



## MINUTES OF SAMPFORD COURTENAY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Date and Venue – Wednesday 4th October 2023, 7.30 pm at Sampford Courtenay Village Hall

Present – Cllrs M Wilson, J. Moesel, M. Carpenter, V. Smedley, P Collins, J. McIlwraith, C. Coleman & Locum Clerk Jane Gillard and 9 members of the public.

Absent – Cllr T Squire.

### 1. Chair's Welcome - Acceptance of Office for New Councillor

Cllr Wilson reiterated her congratulations to all the election candidates. Whilst there has been significant split across the Parish surrounding the requested Election the process has resulted in a duly elected Councillor. She welcomed Joe Moesel onto the Council and confirmed that he had signed the Notice of acceptance of Office.

The Chair continued and said that SCPC are in what is a very difficult period without a permanent Clerk and thanked Jane Gillard for agreeing to support the Council on a Temporary basis. However, it has to be acknowledged SCPC can't expect the same levels of activities that we had when Marion Pratt was our Clerk. There is a necessity to prioritise the business of the Council and focus on delivering core services, accepting that there may need to be different ways to get things done and asked for the patience of Parishioners.

### 2. Apologies – WDBC Cllr M. Casbolt.

### 3. Public Participation -

a) Request from Parishioners to canvass for signage to warn of children using roads within SC Village as part of the PC Road Safety Priority.

The Chair reported that Enquiries are ongoing with the Community Highways officer and will be reported back

b) Request from a Parishioner to comment on recent events affecting local farmers in Sampford Courtenay and beyond

A member of the public read out a statement regarding what she described as the unnecessary "distractions" within SCPC over recent months; and also reported on upsetting and challenging situation of many local farmers suffering loss of over 70 sheep due to uncontrolled dogs.(See Item 11 e below). The statement is included in Appendix A

### 4. Declarations of Interest – Cllr Collins with regard Item 11e . Cllr Moesel also confirmed that his full Declaration of Interests have been uploaded to both SCPC website and WDBC website.

<https://www.sampfordcourtenay-pc.gov.uk/register-interests-councillors>

### 5. Minutes to approve and sign the Minutes of – meeting held on Friday 25th August (already published on Noticeboards and Website)

Proposed - Cllr Collins                      Seconded - Cllr Carpenter - Approved.

### 6. Parish Council Election Result - As reported, the votes were very close and full results are available on the website <https://www.sampfordcourtenay-pc.gov.uk/news/sampford-courtenay-parish-council-election-results>

7. **WDBC Report** – None but details of Agendas and Minutes can be found on the WDBC Website <https://new.westdevon.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-and-committees/committees>
8. **Planning** – to consider or note following planning applications
  - a) **2272/23/HHO – Willow Tree Farm - Householder application for renovation & extensions of bungalow into a two storey chalet bungalow, connect garage to dwelling, with a material change to the dwelling to better situate it's landscape & context COMMENTS BY 12<sup>TH</sup> OCT**

Proposal of No Comments Cllr Collins, Seconded Cllr Carpenter – Proposal carried.

- b) **3158/23/ARC - Middletown Farmhouse EX20 2SZ - Application for approval of details reserved by condition 7 of planning consent 1670/22/LBC COMMENTS by 26<sup>TH</sup> OCT 2023**

Proposal of No Comments Cllr Collins, Seconded Cllr Wilson – Proposal carried.

- c) 3119/23/COM - Willey Lane Sticklepath - NOI proposed base station installation INFO ONLY
  - d) 2802/23/ARC – Bude Farm – Approval of Reserved conditions INFO ONLY
  - e) 2871/23/PAA – Land adjacent Tor Down Farm – Prior approval Agri storage. INFO ONLY
  - f) 2872/23/PAA - Land adjacent to Tor Down Farm – Prior approval agri storage. INFO ONLY

#### **Planning Decisions**

- a) **2269/23/FUL** – Middle Trecott – **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL**
- b) **2503/23/LBC** – Middle Trecott – **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL**
- c) **1868/23/ARM** – Furzedown Farm - **WITHDRAWN**

9. **New Clerk Contract and selection process** - consider proposals circulated to Cllrs by Cllr Wilson and counter proposal put forward by Cllr Coleman

Cllr Colemans proposal for deferring Proposals for the selection of New Clerk

Proposed- Cllr Coleman                      Seconded – None - **Motion withdrawn**

#### **Proposals made by Cllr Wilson**

- a) New contract for the Clerk & RFO are reduced to 12 hours per month.

**Proposed – Cllr Wilson, Seconded - Cllr Carpenter - Proposal carried 6:1 abstention**

- b) Council move to 6 Full meetings a year, with ad hoc interim meetings for necessary council business.

