

# 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 21 May 2020 AT 7.00 PM

### PRESENT

Cllr Kate Gill, Chairman (KG); Cllr Ralph Clark (RC); Cllr Louise Newman (LN); Cllr Ian Cumberlidge (IC); Cllr David Rothwell (DR); Cllr Graham Campbell (GC); Cllr Peter Hales (PH); Mrs. Helen Darch – Clerk.

### PUBLIC FORUM

No members of the public attended the meeting.

### COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

JB noted that various funds existed for local parishes or community groups to apply for and to contact him if there was a need for funding identified. The grants from SHDC are up to £250 and up to £5,000 from DCC for the COVID-19 Prompt Action Fund.

JB touched on the two planning decisions where RC had drafted a letter expressing the Parish Council's concerns [2304/19/FUL Land at Stancombe Wood and 3076/19/FUL The Coach House]. These had not gone to committee as the Development Management [DM] Committee had not met since the emergency was declared in late March. JB assumed then that approval had been made by the planning officer under delegated powers. If there had been anything contentious the ward member and the officer would have considered the application together and come to a decision. If that was not possible the case would then have been referred to the DM Committee.

JB confirmed that the two decisions had been approved. A debate took place around the fact that objections to the two applications had been lodged, including from the Parish Council. Should the two applications have been taken to the DM committee in that case? JB thought that in these two cases the ward member and the officer must have reached a consensus.

Councillors voiced concern over the potential gridlock on the Totnes Road, which is an emergency road, during the works for the Stancombe Wood development. JB noted this but the concerns of local people had to be balanced against the evaluation by the Highways department. The alternative is to engage a highways expert to counter the advice of DCC Highways.

RC then raised the decision on the Coach House which was approved but a property immediately opposite was refused. The two decisions appeared to use the same evidence [on overbuilding for instance] to arrive at different decisions especially as both are based on the Joint Local Plan. JB suggested the decision [by RF as ward member] was taken on the basis that it would have been approved if it had gone to committee.

JB concluded by thanking the parishes and community groups for their work in supporting the community. There hadn't been a single new case of coronavirus in the South Hams or West Devon so that reflected well on the local communities and local people. But it was best not to be complacent and to be aware if people come streaming down here it could kick off again. **The report was received.**

### DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

As the District Councillor did not attend this report was not given.

**0520/1 APOLOGIES** - Cllr Richard Foss, District Councillor, Allington & Strete Ward (RF).

### **0520/2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 23 APRIL 2020**

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

### **0520/3 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. **None were declared.**

### **0520/4 PLANNING & PLANNING MATTERS**

The two planning decisions [2304/19/FUL Land at Stancombe Wood and 3076/19/FUL The Coach House] were discussed under the County Councillor's report. **It was resolved not to take further action on the two cases.**

**0520/5(a) FINANCE**

The Clerk supplied the meeting with a list of cheques for payment. Invoices had been scanned and sent to all councillors electronically before the meeting. Cheque 1719 was added to the agenda list.

1715 – Clerk salary May £249.	1716 – Reimburse Clerk for the cost of a new laminator and plastic sheets £53.97.
1717 – Reimburse Clerk for monthly payment to use Zoom £11.99 plus VAT.	1718 – Reimburse Mr Graham Campbell for materials on Prideaux Lane works. £48.11 plus VAT.
1719- Reimburse Mr Graham Campbell for key cutting for barriers at Prideaux Lane £20.	

**It was proposed and AGREED by all present to authorise payments as enumerated above.**

**0520/5(b) FINANCE**

A monitoring report for 2020/21 had been circulated already along with a cashflow projection. The projection to the end of June 2020 gave CR 10,141.59 including a first half precept of £6,500 and Council Tax Support Grant of £138. It was agreed the latest monitoring should be published on the website. **Resolved the Clerk would provide the monitoring statements for the website.**

**0520/5(c) FINANCE**

Cash at bank – £11, 881.39CR Current account at 07/05/20, £10,295.66CR Business Reserve account at 07/05/20.

