

STRETE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs Helen Darch

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF STRETE PARISH COUNCIL (PC) HELD ON ZOOM ON THURSDAY 15 October 2020 AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT

Cllr Kate Gill (KG); Cllr Ralph Clark (RC); Cllr Louise Newman (LN); Cllr Ian Cumberlidge (IC) (Chairman for the meeting); Cllr David Rothwell (DR); Cllr Graham Campbell (GC); Cllr Peter Hales (PH); Cllr Richard Foss, District Councillor, Allington & Strete Ward (RF); Cllr Julian Brazil, County Councillor, Kingsbridge Division (JB); Mrs. Helen Darch (Clerk); 2 members of the public.

PUBLIC FORUM

Mr Allwood spoke and requested he be sent in future an invitation plus agenda for meetings. He said he had received all comments on 24 Start Bay Park [2662/20/HHO] and thanked the Council for them all. IC asked if Simon Buckler was in the meeting. He couldn't speak or be seen and was happy to listen. The Clerk asked him if he wanted to email comments. He replied no thanks and he wanted to be present rather than speak.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

JB reported on the pandemic. The Devon County Council [DCC] public health officer is the lead officer in respect of outbreaks in Devon. The incidence of COVID-19 in the South Hams remains low but is more than the initial outbreak. Because of the low number of cases if someone has coronavirus the DCC track and trace is effective as there are more people on the case who can visit and phone. At present DCC is confident it can be controlled to some extent but if it grows more then it will have to be 'left to its own devices'. Devon is a Tier 1 area but it still means there is a need to maintain vigilance and adhere to government guidance to keep numbers low.

RC asked if the increase came about from Exeter and the students there. JB replied this reporting is just South Hams. Exeter is in the top ten in England and mainly due to students. But down here even at the height of the outbreak there was never more than five new cases a day. One day last week there were eight new cases. Latest daily cases are two and in the past seven days is 38. Cases per 100k is 43.7. This is a lot higher than the first wave. RC asked if there had been any deaths. JB responded none in the second phase and twelve in the first phase. IC noted there was an outbreak at Torbay hospital. GC thought this was now sorted out.

Funding still available for potholes and is first come first served. It won't replace safety defect patching. But it will save money in the long term. **The report was received.**

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

RF talked on 24 Start Bay Park [2662/20/HHO]. He outlined the circumstances behind the planning decision and review of this by South Hams planning officers recently. They don't believe the decision is at fault. However, RF was disappointed he didn't get this in front of Development Management Committee. Officers should also have confirmed he had received emails; especially at the moment when all are so reliant on technology to communicate. RF also noted that Highways was satisfied with the application and this carried great weight with decisions and appeals. He wrote directly to Mr and Mrs Ellis on this.

RC had sent an email to all on this matter as a partial complaint. RF outlined a standard complaints process 'stage one and stage two' file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/SHWD_Complaints_Policy.pdf. In planning terms, the Council can't appeal the decision though the applicant can. The Council could appeal to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government though this is expensive. RF explained the covenants on the properties at Start Bay Park are not part of the planning process and he couldn't advise on how any decisions on compliance or breach of covenants would be reached.

RC felt in his opinion that the local parish was ignored in their representations on behalf of their residents. RF said the planner had taken into account all of the objections but come to a different conclusion. There is a lot of 'grey area' in planning decision-making and some of it comes to down to professional opinion.

RF also touched on the recent changes in planning decision-making announced by Central Government in a white paper 'Planning for the Future' <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future/planning-for-the-future> which are currently going through a consultation process due to end this month. Overall, these

proposals would see less local discretion on planning decisions. Councillors remarked that a number of MPs including the local MP and all the Devon district councils had raised objections during the consultation period.

RF noted SHDC had met today to plan for the second wave of COVID-19. Some officers will be diverted to these duties if the tier rating is upped or there is a clear need to prioritise the pandemic. Normal service will be slower. There was some more money from central government for a second shut down of businesses, especially local pubs and shops if they are struggling. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plan-for-jobs-chancellor-increases-financial-support-for-businesses-and-workers>. RF wasn't sure if a rates holiday would be offered again in 2021/22.

RF asked about rubbish collection lately. He said in some places it had 'gone wrong' because of changes in routes to prepare for next year's recycling. GC said there was a problem with recycling the previous week when waste wasn't picked up in half the Village on Wednesday. It was picked up on Thursday.