**Proposed – Cllr Wilson, Seconded – Cllr Coleman - Proposal carried.**

- c) Clerk and RFO are advertised for as per **Appendix A**, within the LC2 range

**Proposed – Cllr Wilson Seconded – Cllr Collins – Proposal carried.**

- d) Applicants should be invited to provide as part of their application details of their experience and evidence against the core competencies

**Proposed – Cllr Wilson , Seconded – Cllr Moesel – Proposal carried.**

- e) Applications will be reviewed by a Short listing Group which will be chaired by the Vice Chair Cllr Carpenter with Cllr Smedley and Cllr Coleman plus the offer to be given to Cllr Squire. Applications will be reviewed against required competencies for the role with each being scored with clear marking guides.  
The Interview Group will consist of the Chair Cllr Wilson, Cllr McIlwraith and Cllr Moesel. Each applicant interviewed will be asked the same previously agreed competency

based questions with each being scored with clear marking guides. Delegated power is given to the Interview Group to appoint a successful applicant following interview.

**Proposed- Cllr Wilson Seconded – Cllr Moesel – Proposal carried.**

**10. Local Council Award Foundation Stage** - Deferred until the recruitment of the new Clerk, but registration fee payable now.

**11. Parish Priorities** - Update on any actions

- a) **Safer Roads** - Salt Bin for Frankland Hill - Cllr Collins - Application being prepared to seek **grant** funding to achieve this action
- b) **Prayer Book Rebellion** – Marion Pratt on behalf of the Steering Group made a grant request for £400 funding

**Proposed – Cllr Collins    Seconded – Cllr Wilson – Proposal carried 6 :1 abstention.**

Thank you to Cllr James and his family for the support of the planned Commemoration, and congratulations on a successful Apple Festival on Sat 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2023.

**c) Development of Village Green** – Cllr Carpenter

Successful meeting with the Planning Officer who indicates that as the Green is owned by the Council there are permitted development rights. Full plans are being prepared for consideration of the Council and will be reviewed by the Planning department particularly in relation to accessibility on the water path

- d) **Parish Autumn Clean-up** including SC Station – Cllr McIlwraith is currently in discussion with Bowden Hostas re providing some professional help with this and will report back to the next meeting
- e) **Support for agricultural businesses** - Sheep attacks Honeychurch/Exbourne – as stated by member of the public at the start of the meeting:-

It was agreed that as part of the support from the Council SCPC would hire and pay for the hall for meetings with agencies and enable businesses to come together and gain advice and support including Pastoral when necessary. SCPC, along with Exbourne PC will draft a letter to the Police Crime Commissioner regarding this issue.

**12. Registration of Church Rooms as a Community Asset** - Cllr Wilson

Following the meeting with the Chair of PCC a full report was presented explaining the details regarding registering property as a community asset. Since the original request was made by a Parishioner, works have been undertaken on the Church rooms and as there is a covenant on the deeds of the property it is unlikely to be sold. The requirement for the Churches permission is as explained, not required to make an application to seek registration as a community asset. However, in the circumstances the proposal is to take no further action. Cllr Wilson who took the action on behalf of the Council reported that based on the information that was available to her, it was her honest belief that what was reported to the Council on the 4th February in respect of item 8 was true to the best of her knowledge and was reported in good faith. It is regrettable that Cllr Coleman feels that this is not the case. She is sorry if any of the comments made in the report to Councillors are perceived by him to be untrue.

**13. Village Green Report** – (circulated to Councillors) – issue regarding one manhole cover to be addressed within developments as detailed at Item 11c.

**14. Councillor & Clerk Reports** - None

**15. Mid Year Open Meeting** - Proposal for deferral of the planned Open Meeting on 18th October 2023

Not a priority in the current circumstances arrangements will be made to hold the statutory Open Meeting in 2024

**Proposed Cllr Wilson, Seconded Cllr Collins – Proposal carried.**

**16. Finance** -

a) **Reconciliation of Cash Spread sheet with Bank Statements.** - Approved

b) **Approve payments and transfers as listed below**

Proposed - Cllr Wilson, Seconded- Cllr Carpenter – Approved.

c) **Acknowledgment of the External Audit report and adoption of recommendations**

Notice of conclusion of Audit & AGAR for Y/end 31/03/23 is duly published on the website view through this link [Audit Docs](#) and the notice posted on public notice boards with this Agenda

Proposed - Cllr Wilson Seconded – Cllr Collins – Approved 6:1 Abstention

d) **Request for S137 Funds for Citizens Advice Bureau** - Sum of £100 proposed

Proposed - Cllr Collins Seconded - Cllr Wilson – Approved 5:1 Abstention & 1 objection