**0520/6 CLERK'S REPORT**

**The report had been sent round before the meeting.**

**Audit 2019/20.** The Council needed to complete a Certificate of Exemption to apply for exemption from a 'limited assurance review' by the External auditor. Neither the income and expenditure of the Council exceeded £25,000 in 2019/20 which allowed it to apply for this exemption as in previous years. 2018/19 was an exception when expenses went over £25,000 and an external audit took place. **Resolved: The Council agreed the Certificate of Exemption be signed and sent to the External Auditor [PKF Littlejohn].**

**Zoom.** It was noted the monthly subscription for unlimited minutes on Zoom was £11.99 plus VAT. The experience of using Zoom and alternative platforms was discussed briefly. **Resolved: The Clerk and RC explore the use of simwood.com, a free online platform, and report to the next meeting.**

**Insurance.** The Clerk obtained three annual insurance quotes on the assets and activities of the Council. This is largely for comparison and review of covers as there is a three-year long-term agreement with BHIB that ends 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021. The 2020/21 renewal is due 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020. The quotes were from BHIB, Zurich, and Came and Company.

BHIB gave the cheapest quote at £336.83 on a blanket cover basis for a local authority with less than 1,000 population and standard assets of £180,000 which is ample for the assets held. The other insurers quoted on a fixed asset basis. The Clerk noted she would do an in-depth exercise next year in particular the covers we should have for historic assets and level of cover needed for various activities. **Resolved: to agree to renew the insurance policy with BHIB to the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021 in the sum of £336.83. To note this is the final year of the three-year agreement with BHIB.**

**Public Rights of Way Warden and erection of a horse stile on the coastal path above Strete Gate.** The Warden had contacted the Clerk to discuss the installation of a horse stile on the path that leads down from turnpike to the beach at Strete Gate. DCC would pay for the works and this was to prevent vehicles from using the coastal path. RC asked if this would affect walkers but it was thought it would not. **Resolved: to reply to the Warden agreeing his proposals for the installation of a horse stile on the coast path.**

**0520/7 UPDATES ON COVID-19**

**A report was submitted prior to the meeting.**

This report updated the situation in the Village following the Parish Council meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Spirit in the community is high with most complying with the instruction to 'Stay at Home, Save the NHS and Save Lives'. As a result, statistics for our area shows that no one has been lost to the Covid 19 virus.

The Village Shop confirmed 16 Volunteers from the community are registered to help out and their names and locality are listed there so the nearest volunteer can be deployed to provide the support requested. Their stock of goods is ample for the needs of the Village and frequent home deliveries take place. Currently they have 39 customers receiving weekly deliveries with some having more than one delivery each week. Orders are placed the day before delivery the following afternoon. Friday and Saturday are their busiest days.

Nick Shepherd and Anita McCoy are delivering newspapers to customers in the parish seven days a week. This daily routine has been extremely helpful for members of the community who are self-isolating.

**Thanks were recorded to Monica and Andy for their support of the community.**

Most prescription requirements are currently being delivered direct by the local surgeries and messages are uploaded to the website daily to help keep everyone informed.

However, it has been challenging interpreting the released restriction changes as the community were required to use their own judgement in respect of the advised safety. Local feedback suggests there are many people from outside the area visiting and camping. There is concern over the lack of facilities in this area under lockdown. In particular Cafés and restaurants remain closed, there are no lifeguards on the beaches and toilets are still closed.

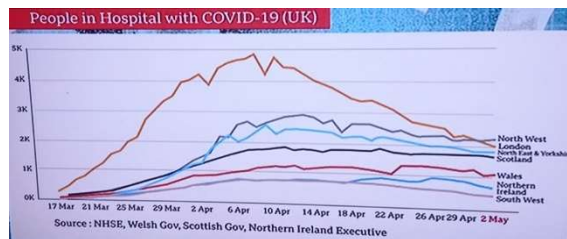
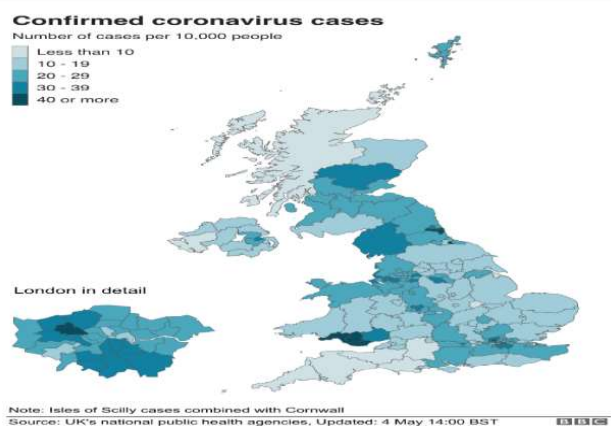
With so many people visiting from outside the area it might be wise to wear face masks in the short-term whilst taking daily exercise, visiting family or collecting goods from the shop. It's important we all continue to undertake appropriate social distancing measures and ensure that we do not gather in groups with people from outside our home. All part of the test and trace process. Remember, our actions can affect others.

