

**MINUTES OF THE ST NEOT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 12<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2020 AT 7:30PM IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, ST NEOT SOCIAL CLUB, ST NEOT**

**Present:** Councillors Dr L Jones (Chair), C Smith, A Bellringer, H Bunt, N O'Neill, O Burrows, R Berrett, G Rogers and T Hooper.

Cornwall Councillor M Eddy

Sue Blaxley (Parish Clerk)

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:30pm.

**Public Participation**

Chris Timms explained that he has prepared a draft booklet entitled "A Walk Through History" which he would like to publish. He explained that the booklet details the history of St Neot village and follows a logical walking route through the village. He said that he is asking the parish council to fund this project. He said that pages on the website stneot.org could also be included to support the project. The Chair said that this matter would be discussed at the next meeting of the parish council. Chris Timms said that the parish council is welcome to have a meeting in the archive to peruse the material that is deposited there.

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors D Lucas and P Critchon.

**2. To confirm the minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th January 2020, having previously been circulated, were agreed as an accurate record.

**3. Declarations of interest in items on the agenda**

Councillor G Rogers declared a prejudicial interest in item 10 on the agenda.

**4. To receive a report on any matters arising from the previous meeting**

None

**5. To receive the Chairman's Communications**

The Chair said that she had received an email from a visitor to the village praising the achievements in the community. She said that Cornwall Council is running Code of Conduct training sessions on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020 in Truro and 16<sup>th</sup>

March 2020 in Saltash. She said that all Councillors should attend this training every 3 years. Some Councillors said they were unable to attend these sessions as they were taking place during the working day. It was agreed that the Clerk would ascertain which Councillors would be attending the sessions in March and book places accordingly and that she would also ask Cornwall Council to consider running a training session one evening in Liskeard.

**6. To answer any questions from Councillors, previously notified to the Clerk**

None

**7. To receive a report from the Clerk**

None

**8. Doorstep Green and Playing Field**

**To compile a monthly rota for emptying the dog waste bins and the bins in the playing field and Doorstep Green and for inspecting the play and fitness equipment**

Councillor C Smith explained that the bins in Lampen Lane and near the school need to be emptied once a fortnight during the winter and every week in the summer. He said that the bags need to be removed from the bins and placed for collection by the refuse lorry early on a Friday morning. Councillor A Bellringer volunteered to undertake this task. It was noted that David Mc Cormack empties the bin by the Holy Well and that Councillor O Burrows empties the bins in the playing field and Doorstep Green. Councillor C Smith said that the play and fitness equipment requires weekly inspections. Councillor R Berrett volunteered to undertake this task and Councillor T Hooper said she would do it in the event that Councillor R Berrett was unavailable.

**To receive and consider a request for use of the Pavilion and playing field for a village tea party on May 8<sup>th</sup> 2020 to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of V.E. day**

The Chair said that she had received a request for the use of the Pavilion and playing field for a village tea party on May 8<sup>th</sup> 2020. Councillor T Hooper said that the parish council needs to be satisfied that adequate insurance is in place and to consider whether dogs will be permitted in the playing field during this event. Councillor C Smith said that any event that brings the community together is beneficial. The Chair said that a request had also been received for the parish council to contribute £100 towards the event. She said that the money would be used towards food costs, such as sandwiches and mini pasties for the afternoon tea and that any profit will be split between the church and the British Legion

village collection. It was proposed by Councillor T Hooper and seconded by Councillor N O'Neill that the use of the Pavilion and the playing field for the VE celebrations on May 8<sup>th</sup> 2020 be authorised and that a contribution of £100 be made towards the food costs. All Councillors voted in favour of the proposal.

### **To receive and consider a report on any matters arising relating to Doorstep Green and the Playing Field**

The Chair said that she and Councillor O Burrows had met with Ben Gallant from West Country Rivers Trust regarding the ecology and habitat in the river adjacent to the playing field. She explained that the River Loveny is particularly important for fish due to the hatchery at the head of the river. She explained that the aim is to improve the habitat and to manage the river which involves three proposals. First, it is proposed to remove some of the sycamore trees from the riverbank alongside the river in the playing field and on the riverside in Doorstep Green. Some trunks will be left 3-4 metres high to act as standing deadwood to act as 'insect hotels. Some oak trees will be planted in replacement. The resultant brush would be chipped and used in Doorstep Green. Secondly, it is proposed to remove the obstruction in the river between the pavilion and the bridge into Doorstep Green as it affects the movement of salmon and trout and other aspects of river ecology and river flow. Thirdly, it is proposed to create a hedgerow of native species 1m from the riverbank alongside the river in the playing field. The Chair said that all work would be undertaken free of charge using EU money and funding from various funders including SW Water. She said that the funding had to be applied for by Westcountry Rivers Trust by the end of March 2020. It was noted that the parish council would be responsible for managing and laying the hedge. The need for a hedge was questioned. The Chair explained that a hedge would provide an improved environment in ecological terms for the river and in addition, it will prevent balls from going into the river. Councillor C Smith said that a hedge will result in the loss of 2m of the playing field. Councillor A Bellringer said that a stone hedge would be visually more attractive and would be less likely to be damaged. Councillor H Bunt said that a boundary alongside the river has been discussed many times and that the conclusion has been reached that a boundary may be more dangerous for children as it prevents potential rescuers from reaching the river quickly. Councillor T Hooper said that removing the obstruction will create a danger for the children swimming in the river. The Chair pointed out that the river is in any case fast flowing, especially in summer, as Colliford supplies 75% of Cornwall's water and much water is released in summer when rainfall is low to reach the treatment centre downstream. The danger to children exists with the current obstruction present too. Councillor R Burrows suggested putting a long pole with a net by the bridge to help children recover balls. It was proposed by Councillor R Berrett and seconded by Councillor A Bellringer that South West Rivers Trust be authorized to undertake the tree cutting alongside the river bank as appropriate and that trees be planted as considered suitable and to remove the obstruction in the river between the pavilion and the bridge into Doorstep Green. All

