

Stoke-Sub-Hamdon Parish Council

No.7 North Street Workshops, North Street, Stoke sub Hamdon TA14 6QR

Clerk. Mr Neil Bloomfield, Tel: **07545 951 917**
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To: All Members of Stoke sub Hamdon Parish Council

Cllr Phillips (Acting Chairman), Cllr Middleton, Cllr Hulett, Cllr Holder, Cllr Nelms, Cllr M Foley

Dear Councillor,

You are summoned to a meeting of Stoke sub Hamdon Parish Council at

6pm on Tuesday 16th January 2024

at the Parish Council Offices, No.7, North Street Workshops, to transact the business set out below.

Neil Bloomfield
Parish Clerk

Published 11th January 2024

Councillors are reminded that as holders of public Office they are expected to comply with the Nolan Principles, and the Councils Code of Conduct as well as showing respects for others in accordance with the law.

As per Councils Standing Order 3(e) there will be an opportunity for members of the public to comment on Agenda items (at the discretion of the chairman of the meeting). As per Standing order 3(f) the public question comment time is limited to 5 minutes each, and the session should not exceed 30 minutes (unless directed by the chairman of the meeting)

If a person behaves in an offensive or improper manner which disrupts the meeting and refuses to moderate their behaviour they will, by motion, be excluded from the remainder of the meeting. S.O. 2(a-c)

AGENDA

24/001 Recording of meetings

Attention is drawn to the Councils policy on recording meetings. Those wishing to record meetings are asked to notify prior to or at the commencement of the meeting if they intend to audio/video record public proceedings. The council will record the meeting.

24/002 Apologies for Absence.

Apologies for absence to be accepted by council.

24/003 Declarations of Interest

Members to declare any interests they may have in agenda items that accord with the requirements of the Council's Code of Conduct. To note declared interests and any

dispensations granted. Councillors with a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI) for any agenda item must request in writing, or immediately prior to the commencement of the meeting an interest to the proper officer who may grant a dispensation.

24/004 Election of Chairman

Owing to the resignation of Cllr Burton the Council are required to elect a chairman for the remainder of the municipal year.

Chairman to be elected by majority vote.

24/005 Declaration of Acceptance of Office

The newly elected chairman is required to declare by signing the Declaration of Acceptance of Office form to be witnessed by the Clerk.

24/006 Approval of Minutes.

To consider acceptance of minutes of previous full council meeting

24/007 Standing Orders (SO) – Motion to Amend

Under Standing Order 26(b) a motion to amend Standing Orders. Council is asked to consider the following motion to amend (S.O.) by adding the following text and thereby creating Standing Order 8(b)

8(b) Causal Vacancy. Co-option by Written Ballot

Voting to fill casual vacancy by co-option may be by written ballot if:

- two Councillors, present at the meeting, make such a request to the Clerk,
- the request must be made prior to the agenda item to co-opt commencing.

Ballot papers will be completed in public session. Votes will be counted by the Clerk and witnessed by the chair of council. Ballot papers will not be retained by the council after the result is declared. If no request for written ballot is made then voting will be by show of hands.

S.O. 8(b) is reserved for co-option of casual vacancies only and will not be used for any other vote in council, committee, sub-committee or working group.

24/008 Casual Vacancy

Council to note the resignation of Cllrs Burton & Cllr Merrick.

24/009 Co-option to fill Vacancies.

No election having been requested. the council can proceed to fill up to 4 casual vacancies by co-option. Applicants will have up to 5 minutes to address council should they wish to. Application forms are available from the clerk using the email address above.

24/010 Declaration of Office

New members are required to sign the declaration of acceptance of office prior to taking their seat.

24/011

Committees

To consider nominations to restore The Planning and Finance & Resources Committees to previously agreed numbers. Council may wish to defer a decision until at least some of the current vacancies are filled. The planning committee have yet to meet. To agree a forward diary for the planning committee for remainder of 23/2

24/012

Council Policies

To consider approval of the following policies and amendments.

- a) Safeguarding Policy
- b) Document Retention Policy
- c) Council is asked to consider signing up to the National Association Local Councils (NALC) Respect Agenda. With over 1000 councils already signed up to the Civility & Respect Pledge it sets out how councillors, staff, partner agencies and the public interact with each other. The Full pledge is at the end of this agenda.

24/013

Banking Mandate

Council to approve an updated banking mandate (enc. 23/013) from the clerk in regard to all council accounts and investment accounts. As soon as possible amend the number of signatories on the:

Lloyds Current account & Lloyds First Reserve Account to minimum of 8 Cllrs (up from 5)

To nominate 3 Cllrs as signatories to The Melton Building Society and Cambridge & Counties Bank.

Financial Regulations (5.5), authorises the Clerk/RFO to make urgent payments if they meet certain criteria. Such payments are reported to the next full council or finance committee. A Council authorised payment by cheque or online requires 2 Cllrs to authorise payment. Online banking allows the Clerk/RFO to comply with 5.5 but the mandate doesn't reflect this. Council is asked to consider Financial Regulations and approving a change to the bank mandate by resolving the following:

Section 5.5 of The Financial Regulations allow the Clerk/RFO to make urgent payments if there is a risk to council of delaying payment. The banking mandate to be aligned with Finance Regulations 5.5 allowing the Clerk/RFO to make urgent payments via online banking. Such payments will be limited to 12 in any 12-month period with a single payment not exceeding £1,000.

