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Clerk: Sam Mainstone - [clerk@sheptonmontagueparish.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@sheptonmontagueparish.gov.uk)

Date: 28 May 2025

## **MINUTES OF THE SHEPTON MONTAGUE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 15 May 2025 AT 7PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

### **PRESENT:**

Councillors: Sykes (Chair), Hunter, Williams, Watch  
Clerk/RFO; Sam Mainstone  
Somerset Councillors: Tom Power  
Parish members: 5

**Open discussion began at 7:00pm; Opportunity for parish members to  
comment on agenda items:**

- It was questioned if the “Annual Parish meeting” had been cancelled. The Clerk clarified that tonight’s meeting is not the “Annual Parish meeting” (An informal meeting for parishioners to share parish news for the last 12 months and upcoming plans which is not a Council meeting, although facilitated by the Parish Council). This evening is the more formal “Annual Council meeting”, for annual council business to take place<sup>1</sup>.
- A member of the public who is a member of the community speedwatch is present this evening for agenda item 25/12,2 (Licence Application), and has photographs showing that bringing trade to this site will be a concern to road safety. This will be discussed during the agenda item.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12, parts II and IV](#)

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Dated:

- Cllr Tom Power shared that since the restructure, Somerset Planning department does seem somewhat less challenged, but there will be a period of catching up from historic pressures. Cllr Power is happy to assist in chasing individual cases if required.

## **MINUTES – Meeting began at 7:13pm:**

### **25/01; Election of Chair 2025/26**

***To nominate and elect a councillor to the office of Chair for 2025/26, who will then sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office.***

It was proposed that Cllr Sykes should continue as Chair, although Cllr Sykes would prefer not, he would continue if Cllrs could discuss how they may provide more support to this role and discuss this at the next meeting.

**It was RESOLVED [for-against-abstain] [4-0-0] for Cllr Sykes to act as Chair for Shepton Montague Parish Council 2025/26.**

### **25/02; Election of Vice Chair 2025/26**

***To nominate and elect a councillor to the office of Vice Chair for 2025/26.***

It was proposed that Cllr Williams continue as Vice Chair. Cllr Williams is happy to continue for a further year.

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] for Cllr Williams to act as vice chair for Shepton Montague Parish Council 2025/26.**

### **25/03; Declarations of interest.**

Members to declare any interests, including disclosable pecuniary interests (DPI) they may have in agenda items that accord with the parish council's [Code of Conduct](#) and to consider any written requests from members for dispensations that accord with the Localism Act 2011 s33 (b-e) (this does not preclude any later dispensation).

None received.

### **25/04; To receive and approve apologies for absence.**

Apologies were received from Cllr Willasey-Willsey.

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to approve the apologies received and the reasons given.**

### **25/04; Approve the minutes of the last meeting held on [23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025](#) as a true and accurate record of that meeting.**

The actions were reviewed and updates provided. ASH has been invited for a site visit by Cllr Sykes.

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025 as a true and accurate record of that meeting.**

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Cllr Sykes signed the minutes.

**25/05; To receive the Clerk's report and to note any recommendations for 2025/26:-**

- 1. To agree the new cost centre for bank charges**
  - a. Donations**
  - b. Historical contingency (previous clerk)**
  - c. Leave village hall in**
  - d. Office admin**

The Clerk's report was circulated prior to the meeting and is available on the website.

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to adopt the new cost centres as recommended by the Clerk/RFO for 2025/26.**

**2. To agree the new earmarked reserve for "Office/Administration"**

It was discussed that the clerk would like to purchase a new printer in order to cope with the amount of meeting papers (her personal one has not coped with so much printing), and it was agreed that Cllr Sykes will obtain some quotes. An amount was not agreed as a reserve, and costs will be agreed case by case.

**3. To agree the process of publication of planning applications on the [website planning page](#) as they arrive (it seems this has not been actioned for some time).**

It was discussed that although the clerk is maintaining a clear schedule of planning applications received by the council, this has not been published on the website. The clerk has noted that this last occurred in November 2023. The clerk asked if this should no be actioned moving forwards.

**ACTION: CLERK**

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] for planning applications to be published on the council website in the same historic format from now on.**

**25/06; Review of clerk's hours of work, to also note end of probationary period was at the end of January**

**To review and either confirm position or extend probationary period.**

**Pleased. End to probationary period – Chair will draft this formally.**

The clerk noted that the hours paid for 2024/25 in March 2025 totaled 65.5 hours.

