

MINUTES OF RODE PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD ON THURSDAY 6TH MAY 2021 AT 7.00 PM (virtual meeting on Zoom)

Presiding: Peter Travis

Clerk Hugh Williams

8 Parishioners, 7 Councillors and County and District Councillors

Apologies for absence: Cllr E Butler

Minutes of 2019 Parish Meeting: These were approved and signed by the Chair. Note no meeting held in 2020.

Somerset County Councillor Report

Cllr Oliver said that she always enjoyed working with Rode Parish Council. She was always willing to help residents and would in particular continue to give support to highways and bus issues. She said that the team at Rode was strong and also there was a very good community spirit within the village, which was probably stronger than many other villages. She hoped that there would be less planning issues in the future but unfortunately this was probably unlikely. However next year would hopefully be easier than this one with remote meetings, which had been difficult for everyone given the Covid19 virus.

District Councillor Report

Cllr Lund endorsed Cllr Oliver's view and she had also enjoyed working with Rode PC. She always found the meetings to be inclusive with volunteers easily found. She added that the new Councillors came forward willingly to fill the 3 vacancies created during the year. She was particularly pleased that Rode had declared a climate emergency this year.

Memorial Hall Report (forwarded by Duncan McLennan, Chairman)

Despite the closure of the Hall for most of the year due to Covid19 the finances of the Memorial Hall remained good with a rise in reserves to £37,351.12, thanks to the government grants for village halls that had been distributed to the Hall by Mendip. Some general maintenance had been carried out during the year. Thanks were given to Tim and Helen Flooks and who had left the Committee. Nicola Radcliffe was the new Secretary and Kate Livingstone now ran the Hall bookings.

Playing Field Report (Delivered by Nigel Clarke, Chairman)

During the last year expenditure had risen due to the requirements to repair the fencing and install a new gate. A concern had recently arisen due to a sink hole appearing in the hard standing by the Scout Hut which requires attention. Inspections, by RoSPA, of the play equipment had been conducted and some suggestions for improvements made.

The Committee had drawn up plans for the development of the new S106 land given to the Playing Field following the building of the Church Farm Estate. These plans had now been published and Option 3 would be pursued as this had the best engagement with the village. Funding remained a problem to get this off the ground.

Thanks were given to all the Trustees for the time (and money) that they gave. Thanks were also given to Rode Post Office, The Cross Keys and the Sharmans for helping raise funds through the lottery.

Some concerns were expressed over the quality of the grass cutting by Eagle with grass being left on the field, previously there had been problems with grass cuttings being put in the drainage ditch.

Thanks were given to Clive Harrington for the clean-up of the village and donating part of his costs to the Playing Field.

Scouts Report (Delivered by Howard Russell)

This had been a unique year, with no meetings since last March until the end of April this year. It was very difficult to keep children 2 metres apart and meetings of all the scout groups depended on the weather being good as they were taking place outside. Thanks were given to Elizabeth Osborne for leading the Cubs who had now stood down. Leaders of all groups were sought. Although a number of children had left during the lockdowns a waiting list had built up and spaces were being filled. Thanks were given to Clive Harrington for his donation. The major issue facing the group was to replace the existing hut which was 50 years old and also now too small; fund raising would need to take place.

Chairman's Report (delivered by Peter Travis)

There had never been a year like this, but the Parish Council (PC) had been able to continue to meet virtually. The PC had been confronted by two major planning applications which had necessitated extra meetings either virtually or outside on the playing field. Transport assessments were made as part of the cases against these developments and these along with a large number of objections from villagers had resulted in Mendip refusing development at The Mead/Merfield site. The Barbara's Field development is still awaiting Mendip's decision.

Rode also set up a 'Buddy Scheme' to help and support to those sheltering during the Covid19 pandemic, there was very good support for this and fortunately little demand. Thanks must also go to the village shop and Cross Keys for providing home deliveries of food and meals during the pandemic.

During a busy year, the PC got involved in the Inspector's hearings in the Mendip Local Plan Part 2 which was proposing extra housing in the area. Due to sufficient financial reserves (built up over the last 10 years) the PC was able to call on professional legal help in putting the case for Rode not to have extra housing development.

Thanks were given to Terry Morrow, Pat Banwell and Andy Hooker who had all stood down from the Parish Council, especially Terry and Pat who had helped draw up the Neighbourhood Plan and also been vice chairs of the PC. Their experience would be missed but three new, very able, Councillors had come forward to fill the vacancies.

Following road and pavement clean up by Clive Harrington and his team the PC had now employed a Lengthsman to keep the village clean and do repairs. Additionally, a 'Hoedown' had taken place and further were planned to keep the village tidy.

Speeding in and around the village was still a major issue to be resolved.

Thanks were given to both District and County Councillors for their continued help on a range of issues and also for their attendance at most PC meetings, the village was lucky to have them. Thanks were also given to the Parish Clerk whose workload had been unusually heavy, given all the extra meetings and the many issues raised during the past year.

Financial Report (delivered by Clerk, Hugh Williams)

The PC had for the first year for a long time spent more than it had received with major expenditure on legal help and transport consultants. However, the good reserves had enabled the PC to act quickly and employ these professional services when required.

The reserves at the start of the year had stood at £39,232 and now, at the end of March, stood at £37,487.

[Full reports from the above were circulated to the Parish Council.]

Parish Discussion Forum

- i) Adoption of The Sportsman:** There was concern expressed over the length of time this was taking and the need to resolve the drainage issues associated with it. It was reported that Somerset County Council were aware of this and recently there had been a more positive response on this issue. A bond is in place, following the developer going out of business, and this should be used to ensure adoption can go ahead. This issue would remain on the PC agenda.
- ii) Trees:** A number of trees required attention and the landowners would be approached. However, concern was expressed over possible enforcement by Mendip where the Enforcement Officer was being replaced by agency staff and might not be as effective. Permanent staff are not being taken on as Mendip will cease once a new Unitary Authority comes into being.
- iii) Neighbourhood Plan:** A question was raised as to its status as 80% of the village had supported it. In response it was said that the Plan was still important and is a material consideration with regard to planning applications, it had been used in defence against development of both The Mead/Merfield and Barbara's Field applications. The problem was it could no longer specify where development took place and with Mendip not having a 5-year housing plan there was additional pressure to build more homes.
- iv) Traffic calming:** It was agreed that the Parish Council needed to put more pressure on introducing further speed limits within the village and a small group had been formed to take this forward and meetings would be held with Somerset Highways. It was noted any proposed new speed restriction measures would require village wide consensus.
- v) Responses to planning applications:** General thanks were given to all those who had helped organise objections to the 2 major planning applications that had come up in the last year. It was thought the volume and quality of the objections will have been noted by Mendip Planning.

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Rode Parish Council

Held on Thursday 6th May 2021

Presiding: Peter Travis

Clerk: Hugh Williams

7 Councillors, County Councillor, District Councillor and 6 Parishioners

- 1. Approval of minutes of 2019 AGM:** Approved and signed by the Chairman.
- 2. Chairman:** Mike Salmon was elected unopposed as Chairman for 2021/22
- 3. Vice Chairman:** Andy Pickett was elected unopposed as Vice Chairman for 2021/22
- 4. Signing of forms:** The Chairman and Vice Chairman signed the Acceptance of Office forms.
- 5. Thanks:** Peter Travis was thanked for being a good Chairman especially during such a difficult year.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm