

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL (via ZOOM) MEETING OF RODE PARISH COUNCIL HELD
ON TUESDAY 1st SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 7.30 pm**

UNCONFIRMED

Present:

Cllr Peter Travis – Chair (PT) Cllr Ann Edney (AE) Cllr Elaine Butler (EB) Cllr Steve Eyles (SE)
Cllr Pat Restorick (PR)

In attendance: Cllr Linda Oliver – County Councillor, Cllr Barbi Lund – District Councillor, Hugh Williams – Clerk, and 8 members of the public

1. Public Participation:

Concern was expressed over the statement read out on behalf of David James at the last meeting where it was felt the statement had not recognised the Rode Neighbourhood Plan and that it was more of a statement of what the village should accept. It was proposed that any planning application should be delayed until after the Inspector's Hearings on the Mendip Local Plan Part 2 were held. Also 23 letters of objection had been sent to the Parish Council (Clerk said this was now 25 letters). The Chairman pointed out that Mendip had not got a 5-year housing plan. The housing shortage had identified NE Mendip as an area for 505 extra houses to meet this shortage with Merfield identified by Mendip as a place for a minimum of 26 houses, this was being challenged at the Hearings but it still did not preclude any developer proposing development there.

It was reported that David James had agreed to speak to the PC again over the planning application before submitting the application to Mendip, which was ready for submission. It was clarified that as part of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) the PC had to ask landowners about their plans for housing development; but this was not to encourage them to build only to hear what they might do. As part of the NP these possible developments were put to the Rode residents and all were rejected. The plans for Merfield in the NP were very different (5-7 properties close to Merfield House) to the plans now proposed (29 houses near The Mead). There had been other discussions regarding development around Merfield and parishioners expressed their concern that no minutes of these meetings were available as it was believed plans for more than original the 5-7 properties had been discussed. It was agreed minutes would be taken of any further meeting with any developer. Parishioners were keen that the PC took the front foot with any development of Barbara's Field especially regarding drainage, water springs on the site and the impact of any development might have on the village. The Chairman said that the PC could investigate employing an independent drainage/water expert to look into the situation regarding Barbara's Field; it was commented that historical records of this area should also be included in any investigation as it was thought springs and ponds existed on the site.

The question over who would be responsible for the maintenance of the proposed attenuation ponds on the Barbara's Field and Browns Ground development was raised; it was thought this would be through a management company for the site but this would need to be clarified before any development took place.

The PC has already agreed to employ an independent traffic expert to assess traffic within Rode and the impact of both Merfield/The Mead and Barbara's Field developments. This would also include the speed watch data that have been gathered already.

2. Apologies for absence: None

3. Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2020: The minutes were approved with the amendment that in minute 9 the sentence starting ‘Nigel Clarke reported...’ should read ‘Nigel Clarke, as Chair of the Playing Field Trustees had been invited to the meeting to answer questions on the letter submitted to the Parish Council, reported...’ and signed by the Chairman.

4. Councillors: The Chairman reported that 3 Councillors had stood down since the last meeting, one only yesterday. He thanked them all for the work they had done, especially Pat Banwell for her 10 years on the PC working on the Neighbourhood Plan, acting as both co-chair and also clerk and the many other duties she selflessly took on. Special thanks were also given to Terry Morrow for his work acting as co-chair and helping with the Neighbourhood Plan and recently all the work he had done putting together Rode’s submission for the Inspector’s Hearings. Lastly Andy Hooker was thanked for returning to the PC when short of members and for his contributions.

The Clerk said that although applications had been received from people to become Parish Councillors none could be co-opted at this meeting as there was a requirement to put up notices informing people of the vacancies and allowing 14 days (excluding weekends and bank holidays) within which people could approach Mendip to ask for a ballot. Although this was extremely unlikely the first period was not up until 4 September. Co-option would take place at the next meeting.

Ann Edney (with help from Elaine Butler) would now be the key contact for planning issues.

5. Report from County Councillor: The most important thing to come out from Somerset was the establishment of a £1 million community fund to help Somerset become carbon neutral. Bids could be submitted for this money from 1 October and it was suggested this was advertised in Rode for residents to come forward with ideas to help Rode become carbon neutral.

5. Report from District Councillor: The £1 million fund from Somerset was welcomed. She also reported that an update on the new Mendip waste collection scheme had been put into the September issue of The Link (also, on the PC website). There was an ongoing debate over the future of Somerset as a unitary authority and the District Councils had put forward proposals for two unitary authorities to cover Somerset.

[See: <http://onesomerset.org.uk> for the single Somerset Unitary Authority
And www.strongersomerset.co.uk for the two unitary authorities for Somerset]

6. Highways issues:

i) Cllr Oliver reported that the speed, volume and vehicle type survey on the A361 near Church Farm was due to start later this month, although traffic may not be up to pre-lockdown levels. It was thought the previous data gathered about 3 years ago could also be used.

She added that SCC had agreed to redo the road markings and speed roundels on this stretch of road in dry weather. She asked for approval from the PC that the proposals

met its requirements; the PC agreed they did. The installation of the gateways was being progressed and the cost of these would be met by Autograph Homes, this also included moving the 40mph sign back to near the Parkgate Lane junction.

