

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL (via ZOOM) MEETING OF RODE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON
TUESDAY 7TH JULY AT 11.00 am**

UNCONFIRMED

Present:

Cllr Peter Travis – Chair (PT) Cllr Terry Morrow (TM) Cllr Pat Banwell (PB) Cllr Ann Edney (AE)
Cllr Andrew Hooker (AH) Cllr Elaine Butler (EB) Cllr Steve Eyles (SE) Cllr Pat Restorick

In attendance: Cllr Linda Oliver – County Councillor, Cllr Barbi Lund – District Councillor, Hugh Williams – Clerk, and 7 members of the public

1. Public Participation:

All the Parishioners present had joined the meeting to discuss the possible housing developments in the village. The Chairman gave an overview of the current situation pointing out that currently there were no planning applications submitted to Mendip. He said that there would be (subject to PC approval) a public meeting on Friday 17 July in the playing field at which a presentation would be made outlining the plans for the Merfield/Mead site and there would be probably one later in July or August at which the Barbara's Field development would be outlined.

Concerns were expressed that the Barbara's Field development could also include Brown's Ground and the Paddock, this, if so, would be a very large development. It was not thought this was the case but possibly a part of Brown's Ground could be included in the plans for maybe around 46 houses. This development was also likely to include 3 houses along Church Lane to infill the gaps on this side of the road.

All the Parishioners expressed considerable concerns over the impact any major development would have on the village infrastructure, in particular on the roads, which were considered inadequate to cope with increased traffic. If the 2 possible developments (possibly around 70 properties) went ahead the character of Rode would change and it would become more like a small town and not a village.

The conservation of the village heritage was seen as important and development at Merfield would result in the loss of the last rural entry into the village. Additionally, building there would be visible from Woolverton, Norton St Philip and the A36. It was again pointed out the Merfield site had been identified as a possible solution to the Inspector's Report on the Mendip Local Plan Part 2 for an additional 26 properties in Rode, but this would be challenged at the forthcoming hearings in September.

There was a strong feeling that English Heritage and Mendip should be made aware of the village feeling against any development; however, with no current actual planning application it was advised this might not be of great value; and it could be better to get concerns agreed ready for any application. However, some Parishioners argued that an objection in principle to any development be made now.

2. Apologies for absence: None

3. Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd June 2020: The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. Report from County Councillor: It was reported that work would start on Bradford Road on 13 July. The SALC report on 'One Somerset' had been circulated and discussions were ongoing (see also 11 below).

5. Report from District Councillor: It was reported that all the Mendip open air markets were now operating again (but not the Frome Independent). Information had been made available that village halls

could now reopen, but it was thought any activity such as singing or exercise (which would raise breathing rate) were not allowed. Thorough cleaning would be required and social distancing maintained. There was discussion over whether Parish Council meetings could be held in the main hall at the village hall, but it was agreed that at present this would not be possible. Maybe an outside physical meeting could be held if major planning applications were to be discussed as to do this via Zoom would be very difficult.

6. Actions from the previous meeting:

- i. **Church Lane verges:** These had now been cut back but it was agreed they really needed to be cut back further into the bank and some of the bank removed from the pavement.
- ii. **Signs on Rode Hill:** These were partially obscured and too high for anyone in the village to cut back. It was agreed the Clerk would approach Somerset Highways on this issue and the Church Lane verge.
- iii. **Clay Lane verges:** These had been cut back on one side but the other side still required cutting back.
- iv. **Pediment on High Street:** The Clerk reported that the owners had agreed to get this repaired and the work should start in the next few weeks and would involve scaffolding the pediment and closing the path by the Brewery Tower while work was done.
- v. **Lengthsman:** The Chairman agreed to liaise with Beckington and Norton St Philip and hopefully use a firm based in Beckington. A proposal would be put forward at the next meeting to agree minimum number days and the day rate.

7. Highways issues: In addition to the Bradford Road works there had been a number of complaints from residents about speeding traffic on the A361 between Bradford Road and the Church Farm site. It was agreed the Clerk would request Somerset County Council to gather speed and volume data on this stretch of the A361.