**Before you leave your home. 'Think Twice'. Is it necessary, is it safe? Personal responsibility is key to beating Covid 19 and help save lives. The report was received.**

**0520/8 CHAIR'S REPORT**

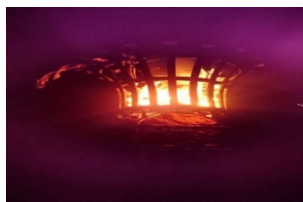
**This report was submitted prior to the meeting. [Chair's Report Strete Parish Council](#) 21.05.20**

**[Coronavirus](#) - The advice as before still applies – RISK ASSESS – look around – STAY ALERT.**



**Going out and about** – everyone seems to be making for the beaches now we have partial relief from total Lockdown. The carparks are exceedingly crammed with vehicles and there are mini motorhomes aplenty. We have been very fortunate in the number of cases compared with the rest of the country. Two charts - details taken at the beginning of May – please help it stay that way and help to make it less.

On a more cheerful note Strete did have their celebratory VE DAY Beacon. It was lit for real on 8<sup>th</sup> May at Manor Farm, by Ian our Beacon Master and attended by Nick and Barbara Shepherd as village virtual photographers and yours truly as mini speech maker. Those who had loved ones who served during that time were invited to contribute their stories which have been loaded onto Strete website. Thank you all for your contributions.



Back to earth with a bump – much of our normal business has been temporarily put on hold and I'd like to thank those who have supervised the normal workings of the Parish for their continued work. We await the next moves on the Memorial and the migration to its new home.

Strete Gate kiosk - have been asked to put away their picnic tables for the time being as have other takeaways in the area.

The Play Park – has been locked, sadly some naughty boys decided to break-in by climbing the fence to use the skateboard ramp. I understand they were observed by Jackie Bishop and Ian who also reprimanded them. The grass has also been cut.

During Lockdown – proper - the roads being exceedingly quiet; wild life has taken over. On my allowed travels to Strete twice a day I have regularly seen hares, pheasants and very many other wild birds. Only yesterday I saw the youngest fox cub I have ever seen, about the size of a small cat. It had very fluffy khaki coloured hair and dithered

about in the middle of the road while I watched and waited with delight whilst it decided what to do for the best. Eventually it walked to the road side and unsteadily climbed the hedge. It was a magical experience.

I'd like to share with you all a sunset I was lucky to see on my way home –**by way of thanks to all the Parish and Village Teams for their unstinting and continuing contributions.**



**THANK YOU – STAY SAFE – STAY ALERT**

**The Chair's report was received.**

## **0520/9 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

### **A report was submitted prior to the meeting. NP Report for PC – May 2020**

Mr Dixon advised that he has received a reply from Western Power Distribution (WPD) about relocating the substation at the A379 access to the Cox's Farm Field (CFF) site. In Mr Dixon's opinion the access by the carpark is not suitable to be used for the development without relocating the substation. WPD have said that they would relocate the substation if they were paid to do so and if the "potential developer" provided an alternative freehold site nearby. The Strete Estate (SE) could provide a suitable alternative piece of land nearby. However, to achieve this SE are likely to incur the following costs: -

1. SE would need to provide a piece of land, probably free of charge
2. The Developer would be required to pay WPD and SE legal fees.
3. WPD want to charge £1,500 plus VAT for a survey before they quantify item 5 below.
4. WPD would charge £52,491.71 plus VAT engineering costs for moving the substation.
5. WPD would charge a ransom fee that, currently, is not quantified.