During April 2025 the total number of hours were 10.5 and May so far totals 24.5. The clerk is happy to continue at an average of 2 hours per week (as per contract), as this may level out during the year, but would appreciate the opportunity to review this following a full year in position.

Cllrs noted that the probationary period has been successful and the Chair will draft this formally.

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**It was RESOLVED[4-0-0] to end the RFO/Clerk successful probationary period and to formally offer the RFO/Clerk permanent position, which was verbally accepted.**

**ACTION: JS**

Cllr Tom Power left at 20:13

**25/07; Finance (as circulated in meeting papers):**

**1. To review bank reconciliations for 2024/25**

The end of year bank reconciliation for 2024/2025 was noted and approved by all.

**2. To review/note/approve list of payments, including staff costs**

The following payments were noted and approved:-

- Village Hall donation (not hire fee) - £100 (noted and approved)
- Gooding's Accountants 2024/25 fee - £42 (invoice noted and approved)
- Zurich Insurance 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024 (noted by internal auditor) - £214 (invoice not available, but renewed quote evidence of cost and to be continued)
- SALC 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024 - £35 (invoice noted and approved)
- Total cost of migration to .gov website/new laptop/Microsoft Licenses - £503.93 reimbursed to Cllr Sykes (invoices for each item noted and approved)
- HMRC 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025 - £170.20 (Payroll summary details noted and approved)
- Clerk Salary 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025 - £681 (Payroll summary details noted and approved)

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to approve the above list of payments.**

**3. To review/approve list of subscriptions/direct debit/planned payments for 2025/26.**

The list was circulated in the meeting papers and the following list of payments for 2025/26 were approved:

- Zurich Insurance renewal at £214.
- Village Hall hire – annual at £100 – description to be amended to “Donation”.
- Internet access at Village hall for £1.20 monthly.
- SALC affiliation fees 2025/26 at £84.29 (Inv. 1823 paid on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025)
- Lloyds monthly banking fees at £4.25
- Annual website hosting/back-up/support fees at £205
- Grass cutting at village hall and churchyard at £17.50 per hour
- Staff costs/hours to be monitored/approved at each meeting throughout the year.
- Goodings Accountants at £168 annually.

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to approve the above list of subscriptions/direct debits/payments for 2025/26.**

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**4. To approve the recommended contractor for grass cutting and review/approve the DRAFT contract.**

It was discussed that this cost may be reduced if an area was defined for rewilding at the Cemetery. Cllr Sykes will look into this possibility with the Diocese and will contact the Church Warden.

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to approve the DRAFT contract for grass cutting at the village hall and cemetery, and for Sam to send the contract as soon as possible.**

**ACTION: JS/CLERK**

**25/08; Review of Policies (as circulated in meeting papers):**

**1. Risk Assessment and Management.**

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to adopt the revised risk assessment for 2025/26.**

**2. Code of Conduct**

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to adopt the Shepton Montague Parish Council's Code of Conduct 2025/26.**

**3. Privacy Policy**

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to adopt the Shepton Montague Parish Council's Privacy Policy 2025/26.**

**4. DRAFT Financial Regulations**

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to adopt the Shepton Montague Parish Council's Financial Regulations 2025/26.**

**5. DRAFT Standing Orders**

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to adopt the Shepton Montague Parish Council's Standing Orders 2025/26.**

**25/09; Review of Internal Auditor report and to note any recommendations.**

**1. To review/approve report and recommendations (as circulated in meeting papers).**

The following comments and recommendations were noted from the internal auditor:

- Box B of Form 2, Annual Governance and Accountability Return is reported as a negative; This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately

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accounted for. The internal auditor commented; "Although I would not expect some expenditures, such as the small amount that goes through each month to for wifi and the Clerk/RFO salary, to be supported by invoices every time, there are several items in the bank statements which I would expect to be supported by an invoice or at least to be shown as approved in the minutes of the PC's meetings". The RFO has completed a report to accompany the Internal Auditor's report detailing; weaknesses found, Implications and Actions, to evidence a resolve to this issue, and was noted by the internal auditor and approved by Council.

- "I would like to commend the parish council for the way it rose to the various challenges faced during 2024/25"
- "I would also like to commend the new clerk/RFO for the way she has hit the ground running when faced with the disarray left in the wake of the previous clerk/RFO's departure. I have every confidence that the the new Parish Clerk/RFO, will prove to be a valuable asset to the PC".

