

Minutes of the Meeting of Severn Stoke & Croome d'Abitot Parish Council Wednesday 29th November 2023, 7.30pm At Croome Court SOQ meeting room

Parish Councillors Present:	Cllr Larry Freeman (Chair) Cllr Susan Faulkner (Deputy Chair) Cllr Royston Garrard Cllr Richard Hill Cllr Pat Preston Cllr Nicola Sumner Cllr Ray Williams	(rep for Croome parish ward) (rep for Severn Stoke parish ward) (rep for Croome parish ward) (rep for Severn Stoke parish ward)
Also in Attendance:	Mrs L Stevens (Clerk and RFO). County Cllr Martin Allen. District Cllr John Michael. Parish Cllr Neil Stevens (Vice Chair, Kempsey Parish Council). L.H (Parish Hall Committee). M.F (National Trust). O. Bishop (National Trust). S.S (Lengthsman). Paul Jones (EA). 2 members of the public. <i>The meeting commenced at 7.32pm</i>	
Apologies:	District Cllr David Harrison. J.H (St Denys').	
Absent	Cllr Lee Russell	

1.	Introduction, apologies and points of order There are currently 4 vacancies on this parish council, (1 in the Croome parish ward and 5 in the Severn Stoke parish ward). The quorum of this council is that 4 parish cllrs must be present for the meeting to proceed. Apologies as above duly accepted.	
2.	Declarations of Interest. Nil new.	
3.	Flood bund - Latest update available. <i>This represents a rearranging of the published agenda</i> Report from Paul Jones (EA). There will be some site clearance before bird nesting season and to avoid bat nesting (evidence of which is nearby). There will be further environmental works in the early spring, with construction planned for straight after. Good options are being explored with contractors – currently at the expression of interest stage with 11 contractors, all at the £3million mark via a DEFRA prescribed tender process. The official tender will be distributed in the 1 st half of December 2023. Newts are not able to be relocated to Kempsey but thank you to the residents that offered to help in this. Fencing on site will be maintained and left on site. Site at village hall could be used by contractors and Paul will pass this option on. <i>Questions from Councillors – all answers of which are combined in the above.</i>	
Public open forum. <i>Standing Orders suspended. Residents provided with guideline notes on each seat prior to meeting commencement. Nil questions. Standing orders reinstated.</i>		
4.	Co-option for unfilled vacancies x 4. Nil candidates stepped forward.	
5.	Minutes <i>To receive and consider approval of the minutes of the previous meeting.</i> - 27 th September 2023. Duly approved. Prps: LF. Scnd: PP.	
6.	Councillors' Reports <i>To discuss and formulate Motions not requiring written notice.</i> All present joined in wishing District Councillor David Harrison the very best and look forward to his return to duties in the near future.	

6. **Councillors' Reports** continued

Cont

a. **CCllr Martin Allen.**



Residents are reminded to use **Worcestershire's On Demand bus service** launched earlier this year, to provide a public transport service where vehicles travel on demand rather than using fixed routes and timetables. The buses, provide a service for areas including Upton upon Severn, Kempsey, Hanley Swan, Hanley Castle, Longdon, Bushley and Welland. Passengers can also travel to points of interest (eg. Malvern Community Hospital, Malvern railway stations and Malvern Retail Park). More local destinations include St Peters Tescos, Aldi, Countryside Centre, St Peter's Garden Centre and County Hall (WCC).

It runs from **7am until 7pm Monday to Saturday (not Sundays) and is currently free to use.** This On Demand service is set to expand in the new year, to offer many more journeys across the district and beyond. There will also be a small charge introduced next year, with a flat fare of £2.50 for all journeys per person, with additional passengers paying £1.25 and ticket bundles available as well as concessionary cards being accepted.

Passengers request a journey through the app or a telephone call and they are collected at an appointed time within a few metres of their location. Passengers share journeys with others. Journeys may involve a short walk to maximise route efficiency, eliminate lengthy detours, and replicate journey times in a private car.

How to book a journey

Journeys can be booked by downloading the app operated by VIA which is available on Google Play or through the Apple app store. Download the VIA app and search for 'Worcestershire on Demand'. VIA are a Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) booking service and operate the booking platform for DRT journeys for many councils across the country. Journeys can be booked in advance and repeat journeys have a reduced price when booked in block. For enquiries or for issues relating to the app, or to book a journey, please email WOD@worcestershire.gov.uk or call 01905 846180.