8. Planning matters

a. New applications:

- i. **2020/0973/FUL:** Erection of 2 bed single storey dwelling house and associated works – rear of 16 Lower Street; there were no objections and this would be left to the Planning Officer.
- ii. **2020/1061/HSE:** Erection of single storey front and rear extensions – 18 The Mead; there were no objections but it was noted a mains water stopcock was on the site so must still be accessible, left to Planning Officer
- iii. **2020/1091FUL:** Change of use from agricultural to leisure including construction of fishing lake, 3 holiday accommodation lets and associated landscaping – off Rode Hill/A361; there were no objections and this would be left to Planning Officer.

b. Mendip decisions:

None

9. Church Farm access to village/footpaths and playing field: The S106 agreement (legally binding) for the development of the Church Farm site required 3 paths from the site to the village. One was along the existing footpath to the Brewery site (down steep steps), another was out the back of the Church Farm site behind the houses on Church Lane to the playing field emerging by the children's play area, and the third was out to Church Lane. There were concerns that the route to the Brewery site and to Church Lane were not suitable for pushchairs or disability vehicles due to steps or narrow pavements. The flat route to access the playing field would be made of 'hoggin' compressed stones and clay (similar to paths at e.g. Stourhead).

Concerns were expressed that the path accessing the playing field could make it easy for dogs to access the playing field and also would invalidate the playing field insurance. Also, if events took place on the field this path could provide access and negate security.

It was agreed that the Church Farm site must not become isolated from the village centre. Further discussions agreed that the path to the playing field would need to be fenced to prevent dogs getting off the path and that a lockable gate would need to be put on the path which could be closed if events were being held on the playing field. Autograph Homes had agreed to fence this path and would be asked to provide a lockable gate. Maintenance of the path would be the responsibility of the Church Farm site and the Parish Council agreed to maintain the portion running through the playing field.

10. Housing schemes: The Parish Council agreed to hold a presentation on the proposals for the Merfield/The Mead development at 7.00pm on Friday 17th July in the playing field. Numbers would be limited due to current Covid19 requirements.

Rode, Beckington and Norton St Philip were pushing back against the Inspector's report to build over 500 houses in NE Mendip and would be making their case at the Hearings starting on 22 September.

11. One Somerset: There were proposals under the local government reorganisation for a single authority to cover Somerset with the removal of the district authorities. There were concerns that Taunton was even more remote than Shepton Mallet, and although more powers might be given to Parish Councils, small ones such as Rode could be disadvantaged. It was agreed PT would represent Rode on online discussions to be held on 20 July.

12. Website accessibility: It would be checked whether the new requirements applied to small Councils such as Rode prior to any compliance checks being carried out.

13. Recycling changes: SWP is introducing changes to what can be recycled and Mendip will be the first area to see the changes. Mail shots are planned to inform residents but wider publicity will be done through The Link, village Facebook etc. It will be difficult in the current situation to get the changes across as ideally a presentation to residents would be best. PT agreed to act as champion for this.

14. Financial matters

i) The Clerk reported that the AGAR return had been made with Rode claiming exemption under the smaller authority exemption.

ii) The VAT reclaim for last year had been submitted to HMRC and the refund was awaited.

iii) The following payments were agreed:

SALC Subscription £288.95

Eagle Grounds Maintenance £725.12

SALC (Financial Training for Clerk) £30.00

Clerk salary and expenses £218.85

HMRC PAYE £53.60

Peter Travis (Zoom subscription) £14.39

The Parish Council had received the annual allotment rent (£50.00) for its allotment. The current bank balance was just over £50,000.

iv) Clarifications were made to the asset register and further checks would be made regarding flags and documents.

15. Other matters: Autograph Homes would be approached about the temporary path onto the A361 which had been promised but was not yet put in place.

16. Items for next agenda / Items to Report:

Discussion on 5G was deferred to a later meeting of the PC.

The PC would consider the possibility of changing the steps from the footpath into the Brewery site to a ramp.

The walking and cycling manifesto was noted but concerns were expressed that this was receiving attention at the expense of public transport.

Lengthsman proposal to be put forward for consideration.

The Meeting closed at 1.30 pm.

Signed _____

Date: _____

Print: _____

Date of Next Meeting (virtual via Zoom): Tuesday 4th August 2020 at **7.30 pm**

Website: rodeparishcouncil.webs.com