IC asked if the pub would be affected by the recent escalation of cases but RC thought it wasn't likely to close. There is a plan to offer takeaway if the pub has to close and the pub might qualify for grant aid if it had to close.

IC asked for any progress on Strete Gate. GC gave an update on his conversation with Steve Mullineaux [SM] at SHDC circulated to all. RF informed the meeting that Slapton PC had invited SM to their meeting and given him a slot to answer questions. RF suggested Strete invite him but give advance warning of questions. SM intends to have a plan in place by November for councillors to review and be implemented by March 2021.

RF noted it had taken a couple of years of district and county councillor insistence that there were issues to get the Strete Gate problem acted on. The pandemic had crystallised and emphasised the issues that were down there. It needs to be sorted out in the round. RF and JB are going to coordinate ideas and what they want to see down at Strete Gate. They will include the Slapton Line Partnership and the three parishes in their deliberations. GC noted SM included the memorial, steps and carpark issues in his review and wanted to include the three parishes in discussions. It was intended to use the Coastal Revival Fund award of £44,380 made to the Slapton Line Partnership in 2019 toward this. **The report was received.**

1020/1 APOLOGIES – None.

1020/2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 17 September 2020

The above minutes were AGREED as a true and correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

1020/3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Parish Councillors were invited to declare any unregistered or other interest, including the nature and extent of such interests they may have in any items to be considered at this meeting. **PH declared an interest in Blindwells [2954/20/VAR] and turned off his mike and video for Item 4.**

1020/4 PLANNING & PLANNING MATTERS

2954/20/VAR Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) of planning consent 3400/18/FUL

Blindwells, Hynetown Road Strete TQ6 0RS.

RC had circulated a report on the above application. He reminded the committee that the original application [3400/18/FUL] had been objected to by the PC, refused by the district council and gone to appeal by the applicant. It was granted on appeal. RC reminded the committee that a slow response by SHDC had weakened their arguments for the refusal [*The Inspector 'exceptionally' accepted late statements from SHDC because of interest in the case*]. RC said the new application was couched as a minor alteration but in his opinion was more than that. The properties were being enlarged with [completely] different roofing. So, he thought this was a new application under the guise of a revised or amended application. He observed the second home policy in the draft neighbourhood plan would apply to this application. He also noted a number of Joint Local Plan policies applied which weren't being complied with in this application.

IC commented on the potential invasion of privacy for neighbours, through the felling of trees. Councillors felt the site looked too crowded especially with three rather than two houses [the original recommendation of the Council] and the potential enlargement of the properties. GC noted the current spacing adopted by houses on that side of Hynetown Road [Falloden and Weatherley] was not carried over here as the houses were closer together than the current norm. **It was resolved to object [six objected and one abstained] and use the report supplied by RC as the comments on the planning portal.**

IC wondered if there was a planning application for work taking place at Landcombe. RC felt this was all covered in the original application [2859/19/HHO] and the only thing outstanding was a new application for the driveway and entrance as the previous one [0349/20/FUL] was withdrawn in March 2020. PH noted the barn was separate as well and a new planning application would be submitted by the householder for any works on the barn.

RC asked the Clerk to get enforcement officers down to the site. RF commented that the works have to be observed by enforcement officers to be enforced. RC wondered if this would end up with a retrospective application. RF said it was difficult without building control and that it needed someone to be caught and made to undo retrospective works to enforce the importance of doing things within applications first time round.

1020/5(a) FINANCE

Six cheques were listed for payment and invoices sent to all Councillors before the meeting. An additional cheque, 1741, was added to the list of payments at the meeting.

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| 1735 – Clerk salary October £256. | 1736 – SLCC membership renewal £92. |
| 1737 – Mr C Ellis work on gatepost per quote approved 0420/14 £75. | 1738 – Mr C Ellis strimming around bus stops and benches £125. |
| 1739 – South Hams District Council playpark annual insurance and inspection fee £210 plus VAT. | 1740 – Mr L Bray Neighbourhood Plan. Plan, maps and documents for resubmission £500. |
| 1741 – Mr G Campbell reimbursement materials for playpark £25. | |

It was proposed and AGREED by all present to authorise the payment as enumerated above.

