

Priddy Parish Council

COUNCIL MINUTES

A Meeting of the Parish Council held on **Thursday 12th November 2020**
at **7:30pm** by Zoom Virtual Platform

Present: Cllrs Alan Adams, Alan Butcher (Chair), Chris Dyke, Juanita Glass, Mark Leach, Rachel Thompson MBE

In attendance: William Newton Newey, Parish Clerk, seven members of the public

PPC20/141 **Apologies for absence:** Cllr Andrews

PPC20/142 **Declarations of Interest:** Cllr Butcher item PPC20/146a which was a reimbursement to him.

PPC20/143 **Public Forum**

a) **Deer Leap Care Park**

Cllr Pullin spoke about the concerns over the encampment in Deer Leap car park which had been expressed. He had been to visit the car park earlier in the day and found the Travellers polite and courteous. He said that access had been made available to the farmer who accessed his field via the car park. The Travellers had told him that the travellers were planning on moving within a few days, partly because the car park was too cold. Visits to the site had also been made by the Police, the NHS, Welfare and the Gypsy Liaison Officer from the County Council. Cllr Pullin confirmed that while during Covid-19 lock down restrictions were in place it was policy of the County not to move people. He said that he had found the site clean and tidy and that the occupants did not want to upset anybody.

Cllr Killen confirmed that the car park was on land owned by Somerset County Council and that it was expected that the County Council would take a lead on the matter. Mendip District Council would be involved from welfare point of view. Cllr Killen said that any legal action would be bound by the time periods in legislation.

There was concern about the clearing up of the site once the travellers had left. Cllr Pullin confirmed that the site was leased by the County Council to the AONB but that sacks for refuse had already been provided by the County Council. Cllr Killen confirmed that he would expect that Mendip District and Somerset County Council would undertake the clearing up of the site with the assistance of Somerset Waste Partnership.

Though he accepted that there was a policy about the movement of people during Covid-19 lock down, Cllr Leach asked why the County Council had not started the process to obtain a court order so that removal from the site could proceed as soon as the lock down was over. Cllr Killen stated that no legal action could start until after the lock down had been lifted.

Cllr Adams raised the subject of transit sites and Cllr Pullin confirmed that there was site in Frome which had been brought to the attention of the travellers. Cllr Killen said that there was also a transit site on the Levels but Cllr Glass believed that this was water-logged due to recent rain.

A member of the public drew attention to the fact that the current occupation of the car park was not an isolated incident. They cited the examples of a horsebox which had converted into a motorhome which had been in the car park for five weeks. They had noted eleven camper vans and nine tents in the car park and associated picnic area on a Monday morning in August. They were concerned about the rubbish which would be left behind including scrap metal.

The Chairman said that the AONB had been discussing control of the car park and saw the current incident as a one in four years occurrence. Local knowledge would dispute the frequency with which the car park was used for overnight stays.

Another member of the public was also concerned about the number of overnight stays in the car park, which sometimes lasted several nights. They were concerned about a lack of sanitation and facilities.

It was reported that the car park had been shown on a website as a place for overnight stays. Cllr Dyke confirmed that contact had been made with the owner of the website and the car park had been removed.

The Chairman drew the meeting's attention to a document entitled *Dealing with illegal and unauthorised encampments: A summary of available powers* which had been

Priddy Parish Council

published by the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice.

b) Dale Farm

A member of the public, for their self and others, wanted to ask about the development of Dale Farm and wanted to know why certain matters seemed to have been missed in the planning process. The lighting had been adjusted so that it was turned off at 10:00pm but was still coming on again early in the morning. Quite an area of roof was now visible at the farm and there had been no request for screening a part of the planning conditions.

Cllr Killeen said that it would be inapposite to add a restriction to the whole site in respect of the minor application which had been recently approved. There could only be enforcement in respect of light if this had been part of a planning conditions. He advised continued conversations with the site owner / farmer.

Another member of the public was concerned that lighting was not in the planning application and that it had been missed by the Planning Department. Cllr Killen said that lighting did not necessarily form part of planning applications.

