

NEROCHE PARISH COUNCIL

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Draft minutes of the Ordinary meeting of Neroche Parish Council held at Neroche Hall on Tuesday 10th

Present: Cllrs Mr T Pope, J Hole, Mr J Parsons, Mr M Palmer (Chair) Mrs S Hayman, Mr D Macey, Mr M Prosser and Mr D Knight

In Attendance: Mrs E York (Clerk), and three parishioners

Public Session:

Parishioners present wished to discuss the outstanding Curland planning Application. It has been noted that two new communications have been added to the planning portal; from the planning department and from Wessex Water. Parishioners expressed that they had been led to believe that there would be a full planning consultation. Clerk read update from Councillor Sarah Wakefield (below) which confirmed that it looks likely that the planning will be approved due to there being a lack of identified traveller sites within the county. It was agreed that the Clerk will write to Somerset Council to follow up on this matter and also to communicate with Cllr Wakefield regarding the consultation. It was noted that there has still not ever been a planning notice erected on the site. It was agreed that Cllr Hole would look into water quality testing for the river either side of the site, although it is noted that there are other contributing factors in any potential pollution to the river in this location.

2024/107 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Mrs K Street and Mrs F Gledhill.

These were recognised and approved as an absence under s185 of the Local Government Act 1972.

2024/108 Declarations of interest and dispensations

There were no declarations of interest and dispensations.

2024/109 Approval of the minutes from the previous meeting

The minutes were approved, with spelling amendments, as an accurate record to be signed by the chair.

2024/110 Report from County Councillor

Cllr Sarah Wakefield sent her apologies and report ahead of the meeting:

Curland Planning: 15/23/0003. It is extremely disappointing if not entirely unexpected that the long outstanding application has now been updated with the report from the planning policy expert appointed by the council has indicated that policy is likely to support the applicant. SWT along with many other district councils and now Somerset Council has failed to provide or identify traveller sites in the numbers required by government policy. This leaves sites like this, if acquired by a member of that community, vulnerable to an application for a permanent right to reside there. The PC should read the advice carefully and may wish to reply to it to pointing out that there are no local schools or services, no fresh water supply and a composting toilet near the river/stream could well be polluted by effluent escaping from it unless it is extremely well maintained and that there is unlikely to be regular and sufficient testing of the water in the stream – which runs close to (and through?) some properties. The location is damp and extremely muddy in the autumn and winter months and is altogether unsuitable for residential living without proper amenities. It is not fair or reasonable that the local residents should have to live with

these failings. However, I would point out that the councils have tried to identify sites over the time I have been a councillor but it is extremely difficult to do this as local opposition is very fierce and well-organised too. Planning permission is always required for any site not already having permission for residential dwelling.

I was asked whether there was a cash incentive in our housing provision to encourage people to swap from larger to smaller properties and vice versa. I do not think that this does happen but we are looking at revising the way Homefinder works but what we really need is more homes quickly for the 10,000 families on the waiting list. We do work with tenants at risk of losing their tenancies wherever possible and would not advise anyone to give up a tenancy voluntarily as they will not have any priority on the long waiting list. Housing is becoming harder and harder to find for those without means as I am sure you are all aware. When offices are converted to homes they are counted in the total of homes available but not many of them are ones to which the council has access.

I was asked about the staggered junction on the A358 and this is the unhelpful response I was given: 'The Road Safety team undertakes monitoring of collision and injury accident sites. Having discussed the matter with them, the A358 between Henlade and Southfields Roundabout does not currently feature in the list of sites for positive treatment due to the level of collisions reducing. In relation to the specific junction you raise, there has been one slight injury recorded in the past five years meaning this site would not be prioritised for treatment given the need to focus on higher priority sites.'

If the PC wants to pursue this further my suggestion is that you confer with the COP who worked together so successfully over the A358 plans and put together a list of improvements which you wish to see happening to the road as it is not now going to be upgraded. This would need to be fed into officers, possibly via the LCN or directly (and I could perhaps help with this) so that a more holistic view of the road could be taken. I rather think though that if complaints are made without solutions it is more likely that some crossing points may be closed permanently.