1020/5(b) FINANCE

A monitoring report for 2020/21 had been circulated already along with a cashflow projection to the end of November 2020 of CR6,403.89. **Resolved the monitoring statements would be put on the website.**

1020/5(c) FINANCE

Cash at bank – £12,172.66CR Current account at 09/10/20, £10,297.65CR Business Reserve account at 09/10/20.

1020/5(d) FINANCE

Revised budget. Councillors went through the revised budget. RC asked for the full £1,000 lodgement for the Neighbourhood Plan [NP] to be retained to cover a referendum for the NP. He also asked about Village Maintenance. The Clerk confirmed the £3,043.35 lodged comprised the two quotes received so far plus actual spend. PH said he was waiting for the other two quotes to come in and this programme of spend could be rolled across two years. The Clerk confirmed the £1,555 figure in for roads and transport was the entire contract cost for sweeping in 2020/21. PH asked about carbon neutral initiatives. He reminded the council of the current grant offer of 75% funding toward electric vehicle charging which expired in March 2021 [ref 0820/13]. He said there would probably be a subsidy in 2021/2 but he wasn't sure. PH suggested costs of £5k for works with 75% funding would give £1,250 required in the budget. He noted this would need a mandate so to wait for the outcome of the village survey to give that mandate and then seek Council approval.

A discussion took place on the availability of electric vehicle charging units down at the Pub [one already exists at the carpark and is used by the landowner]. PH noted some points to consider but that it would be income to the pub from people charging their cars there. This will be revisited. **The report was received.**

1020/6 CLERK'S REPORT

The report had been sent round before the meeting. Personnel matters. LN and GC met with the Clerk and discussed performance. The Clerk went up a scale from £10.24/hr to £10.44/hr effective from September 2020. **Councillor Advocate.** The Clerk is now the Councillor Advocate for Strete. **Resolved: GC to pass questions to the Clerk for the question and answer session on 22nd October with Chief Superintendent Matt Lawler on the police handling of issues in the summer.**

Councillors also discussed issues with speeding. **Resolved the Clerk would ask Lisa Edmonds to advise on speed control measures.**

Memorial Tree. Councillors discussed where a tree could be planted. **It was resolved IC would advise on trees suitable for planting on the Village Green.** The applicant can then select what they prefer from these choices. **The report was received.**

1020/7 CHAIR'S REPORT

Report submitted before the meeting. Chair's Report Strete Parish Council 15.10.20

Coronavirus – For us the same rules continue to apply. RISK ASSESS – STAY ALERT - RULE OF SIX. We had all hoped that the pandemic would decline, however in many places, thankfully not in the South Hams it has risen sharply. The government are using a three-tier category for restrictions including LOCKDOWN in some areas. Balancing business prosperity - freedom and leisure and helping the NHS cope is proving tricky!

Strete Gate and Slapton Line. As the winter approaches and the summer season is coming to an end there is much less congestion and misbehaviour - thankfully. We do not want a repeat of this year's mayhem so we await some clarification on difficulties from our Parish Council meeting in NOVEMBER.

Play Park. At last month's P.C. meeting we voted to keep the Play Park open. The Allianz check has been made but we still await their update – contact made with Helen Hardwicke today, she is endeavouring to get a result. The grass is being well cut, but recently the moles have decided to make lots of hills. Recently I saw two youngsters – girls – armed with skate boards making their way to the Play Park. Good for them.

The Kings Arms. KG reported on the opening menus and arrangements for the pub which was opening on Friday 16th October. The email to book is bookings@kingsarmsatstrete.co.uk.

Finally, if you can, please download the NHS Track & Trace app as all pubs are now required to use it when possible. STAY SAFE EVERYONE. **The Chair's report was received.**

1020/8 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

**A report was submitted prior to the meeting. A full report is also on the 'Where are We Now' page within the Neighbourhood Plan section of the Parish website under 'October 2020 Neighbourhood Plan Update'.
Neighbourhood Plan Report – October 2020**

The Revised Strete Neighbourhood Plan was completed to include recommended policy wording amendments to address various changes related to Policy SNP8: Housing Development together with new maps for SNP6: Settlement Boundary and the Proposals Map. In addition, revised wording was required to other statutory documents. Thanks to Duncan Smith and Lee Bray for their assistance with this.

Following desk top publishing work, a revised Neighbourhood Plan together with the following revised documents was circulated to SNP Group members for comment and approval.

1. Revised Basic Conditions Statement
2. Revised Statement of Consultation
3. Revised Monitoring Framework

It was not possible to hold a Strete Neighbourhood Plan Group meeting due to Covid-19 restrictions but, following distribution by email of all applicable documents, a majority of group members responded in favour to approve the Plan for submission to SHDC. The Plan was submitted and accepted by SHDC for Regulation 15 on 01/10/2020. The Plan will now proceed to Regulation 16 for the regulation six-week statutory consultation from Monday 19/10/2020 until Monday 30/11/2020 before proceeding to Examination.

The revised NP and documents are now on Strete Parish Council and SHDC websites as part of the Regulation 16 consultation.

Correspondence has been sent out, as required by the regulations, to all consultees who submitted comments for the previous consultation that took place between October and December 2018. If they have any comments to make on the new [revised] Plan they should submit them to SHDC.

Hopefully, the revised Plan will be submitted for examination in December 2020. **The NP report was received.**

1020/9 UPDATES: STRETE GATE, MEETING WITH CLERK ON PERFORMANCE, PLANTING OF MEMORIAL TREE.

Reports were submitted prior to the meeting. Full reports can be found on the website.

Strete Gate. GC reported on recent developments.

The Police and Crime Commissioner's office has invited us to work through the Councillor advocate system to argue our case for support for The Safer Summers project. GC was waiting for a date to meet the Slapton Council Chair to share possible action re Slapton line.

GC had a phone meeting today with Steve Mullineaux from SHDC regarding the summer issues on the Slapton line. The following points were made:

1. over the next six weeks SHDC in coordination with the parishes, police and other agencies will carry out a comprehensive review of problem areas including parking, charges, signage and byelaws. The aim is to have a new effective and adequate system in place to deal with the influx of tourists by next March.
2. This should see an improvement in SHDC 's capacity to deal with open space, rubbish collection, toilet maintenance, parking and enforcement staffing.
3. a number of related issues will be considered at the same time to include the moving of the memorial, the inadequate access road to the Strete Gate parking, increased parking at Strete Gate, the creation of good access paths and steps to the beach and toilets for all visitors including disabled people.
4. SHDC is reviewing the possibility of building toilets at the centre of line but this is very expensive.
5. Strete PC must lobby the Police and Crime Commissioner for beach marshals through our Councillor Advocate along with Slapton PC and SHDC.
6. Steve would like to meet the PC at the next PC meeting, Thursday November 19th to discuss the plan and its implementation. **Resolved: The Clerk to invite Steve Mullineaux to the Parish Council meeting on November 19th.**

Strete Gate Carpark tariff review. Consultation on the proposed increase in car parking charges at Strete Gate from next April. There is a tariff review for the carparks with responses due by 30th October. Strete Gate is to increase by 10p to £1.10 for 1 hour and 20p to £2.20 for 2 hours. No other changes are made in the proposal. Councillors observed there were other proposals in the future to remove overnight parking charges. **Resolved: to respond to SHDC but note if there was going to be another consultation [on the overnight charges] it would be sensible to combine the two.**

Councillors also discussed the ringgo app where an extra fee for using it has been waived. It was noted the app needed a certain upgrade of software so it was not available to all. IC said he advised people to take a photo of the out of order meter and date so they had evidence if they were later fined.

Clerk performance. RC asked about this. LN and GC advised that they had discussed training with the Clerk.

The memorial tree was discussed under 1020/6. **Reports were received.**

1020/10 DISCUSSION ON ROAD SPEED AND ROAD SAFETY IN THE VILLAGE.

PH shifted the VAS machine to the A379 on 1st October to up by the 20 MPH roundel on the hill and was going to leave it. There was a discussion on where best to locate the VAS on the A379. Other remedies for speeding were offered including speedbumps and variable speed cameras at each end of the Village.

PH asked if the VAS should remain or be moved back to Totnes Rd. IC noted villagers are in favour when the VAS is located by them but not otherwise so maybe it could be moved around more. PH said he would move it once the battery had its cycle which is three weeks. **Resolved: to move the VAS after half-term [3 weeks] and move it back later. Cllrs wondered if an empty speed camera would work. The Clerk to confirm with Lisa Edmonds.**

RC raised 'unreasonable parking' and an abandoned caravan on the Totnes Road. The Clerk responded that this had been reported to DCC Highways. The 'abandoned' car at Strete Gate belongs to the gentleman who has relocated there and now stays at Lannacombe. KG confirmed the car is legally taxed.