- ii) 20mph speed limit through the village had been raised however it was reported that previous surveys had revealed speeding was not a regular occurrence in the village and therefore the PC would have to pay for any signs etc. to be installed. It was suggested that possibly any developer could be asked as a condition that they made a contribution to implementing a speed limit; either through a Section 106 or Section 278 (*Under section 278 of the Highways Act 1980, a local highways authority can enter into a legal agreement with a developer (in order to facilitate development) for the developer to either pay for, or make alterations or improvements to, the highway.*)

It was reported that Frome was installing pollution monitors in the town and for a modest outlay these could be installed in Rode.

7. Actions from the previous meeting:

- i. **Lengthsman:** Jason Macey had agreed to take up the role of Lengthsman for Rode. He is already working as Lengthsman for Beckington and Norton St Philip. A specification of work had been drawn up. There was some discussion over the use of weed killers round the village and feedback on this was requested.
The initial contract would be for a 3-month trial and he would be expected to work 26 days/year – roughly 2 days/month, it was hoped he could start next week.
- ii. **Church Lane verges:** This was to be looked at by the Lengthsman.
- iii. **Fussell's drain on Straight Lane:** The Clerk had approached Andy Fussell on this issue, he had replied saying he would look into this but thought the drain might be in the road, in which case he could not do anything about it.
- iv. **Website accessibility:** The Clerk reported that a company had been employed (with PC approval) to assess the PC website as part of the legislation that was coming into force later this month. An accessibility statement would be prepared along with a report on any action required.

8. Planning matters

a. New applications:

2020/1540/TCA: Felling of 2 sycamore trees, reduction of height of another and felling of a pine tree – The Old Coach House, 1A Rode Hill. No objections, leave to Planning Officer.

b. Mendip decisions:

2020/0586/HSE and 2020/0587/LBC: Internal and external alterations including erection of single-storey rear extension – 13 High Street. Approved with conditions

2020/0973/FUL: Erection of two bed dwelling house and associated work – behind 16 Lower Street. Approved with conditions

2020/1061/HSE: Erection of single storey front and rear extensions – 18 The Mead. Approved with conditions

2020/1370/TCA: Felling of bay trees – 5 Langham Place. Approved no TPO required.

c. Other planning matters:

Merfield development: SE was to contact David James to arrange a further meeting regarding the possible development near The Mead. It was agreed AE and EB would join him in the virtual meeting. Minutes of the meeting would be taken. There was discussion over what might be asked for at this meeting, however there was concern that if something was asked for and David James agreed to it then it could be interpreted that the PC would then back the planning application.

Barbara's Field: Andy Fussell had presented outline plans at a public meeting in the playing field on 20th August with about 50 parishioners present. Further requests were made that the PC engage a water/drainage consultant as historical plans indicated that there were springs and ponds on the site and building could alter the water table and result in damage to nearby houses. Drainage from this site could probably affect the whole village. A traffic consultant was being employed by the PC and data from previous surveys would be given to him. It was agreed to check with him whether he would accept input from individuals.

9. Church Farm access to village/footpaths and playing field: This still had to be progressed and EB agreed to meet with Nigel Clarke and Autograph Homes.

10. Inspector's Hearing: These had now been delayed until mid to late October. Rode had submitted its response to the Inspector and it was agreed this would be posted on the PC website and on Facebook. The PC endorsed Terry Morrow as a representative at the Hearings and he and PT would attend.

11. Multi-use paths: Mendip is holding a series of virtual meetings with parish councils to discuss plans to link villages and towns with multi-use (walking and cycling) paths. PT (and possibly District Councillor) agreed to represent Rode.

12. Somerset Unitary Authority: Somerset County Council was proposing a single Unitary Authority to cover the whole county and the District Councils had put forward an alternative proposal for two Authorities covering East and West Somerset. There were to be a couple of virtual presentations on the two-authority proposition to be held in September and PT would attend one. Some concern was expressed over a single Unitary Authority as this would be based in Taunton and Somerset was partnering with Devon on a number of initiatives so Rode in the east of the county could become very remote to any authority.

13. Financial matters

i) The Clerk said that with the resignations there were now only two signatories left on the bank account and once the PC was back to full strength new signatories would need to be added to the account. Pat Banwell had also been the chief account contact for the bank and it was agreed that Ann Edney would become the new chief contact.

ii) The following payments were agreed:

Zoonou (for website accessibility)	£660.00
Terry Morrow (postage)	£22.89
Eagle Grounds Maintenance	£725.12
Clerk salary and expenses	£242.75

HMRC PAYE	£60.80
Peter Travis (Zoom subscription)	£14.39
SALC (planning training)	£90.00

14. Any other business: The issue of ultra-fast broadband was raised as previous plans for Rode had now been shelved. Voneus and Truespeed would be approached on this, as the increase in people working from home and the new houses at Church Farm had increased the need for an upgrade in the village.

Due to Covid 19 the D2 bus service through the village would be limited to 22 passengers instead of the normal capacity of 60. It was agreed that a survey of villagers could be conducted on bus use to see what impact this might have.

The Meeting closed at 10.05 pm.

Signed _____

Date: _____

Print: _____

Date of Next Meeting (virtual via Zoom): Tuesday 6th October 2020 at **7.30 pm**

Website: rodeparishcouncil.webs.com