- Tarmac continue to explore a move to the eastern side of the A38. Issues being discussed with the county council and district council include planning for lorries crossing the main road and options for installation of traffic lights.
- Defford Mill Heavy Vehicles brown directional signs are to be installed care of WCC and Martin's divisional fund. Parish council gave thanks to Martin for this and hoped this will alleviate some of the issues that residents have been experiencing recently. Installation hopefully within the next 3 months. Any further enforcement matters in relation to this would be in the hands of the District Council.
- Clifton A38 white barriers have been fixed. Verge markers will be installed.
- Kinnersley footpath (opp. Royal Oak) will be dug out and repaired shortly.
- Severn Stoke village pavement clearance will proceed in due course, but no dates as yet.

b. **DCllr John Michael.**

- District Cllr ward budgets of £500 will be increased to £1k next year. This scheme allows councillors to assist local projects financially, support local initiatives and needs or opportunities which would also allow councillors to become more involved in their communities.

6c.	<p>Kempsey Parish Council Vice Chair Neil Stevens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Next year will mark the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings. There will be a national wide beacon lighting event and the beacon on Kempsey Common will be lit as part of this on 6th June at 9.15pm. It is currently planned that there will be food and drink and a pleasant evening atmosphere with singing of war time songs. An official invitation was passed to Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Councillors and their families. Chairman Larry Freeman gave thanks for this and is to attend the next meeting of the D-Day committee to ensure that this parish council is fully involved. 	Cllr Freeman
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7.	<p>2024/2025 Budget</p> <p>Standing orders relaxed to allow public input.</p> <p>a. Motion 1: Proposal to retain unchanged the parish council precept at £9,870 in 2024/25. Or....</p> <p>b. Motion 2: Proposal to increase the parish council precept by 2.5% in 2024/2025.</p> <p>i. The Clerk provided a financial update. In brief summary, this PC is currently on track to spend £16,800 across the whole financial year (excluding £10k transfer across bank accounts to maximise savings interest). Currently on track to receive £13,200 across the whole financial year. At beginning of 2023 financial year, the PC had £19,272.13 (total of both bank accounts). Advisable (indeed, a legal consideration) to only have twice the precept in savings. Precept (23/24) is £,9870 and so we are at that threshold. Auditor brought this up last year as a verbal future 'alert' for the PC.</p> <p>ii. Cllrs had previously considered mid-year that a £3,000/£4,000 overspend might be acceptable in light of the cost of living crisis and resident requests for a new VAS.</p> <p>iii. Regarding the VAS sign for Kinnersley, the PC had £2,525 (from previous insurance claim) in reserve but spent £3,954 at Cllr's request and agreement on a better spec unit. Likely repairs of bin and bus shelter costing £250 (excess insurance) if claimed on insurance. Street light testing (KIWA) budgeted for £350 but total costs came to £648 due to non-urgent defects found. Support for fete and also for bus services £174. Increases in insurance premiums, audit, hall legal fees etc. Likely street light repairs of £1,500 plus VAT in 2024 to one unit on Stonnall Close. Likely legal fees between £500 and £1500 for hall in early 2024. £300 A38 speed roundel invoice due in spring 2024 (Severn Bank).</p> <p>iv. There were no questions from the public.</p> <p>v. Cllrs thanked the Clerk for the briefing, had no questions and agreed to consider all options carefully and make a decision at next full council. Motions as above deferred until January 2024.</p>	Clerk & All Cllrs
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Table 1: Recent precept history for SS&CDA parish council

	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Annual precept (£)	8900	9000	9400	9870
£ increase	200	100	400	470
% increase	2.30	1.12	4.44	5.00
Approx amount (£) paid p/a per property Band D (Fluctuates according to number of eligible properties)	30.69	31.03	30.82	32.57
£ increase on previous year	0.69	0.34	-0.21	1.75

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Table 2: Options for next financial year precept

Options for future precept increase	2024/2025 option 1. No change	2024/2025 option 2. 2.5% Incr	2024/2025 option 3. 5% incr
Annual precept (£)	9,870.00	10,116.75	10,363.50
£ increase	0	716.75	963.50
% increase	0	2.5	5
Approx amount (£) paid p/a per property Band D. (Fluctuates according to number of eligible properties)	32.57	33.39	34.20
£ increase on previous year	0	0.82	1.63

8. **Planning and Enforcement**

To consider and resolve to respond to the following applications or enforcement matters. Parish councils are statutory consultees, have no powers to approve or reject planning applications and can submit 1 of 3 responses: No Objections, Support or Object, along with comments as nec.