It has been suggested that the engineering cost estimate released by WPD could include 'betterment costs' to upgrade the substation. These should not be part of relocation costs.

WPD advised Mr Dixon that they would require 33% of the difference between the development value and agricultural value in addition to their relocation costs. It has been estimated that a bill of £125,000 in total to WPD could apply for moving the substation. The WPD surveyor has suggested they may be able to reduce the total amount, but it is premature to say by how much.

Mr Dixon has suggested this will make the scheme unviable and makes the point that, by having a link road with 2 access points, the cost from road building and the cost of moving the substation makes a proposed development expensive. In Mr Dixon's opinion the scheme may not be viable from removing the substation relocation cost alone. There may also be a need to reduce the road building cost as well as removing the free carpark cost. Mr Dixon suggests if access through The Plat could be agreed then none of WPD costs need be incurred and there is a better chance of viability. Mr Dixon has asked the Neighbourhood Plan Group (NPG) to amend Policy SNP8 Housing Development Site at Cox's Farm Field to use only The Plat as access to CFF site.

Whilst Mr Dixon intends to discuss SE's viability position with Plymouth City Council Viability Team, he has requested time to pursue discussions with WPD to negotiate a reasonable concession on WPD's ransom before contacting them. Apparently, the Office of the Energy Regulator determines WPD's approach as they are expected to take a commercial position. If the matter were to proceed formally, WPD would instruct a SW based surveyor / valuer to assess the share of the development value that should be paid to them. In that way they will be able to provide an independent third-party opinion. It is believed that WPD have this ransom negotiation in many development cases and are not afraid to use their commercial advantage.

From the comments above, it seems like the development of Strete NP over the past five years is going backwards. If Mr Dixon's suggestions were to be adopted there would be no benefit to Strete community. The only benefactors would be WPD and SE.

The NPG have prepared a detailed NP that meets with the landscape character of the Parish and the sensitive nature of a new housing development in the centre of the hilltop, coastal village of Strete and the AONB. They have identified the needs of the community to improve well-being in conjunction with the construction

design and quantity of new homes to meet new and expanding climate change requirements. All fully consulted on in accordance with regulations and accepted for examination by SHDC. **Examination suspension has been extended to 31 July 2020.**

Ransom, bullying tactics of WPD and SE must be resisted and they must not be allowed to hold the community of Strete to ransom. The NP is for the betterment of the community of Strete at large. What is needed on CFF site is:

1. an end to speculative development on a site in the centre of the village
2. a village car park
3. an access route from the A379 to The Plat
4. a sensitive housing development on the CFF site that that meets climate change requirements and will secure a car park and access route as set out in the NP.

**A discussion then took place on the need to relocate the substation to permit access.** Previous conversations with Richard Jackson from DCC Highways suggested current access would be wide enough for normal traffic without the need to move the substation. It was also mooted that the substation could be decommissioned and that at Hynetown brought on instead. It was also suggested the Parish Council would like WPD to inspect the state of the substation which was quite overgrown and rundown and that Council members might like to do their own inspection.

**It was resolved RC contact WPD and write to Charles Dixon to make them aware of the opinion of the highways officer on the need to widen access. At a future date to arrange an inspection by the Parish Council of the state of the substation. The NP report was received.**

#### **0520/10 UPDATE ON THE SLAPTON LINE**

No report had been sent and there was no report from the County Councillor.

#### **0520/11 UPDATE ON CONTRACTS**

KG asked for an update on the sweeper contract. RC intended for works to start before the summer school holiday so by the end of July. KG thought it may be a bit early with lockdown rules still partially in place. A discussion took place. **Resolved: RC to talk to Brookings about doing sweeper work in July.**

#### **0520/12 KINGS ARMS**

**A report was submitted prior to the meeting.**

At the time of writing, we still await a response from SHDC regarding our application for the renewal of the ACV. In the event that the ACV is granted, one of the necessities required is to have ready the bones of a business plan developed to a point where it might be rapidly deployed. This is because if the pub were to come onto the market, the ACV only gives the Community six months in which to pull together an offer. It would be difficult to do this from scratch in such a short time.

