

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL (via ZOOM) MEETING OF RODE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON
TUESDAY 2nd JUNE AT 4.30pm**

UNCONFIRMED

Present:

Cllr Terry Morrow – Chair (TM) Cllr Peter Travis (PT) Cllr Pat Banwell (PB) Cllr Ann Edney (AE)
Cllr Andrew Hooker (AH) Cllr Elaine Butler (EB) Cllr Steve Eyles (SE)

In attendance: Cllr Linda Oliver – County Councillor (briefly due to sound connection), Cllr Barbi Lund – District Councillor, Hugh Williams – Clerk, and 4 members of the public

1. Public Participation:

Letters received by email prior to the meeting and all the Parishioners present were concerned over a single topic – possible housing development in Rode in particular near Merfield adjacent to The Mead. It was therefore agreed to include item 11 on the agenda (Housing development in Rode) in this part of the meeting. The Chairman gave a brief review of the current situation, pointing out that currently no application for development had been submitted to Mendip. He said that in the Neighbourhood Plan for Rode all the potential development sites had been turned down (with Merfield the ‘least turned down’ – 2015 survey), however a need had been identified for housing for people to ‘downsize’ to and for the more elderly in general. He said that David James, who was in process of submitting an application to Mendip for the land adjacent to The Mead, was willing to work with the Parish Council (PC) and had said he would not proceed if the PC was against it.

Parishioners pointed out that the possible 26 house development was much increased from the 12-15 (max 18) minuted in April 2019, where 6-9 properties would be bungalows. The Chairmen pointed out that in response to the Inspector’s Report on the Mendip Local Plan Part 2, Mendip had put forward development of Merfield as part of the solution to meet the new requirement to build over 500 houses within NE Mendip. However, Rode, Beckington and Norton St Philip PCs had all started a legal challenge to the Inspector’s Report regarding developments in the three villages.

Parishioners made the case that Merfield was located in a conservation area at the more rural end of the village with both Straight Lane and Crooked Lane being very rural roads unsuited to any increase in traffic, unlike the B3019 and A361 which could be used as access to the other side of the village. There should be no development on this site and the plans for development had moved from a care home with bungalows now to possibly a large number of houses. Fears were expressed that 26 houses could end up being even more. Questions were raised over the infrastructure of the village being able to cope with increased housing and an increased population. Further development might well follow if this application went ahead, especially at Townsend Farm, whose future was uncertain following the death of the owner.

Parishioners present proposed that Barbara’s Field would be more suitable for development provided access to it could be improved; it was pointed out this would be very difficult to achieve. Questions were raised as to whether any other sites in the village might be used for development.

Any development at Merfield would have to overcome conservation and heritage issues, which it was suggested might be the biggest stumbling blocks. A resident reported that English Heritage had been approached but no response had been received.

The suggestion was made that Parishioners write a letter to the Parish Council outlining their objections.

It was unlikely all development in Rode could be resisted and it would be important to work with any developer to try and ensure what was to be built met the requirements of Rode residents.

The Chairman thanked all the Parishioners for their contributions and said it would be likely that an application would have been submitted prior to the next meeting at which a decision would be made whether the Parish Council supported it or not.

2. Apologies for absence: Cllr P Restorick

3. Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 5th May 2020: The minutes were approved, with the amendment that the Clerk's salary should read £136.67, and signed by the Chairman online.

4. Report from County Councillor: Due to poor sound over Zoom the County Councillor had to leave the meeting prior to reporting.

5. Report from District Councillor: It was reported that all Mendip meetings were now taking place virtually and were also being live streamed so anyone can watch and listen. All the recycling sites had now opened again and household garden waste was being collected again, although not always on the designated day and Cllr Lund was investigating this. Outside markets were opening up but Frome market would only open on Saturdays starting on 13 June.