- a. **Old Hills Footpath** – Outstanding issue of regularisation of route. Matter has been in abeyance 21 years due to WCC Footpaths team’s prioritisation system for DMMOs. *Not discussed. Move to County Cllr section at next meeting.*
- b. *Standing Item: To consider and resolve to respond, or, as required, arrange an extra-ordinary parish council meeting for planning applications received after date of publication of this agenda.*

Clerk

9. **Project updates** - *Discuss and formulate Motions not requiring written notice.*

- a. **Defford Mill Signs.**
County Cllr M. Allen arranging via divisional fund. Motion of thanks. PC allocation £300 put back into general finances.
- b. **High Green phone box**
Electrical testing progress being chased with help of DCllr D. Harrison.
- c. **High Green noticeboard.**
Cllr Freeman to order backing board and organise repairs in the warmer weather.
- d. **Kinnersley Daffodils**
Spare bulbs to be passed to Cllr Preston for use in Severn Stoke village. Cllr Williams thanked all the volunteers who have helped in Kinnersley – many have made a considerable effort and got stuck in and planted far more than they originally anticipated. The village is going to look splendid in the spring. Clerk to pass parish council thanks on via the Klinks magazine.
- e. **Damaged Litter Bins, A38 Clifton layby x 2. Update on insurance claim**
The Clerk noted that an insurance excess of £125 would be payable. **Motion:** The Clerk was instructed to claim on the insurance and to order a Glasdon Jubilee 110. Prps: LF. Scnd: RG. **Approved.**
- f. **Bus shelter, Severn Stoke A38. Update on insurance claim.**
The Clerk noted that an insurance excess of £125 would be payable. Cllrs debated seeking a quote for repair before considering claiming on insurance. Seek quotation for replacement flexi-glass Glasdon might be able to assist. **Motion** - £125 vote threshold for quote. Prps: LF. Scnd: RG. **Approved.** If quotation is less than insurance excess, then parish councillors to proceed with order and arrangement of repairs. If quotation is more - claim on insurance.
- g. **Knights Hill telegraph poles. Site visit with H.Alcock, Wayleaves Specialist, Network Services, National Grid.**
Confirmation received that none of the wooden telegraph poles on Knights Hill are the responsibility of this PC. PC has ownership of the Knights Hill light fixtures only and responsibility for maintenance therein.

Clerk

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Cllr
Freeman

Cllr
Preston

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<p>9</p> <p>h.</p> <p>i.</p> <p>j.</p> <p>k.</p>	<p>Continued - Project updates</p> <p>Defibrillator, grant outcome and next steps. Parish Council has failed in its application for funding for a defibrillator due to the lack of permanent options for installation (and as a secondary matter for electricity supply). All viable sites are still subject to the outcome of the bund construction. Severn Trent and BT Openreach have not responded to requests for exploration at their facilities in the village. Parish Cllrs reluctantly agreed to place this project on hold and remove from agenda until the bund is constructed.</p> <p>Overgrown vegetation/hedges - Clifton and Severn Stoke village. Lengthsman kindly agreed to attend and remove worst and place in brown bins. Clerk to report to Savills where applicable. Clerk to write to EA Paul Jones and ask that the hedges be maintained as previously agreed with Savills and tenants and as part of the planning permission.</p> <p>Stonnall Close, street light columns, structural test outcome. Urgent works advised by KIWA not relating to public safety. Parish Clerk has written to WCC to ask for advise and a list of contractors to approach. Cllr Freeman has inspected and noted that all lights on Stonnall Close are looking tired but that all are functioning (ie lit at night).</p> <p>Knight's Hill, resident parking problems. Cllrs had inspected the area and noted that one property is having building works done - there were a number of vehicles present associated with this. Clerk had written to residents advising them of the process for making a complaint, ideally speaking to neighbours first and, for compiling evidence. Councillors agreed that the parish council could do no more until such evidence is provided. District Councillor DH has agreed to look at option of allocating ward budget for resident parking only signs/turning area only signs to be purchased (installation would have to be conducted by the residents or placed on their own boundaries).</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>DCllrs</p>
<p>10.</p> <p>a.</p> <p>b.</p>	<p>Parish Hall - To discuss and formulate Motions not requiring written notice</p> <p>General update including AGM. Permission to demolish received on 24th October 2023. No bats were found during survey/inspection but bat boxes have been put up as required. Demolition to occur end Nov/beginning Dec and will take approx. one week for site clearance. Site will be levelled and left safe. Metal on site was subject on Tuesday to threat of theft but this was avoided via on-site presence and the gate being locked. Cllrs debated additional site security but found no additional requirements as temptation of site remains unchanged – low, with low capacity for any significant number of vehicles. Gate key combination to be provided to Lengthsman and those that volunteer to put brown bins out. Discussion as to possibility for maintaining 'acquired resident access' and residents using the site for visitor parking – possible benefits of the site looking used. Possible benefits of the Harris fencing remaining in place. Cllrs to have a site visit in January 2024 and make decision on site access, site security, site fencing and gate lock. Hall committee confirmed that theses decisions remain with the parish council. Cllr Freeman noted the desire of the PC to work proactively with the Hall committee on all things.</p> <p>Parish Council and Hall Committee joint project to clarify Hall Constitution and charity purpose in light of demolition and medium-term continuation of lease pending negotiations with Savills. May include financial motions in relation to solicitor consultation fees not exceeding £1500 net as a guideline threshold for debate.</p>	<p>Cllr Freeman</p>

