

MINUTES OF CROSCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL FULL COUNCIL MEETING

Held at the Church Rooms, Church Street

on

Tuesday 10th September, 2024, at 7:00 pm

Present: Cllrs A Ford, A Hargraves (Chair), P Hodge, C Jackson, J Owen, L Tully

Attending: Cllr M Lovell (Somerset Council); J McGhee (Parish Clerk); 19 members of the public

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcome everyone to the meeting.

2. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no comments from the public at this point.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE; ABSENCES

Cllr Gudzelak sent apologies.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members to declare any interests, including Disclosable Pecuniary Interests they may have in agenda items that accord with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 s33(b-e).

(NB - this does not preclude any later declarations).

None.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- i. To confirm and sign minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 30th July, 2024 (Appendix 1).

Resolved. Approved.

6. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

2024/1060/FUL

Siting of a temporary rural workers dwelling, erection of an agricultural building and the creation of a yard.

Land at 359706 144913, Thrupe Lane, Crocombe, Shepton Mallet, Somerset.

A number of parishioners, including some neighbours and near neighbours of the property in question, were present to give their views on this application, as were the applicants Mr and Mrs Morrell. Those comments are now described.

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An increase in traffic was cited as a major concern. Thrupe Lane is a single-track road with passing places and concern was expressed at an increased risk to drivers, cyclists and pedestrians (it was noted that the East Mendip Way is not far from the property). This risk is complicated by the fact that there are no pavements on Thrupe Lane or Rock Street, the continuation of Thrupe Lane in the village.

It was felt by some that the size of the barn was disproportionate and it was not clear precisely how it is to be used. The view was expressed that it seemed out of scale for farming a modest alpaca herd.

A possible negative environmental impact was mentioned, including increased runoff of water from the hillside exacerbating the flood risk which Croscombe already runs. Potential contamination of waterways from phosphates resulting from chicken farming was also raised.

The issue of amenity was addressed. It was felt that there would be negative effect on the views from and to the village, including from the East Mendip Way, and that an unfortunate precedent would be set with regard to the countryside surrounding the village.

It was felt that there was insufficient information in the business case quoted in support of the buildings because some of the information had been redacted.

One person quoted DEFRA as stating that an alpaca herd doesn't require someone to be on site permanently, thus negating the requirement for the mobile home.

It was noted that the ecological justification made covered a 30-year period whereas the requirement for temporary accommodation is over a 3-year period, and the opinion was given that there is in fact the risk of a short-term detrimental effect on the ecology and biodiversity of the area.

A speaker presented the view that the plans for an alpaca herd and number of hens do not meet an existing need in the parish.

One speaker did highlight the fact that the application concerns the mobile home, yard and barn, and not the alpaca/hen farming itself, although the latter depends on the former.

An increased risk of the spread of bovine TB was mentioned as one possible impact of having an alpaca herd in the area.

Mr and Mrs Morrell emphasised their respect for the area. Mr Morrell pointed out that eggs will be aimed at passing traffic and people will not go out of their way just to purchase eggs, so perhaps mitigating the traffic risk. The alpacas will be used for breeding and not, for example, for walking events, although some sort of alpaca experience may be offered to visitors. There will be rotation of the paddocks and they would not be stocking to full capacity for their alpaca herd. Mrs Morrell clarified that the barn will not be used to house hens. Cllr Jackson asked Mr Morrell what his current occupation is – he replied that it is as a locksmith but that he is proceeding up the learning curve of alpaca farming.

The Chair asked councillors individually for their view having heard the various remarks. Councillors were unanimous in stating that the Parish Council should recommend the application be refused, principally on the grounds of impacts on amenity and the environment, as well as the concomitant risk from increased traffic.

The Clerk is to register that recommendation with supporting reasons on the planning section of the Somerset Council website.

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7. FINANCE

- i. To approve (or not) bank account reconciliation at 04 Sep 24 (Appendix 2).

Resolved. Approved.

- ii. To approve (or not) receipts and payments identified in cashflow from 18 Jul 24 to 04 Sep 24 (Appendix 3).

Resolved. Approved.

8. CLERK'S REPORT

- i. To note Clerk's Report (Appendix 4).

Resolved. Noted.

9. LOCAL AUTHORITY REPORT

- i. To note report from Cllr Lovell of Somerset Council (Appendix 5).

Resolved. Noted.

10. PLAY AREA ANNUAL INSPECTION – ROSPA PLAY SAFETY REPORT (Appendix 6)

The Play Area annual inspection report was discussed. One item was identified meriting action on the part of the Parish Council, namely maintenance work required for the 'swing basket' where the tightening of a bolt was recommended. Cllr Jackson undertook to check the need and effect the repair.

11. FLOOD GROUP UPDATE (INCLUDING FINANCING)

Cllr Hodge provided an update on the activities of the Flood Group.

John Owen is now the Warden Organiser for the Flood Group.

John Phillips from the Environment Agency followed up his geomorphological report with an email agreeing that the removal of the larger boulders from the culvert would be advisable as they may be too large for flood flows to move effectively. The report itself stated that there was no point in removing all the stones from the stream bed as they are mobilised at times of high flow. The report did suggest small level recorders be fitted at strategic points on the river. The main recommendations were that a hydrology assessment be undertaken of the last two floods and that a hydraulic assessment should be made of the river channel and culvert.