6. Actions from the previous meeting:

- i. **Letter to C Harrington:** The Clerk reported a letter thanking him for clearing Crooked Lane and Parkgate Lane of stones and loose chippings had been sent.
- ii. **Letter to R Patterson:** The Clerk confirmed a letter thanking him for smoothing out the top of Rockabella had been sent.
- iii. **VE Day celebrations:** Despite 'lockdown' quite a lot had happened in the village and many celebrated the Day with bunting, flags and socially distancing tea and drinks gatherings as well as music on the Green.
- iv. **Buddy Scheme:** This was working well and under no pressure. A very good booklet on Mental Health was available but few had been taken up. It was agreed that copies would be put in the Post Office and phone box as well as being offered to the Vicar.

7. Highways issues: It was reported that work on the Bradford Road to the north side of Rode Hill was due to start on the w/c 13 July, this was due to start as 'lockdown' started but had to be postponed.

8. Planning matters

a. New applications:

- i. **2020/0586/HSE:** 13 High Street was still awaiting Mendip decision

b. Mendip decisions: None

c. Other planning matters

Consideration was given to forming a small group to look closely at future planning applications but it was agreed that the whole PC should be involved currently with possible large planning applications coming forward; re-establishing a small team could be done later.

It was reported that some initial discussions had been held with the landowner of Barbara's Field about possible Section 106 mitigation ahead of any planning application for Barbara's Field.

The PC had gained more knowledge of how to influence future development following the Church Farm development, and the importance of an S106. [*Section 106 (S106) Agreements are legal agreements between Local Authorities and developers; these are linked to planning permissions and can also be known as planning obligations. Section 106 agreements are drafted when it is considered that a development will have significant impacts on the local area that cannot be moderated by means of conditions attached to a planning decision.*]

9. Playing field: The playing field was now open again but the children's play area had to remain closed.

10. Access from Church Farm to village: A footpath from the Church Farm development would run adjacent to the playing field to the back of The Old Brewery and this, in accordance with the S106, had to be completed before occupation of the Church Farm site took place. Members of the PC agreed to walk this and the route to Church Lane prior to raising any issues with Autograph Homes.

11. Financial matters:

- i) The PC Asset register had been circulated and some questions were resolved. Keith Sharman was taking photographs to keep a record of all the PC Assets. Further investigations on keys, old documents, maps etc. would be made and an updated register circulated.
- ii) The financial report for 2019/20 was presented and agreed.
- iii) The following payments were agreed:

Terry Morrow (Zoom subscription)	£14.39
SALC (Audit training for Clerk)	£25.00
Eagle Grounds Maintenance	£385.63
Clerk salary and expenses	£239.85
HMRC PAYE	£53.60
Alan Aked (Internal Auditor)	£25.00
- iv) Annual Governance and Accountability Return AGAR Section 1 Annual Governance Statement 2019/20, previously circulated, was agreed by those present and the Chair and Clerk would arrange signing off.
- v) AGAR Section 2 Accounting Statements 2019/20, previously circulated, were approved by those present and the Chair and Clerk would arrange signing them off.
- vi) Rode Parish Council had a turnover of less than £25,000 and therefore the PC could exempt itself from a limited assurance review under Section 9 of the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015. The Certificate of Exemption – AGAR 2019/20 Part 2 was approved and arrangements made for the Chair and Clerk to sign and date. The accounts were currently being audited by the internal auditor.

12. Other matters: PB reported that she had received complaints about the hedge blocking part of the footpath on the Bradford Road. It was agreed the Clerk would write to the owners and ask them to cut it back to clear the footpath. PT offered to cut back undergrowth obscuring the 30 mph speed limit signs near The Mill and vegetation obscuring road signs on Rode Hill.

PT also reported that because of 'lockdown' the D2 would stop running through Rode at weekends. Faresaver services were continuing through Rode between Frome and Trowbridge.

It was agreed the PC would write an article for The Link to welcome Demi to the village Post Office and thank Alex for his time as postmaster.

The Meeting closed at 6.45 pm.

Signed _____

Date: _____

Print: _____

Date of Next Meeting (virtual via Zoom): Tuesday 7th July 2020 at **11.00 am** (to be confirmed)