2024. Clerk advised that she had had confirmations of 3 standing orders being set up.
- b. **Live Nativity.** Cllr Sugg advised the preparations were going well. The ticket sales were not as high as hoped, but thought there would be more sold on the day. Cllr Wintersgill will email Clerk with list of jobs which need doing on the day so she can distribute to all Cllrs.

**23/186 Group Representative Reports**

Primary School – Cllr C Warwick-Mortimer

Alms Houses

**23/187 To discuss and identify Highways Issues.** None to report

**23/188 To discuss and identify items for the Village Ranger.** Nothing was reported.

**23/189 To discuss and resolve the following topics;**

Resolution sought to exclude the public (*Non Parish Council Members*)

1. Local Government services pay agreement 2023.

**23/190 Agenda items for the next meeting.**

Dog training at recreation ground

Meeting finished at 8.23pm.

Chair.....

Clerk .....