<p>10</p> <p>b.</p> <p>c.</p>	<p>Continued - Hall Constitution</p> <p>Welcome to and introduction by L.H. Residents have responded positively to recent communication leaflet. PC as lease-holders and also as a joint signatory on the Hall Committee Constitution has a vested and/or naturally resulting interest (<i>Clerk's language summary</i>) in future decisions of the charity. An initial meeting will occur between Hall Committee Reps and solicitors to initiate discussions and then a second meeting will occur which will ask specific questions for response by the solicitor, which will clarify the charity's legal position, its ability to make changes to the constitution in consultation with residents and, its options for winding down the charity and putting finances into a form of trust, again in consultation with residents.</p> <p>Motion – Proposal for supporting as a joint enterprise. Prs: PP. Scnd RG. Duly carried.</p> <p>Motion – Proposal for threshold £1k PC contribution towards legal expenses. Prps: PP. Scnd: NS. Duly carried.</p> <p>To note that formal notice of demolition has been sent to the landlord St Monica Trust c/o Savills.</p> <p>Cllr Freeman has attended Savills PW and BK to discuss parish biodiversity levels and also at that time entered into informal discussions relating to hall future. Savills have noted that the hall has come down and they are not pressing the PC for any change of use of land or cessation of the lease or change to legal requirements of any kind. NB As long as the land is being used for the benefit of the parish, they are content for the status quo – and it may be for the PC to decide what this covers. Offer of site for use by County Hall and EA during bund construction would, in Savill's first glance opinion, cover this requirement.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>11.</p> <p>a.</p> <p>b.</p>	<p>Group/Committee/Other project updates <i>Along with the Motions on this agenda, to discuss and formulate Motions not requiring written notice</i></p> <p>Croome National Trust.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visitor numbers continue to increase year on year to bring levels back to pre-covid. - The Changing places application was approved by MHDC. - The application for permanent compost bin facilities remains pending discussions with MHDC. - Discussion on Christmas projects. - Wifi will be installed in the SOQ room in January 2024. - Cllrs asked the Clerk to move NT items to earlier in the agenda in the future in order to prevent delaying NT reps at meetings. - Cllrs wished NT Reps a Happy Christmas and thanked them for their continued contributions to the parish and attendance at PC meetings. <p>Lengthsman.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thank you to MHDC for their support in cleaning the roads in advance of the Remembrance Service and walk to the war memorial. The road sweeper also fortuitously was on site to help with cleaning up the broken glass at the vandalised bus shelter at Severn Stoke. Clerk to write thanks. - Gate at High Green – WCC have still not repaired. Clerk to write reminder. - Flytipping in the Severn Trent entrance gate at Kerswell Green continues to be a problem – this is just within the parish boundary. Clerk to write to Severn Trent. - Cllr Freeman to conduct site visit to Madge Hill to look at flytipping there. 	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Cllr Freeman</p>

