

# Sourton Parish Council

## Minutes of the Sourton Parish Council meeting held at 7pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024 at Sourton Village Hall.

### Council Member Present:

Cllr S Firth (Chair)  
Cllr S Eberle  
Cllr Jefferies  
Cllr Jewell  
Cllr Leonard

### In Attendance:

Mrs A Horn (Clerk), 1 member of the public

- 50 Chair's Welcome** Cllr S Firth welcomed everyone
- 51 Apologies for Absence** On the proposition of Cllr Jefferies and seconded by Cllr Eberle it was **RESOLVED** to accept Cllr D Firth's apology for personal reasons. Cllrs Mott and Southcott WDBC apologies were noted.
- 52 Public Forum** None
- 53 Declarations of Interest** None
- 54 WDBC, DCC, DNP and Sourton Hall Reports** Reports from WDBC and DNP had been circulated by email before the meeting.  
Sourton Hall- The hall is increasing its hire fees which have not been increased for a number of years and a smart meter has been fitted.
- 55 Minutes of the previous meeting** On the proposition of Cllr S Firth and seconded by Cllr Eberle it was **RESOLVED** to approve and sign the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> July, with the addition of 3<sup>rd</sup> June to item 38.1
- 56 Co- option**
- 56.1 Co-option of Councillors** The council asked the applicants why they wanted to join the parish council and what they could bring to the council. Candidate A had sent apologies, so their application form was read out, Candidates B and C answered with their reasons.
- Voting for each of the two vacancies was undertaken separately and they were filled by co-option as follows:
- Vacancy 1 –  
Candidate A proposed by Cllr S Firth, seconded by Cllr Eberle  
Candidate B proposed by Cllr Jewell seconded by Cllr S Firth  
Candidate C proposed by Cllr Eberle and seconded Cllr Jefferies  
Candidate A 2 votes Candidate B 2 votes Candidate C 0 votes.

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Cllr S Firth used his casting vote and Elaine Bayley Skinner was co-opted.

Vacancy 2 –

Candidate B proposed by Cllr S Firth seconded by Cllr Eberle

Candidate C proposed by Cllr Eberle and seconded Cllr Jefferies

Candidate B 1 vote Candidate C 3 votes John Leonard was co-opted

Cllr Leonard signed the Declaration of Office and joined the meeting.

Member of the public left 19:13

## 56.2 Staffing sub committee

On the proposition of Cllr S Firth and seconded Cllr Jefferies it was **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllrs Eberle and Leonard to the Staffing subcommittee.

It was agreed to update the Terms of Reference for the Subcommittee in May to include the Vice Chair of the council being automatically appointed to the Staffing Sub Committee as chair.

## 56.3 Appeals sub committee

It was agreed to postpone appointment of Cllr Bayley-Skinner to the Appeals Committee until the next meeting as she was not in attendance.

## Finance

### 57.1 Finance Report

The bank reconciliations for July and August were noted which Cllr D Firth would sign at a later date. The new format from the trial finance software was thought to be more complicated and not an improvement. Clerk with Cllr Jefferies to design new layout.

### 57.2 Payments

On the proposition of Cllr Eberle and seconded Cllr Leonard it was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments.

### 57.3 Delegated authority

The payments made under delegated authority were noted

## 58 Policies

### 58.1

On the proposition of Cllr Eberle and seconded Cllr Jewell it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the policies listed below en bloc noting that the continuity plan would need to be updated with the new councillors' details.

- **Closed Churchyard**
- **Expenses**
- **Meeting Attendance**
- **Continuity Plan**
- **Equal opportunities**
- **Absence Management**
- **Complaints procedure**

### 59 Consultation - 59.1 **Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and**

On the proposition of Cllr S Firth and seconded by Cllr Jewell it was **RESOLVED** not to respond to the National Planning Policy Framework.

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## other changes to the planning system

### 60 Projects

#### 60.1 Events working group

It was agreed to hold the Fireworks event on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November with food and drinks provided by the Council. The Clerk would book the hall and complete the event risk assessment, Cllr Jewell would arrange the fireworks and Cllr S Firth would speak to the tenant and land agent to get permission to use the field. It was agreed to hold a Christmas event on either Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> or Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December depending on hall availability. It would be a craft event with free tables for crafters and the Christmas lights would be switched on at the end of the event.

#### 60.2 Churchyard Plan

It was agreed that the joint Church and Parish Council volunteer cut would be held on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2025 and would be advertised in the BASE magazine to attract volunteers. The tender for grass cutting would be sent out for cuts in June, August, September, end of October beginning of November with the contractor collecting the grass and not mulching it.

The clerk had spoken to the Dioses of Exeter to ask how best to negotiate the change to less cuts and more managed for wildlife and the advice received suggested:

- communication, is so important to communicate well why the grass is being left to grow. A simple poster can go a long way to changing visitor perceptions as to whether a churchyard is messy or nature friendly!
- tidy the edges, if you are able to propose that alongside a reduced mowing schedule some shorter visits are arranged to trim the edges and keep a mown path or two meandering through the churchyard it immediately makes the site look more cared for and inviting but is much quicker than a full mow
- liaise with the locals, are there graves that are of particular interest, if so, these could be added to your short visits to make sure they remain accessible. It would be worth adding in the above to a tender proposal to help explain that it's not just a cost saving measure.

The Dioses offered to get in touch with the Church and say the Parish Council had been in contact which the Parish council agreed to take them up on.

#### 60.3 Community Grant Wildlife Scheme

It was noted that the Clerk had applied for a grant to purchase rakes, grass bags and grass collecting gloves. The outcome of the grant was awaited.

#### 60.4 Rural Village Service Group

On the proposition of Cllr S Firth and seconded by Cllr Leonard it was **RESOLVED** not to become a member of the Rural Village Service Group.

#### 60.5 Bins

The 2 new bins had been ordered in August and the Clerk was awaiting delivery.

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- 60.6 Website Accessibility** The Clerk reported that the website is inclusive and compliant with legal standards and has a new feature that will increase text size, change the contrast, and read the webpage.
- 60.7 Defibrillator** Cllr Samuel DCC had given £500 from her localities budget and Cllrs Mott and Southcott had given £50 each to the project. The British Heart Foundation applications for defibrillators open at the beginning of October on a first come first serve basis, the Clerk would apply as soon as the application was open. It was agreed to conduct a survey of resident's views as evidence if for a National Lottery grant application if the British Heart Foundation one was unsuccessful.
- 60.8 Traffic Plan** The Speed watch group had not yet met due to weather constraints. The data would be added to the traffic plan. It was agreed to invite Cllr Samuel of DCC to the October meeting to discuss traffic issues in Sourton.
- 60.9 Verge by Bungalow Bus Stop** Where the brambles had been cut the wildflowers had flourished. Two volunteers had undertaken some bramble cutting around the area and it was hoped to expand the bramble cutting. It was understood the Men in Sheds were still keen to help with some work on the bus shelter, the Clerk would liaise with them.
- 61 Councillor Reports** None
- 62 Items Brought Forward for next agenda** Budgets  
Finance
- 63 EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**  
PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and having regard to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted to consider that the Press and Public be excluded from the Meeting for the following items of business.  
  
(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to legal and/or commercial matters, staffing and/or the financial or business affairs of a person or persons other than the Council)  
**CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY**
- 64 WDBC Enforcement** An update was noted.
- 65** On the proposition of Cllr S Firth and seconded Cllr Eberle by it was **RESOLVED** to exit part 2 of the meeting and ratify the decisions made.

The meeting closed at 9pm