2024/111 Actions from the minutes of the last meeting

- 1) Parish Emergency Contingency Plan – examples are yet to be circulated.

2024/112 Items of report and correspondence

There were no items of report or correspondence.

2024/113 Local Community Network Update

No update was received.

2024/114 Planning and Applications

It was noted that in relation to planning enforcement, there are no powers once four years has expired.

No planning applications were received in advance of the meeting.

Notification of an application for a lawful development certificate has been received – application number 15/24/0003/LEW. As this is a legal determination it is not possible for the Parish Council to pass comment on this matter.

2024/115 Community Matters

- 1) Neroche Newsletter – this matter was deferred to agenda item number 2024/117 (1).
- 2) Village Hall Noticeboard – there is no update on this matter in Cllr Gledhill's absence. Posters are due to be printed.

2024/116 Environmental Matters

- 1) It was noted that Staple Fitzpaine was almost completely cut off due to flooding in Storm Bert.

- 2) Drain Clearance – as previously reported the gullies are due to be cleared between now and April. The culvert by the Polo ground has now been dug out. The culvert by Brandy Bridge (Staple Fitzpaine Road) has been cleared. Cllr Palmer has added a “Gullies and Drains” sheet to the PC record keeping spreadsheet. Cllrs are reminded to please submit photos and data to Cllr Palmer. It was agreed that to come up with a formal policy for instructing works and for the clearance of hedges and ditches and for there to be a written published protocol in place which the PC are able to follow. Clerk to investigate any powers available to enforce such matters – what are the powers of the PC?
- 3) Thanks and Well Done to all involved in the recent works at Curland Green. Sadly there was very little in the way of feedback from the community. It was noted that the hedge is still encroaching into the road / layby and agreed that Cllr Palmer and the Clerk would look further into the legalities of cutting the hedge.
- 4) Dog waste posters – Cllr Gledhill to arrange for these to be printed.

2024/117 Finance

- 1) The following items were approved for payment:

Salary & Expenses of Clerk	£426.26
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- 2) The finance working group met on Tuesday 3rd December. Cllr Parsons provided a report to the meeting:

It was proposed that the Clerk’s salary be increased to £15 per hour in recognition of experience gained.

It was proposed that £1,800 be included in the budget for the forthcoming year to put towards a Parish Council Newsletter, to replace the Neroche Newsletter which has sadly recently ceased.

It was proposed that £2,500 be contributed towards the upkeep and ongoing costs of the Parish Hall on an annual basis.

Requests were put in for the local churches whom have previously been supported by the Burial Grounds Grants for them to confirm their requirements. The only request received was from Thurlbear and therefore it was proposed that £400 be included in the budget calculations for this. Additional costs were discussed; Gully Clearance can be purchased from Somerset Council at a cost of £684.71 per day. It was proposed to include the cost of one day’s gully clearance in the budget. Taking into account all of the above matters, it was proposed that the precept be increased to £18,000 for the year 2025/26.

Cllrs present voted on the proposals and it was agreed that unanimously.

2024/118 Highways

- 1) Village Gateway
No further update.
- 2) Staple Hill; speed limit reduction
No update
- 3) Potholes and Road Repairs
Fly Tipping on Staple Hill has been cleared.
- 4) Accidents
It appears that a vehicle has gone through the hedge up the hill from Hill Farm
Telegraph pole is snapped coming down Staple Hill
- 5) A358 – Hatch Junction Update
As previously noted.

2024/119 Rights of Way Update

Cllr Hayman reported:

Paul Partington of the OSS is going to the Council regarding the stile remaining at the top of T2/8. The explanatory note has been proven to be incorrect and the council documents show the stile at “point D”, but they are not taking notice of their own evidence.

The Himalayan Balsam is in fact Japanese Knotweed and is therefore the responsibility of the landowner.

2024/106 Date of Next Meeting and Items for the Agenda

It was requested that the following items be added to the agenda:

Curland Hedge

Neighbourhood Plan

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Tuesday 14th January 2025 at 7.30pm in Neroche Hall.

The meeting was declared closed at 21.33

DRAFT