<p>12.</p> <p>a.</p> <p>b.</p> <p>c.</p> <p>d.</p> <p>e.</p> <p>f.</p> <p>g.</p> <p>h.</p>	<p>General Finance and Admin <i>Along with Motions on this agenda, to discuss and formulate Motions not requiring written notice</i></p> <p>To consider/approve payment of accounts made in the previous month. App 1. Duly approved. Prps: RG. Scnd: RW.</p> <p>To consider/approve payment of outstanding accounts. App 2. Duly approved. Prps: SF Scnd: PP.</p> <p>To consider/approve the latest bank reconciliation. Approved. Prps: PP. Scnd: RG.</p> <p>Biodiversity Policy Requirement. Appendix 3 to the agenda. Clerk instructed to draft a questionnaire to all farmers in the parish to ask about biodiversity targets and trading. Motion: That the draft Biodiversity policy be adopted without amendment. Prps: RW. Scnd: LF. Duly approved. Cllrs did not discuss a budget for this item.</p> <p>Church funding. Levelling Up Bill is an amendment to the 1894 Act to allow other subsequent Acts to allow money to be spent. E.g., the 1957 Act will now allow the Council to spend money on church clocks and churchyard maintenance. Motion to amend current S137 policy to be used as a general grants policy through which such applications can be managed. Prps: PP. Scnd: LF. Duly approved.</p> <p>Parish Council website and logo. A .org domain is approx. £12 p.a. Website creation approx. £500 - £1k upon startup (with training sometimes included) and then annual fee thereafter. Clerk to pass to Cllrs the WCALC advice on website and Cllr Hill to consider and advise thereafter. Logo project to wait until New Year and then Cllrs to consider options for using a local illustrator or to run a competition, which will feed into website design.</p> <p>Klinks parish magazine subscription. Magazine is being discontinued and replaced a a free newspaper. Continue to submit contributions and see how it works out.</p> <p>Thank you to volunteers over pass year Councillors gave thanks to the lengthsman and all resident volunteers for a years litter picking and fly tipping reporting. £50 Chairman's allowance allocated. Prps: SF. Scnd: PP. Duly approved.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk Cllr Hill</p> <p>Cllr Freeman Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
<p>13.</p> <p>a.</p> <p>b.</p>	<p>Correspondence, dates for diary, items for future agenda.</p> <p>Carols at The Nash on Friday 1st Dec 2023 for The Friends of St Denys.</p> <p>Items to be added back to agenda once time permits. Communication strategy and Vision, including Leaflet/poster for general parish. Exploration of parish council rebranding to 'Local Community Council'. Spring 2024, High Green phone box, maintenance/refurbishment of.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>14.</p>	<p>Dates of next meeting: Please always double check meeting dates and times before attendance, as meetings may unavoidably change at short notice. Meetings venue unless otherwise stated: SOQ room, Croome National Trust Visitor Centre. Satnav: Near High Green, Worcestershire, WR8 9DW. What3 words location: ///alleyway.rescuer.perfect - Wed January 24th 2024, 7.30pm, Croome SOQ meeting room.</p>	

Contact the parish clerk if you would like to receive agendas or minutes by email.

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Appendix 1. Items already paid 2023 since last PC meeting:

(Approved under previous agenda or required payment under contract monthly)

08/10/2023	National Trust	Hire of NT S.O.Q Building annual	£210.00	£35 VAT
27/10/2023	Westcotex Ltd	VAS Kinnersley	£3,954.00	£659 VAT
18/10/2023	David Harrison	poppy wreath of £20 plus £30 donation	£50.00	0.00 VAT
18/10/2023	Mr Simon Bott	Lengthsman invoice Sept 2023	£284.95	0.00 VAT
18/10/2023	Mr Simon Bott	Parish Hall Mowing Sept 2023	£90.00	0.00 VAT
19/09/2023	MHDC	Election fee May 2023	£100.00	0.00 VAT
18/10/2023	WCALC	Training Chair	£36.00	£6.00
18/10/2023	PCC SEVERN STOKE	Church room hire 2023	£500.00	0.00 VAT
29/09/2023	Mr Simon Bott	Equipment support grant	£75.00	0.00 VAT
18/10/2023	Mrs Lisa Stevens	Expenses Oct 2023	£18.63	0.00 VAT
29/11/2023	Mrs Lisa Stevens	Clerk wage September. Standing order.	£311.84	0.00 VAT
22/11/2023	Mr Simon Bott	Lengthsman invoice Oct 2023	£286.70	0.00 VAT
27/10/2023	Npower (took over from EON)	Ums50028943, Street Lighting, Severn Stoke	£87.56	£4.17

Appendix 2. Items for payment 2023 outstanding:

KIWA Ltd	Inspection and Testing of Lighting Columns – Stonnall Close, Severn Stoke	Quote SL1571	£540 plus VAT
Mrs Lisa Stevens	Expenses Nov 2023		£16.00
Mrs Lisa Stevens	Clerk wage October 2023.		£311.84

Signed Chairman

.....Date