1020/11 UPDATE ON CONTRACTS

No updates were received on contracts.

1020/12 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Reports had been circulated prior to the meeting.

KG (Chair) Playpark. KG reported the Allianz report had been received and there was nothing of concern. The grass had been cut recently. GC will do minor works when the weather improves. He will use quick-drying brown paint so there is no need to close the playpark.

LN Transport and Roads. DCC had cut the verges for the site lines. John Gilbert submitted a quote for annual hedge trimming and cleaning the road with a blower for £445 plus VAT. LN will try to get the hedges done a bit earlier this time. RC asked if the trims could be done before 7th November when the sweeper is booked to visit. LN said she would ask but JG is occupied with contract work at this time of year. LN said the hedge down Vicarage Lane near Tallis Rock was looking overgrown on the Camellia House side. She would speak with the householder. **Resolved: LN would talk with the householder regarding hedge trimming.** IC also reported a holly tree on the road toward Dartmouth [by Frogwell] that had been cut to about 4 feet. He thought the work was rather severe and it would take a while for the tree to grow back again. Cllrs discussed various hedges/trees along Vicarage Lane.

GC also mentioned the hedge opposite Manor Farm [managed by Philip Knight] which was getting quite overgrown into the road. **Resolved: LN to ask Philip Knight to cut his hedges.**

DR Health and Safety. DR observed he had nothing to report.

IC Rights of Way, tree warden and Strete Gate. IC reported verbally. Tree warden: only the holly tree discussed already. RC asked if the ash tree [2394/20/TCA] had been crowned. DR thought not [at the bottom of his garden]. IC observed the tree was looking rather unwell [very brown and dead very quickly] and hoped it had not been damaged. He will monitor the situation once the crowning has been done and wait for the spring. IC also said he was disappointed with DCC policy which designated ash trees with dieback after a gale because they had lost their leaves. This was not necessarily a sign of dieback but a consequence of the strong wind. **Rights of Way** are still being used less than in the summer. All cut back by strimmer and being used. **Strete Gate varies** – sunny days are hectic still. The gate into the picnic area was ripped off which should be repaired by the Field Studies Council. A picnic table from the café has also been broken up for kindling. GC reported his son-in-law two weeks previously had found 15 or so people on the beach in a marquee having a party. GC tried to get hold of the police on '101' and stayed on 55 minutes waiting. No luck on webchat. No response to an email sent, from the police. **Resolved to pass issues with reporting to the police to the Councillor advocate to bring up.**

RC Planning and Neighbourhood Plan. Bettsworths appear to be drawing up a sale prospectus for [Rose] cottage behind the Chapel owned by Heavitree.

PH The VAS sign and local transport liaison. VAS Monitoring. As reported in 1020/10 the VAS unit was moved onto the existing mounting at the northern approach to the 20mph speed limit on the A379 adjacent to Frogwell at the beginning of October. Operation continues.

Local transport liaison. Nothing new to report. The electric vehicle survey is ready to be distributed with the Neighbourhood Plan update to all households.

Parish Benches and picnic tables. There has been a delay in obtaining the third quote which will necessitate putting off evaluation of the bids and a recommendation until the November meeting.

GC Village Green. Grass was cut once in October. Greenspace has been asked to enclose dated photographs of cuts with their invoices to help us monitor their work. Greenspace has not flattened Prideaux Lane as promised. GC has asked them to tell him if they cannot do the job. Kim Tucker has not yet been to look at work on lane for a quote. GC told Terry Hallett the Council will hold his quote whilst we review Greenspace's performance.

One of the Prideaux lane barriers sticks occasionally and GC is awaiting advice from the manufacturer. The barrier at the Start Bay Park end has been bypassed to some extent by a small Suzuki 4x4, possibly a farmer, by driving through the hedge base. GC has a couple of posts to block off the problem area.

1020/13 CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence is forwarded to Councillors and continues in the main to focus on the COVID-19 emergency.

1020/14 OTHER BUSINESS

GC referred to an email received from Jayne Webb lady mayoress of Dartmouth on the Dartmouth Community Hub [Hub]. The Hub has grant funding for community support in the villages and can visit once a month initially to put on social events and offer advice including CAB. They have invited Strete to take part. Penny Penhale will discuss this with the Parish Hall Committee. LN asked if this was affected by the COVID-19 regulations but GC confirmed the Hub had adopted measures to cater for lockdown. GC mentioned the proposed activities in the Neighbourhood Plan to include support with IT and visiting people. This could be undertaken by Hub staff.

