

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL (via ZOOM) MEETING OF RODE PARISH COUNCIL HELD
ON TUESDAY 5th JANUARY 2021 AT 7.30 pm**

UNCONFIRMED

Present:

Cllr Peter Travis – Chair (PT), Cllr Ann Edney (AE), Cllr Elaine Butler (EB), Cllr Steve Eyles (SE), Cllr Jim McAuliffe (JM), Cllr Andy Pickett (AP), Cllr Mike Salmon (MS)

In attendance: Cllr B Lund, Cllr L Oliver, Hugh Williams – Clerk, and 5 members of the public

1. Public Participation:

Thanks were given to those who had attended the Inspector's Hearings into the Mendip Local Plan Part 2 at the end of November and start of December. However, some concern was expressed over a comment made by DLA Piper that although the Merfield site was totally inappropriate for housing development Barbara's Field site might be more suitable. It was agreed this was unfortunate but as no planning application had been received for Barbara's Field the PC had been advised by the Monitoring Officer that it could not make any comment on it. Comment was made that Barbara's Field could have considerable historic importance with a possible ancient settlement, Roman remains and the site of a clay pipe factory and it would be helpful if the landowner could give access for further investigation by the village.

There was continued speeding through the village and this had been an issue for the last 10 years; a request was made for the PC to investigate the speed and volume of traffic through the village and take any action to alleviate the problem.

2. Apologies for absence: Cllr Pat Restorick

3. Approval of the minutes: The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 1st December 2020 were approved.

4. Declarations of interest: None. The Clerk added that Mendip had today updated their website to include information on the three new Councillors.

5. Report from County Councillor: Cllr Oliver said that the Somerset weekly information emails on Covid were useful and anyone could sign up to receive them. Cases were increasing hence the new 'lockdown' although Mendip was currently showing one of the lowest increases in cases. Somerset was looking for people to help with the vaccination programme and it was agreed this request would be put on the Rode Village Facebook page. Recycling centres remained open but people were encouraged to keep their waste, if possible, until the lockdown ended.

On the speed data on the A361, although difficult to interpret, she advised that once Patrick Moss had been consulted any comments and questions be sent directly to Somerset Highways.

If Rode wanted any traffic calming measures installed, the PC should approach Traffic Management; although current data did not support the need for it and a case would have to be made for reduced speed in the village. She warned that when traffic calming was put in Norton there were more complaints about the lighting (legally required) than about the previous speed of traffic. On the issue of repeater signs on Rode Hill these should be progressed as all data showed there was

speeding on this road and that maybe roundels on the road would be most effective. The issue should be taken forward to Traffic Management.

6. Report from District Councillor: No report for this meeting.

7. Actions from the previous meeting:

- i. **Weed control:** Closing roads in the village would probably necessitate a cost and also 12-week notice would be required. The Chair said he had spoken to Clive Harrington regarding cleaning the roads, which he agreed were in a poor condition with mud and weeds. This would be the best time of the year to 'scrub' the roads in the village and his company could do the work. It was agreed that a quote for the work should be obtained and possibly a road selected for 'scrubbing'. PT agreed to take this forward.
- ii. **Recycling:** The new scheme appeared to be working well and it was agreed to write to SWP expressing thanks to them. However, a comment would be made about concerns over 3 weekly collections and nappies in the summer.
- iii. **Broadband:** SE updated the meeting that Voneus had chosen Rode as one of the locations to include in the next group of villages to get ultrafast broadband. The next group of villages would go forward in about 8-9 weeks and it was hoped that ultrafast broadband could be available in Rode by the end of the year.
- iv. **Website accessibility:** This was still to be progressed and the Clerk and Chair would put together a proposal for approval by the PC.
- v. **Water run-off issues:** It was suggested that Aster Homes were claiming that water run-off into properties in Nutts Lane was not their responsibility however this needs further investigation. The reduced height of the bank had resulted in water running across all of Clay Lane, attempts to rebuild the bank had helped but the situation was still not ideal.
- vi. **The Sportsman:** Money had been set aside following this development but the developer had since folded. The issue of adoption had been ongoing for 10 years and the issues regarding drainage etc. needed to be set out so these can be rectified and The Sportsman adopted. AP and Cllr Oliver agreed to take this forward.
- vii. **18 Marsh Road:** The pavement and an area onto the road had recently been resurfaced following building works. However, there is no clear demarcation between the property and the pavement or between the pavement and the road and also the drainage gully enters under the new tarmac but does not reappear further down the road. This is to be further investigated and either Mendip or Somerset Highways approached over the issue.
- viii. **The Bell:** This was to be progressed and EB agreed to look into it as the property continued to deteriorate.

8. Climate Emergency: JM had prepared a paper, he said that around 75% of Councils had declared an emergency and that by Rode declaring an emergency this would be a formal recognition of the issue and that the PC would try to do something about the issue. Many Councils set a target of becoming carbon neutral (often by 2030) but there was agreement that for Rode to become carbon neutral was difficult as no one had a grasp of the village's current carbon impact or how it could be determined. Cllr Lund pointed out that Somerset and Mendip who had buildings and controlled roads etc. and could assess their impact more readily were struggling with measuring how to become carbon neutral. It was agreed that Rode should look at tangible actions it could take to reduce any impact on the climate, e.g. bus use, housing, energy efficiency of buildings, tree planting etc. Future decisions by the PC should, if a climate emergency be declared, consider the impact they

make on the climate. It was mentioned that a number of grants were available for small projects which benefited the environment such as energy efficiency and tree planting and Rode PC would need to have someone to look into these.