Councillors voted in favour of this proposal.

## **9. Cott Yard**

### **To receive and consider a report on any matters arising relating to Cott Yard**

Councillor C Smith said that one new chair had been delivered to Restgarth and that the others were on order. The Chair said that she had received an email from Heather Taylor explaining that her parking area and private driveway into Cott Yard is being used as a public car park in the evenings and at weekends making it impassable for her own use and that of her visitors. It was proposed by Councillor Dr L Jones and seconded by Councillor C Smith that a sign be erected saying "Private Parking by order of St Neot Parish Council". In addition, it was agreed that Heather Taylor be advised to shut the gate at the entrance to Cott Yard as she owns the entrance. The Clerk explained that she is progressing the new BT broadband package for the archive room.

Councillor G Rogers, having previously declared an interest, left the meeting during discussion of the following item.

## **10. Toilets and Car Park in St Neot**

### **To receive and consider a report on any matters arising relating to the toilets and car park in St Neot**

The Clerk said that quotations had been sought from Lanhydrock Gardening Services and Gary Rogers for the planting of perennials in the grassed area between the car park and the road. The Clerk said that a quotation from Gary Rogers had been received to remove the weeds and builders' rubble from the area, to make good the area for planting, supplying compost and plants (low growing trailing plants with some alpiners which will attract insects) in the sum of £750. It was proposed by Councillor C Smith and seconded by Councillor T Hooper that this quotation be accepted on the condition that any VAT receipts for plants and compost be paid separately to the invoice for labour or non VAT items so that the VAT can be reclaimed. All Councillors voted in favour of this proposal. It was agreed that the Clerk would remind Colin Arthur to install the plinth in the car park on which to site the existing recycling bin.

Councillor G Rogers returned to the meeting.

## **11. Community Emergency Plan**

### **To receive and consider a report from Councillor D Lucas**

This matter was deferred until the next meeting.

## **12. Maintenance Works**

### **To consider compiling a contact list of trades people for maintenance tasks**

The Clerk and councillors compiled a list.

### **To consider compiling a plan detailing the maintenance tasks to be undertaken on a monthly basis**

The Clerk and councillors compiled a list.

### **To consider obtaining quotations for maintenance works that are required in the parish**

The Clerk and councillors compiled a list. It was proposed by Councillor Dr L Jones and seconded by Councillor C Smith that the Clerk asks SWMES to service the ground source heat pump in Cott Yard. All Councillors voted in favour of this proposal. It was proposed by Councillor C Smith and seconded by Councillor G Rogers that the Clerk asks Daryll O'Neill and R and B Electrical for quotations to upgrade all the lighting in the Pavilion to LED lighting. All Councillors voted in favour of this proposal.

### **To consider employing a person to undertake routine maintenance tasks**

It was agreed that this was not be necessary at the present time as there are sufficient volunteers willing to undertake these tasks.

## **13. Community Projects**

### **To receive and consider obtaining quotations for works at Crowpound Crossroads**

Councillor C Smith said that the parish council has a surplus of funds which should be invested into the community. He said that an idea would be to improve the area at Crowpound Crossroads for parking which would involve laying kerbs between the parking area and the road, improving drainage and the provision of an improved permeable surface. He said that these works would cost approximately £5,000. Councillor Dr L Jones said that this would be a significant amount of precept money when repair work which could involve stamping and replenishing the scalpings would suffice. Councillor O Burrows agreed with this comment. Councillor G Rogers said that the scalpings wash out very quickly. Councillor T Hooper said that it might be a good idea to ask civil engineers for their advice on suitable permeable surfaces for the area. It was agreed that the Clerk would ask Loveny Construction and Dave Thomas for their advice in this respect.