With this thought in mind, David, Ralph and myself have continued to engage with Andy Edwards with a couple of videoconference sessions. It seems like an age ago now, but you will remember that Andy came along to a PC meeting (pre-Covid) and addressed us with his partner Charlie about their plans to take a ten-year lease on the pub.

Since that time, the business outlook has completely changed as a result of the pandemic, and the immediate prospects for re-opening pubs have become rather bleak. Nevertheless, Andy remains interested in the prospect of the Kings Arms being reopened. His partner Charlie has had to focus on ensuring that his main business (Bayards Cove) survives the pandemic and he is no longer directly involved, although he remains interested and has offered technical assistance.

The conversations have focused mainly on the viability of various options for how the pub might be operated profitably under a long lease from Mark Hildyard, upon the assumption that Mark will retain ownership. We have asked Nigel Backwith to join in and advise – Nigel is a businessman who lives in the village and was closely associated with advising previous Heavitree leaseholders, and he has priceless knowledge about the likely profitability of the previous operations.

Time has moved on and the building work to the rear of the pub has now been completed, the dumb waiter has been removed and the dining room now has an impressive view through continuous glass doors, making it far more attractive for diners. As an unofficial group, we are currently working towards finalising a viable Business Plan taking account of worst case, median and good scenarios, all probably assuming a start in 2021 in order to capture the seasonal trade. Once this is available and has been stress tested, it will be possible to use it as the basis for the Parish to have ready in the event that an opportunity to purchase comes as a result of the ACV, thus satisfying the Parish Council's immediate requirement.

Given the present situation, it seems unlikely that Mark Hildyard will look to put the pub up for sale on the open market, as he is still advertising the pub for long lease and may well be developing the flat (which is not included in the ACV) for use as a holiday lease. It is therefore felt to be unlikely that there will be an opportunity for the community to become owners of the property through the operation of an ACV order for the foreseeable future. This is not to say that the renewal of the ACV is not needed – it most certainly is required as circumstances change and we must look to the long term in order to protect the Community's best interests

However, it is possible that upon completion of the business plan, Andy Edwards will wish to go forward and attempt to form a group of interested investors in order to raise the capital to start up an operating venture on a lease basis. Indeed, it is also possible that Mark has other potential parties who may wish to lease – although this seems unlikely given the post-pandemic situation. A number of options are possible in terms of financing such a venture and the makeup and constitution of such a group is at present unclear. An opportunity is likely to open up for investors to come forward in some form. The Parish Council's call for support for the ACV amply demonstrated that there is interest in financing and operating the pub within the village – there were two dozen offers of financial assistance for a Community venture to purchase the pub under the terms of an ACV.

What is likely to come to the table is a very different proposition from community purchase – put simply it would be an operating venture where some of the operating capital would be provided by members of the Community. Whilst a profit motive is unlikely to feature highly – more likely would be the avoidance of making a loss – nevertheless it would be purely a private commercial venture. It seems to me that such a venture might offer the best prospect of getting the pub open next year. **Councillors' input and discussion is welcomed. I will continue to report back as the situation develops.**

**The report was discussed.** It was stressed that the support expressed by parishioners for the ACV, and in particular financial support, was distinct from the arrangements outlined here for the drawing up of a business plan for the business operations of the pub under a long lease. **These were two separate initiatives.** However there had been a number of people in the village who expressed support for the pub to reopen. RC suggested the Parish Council might want to endorse the initiative by way of expressing its approval.

GC asked whether a canvas of village support would be only after the **prospective tenant** had exhausted all other potential partners. PH confirmed the **prospective tenant** was considering a number of options from different partners.

RC explained the detail of the business plan is being scrutinised by the Parish Council for its viability. Only then it would be put to the parishioners on whether they would be willing to support this venture. This would be in the form of an open letter and it would be some time before all the detail is firmed up. DR had advised to aim for a reopening of the pub in 2021 to catch the Easter trade. **The report was received.**

#### 0520/13 STRETE GATE STEPS

IC reported he had contacted Charles Dixon on two occasions by email and once by telephone to raise the issue of the missing steps with the Strete Estate as landowner but had received no reply. Charles Dixon is away until 26<sup>th</sup> May and IC will await his reply on return. **The report was noted.**

#### 0520/14 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

**Reports had been circulated prior to the meeting.**

**KG (Chair) Playpark.** This was reported on in 0520/8.

**LN Transport and Roads.** It has been very quiet on the roads. LN thought there may have been more motorbikes doing wheelies. The verge on the Dartmouth road by the oak tree has been cut by the Council, but the one going out of the village on Totnes road has not yet been cut.