Temp Clerk's Wage	£88.88	
HMRC	TBC	
NALC Foundation Award Scheme	£60.00	
External Audit	£252.00	
Toilet Cleaner Wages	£83.36	
Toilet Sundries	£9.49	
Toilet Electric	£6.00	Direct Debit
For maintenance to Burial Ground	£350.00	
P3 Strimmer and safety Equipment	£1035.80	Supported from DCC P3 grant funding
British Legion Poppy Wreath	£100.00	S137 for Armistice Day commemoration
CAB	£100.00	
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>£2085.53</b>	
Transfer between accounts	£1114.02	To Current AC from EMR

<b>Income</b>	<b>£5341.00</b>	<b>Second instalment of Precept</b>
	<b>£20.50</b>	<b>Seamoor Lotto</b>
	<b>£106.42</b>	<b>Plant Stall</b>
	<b>£ 9.47</b>	<b>Wayleave for poll on Village Green</b>
<b>Current Account balance</b>	<b>£6,489.20</b>	<b>After above transactions</b>
<b>Reserve Account balance</b>	<b>£28,399.31</b>	<b>After above transactions Currently £29713.58</b>

**Date of the next meeting - 6th December 2023**

**Councillors are respectfully requested to circulate any reports pertaining to this meeting with sufficient time for their full consideration and opportunities to make counter proposals.**

**Members of the Public are cordially invited to attend all Parish Council Meetings and suggest items for the Agenda. (Please contact the Clerk at least 7 days prior to scheduled meeting re Agenda items)**

Signed ..... Cllr M Wilson, Chair. Date.....

<b>2023</b>						
. April 5 <sup>th</sup>	May 17 <sup>th</sup> AGM – followed by monthly meeting & Annual parish Meeting	June 7th	July 5th	Aug 2nd	Sept 6th Cancelled	Oct 4th
Oct 18 <sup>th</sup> Open Meeting Cancelled	Nov 1 <sup>st</sup> Cancelled	Dec 6th	<b>2024</b>	Jan 3rd	Feb 7 <sup>th</sup> Cancelled	Mar 6th

## Appendix A

Sampford Courtenay is a great place to live and work – in a beautiful area, lots going on and much to celebrate.

We benefit from having a number of talented people within our community, many of whom are semi or fully retired professionals with the capacity and potential to do so much for the benefit of everyone in our Parish.

Many of us welcome the challenges that come with needing to understand different contexts and situations from our professional lives and are determined to do what we can to help others. It is wrong of anyone to undermine those efforts in any way.

To have made the case for the recent election in the name of democracy was, in my view, misguided and, in many respects, both divisive and subversive. Democracy is about ‘the people’ having a say, not just about having a vote.

At the Parish Open meeting in October 2021, I deliberately made the point that, whilst there was money in the earmarked reserves for elections, I wanted it to be clear to all councillors that any expenditure should be kept to a minimum. In light of that you will understand why I am disappointed that so much money has now been spent on an election when a no-cost co-option was possible.

Having watched the work of the Parish Council for some time now I am increasingly concerned at the time and effort taken up by what I shall describe as 'distractions'. Many commendable actions have been undertaken and much has been achieved but the recent resignation of our Clerk is regrettable and, apparently, largely due to the frustration caused by what I have already referred to as 'distractions'. No Councillor should be frustrating either process or progress. You each have a duty to represent and to protect the best interests of all Parishioners - if you can't do that then you ought to step aside.

Much has been achieved by the Council in recent years in spite of Covid and the other challenges that are being faced nationally and globally and I commend and thank everyone involved for that.

Recently, several of us within the farming community have had to face an issue that has been incredibly upsetting and challenging. It is in this context that I want to praise Michele, not as Chair of this Council but as one of the many ex-professionals bringing her experience and expertise to bear in helping those of us affected. To date, three farmers in this Parish and two from Exbourne have had sheep attacked. It is said that 70 sheep have been killed and many others injured by out-of-control dogs. Next year's lambing season will be affected.

This is serious and upsetting for anyone having to deal with it. Sadly, those who own the dogs haven't yet taken responsibility and Michele has co-ordinated the necessary information that, hopefully, will result in appropriate Police action being taken. The financial losses run into several thousands but the emotional cost is also significant and the impact of both could be long lasting. We hope there will be a resolution soon without further losses.

Thank you, Michele, for what you have done to support us.

Alongside this, there has been the recent theft of a tractor GPS system from farm premises close to the home where a young family were asleep – nearly £20k to replace it (which may or may not be covered by insurance) but also a family that will need time before they can feel safe in their beds.

... And all this against a background of changed funding arrangements for farms and the likelihood of significant financial shortfalls for many of our farmers from 2027 onwards.

Our rural community need this Parish Council to be focussed on what really matters. The flurry and excitement surrounding an election in the name of democracy when our farmers are facing much bigger issues on a daily basis just makes those involved look completely out of touch. As such, it is difficult to see how anyone advocating it or spending any further time on it now can truly represent the Parish they serve. Thank you