## **14. Donations**

### **To consider making charitable donations under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972**

The Chair explained that on an annual basis, the parish council makes some charitable donations in accordance with the amount that is permitted to be donated for that year. It was proposed by Councillor Dr L Jones and seconded by Councillor O Burrows that £100 be donated to St Neot United Charities. All Councillors voted in favour of this proposal. It was proposed by Councillor Dr L Jones and seconded by Councillor O Burrows that £50 be donated to the British Legion Poppy Appeal in November 2020. All Councillors voted in favour of this proposal. It was proposed by Councillor Dr L Jones and seconded by Councillor A Bellringer that £100 be donated to Cornwall Air Ambulance. All Councillors voted in favour of this proposal.

The Clerk left the meeting during discussion of the following item.

## **15. Pension for Clerk**

### **To consider contributing to a pension scheme for the Clerk**

First, the Chair pointed out that the Clerk was both her neighbour and colleague on the parish council but that there was no infringement under the Code of Conduct rules in the Chair considering the matter.

In line with an employer's obligation to contribute to a pension scheme if requested by an employee, on a certain level of income, a request by the Clerk to join the Local Government Pension Scheme was considered. The latter scheme is more expensive for the parish council than other pensions and this led to much discussion. In this particular case, the fifteen years of continuous service and high skill level of the post holder were acknowledged, with her Master's degree in Town Planning and twenty years working in that role in local government prior to becoming an employee of St. Neot Parish Council.

The increased expertise now required for the role (e.g. computer literacy, web page editing, acting as Responsible Financial Officer, Data Protection law, as well as a myriad of other competencies), were taken into account. Councillors were made aware of difficulties some parish council's face when the Clerk lacks these competencies e.g. £30,000 not accounted for in the case of one council. It was also noted that a less competent Clerk may need more hours for the job and thus increase costs. Some councillors favoured a different pension scheme at a lower cost. The Chair said that she felt it should not be a race to the bottom and to be an exemplary employer for a highly qualified candidate would attract and retain a high calibre clerk. She also said the considerable work load of any

Chairperson would be much more onerous with a less competent Clerk and it may be more difficult to fill the position.

After considerable discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Dr L Jones and seconded by Councillor T Hooper that St Neot Parish Council shall, on this occasion become members of the Local Government Pension Scheme. Any future written request by an employee will be considered on a case by case basis and in compliance with existing employment law.

6 councillors voted in favour of this proposal and 3 against. The proposal was therefore carried.

The Clerk returned to the meeting

## **16. Councillor Surgery at Local Produce Market**

**To receive feedback from the Councillor surgery on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020 and to appoint a volunteer for the next surgery on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

It was noted that Councillor D Lucas had attended the surgery on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020 and had reported that a parishioner was complimentary about the dog bins. In addition, he reported that a parishioner had made a few comments about the Kerdroya project saying that he had talked to the SW Lakes Trust about possible anti-social behaviour, litter, animals possibly getting trapped in the maze and possible confrontation with humans and that he had asked whether risk assessments had been done. He said that SW Lakes Trust had responded saying that they would do a risk assessment if events proved this to be necessary

Councillor Dr L Jones volunteered to attend the market in March.

## **17. To receive reports from -**

### **a) Cornwall Councillor**

Cornwall Councillor M Eddy said that the case at Dragon's Corner will be heard in the Crown Court on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020 although it has been suggested that this is not a suitable forum for this case so Cornwall Council has tried to contact the occupier of the site to offer him alternative accommodation and in addition, is pursuing the possibility of an injunction to enforce the enforcement notice. He said there is a problem with the road works at Colliford. In addition, he said that Cornwall Council will be increasing the Council tax by 3.99% and that social care remains a significant problem in Cornwall. He said that he is pursuing enquiries with the landowner regarding possible purchase of some of the land adjacent to the Holy Well.

**b) Goonzion Commoners**

None

**c) Liskeard Looe Community Network Panel**

None

**16. To authorise the signing of orders for payment, including –**

Julie Ball (Cleaning of Toilets and Pavilion – February 2020) - £195.00  
Christian Smith (Bin Liners) - £7.96  
South West Water (Water for Pavilion) - £19.93  
South West Water (Water for Toilets) - £79.60  
South West Water (Water for Cott Yard) - £24.53  
Richards Builders Merchants (Building Materials) - £14.72  
St Neot Social Club (Cleaning Materials for Toilets) - £8.74  
Christian Smith (Chairs for Cott Yard) - £436.74  
St Neot News (Expenses May 2019 – October 2019) - £653.00

It was proposed by Councillor Dr L Jones and seconded by Councillor G Rogers that all of the above orders be authorized for payment. All Councillors voted in favour of the proposal.

**17. Finance Report**

**To receive a current financial statement of the accounts and to review income and expenditure against budget**

The Clerk reported that this month, no income has been received. The accounts balance at £69,523.50.

**18. Date of next meeting**

**To confirm the date and venue of the next Parish Council meeting which will be on Wednesday 11th March 2020**

The date of the next meeting of St Neot parish council will be on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 commencing at 7:30pm.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 10pm.