GC asked if the Council might consider a short-term contribution to the PHC if they hosted the Hub as they received little income. This initiative entails costs for heating and lighting at the least and cleaning required. The Clerk said she had spoken with Penny Penhale to confirm if they submit costs/accounts the Council will consider a grant. **Resolved: DR will talk with the PHC who will provide an estimate of costs/account for a grant.**

PH reported on flu vaccine. There wasn't any available when he went for an inoculation last week and no one had any. The formula for the over-65 population is in short supply but this isn't believed to be so for the other vaccine.

CLOSED SESSION

Resolution. To exclude the public from the Meeting under The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s1 (2). *The resolution is to exclude the public from the meeting at this point in the proceedings as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted under this part of the meeting.*

The Clerk read out the notification for closure and the public left the meeting. The Clerk also noted that meeting minutes will continue to be taken and be available for the public.

KG read out a statement. This explained the history and operation of the 'Village Day Fund' which had been set up in 1980 and was used for funding the costs of Village Day. The Clerk vouched that KG had rung Penny Penhale and apologised for any perceived rudeness/lack of responsiveness over requests for information. Also, the Clerk reported the two sets of signatories planned to meet to agree a way forward. KG asked for any comments.

Councillors asked if the statement read out would be public and KG agreed. This would satisfy concerns over the transparency of the Fund. One councillor asked what apologies would be forthcoming to the PHC and the rest of the Council. KG replied she was sorry if she had caused any upset but she was unaware that her actions had caused any problem. She thought the correspondence from the parishioner on the Village Day Fund was a scam.

RC spoke. He understood that the parishioner and the Village Day committee were not part of the SPH. He acknowledged KG had explained the fund was available for a number of activities in the village not just Village Day. He also acknowledged the arrangements suggested by Penny Penhale and the Clerk whereby the signatories meet and agree the way forward. He asked if people could approach KG to obtain set up funds for events in the village.

KG confirmed this provided events were not organised by the PHC. RC asked if KG would get this meeting arranged and she said she would ask her other signatories. IC suggested this meeting could be a good idea and also the annual production of statements on the fund. He observed the lack of communication is what annoyed people.

RC agreed this was the way forward and wanted a record of this action being followed up at future parish meetings. *Since the meeting the Clerk commissioned a report by the Council's internal auditor into the workings of the 'Village Day Fund'. He reported to the Council on 22nd October. The report follows in Appendix A. The report recommended that all Village funds satisfy transparency by the submission of annual reports to include their finances to the annual meeting of electors with a copy to be published in Stretewise. Contact details to be included in Stretewise. In addition, funds to update and review their written constitutions.*

JB observed in East Prawle there were three committees that worked well together even though they had separate aims. He thought the way things were operated seemed fine but there needed to be both cooperation and independence: the PC shouldn't be telling the other two organisations to spend in a certain way. It should be based on mutual respect. RF seconded this. Everyone should be working for the good of the parish.

1020/15 THE NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2020 AT 7.00 PM. THE VENUE IS LIKELY TO BE ON ZOOM UNLESS OTHERWISE ADVISED. THE MEETING WAS CLOSED at 9.30 p.m.

Signed: Cllr Kate Gill (Chair)

Dated: 19 NOVEMBER 2020

APPENDIX A REPORT ON STRETE VILLAGE DAY ACCOUNT.

Role and purpose

Helen Darch, Clerk of the SPC, contacted me to see whether I could help mediate in an issue, which although brought to the SPC's attention was not in their powers to rule on. This inability to make a ruling was confirmed by the monitoring office at SHDC who said that it considered the issue a private matter which could only be resolved by the interested parties.

The reason why I was approached to help was that I am a former bank Manager and also the internal independent auditor of SPC's finances. Similar to the SPC, I do not have any powers to make any rulings but it is hoped that after talking to the parties, my advice will be acted on for the benefit of the village. It also removes the need for further direct consultation by the parties with the SPC who should not be involved.

Background

The issues raised primarily concern a now dormant bank account in the name of Strete Village Day whose three authorised signatories are Kate Gill, the late Shirley Goldring and Roger English. It is a treasurer's account held at Lloyds, Totnes. The account number is 02090690 and I have seen a statement showing a balance of £1601.48 as at 10.2.2017. The bank account was originally opened in 1980 and there have been no associated accounts in that name.

