

Ashbrittle parish Council 30/5/24

Present

CD Charles Doble PW Philip Wilson JR Jeremy Robbins PL Paul Leyland.

Constitution

CD said there was an existing document that perhaps needed updating.

PW said he had looked at other and produced something that was derived from what he had seen

including a standing order regarding frequency of meetings and the need for a quorum of at least 3 people. (presently there are only 4 councillors and there is an urgent need for additional people).

PW & PL to look at the STASH site as PW thought it was difficult to upload documents in an acceptable way.

CD said there used to be a Parish Plan that documented local landmarks and also the demographics of the community.

It was agreed that although it would be a useful resource to revisit this at the moment was going to be too cumbersome and the manpower and resources are not in place.

Publication of minutes.

it was agreed that the minutes of meetings should be made public on the STASH site (stash.org.uk) and the parish magazine. this should be in the form of a shortened synopsis once the content was approved by all present.

It was also agreed that there was still an urgent need for a minute taker/ administrator.

Finger Posts

PL said he had contacted Somerset council re. finger posts after reading that they might replace fallen posts.

Two of the 7 posts in the parish have vanished or fallen.

He had a fairly positive response, but there seemed to be some confusion as to what was on offer. the matter has been passed to another department and PL is waiting for a reply.

Everyone agreed that If repair work was carried out by volunteers or contractors insurance and health and safety could be an issue.

PW to look into existing insurance to see what was covered.

Telephone Box

CD produced the agreement between Ashbrittle Parish Council and BT PLC dated 27th January 2010 showing he had signed for the transfer of the K6/K9 Telephone Kiosk on behalf of the Parish Council.

There have been offers of help to restore the telephone box. However now that it has been established that it belongs to the council the same issues of insurance and H&S mentioned in finger posts will apply. Again we should look at insurance before accepting any help.

JR mentioned a local decorator who could be used if needed.

Village Green

JR said he'd been asked by several people what the status of the village green was now and in the future.

CD has the freehold of the green having purchased it some years ago for all in the parish to enjoy and to maintain it as a traditional village green thereby safeguarding it from potential unwelcome development etc.

CD said he was more than happy for people to use it for recreational purposes and for events (with permission for reasons of insurance etc) , but was very unhappy with people parking on it and gradually eroding the turfed area.

CD was also happy for any support in maintaining the green, but would appreciate a call so that he can formalise and coordinate the maintenance.

He can always be contacted on: Charles Doble 01823 672 365
charles@greenandcarter.com

PL suggested a small flyer explains the above could be posted around the village.

Everyone agreed this would be a good move forward

Village Shop

JR had attended a recent meeting about the future of the shop. He reported that there was wide recognition that the shop plays a unique and significant role in our communities - in particular for the Parishes of Ashbrittle and Stawley. In a rural area where we have few social amenities, it provides a shop (including newspapers), cafe and importantly a social hub, and probably touches and brings together more members of our Parishes, from children to OAPs, than any other facility. It is unique because, unlike churches or village halls, we only have one, and once lost would be very difficult to reinstate. It was acknowledged that it was rarely used for a weekly shop but, if lost, similar facilities/amenities for Parishioners and visitors would be between 5-7 miles distant, with associated travel and environmental costs and impact.

At the recent meeting the Chair of the SCA outlined the current situation: the departure of the previous owner of the lease; the temporary return of Sally & Martin; broad picture finances; the dependence on volunteer support for future viability. He then proposed a possible way forward: a not for profit community benefit society (SCA) run shop, with a part-time professional manager supported by a volunteer network. This received almost universal support from the meeting - acknowledging that the devil was in the detail.

Money is obviously the key factor. In outline monthly turnover was reported to be around £10,000, monthly profit £1,750. This was deemed insufficient for a full time living to be made, and was the driving factor behind the part-time professional manager/volunteer staffing proposal, which should broadly be self financing. One off costs included initial stock purchase, around £6,000, and a further £4,000 may or may not be needed for any other start up costs (such as the deposit for the lucrative newspaper delivery).

The SCA has been visiting and examining other shops in Somerset/Devon to look at the best viable models. The council agreed to give the same message of support as that given by Stawley PC, and then await a formal approach from the SCA for a capital grant and any ongoing support. In parallel the SCA is seeking funding from other donations, Somerset Community Council, Plunkett.