A further member of the public raised the issue of light pollution and the effect on neighbouring properties. He noted that the Mendip District Council Planning Department report had said there would be no environmental impact yet there was marked light pollution in an AONB area. Cllr Killen said that there was a Dark Skies Policy in respect of the Mendip Hills AONB and that developments should follow this and other policies. He said that the Dark Skies policy and light pollution had become an item actively considered by the Planning Department. The member of the public felt that the light pollution could have been foreseen and that the Planning Department should have considered the matter.

Cllr Killen said that the matter had probably become an issue for Environmental Protection rather than the planning system.

Cllrs Pullin and Thompson left the meeting

PPC20/145 Deer Leap Car Park

Cllr Leach wanted to consider the information contained in *Dealing with illegal and unauthorised encampments* but was not in favour of any delay in taking action. He noted that the landowner not the lessee was responsible for taking action in respect of overnight stays. He noted that the converted horsebox referred to by a member of the public was now parked in a passing place further down Deer Leap. Cllr Dyke said that she had been told that the vehicle was not taxed but that no police action had been taken. She favoured more signage and prevention in respect of inappropriate use of Deer Leap car park.

Cllr Adams was concerned that there should be prompt action to clear up the site and to deal with any hazardous waste. He regretted the Somerset County Council policy of not seeking to move the travellers.

Cllr Glass said that she had heard that there had been criminal damage at the car park. Although Cllr Pullin had said that the travellers had been polite and courteous, Cllr Glass said that she had been informed that the experience in the Village was of abuse and that violence had been threatened and that access to the farmer's field had been denied.

The Chairman said that the village had experienced anti-social behaviour in the past during Sheep Fairs. He noted that the Parish Council had no powers and were reliant on action by the lessee, Somerset County council and the Police. He accepted that Covid-19 regulations produced unusual circumstances but he was concerned that action should be taken to avoid a re-occurrence of issues, especially in the spring.

Cllr Leach said that he felt there were two separate issues; the occupation of the Deer Leap car park by the Travellers and other overnight stays in the Parish. He cited the example of the AONB centre car park at Charterhouse where there appeared to be other overnight's stays.

The Chairman queried if access to the Deer Leap car park should be blocked until decisions as to future measures had been made.

It was agreed that another extra-ordinary meeting of the Council be held on 19th November if the Travellers were still present at the Deer Leap car park.

WNN

Priddy Parish Council

PPC20/144 **Planning**

Planning Cases Decided

The following decisions were noted

- a) **2020/1777/FUL** – Proposed extension to existing agricultural building to roof over yard Dale Farm Dale Lane Priddy Wells Somerset – Approved with conditions
Given the comments during the public forum, it was agreed that the subject of Dale Farm would appear on the agenda of the next scheduled Council meeting.

PPC20/146 **Financial**

To authorise the following payments

- a) Bus Shelter roofing materials [AJ Butcher] (£86.44)
b) Somerset Association of Local Councils Training [Successful Chairman and Responding to Planning applications] (£80.00)
c) Annual registration with the Information commissioner (£40.00)
d) Clerk's Expenses [WD Newton Newey: includes Defib battery and Poster Competition Prizes] (£530.26)
e) Production of Poster Competition Boards [Arian Designs] (£201.60)

The payments having been approved, the Clerk would send the cheques and paperwork to the Chairman and Vice Chairman for signature.

PPC20/147 **Matters of Report**

a) **Grit Bin at Rookham**

Cllr Glass reported that the Grit Bin at Rookham had been removed. The bin had been placed at Rookham as bags of grit were being stolen. It was queried if the bin had been moved during recent forestry works in the area. It was not thought that a claim for replacement on the Council's insurance would be worthwhile given the level of excess payable.

It was agreed that the replacement of the Grit Bin should be included on the agenda of the next scheduled meeting of the Council.

WNN

PPC20/148 **Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 2nd December 2020**

This meeting would also be held virtually on the Zoom platform

The meeting closed at 8:21pm.

.....
(Chairman)

.....
(Date)

William Newton Newey, Parish Clerk
16th November 2020