

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF RODE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN RODE MEMORIAL HALL
ON MONDAY 11th DECEMBER 2023 AT 7.30 pm**

CONFIRMED

Present:

Cllr Mike Salmon (MS) – Chair, Cllr Ann Edney (AE), Cllr Peter Travis (PT), Cllr Jim McAuliffe (JM), Cllr Jonathan Bowler (JB), Cllr Pat Restorick (PR) and Cllr Moira Punt (MP).

In attendance: Hugh Williams – Clerk, Cllr Adam Boyden (County Councillor) and 5 parishioners.

1. Parishioners Participation: The principal concerns of all Parishioners present were the proposed solar farm and in particular its size and the use of Monkley Lane as an access road. It was agreed that this planning application would be moved up the agenda.

2. Apologies for absence: Cllr A Pickett and Cllr D Denton (County Councillor)

3. Approval of the minutes: The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 13th November were approved.

4. Declarations of interest: None.

5. Planning:

2023/2183/FUL: Construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic farm with battery storage and associated infrastructure, including inverters, security cameras, fencing, access tracks and landscaping.

The Chair outlined the comments that had been received by Somerset, apart from 27 comments from Rode residents (26 opposed, 1 neutral) there had been comments from a number of statutory consultees. There were no major concerns from: Environment (no noise concerns), Somerset Archaeology (apart from one possible barrow), and Highways (apart from need for improved access/egress from the site off A361. Local Lead Flood Authority required improved drainage and plans for heavy rainfall events, the Somerset Landscape Officer did not object but required black panels and improved screening of the ‘farm’ along with the removal of much of the triangular area near Rode on the road to Wingfield. There were objections from Somerset Conservation over impact on listed buildings and supports Somerset CPRE objection which said the ‘farm’ was too large and too close to the village and would impact on it, along with other solar farms in the area this was too many; there was insufficient information and in particular lack of safety regarding the batteries.

The principal local concerns were the use of Monkley Lane for construction and, also for future access to both the site and the batteries and inverters, the scale of the proposed solar farm and concern over the lack of detail provide. Discussion over the Parish Council (PC) declaring a climate emergency and possible counter action of not supporting a solar farm. Additionally, concerns were expressed over the lack of benefits to the village itself. However, with the Climate Emergency Group also having concerns over the proposal it was agreed that the PC would submit an objection with comments. These comments would centre on, scale of solar farm and the impact on the character of Rode, use of Monkley Lane, lack of detail on a number of issues and in particular on the safety of the batteries.

Information was given to the meeting that Somerset was working on a renewable energy plan for the county but this would not be ready until sometime in 2024.

It was reported that the amount of financial remuneration being offered to the PC was very low when compared to other solar farms and the PC would require further negotiations with Low Carbon on this.

6. County Councillors Report: The LCN had recently met and had discussed road safety, this had given a chance to raise the two fatal accidents on the A361 and the delay in implementing a 30mph limit on this stretch of road. This had been taken on board and the TRO for the 30mph limit on the A361 and 20mph limit in the village should now be issued by 21 December.

The replacement sites for consultation on where to build the 505 houses arising from the shortfall to meet the Local Plan Part 2 should be issued soon. It was though none of the sites would be in Rode, Beckington or Norton St Philip.

A public consultation on the Somerset budget for next year was now open: <https://somersetcouncil.citizenspace.com/comms/budget-consultation-2024-2025/> This is open to all to gauge people's priorities and everyone was encouraged to look at this.

7. Actions from previous meeting:

- i. **Grass cutting:** The Clerk reported that Tony Jones had accepted the cutting of the village grass for 2024, however a contract was to be drafted by Cllr A Pickett and sent to him for agreement.
- ii. **Paths at playing field:** Following the meeting of the Playing Field Committee it had been agreed to cut through the fence and put in a path to join up with the concrete path from the skate board area. A sign asking people to keep dogs on short leads would be put in place. It was agreed to progress with this and instal a scalping path.

8. Climate Change Group: The Group had recently met and submitted comment on the proposed solar farm development.

9. Highways issues:

- i. **Street Lights Turn off:** A new questionnaire outline possible extent of the turn off at midnight had been prepared and members of the PC agreed to circulate this to all Parishioners.
- ii. **SIDs:** JB reported on the new automatic SIDs which could be put in place and made continuous recordings during daylight hours. These new devices would help avoid confrontations between the Speedwatch team and motorists and the data provision could be used by the police to approach persistent speeders. It was agreed to make the purchase of one automatic SID for use on Bradford Road and Rode Hill. Avon and Somerset Police have still not taken the initiative to sponsor these.

10. Planning:

i) New applications:

2023/2187/FUL: See above under 5).

ii) Somerset decisions:

2023/2036/TCA: Fell apple tree and reduce another by 1m to leave a height and lateral branch length of 3m – 13 High Street. Approved

11. Website: The new website was now live and thanks were expressed to JM for his work on it. More of the village history still had to be transferred over. Zonkey would be approached to give access to other people. JB requested access to update the Hoedown section, he reported the last Hoedown had collected a lot of litter and it was questioned what could be done to try and stop people just throwing litter from vehicles. This would be considered early next year.

12. Any other business:

i) Trees behind school: It was noted that leaves etc. from these were possibly blocking the culvert behind the school. Some had been pollarded and the culvert would be inspected.

ii) Christmas tree: The PC expressed its gratitude to the Osbornes for supplying the tree on the green. (Clerk to thank on behalf of the PC).

iii) Somerset Bus Partnership: PT reported that the Bus Partnership was asking Parish Councils for support; the official request would follow. The meeting agreed to donate £100 to the Partnership.

13. Financial matters:

i. Annual donations: These would be reviewed and payments made in January.

ii. Payments: The following payments were agreed:

Clerk Salary (including back pay)	£399.79
HMRC PAYE	£99.40
Perry Landscapes	£95.00
Darren Haine (Unity Printworks)	£22.00

14. Date of next meeting:

The next meeting would be held in the Committee Room at the Memorial Hall on: **Monday 15th January at 7.30pm** (A pre-meeting PC starting at 7.00pm for Councillors only will be held to review the Rode Neighbourhood Plan)

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

Signed

Date

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