The account is not a trust the account is not a trust account but a simple unincorporated association which is governed by the nominated signatories. There are no real requirements other than the need to draw up a

constitution setting out the basic aims of the account and the rules under which this should be carried out. The constitution can be altered at any time as long as this is ratified by the signatories.

Until such time the responsibility for the running of the village day was transferred to the Strete Parish Hall, the accounts purpose was to the manage income and expenditure with a provision to making donations to village charities and good causes if funds allowed. The signatories felt it prudent to maintain a balance of £1500 on the account at all times to cover cashflow needs for the next year and to cover any exceptional loss due to bad weather. This is effectively the “reserve” that some people have referred to.

Once responsibility for the running of village day had switched to the Strete Parish Hall committee, the Strete Village Day account took on a slightly different purpose in that although it makes the occasional small donation, its prime purpose seems to be the provider of funds by way of loan for organisations in Strete who need help with their costs prior to income receipt. By advancing monies which are repaid, it is the intention that this capital will be available for the village’s benefit ad infinitum.

Nature of problem

The principal source of discontent has been the alleged difficulty of obtaining even basic information about the account from the Strete Village day signatories by the Strete Parish Hall committee. Not unexpectedly, the Strete Parish Hall felt that information on this “public” bank account should be readily available to them. They also felt that as the current organisers of village day (and not having a full understanding of the account) that they should be entitled to the benefit of these funds.

Frustrated at the lack of progress and an acknowledgement that there seemed to be a reluctance to transfer monies or liaise with the SPH committee, the SPH committee felt that setting up an account in non SPH committee names may help to progress matters. The nominated people were all people who help with village day, namely Maurice Watson, Jackie Ellis and Richard Pearce. MW wrote to Kate Gill, seen as the principal point of contact for the Strete Village Day account requesting the relinquishing of control by the existing signatories or by transferring the balance on the account to a new account which would be specially opened.

No response was forthcoming by Kate Gill who had suspicions that the various emails were fraudulent as she was unaware of who Maurice Watson was. MW subsequently did make reference to Penny Penhale (chair SPH) in her replies so that if necessary, authenticity could be checked out. Further correspondence continued without reply and not unexpectedly the tone and content hardened until such time the matter was raised with the Strete Parish Council to see whether they could arbitrate and/or rule on the matter.

Current situation.

Kate Gill and Roger English are now in the process of reactivating the Strete Village Day account and replacing the late Shirley Goldring with Simon Buckler as the third signatory. As I understand it, the signatories have no wish to change the purpose of the account which will be used as previously described. In the circumstances, there is little point in Maurice Watson proceeding with a new account opening.

Before making some recommendations, I would comment that in my opinion much time and unnecessary aggravation could have been avoided if communication on a personal level by individuals, and on a wider sense within the village community, had been undertaken in an expected manner.

Recommendations.

1. A new constitution should be drawn up by the signatories of the Strete Village Day account. This should include reference to recommendation 3 below.
2. After the Strete Village Day account has been reactivated with the new signatory of Simon Buckler, steps should be taken to rename the bank account to aptly reflect its purpose.
3. A brief annual report of activities and finances of the Strete Village Day account should be prepared and sent to the Strete Parish Council prior to their AGM. This report should also be published in Stretewise. The need to produce an annual report to be adopted within the constitution.
4. The Clerk of the Strete Parish Council to determine any other village trusts or funds which are perceived to be for the benefit of the village and request information from them as per 3 above.
5. Such accounts determined by the Clerk to be included in the Stretewise Village Directory with appropriate contact details.
6. The Strete Parish Hall committee if they haven’t done so already, may wish to check whether their constitution is up to date and appropriate for their needs. Being a charity, it is perceived that all funds raised and given by donors are expressly to be used for the stated aims within the constitution. Thus, without express consent in the constitution, funds raised from activities such as village day cannot be given to other charities or good causes.

Plea

I know this issue has been rather fractious and my hope would be that people take the initiative to rebuild bridges wherever and whenever possible. All the parties involved should be given credit for giving up valuable time for the benefit of our village and my hope is that with respect, transparency and good communication, our wonderful village will continue to benefit from their efforts. Thank you.

Nick Shepherd