The PC unanimously agreed to declare a climate emergency:

i.) Declares a Climate Emergency;

ii.) Pledges that Rode Parish Council will support initiatives to address climate change, and consider the sustainability and environmental impacts of all its decisions, initiatives and advice;

iii.) Works with other local councils (including neighbouring Parish Councils, Mendip DC, and SCC) to determine and implement best practice;

iv.) Sets up a Steering/Working Group to determine the next steps, with a view to the Working Group reporting back to the Parish Council within [two] months with proposed Terms of Reference and an outline of initial actions which the Parish Council can take to address this emergency.

It was agreed that a Steering/Working Group should be formed that had PC representation on it but probably was chaired by a more knowledgeable climate person and also using people from the current climate emergency group. This Working Group would help formulate tangible actions that the PC could consider taking to reduce climate change.

Rode had agreed to support the SAVE Climate initiative which is to be run by Burnham on Sea Council and the ECO-Centre. The Secretary of this initiative had offered to give a presentation to Rode PC and it was agreed that he would be asked to do so and to answer any questions – this would be separate to a PC meeting.

9. Highways: The meeting agreed the small group would discuss the traffic data collected on the A361 with Patrick Moss later this month.

It was agreed to pursue the installation of repeater signs on Rode Hill to remind motorists that this is a 30mph zone.

The meeting agreed to form a working group (PT, EB, AP) to investigate traffic (volume and speed) within the village, this would look at the current data available, gather extra data as necessary on village hot-spots and assess the issue fully.

10. Planning matters

a. New applications:

2020/2503/TCA: Removal of lower branches of Hornbeam, reduce height of Cornus and reduce height of and shape group of 6 Photinias – 33 High Street. No objections.

b. Mendip decisions:

2020/1997/HSE: Conversion of loft, construction of three flat dormer windows to rear elevation – 25A Lower Street. Approved with conditions.

c. Other planning matters: -

11. Church Farm access to village/footpaths and playing field: Nigel Clarke (Chairman of the Playing Field Committee) had sent a report to the PC and he informed the meeting that a new Trustee had been found for the Committee. He said there were concerns over the state of the tarmac by the Scout Hut which was thought to be being damaged by the SWP vehicles turning and parking there; with the possible future replacement of the Scout Hut the Playing Field Committee had decided only to monitor the situation. Plans are being drawn up on what to do on the new S106 land, the School and the Scouts were keen to support the project and the Woodland Trust were to be consulted. The village would also be consulted and possibly villagers could sponsor trees in the area.

He said that until plans were finalised, no funding would be sought from the PC. The Play Ground would remain open during this lockdown.

The path from the Church Farm development was still to be installed, possibly delayed due to the wet weather, Ashford Homes would be contacted on this issue.

He was thanked for this update.

12. Inspector's Hearing: The Chair reported that the Interim Report should be published at the end of the month, this would then go for a six-week consultation and the final Report was not expected until the end of June.

13. Cycling and Walking: It was reported that Beckington, Lullington and Berkley were all supporting the Frome initiative to create a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. The meeting agreed that Rode would also support this as it would also tie-in with declaring a Climate Emergency.

14. Drainage Issues in Rode: Mendip had received grant funding to investigate the drainage and flood issues in Rode. A contractor had been appointed and the first survey of the culvert from the school to the river was due to take place in mid-February. The village would be kept updated as the survey could involve parking suspensions on roads during the surveys. Further investigations were planned over the coming months around the village.

15. Police Beat Manager: The Mendip East Neighbourhood Policing report for December was noted.

16. Financial matters:

i) The Clerk reported that he had replied to the letter from NatWest indicating there was a problem adding the two new signatories but had heard no more. He said he would try and check in the bank to find out who was authorised to sign cheques.

ii) The following payments were agreed:

DLA Piper (Support for Hearings)	£3,516.00
SALC training (Planning)	£50.00
G Berry (website hosting)	£125.88
Clerk salary	£220.82
HMRC PAYE	£55.00
Peter Travis (Zoom subscription)	£14.39
T Lynch (electricity for Xmas tree)	£25.00
Mendip Community Transport	£150.00
Hardington Vale (church grass cutting)	£450.00
Citizens Advice Mendip	£100.00
Rode Chapel	£160.00

17. Other items:

a) **Footpaths:** These were all registered, although path 13/1 was to be investigated and a change of direction might need to be applied for.

b) **Tree on Cheap Street:** This required pruning and the Clerk was asked to get quotes.

c) **Pump on Lower Street:** If someone was willing to renovate it the PC agreed it would fund any materials

d) **Covid Champions and Buddy Scheme:** MS reported he had virtually attended a couple of Somerset sessions on Covid Champions, but these appeared to be too little too late. He reported that with the new lockdown there could be an increased demand in the village for Buddies, this could be a problem as many people's availability might have changed since the scheme was set up 10 months ago. It was agreed a letter drop be delivered to the people who had come forward as Buddies so as to check their current situation. If necessary, a call could go out for more Buddies.

The Meeting closed at 10.25 pm.

Signed _____

Date: _____

Print: _____

Date of Next Meeting (virtual via Zoom): Tuesday 2nd February 2021 at **7.30 pm**

Website: rodeparishcouncil.webs.com