**DR Health and Safety.** Nothing to report.

**IC Rights of Way, tree warden and Strete Gate. Strete Gate.** IC noted the Strete Gate car park was phenomenally busy. He was concerned about the heavy usage of the "picnic area" by dog walkers, some professional with a number of charges off the lead running free. This has had an adverse effect on dog fouling and nesting birds/young fledglings at this time of year. These walkers had been asked to at least keep dogs 'in check' but they responded that there were no signs prohibiting their use of the area. **IC suggested tackling the Field Centre to deal with this.**

**Rights of Way.** The Coast path has been 'strimmed' to make life easier. All footpaths are getting a 'hammering' but wildlife was evident including quite a few Adders.

**Tree warden.** There had been concern over the Sycamore tree below the Tannen land having been damaged but IC was pleased to report it is of a later-leaving variety. There is a good show of buds on it now. Like most gardens at the moment, it could do with some rain.

**RC Planning and Neighbourhood Plan.** RC had nothing to add to his earlier report in 0520/9.

**PH The VAS sign and local transport liaison. VAS Monitoring.** Nothing to report other than to thank Graham for strimming the verge. Operation continues. **Local transport liaison.** Nothing to report.

**GC Village Green.** The village field had been cut again in May and will be recut later in the month as growth has been quick. The gatepost is being replaced by Chris Ellis as soon as he has time. The barriers in Prideaux Lane are both in place, and keys have been cut and are being given out today (18th May) to all the users of the bridleway. Devon CC have been informed. It has been a useful thing to do, as last week one of the residents from Seven Cottages had a near miss when walking on Prideaux Lane with her 10-month-old son, when a car with several young lads came down the path. That won't happen again. Small notices giving Strete Clerk's phone number in case of emergency will be ordered. Quotes of £20 plus VAT or £25 plus VAT were cited for plastic or metal signs. **Resolved: for durability to order the metal signs at £25 plus VAT.**

GC observed, repairing the Lane where it is badly rutted was proving difficult and Greenspace's roller wasn't effective. However, a complete tractor rotovation of the path would mean it was difficult to walk on for a good while. GC suggested a larger self-propelled machine, just to rotovate the ruts, would make the path passable. Jewson would hire one out at a cost of £101 for the day. Alternatives were discussed. **It was resolved IC would look into a tractor with a yard scraper which might do the job.**

**0520/15 CORRESPONDENCE**

Correspondence was circulated as it was received. The Clerk observed the majority of emails received continued to focus on the ongoing COVID-19 emergency. These were forwarded to councillors and placed on the website as appropriate for public viewing.

**0520/16 REPORTS**

**Councillors had nothing to add.**

**0520/17 THE NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY 18 JUNE 2020 AT 7.00 PM ON ZOOM.**

**THE MEETING WAS CLOSED** at 7.50 p.m.

Signed: ..... Cllr Kate Gill (Chair)

Dated: 18 JUNE 2020

**ACTION POINTS:**

**Clerk: to provide the monitoring statements for the website; to get the Certificate of Exemption signed and sent to the External Auditor [PKF Littlejohn]; with RC to explore the use of simwood.com, a free online platform, and report to the next meeting; to renew the insurance policy with BHIB to the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021 in the sum of £336.83; to reply to the Warden agreeing his proposals for the installation of a horse stile on the coast path.**

**IC: to look into a tractor with a yard scraper to deal with the ruts on Prideaux Lane.**

**RC: to contact WPD and write to Charles Dixon to make them aware of the opinion of the highways officer on whether there was a need to widen access at Cox's Farm Field; to talk to Brookings about doing sweeper work in July; with the Clerk to explore the use of simwood.com, a free online platform, and report to the next meeting.**

**GC: to order the metal signs at £25 plus VAT for the entrances at Prideaux Lane.**