The Environment Agency did look at the possibility of removing a stone mound at the Forge. There has not been any feedback, meanwhile the owner has arranged to remove some stones to reduce the height of the mound.

The Flood Group is planning a survey of the river and looking to identify and remove large stones from critical sections.

SRA are to progress a culvert route survey to identify responsibilities and hopefully arrange to remove blockages and make repairs to the culvert.

With flood resilience measures in place in many homes in Croscombe a consequence is that more flood water will flow further down the road. This means that other properties may be at risk and need to take measures to protect their properties. The EA have been asked if they will contact those that they consider may be at risk.

A Flood Group representative attended a training session for the Wessex Telemetry system. This is being tested by us and others and will eventually be available to all to monitor rainfall on the catchment and river flow at Croscombe.

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A small sum of money, £150, was requested for the hire of a digger to help repair damage to the stream in Ham Woods. This will mean that the stream will flow into sinks and not down the footpath onto the road and into the river. The work will be carried out by volunteers. The sum was approved.

A grant will be applied for from Somerset Rivers Authority to buy walkie talkies for the Flood Wardens and water level recorders to be fitted by the river. There may be other items to follow.

12. ORCHARD GROUP

i. Apple pressing event

The apple pressing event proposed to be held in Cllr Tully's back garden was approved.

ii. Survey – next steps

It was agreed that Cllr Tully will request the names of three members of the Orchard Group to take part in a group to finalise the draft survey for approval by the Parish Council, based on the work already done within the Orchard Group and by Cllr Hargraves. The Council will be represented by Cllrs Hargraves, Tully and Gudzelak along with the Clerk. The Clerk will circulate both draft surveys to all councillors.

iii. Discussions with Dinder Estate.

Cllr Hargraves provided an update on discussions with Dinder Estate on orchard matters. They are happy in principle with an expansion of the orchard but will require to see more detailed information on what that would involve before giving formal approval. They did not agree to allow limited use of the water supply from the estate into the orchard area, indeed that supply will be cut off. They did as a gesture offer to help fund the procurement of a water bowser to allow cemetery and orchard needs to be met.

13. SHEPTON LCN EMERGENCY PLANNING WORKSHOP

Cllr Hargraves gave an update on his attendance at the Shepton LCN Emergency Planning Workshop. This covered a range of emergency situations, including flooding. Various levels of planning were discussed down to that of a single household. There is no statutory requirement for this planning on the part of the Parish Council. Councillors are to consider the material sent on from the workshop by Cllr Hargraves so that Council can develop a view on whether any further emergency planning is required for the parish in addition to the extensive work being undertaken by the Flood Group.

14. TRAFFIC CALMING

Cllr Hargraves had a constructive meeting with Sara Davis of Somerset Council Traffic Management.

There is no money available for traffic work this financial year, but there may be next year. The Parish Council would like to consider, for example, implementing a pedestrian crossing in the village, extending the 20mph limit and introducing other traffic calming measures. It will continue to seek the expertise of Somerset Council Traffic Management in pursuing these options.

Ms Davis pointed out that there have been very few recorded traffic incidents in the village.

Cllr Hargraves will contact J Sackett who, it is understood, has compiled information on heavy goods vehicles passing through the village, and will continue to drive conversations on traffic calming.

15. COUNCILLOR EXPENSES

Cllr Hodge raised the question of meeting the expenses of councillors, specifically in his case recently the cost of travel to a Flood Group related meeting in Taunton. It was agreed that the principle should be that no

councillor should be out of pocket in performing necessary duties, and that the Clerk will use a recent communication from Somerset Council as the basis for developing a policy on expenses.

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16. FOOTPATHS – SHEPTON MALLET/CROSCOMBE/DINDER

Cllr Ford raised the issue of the difficulty of using the footpaths between Crocombe, Shepton Mallet and Dinder, mainly because of foliage overhanging the paths. The Clerk will forward Cllr Ford the link to Somerset Council to report a problem on the road, including pavements; Cllr Ford will raise the issue and report on any response/action at the next meeting.

17. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

The Clerk proposed the reappointment in principle of the internal auditor used for 2023/24, Eleanor Greene of Do the Numbers Ltd., subject to agreement of a suitable date and venue for the audit. Cllr Ford proposed this be accepted; Cllr Tully seconded. The proposal was unanimously agreed.

18. UPDATES ON ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- i. Update submission forms to Unity Trust – Clerk
Submissions signed by the Clerk and Chair and sent to Unity Trust.
- ii. Update and publish Flood Group ToR and Flood Plan on website – Clerk
Done.
- iii. Liaise with J Scott and C Brown re orchard grass cutting – Clerk
C Brown approached by the Clerk for a quotation covering orchard grass cutting for the rest of this season and agreed to provide it.
- iv. Obtain titles for south field/cemetery and review re water supply references – Clerk
Done and forwarded to councillors for information.
- v. Supply dog and litter bin information to Somerset Council – Clerk
Done. We await information on charges for emptying dog bins in 2025/26.
- vi. Post bus survey invitation on the web – Clerk
Done.
- vii. Set up council WhatsApp group – Cllr Hargraves
Done.

19. MATTERS OF REPORT – ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Review of cemetery fees.
Report on Dinder Estates decision.

Date of next meeting – Tuesday, 22nd October, 2024, at 7:00pm in the Church Rooms.

CLOSE