24/014

Allotment Fees and Charges

The Finance & Resources committee (F&R) considered financial options for the allotments provided by the Parish Council. F&R resolved to recommend the following changes to the allotment fees:

The annual rent, currently £17 per full plot should be abolished commencing January 2024. The £25 returnable deposit scheme should be amended to a non-refundable payment of £50 p.a. per allotment holding. Existing allotment holders will be expected to bring the £25 in place up to £50 within the calendar year. There is a significant amount of administration in processing annual renewals and processing individual payments and

the loss of revenue is minimal when offset against the administration and general health benefits. Report attached.

24/015 Draft Budget 2024/2025

To consider the draft budget from the Finance & Resources Committee.

24/016 Direct Debit Payments

Financial regulations (6.7) allow for the use of direct debits for utilities and similar regular payments. They are still subject to monthly reporting and reviewed annually by resolution. With new premises it is practical to use Direct Debits for utilities and other similar payments. Sect. 6.7 requires 2 members to sign a DD mandate.

To further minimise financial risk Council is asked to approve by resolution the following regular payees be paid by Variable Direct Debit to

- EDF Energy
- British Gas
- Ionos (web domain host)
- Hugo Fox (website host)
- Cloudy IT (office365 support)
- Smarty Mobile (office broadband)

24/017 Account Balances and Schedule of payments.

Council to note.

Account Balances as at 05/01/2024

Lloyds Business Acc xxxxx860	£55,324.30
Lloyds BB Inst Acc xxxxx260	£44,239.68

Most recent balance data

Melton Building Soc.	£ 33,428.98
Cambridge & Counties	£ 23,026.17

Invoices Paid by Standing Order*/Previously approved:

Evis Ground Maintenance (October)	£ 750.00*
Bank charges	£ 8.70
Cloudy IT Monthly M/Soft 365 Licence fee x11	£ 60.68*
Stable Print November Newsletter	£ 210.00
Reimburse Lyn Foley Fire safe for office (reissue chq)	£ 257.98
Donation Leonardo (AWASA)	£ 100.00
Public Works Loan Boar HYFC Loan (November)	£4,774.85

Total **£6,162.21**

Payments to be noted/agreed by resolution

(1) Authorised by finance committee

(Standing orders/salary pre resolved)*

Somerset Council-	Lengths-man scheme (Full Year)	£ 3,844.70
Stable Print *	Dec Newsletters	£ 210.00*
Evis GM *	Nov Ground Maintenance	£ 750.00 *
Cloudy IT *	Office 365	£ 60.68 *
Royal British Legion(1)	Wreath	£ 100.00

Salary Payment	Clerk(1) Interim Payment	£2,000.00*
	Sub total	<u>£6,965.38</u>

December Payments for noting (regular payments pre approved)
(Payment Made under 5.5 Financial Regulations)

		B/F	£3120.68
Evis GM	December Ground Maintenance		£750.00*
Cloudy IT	Office 365 user licences		£ 60.68*
Stable Print	January Newsletter		£ 210.00*
Lloyds Bank	Service Charges		£ 8.70*
EDF Energy(2)	Unit 7 utility		£ 188.50
	<u>Total payments (Oct-Dec)</u>		<u>£4,338.56</u>

24/017-1 Financial Regulations-Urgent Payment

Council asked to note the following payment authorised by RFO

Payment made 09/01/24
HMRC PAYE Underpayment 2022/23 &
RT1 Payment 2023/24.
£522,53

24/018 Debit Card

A previous resolution of council agreed to obtain a Debit Card linked to the Councils current account, Council asked to note or may wish to re-approve this action under Para 6.18 Financial Regulations. The Clerk is the only permitted user with a transaction limit of £500 unless authorised in advance by Council.

24/019 Financial Software

The Council resolved to purchase the Scribe Financial software package. It also resolved to purchase the allotment package. The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) is required to ensure appropriate processes are in place to manage the council's finances. It is the recommendation of the Clerk that the allotment package be dismissed, Council asked to note the Scribe Accounts software Package has been purchased but without the allotment management software.

One off setup charge: £479.00
Monthly subscription: £55.00

The monthly charge include access to Training, additional users, daily back up and accounting support. A cloud-based system members will be able to view the latest financial position. This software is considered an industry leader and saves officer time generating the various reports required under the council's audit regime. Saving 50 minutes Clerk time per week would cover the total annual subscription.

24/020 Motion to Exclude the Press & Public

Owing to the nature of the following items the press and public are to be excluded as public discussion of these items would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential/sensitive nature of the business to be transacted.
Sec.1 The Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960.

24/021 Major Spending Review

The uncertainty surrounding future service provision requires council to consider its current spending including grant allocations for this and the coming years. It is recommended a medium to long term view is taken focusing on value for money, community need for services and savings to increase available funding. Consider changes to the EMR balances ensuring they are fit for purpose.

Members will receive a confidential paper in advance of the meeting.

24/022 Correspondence

Council to consider a report sent to council and other items of correspondence received.

Members will receive a confidential paper in advance of the meeting.

To note date of next meeting **TBA**