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to approve the Internal Auditor report on Form 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability return 2024/25, and the RFO accompanying report.**

**25/10; Review of DRAFT AGAR.**

**To approve and sign the Annual governance Statement 2024/25**

**Key dates for AGAR 2024/25:**

- **Submission deadline - 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025**
  - **Suggested period for the exercise of public rights period (which must include 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025) 3<sup>rd</sup> June – 14<sup>th</sup> July 2025**
- 5. To determine the dates for the exercise of public rights 2024/25**

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to approve the recommended period 3<sup>rd</sup> June – 14<sup>th</sup> July 2025 for the exercise of public rights 2024/25.**

**25/11; To review and approve the AGAR annual Accounting Statement 2024/25 and sign.**

The Clerk read out the statements in Section 1 (pg 5) of the AGAR Annual Accounting Statement 2024/25. All were agreed except box 2; *We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.*

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to agree Section 1 (pg 5) of the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25, statements 1, 3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 with the exception of statement 2 (reference internal auditor comments).**

**Signed by Chair and Clerk of the meeting.**

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**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to agree Section 2 (pg6) of the Annual Governance Statements 2024/25 and to note the restated values for 31 March 2024 and reasons given.**

**Signed by RFO prior to meeting and signed by Chair at the meeting.**

**25/12; CIL funds £1356.00; Cllrs to decide and plan project to spend CIL funds. At the Parish meeting 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022 it was suggested that the CIL funds be used to pay for repairs to the village hall roof where the lead had been stolen. However the roof has subsequently been repaired and the cost claimed on the insurance so it seems the CIL money can be put towards something else.**

It was suggested to renew the fingerpost signage past Bratton Seymour turning towards the lakes (from Verrington Lane) and other signs.

Another suggestion was for emergency flood planning items; 4 walkie talkies professional with charger and long range.

Cllr Sykes will obtain quotes for the above and then bring back to the next meeting.

**ACTION: JS**

### **25/13; Planning items**

- 1. Proposal: Erection of equestrian building including stables for breeding mares and hay barn and formation of hardstanding.**

**Location: Land At Lushes Farm Stoke Hill Stoney Stoke Wincanton Somerset**

**Applicant: James & Fiona Read Application Type : Full Application Application**

**Number: 25/00715/FUL**

**Closing date for comments: 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2025**

Lydia from Whiteacre planning presented;

James & Fiona and for business logistical and clinical reasons they would like to build a new purpose built building which will be fit for purpose. It is on James and Fiona's own land rather than the family farm: they are looking to establish their business with a degree of separation from that of the family.

They currently do not have independent barns and would like independent security.

This will enable safer and healthier stock with a purpose-built maternity barn. The Hay barn is too small and awkward to access and is too tight between buildings (potential fire hazard too).

James would be happy to show anyone the site.

This site is below the ridgeline and less visible.

Preapplication discussions have taken place and Somerset Council planning officers are in support.

It was mentioned that Knowle Rock residents (unable to attend this evening) had some concerns (they did not see any displayed planning notice) and James Read (the applicant) said that he would go and talk to the residents of Knowle Rock to try and allay their concerns.

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to approve planning application 25/00715/FUL.**

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## **2. Application for premises license to be granted; Apple HQ – Dowding/O'Meara**

A response was submitted by SMPC on 13<sup>th</sup> May, however, the response was rejected. Cllr Power commented that this is a complicated process and he will raise this issue on Council's behalf.

A further response was prepared and agreed for the clerk to submit this evening before 12midnight.

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to submit the prepared second response this evening.**

### **25/14; Agenda items for next meeting**

1. Update on flooding
2. Quotes for CIL suggestions
3. Notice Boards – suggestion for a new position at the side of the pub (with permission to be sought)

**25/15; Review and approve [schedule of 2025 meetings](#) as listed on the website; Provisional meeting dates set for the rest of 2025 are August 14<sup>th</sup> and November 13<sup>th</sup>.**

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to approve the 2025 schedule of meetings for the Parish Council, with an additional date to be agreed for the annual parish meeting.**

#### **1. To agree a date for the meeting of the Parish.**

It was suggested that Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September at 7:00pm would be the annual parish meeting. Cllrs to send a list of who to invite for this part of the meeting.

**It was RESOLVED [4-0-0] to hold the annual parish meeting on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025 at the Village Hall.**

**ACTION: CLLRS/CLERK**

### **25/16; Date of next meeting 14<sup>th</sup> August 2025.**

Although the date of 14<sup>th</sup> August 2025 was noted this evening, when typing the minutes it was realised that the hall will not be available. A new date and time will be discussed/agreed/published in due course.

**Meeting ended at 9:00 pm**

**End of Minutes**

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