



QUEEN CAMEL PARISH COUNCIL

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## Minutes of Queen Camel Parish Council Annual Village Meeting held on Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 7pm

Doors opened at 6pm to allow people to meet view information provided by village organisations and clubs. Approximately 80 electors, residents and friends of Queen Camel came to the meeting.

**Present:** Parish Councillors- Phil Jones, John Brendon, Brian Norman and Angus Davidson.

**Also present:** County Councillor's Henry Hobhouse and Sarah Dyke (Environment lead) with speakers listed in the headings below.

### 1. Welcome

Cllr Phil Jones, Chair of Queen Camel Parish Council, welcomed everyone to the meeting. A tribute and one minute silence was held in respect of the late Councillor Mike Lewis. Attendees were informed that speakers had been asked to limit their input, and Village Organisation had agreed to allow Cllr Jones to speak on their behalf, in order that people would be able to fully discuss issues relating to the recent flooding in the village.

### 2. Minutes of the last meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2022

The minutes of the previous Annual Village Meeting were approved.

### 3. Chairman's Report – Councillor Jones

*Note: At the meeting the following updates were given between the other speakers. For convenience they are summarized together under this heading.*

Cllr Jones explained that the Village Meeting is normally an opportunity to celebrate the village for the past 12 months and to highlight the year ahead, however the past couple of weeks have been anything but normal and the loss of Cllr Lewis, a King's Coronation and then torrential downpours and significant flooding within the parish area and beyond. The flooding has raised a number of questions for people and so the focus of this year's Village Meeting was to be on discussion the flooding.

Cllr Jones expressed thanks all the volunteers around the village for decorating our streets to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III and for the events that had taken place over the weekend.

Cllr Jones outlined the role of the Parish Council and encouraged people to consider the current vacancies on the council. He explained that the PC sets the precept which is gathered through Council Tax to provide funds to support the community. He highlighted that due to the cost-of-living crisis, the PC did not ask for an increase if PC precept this year and they were the only body paid from Council Tax that did not ask for an increase. He stressed that managing finances will be a challenge.

It was highlighted that the community's money to help fund projects around the village such as part paying for commemorative coins, for each child at the school, to mark the Queen's Jubilee and the King's Coronation; the refurbishment of the Memorial Hall floor and supporting maintaining the Church clock,

lighting and grounds as well as funding The Camels magazine. He thanked everyone who works on the magazine and distributes it around the village.

Cllr Jones acknowledged the work that is done to support the welfare of people within the community. The Community Land Trust for setting up the Living Room, providing a warm space for people to meet up during the winter when the energy bills were so high. The work of Camel Cares, providing support and a friendly face when people need it, but stressing they are not a 'taxi service'. Also, the Hardship Fund, set up in September 2022 and funded from fundraising and donation, providing a facility to help people when in times of hardship. Application can be made through the School or the Medical Centre to help ensure anonymity. The Cleaveside Community Lounge was set up through funding from South Somerset District Council, applied for by the Parish Council, to provide a place for people to re-engage with others as we came out of the COVID pandemic. The Village Café, a meeting place held every 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday in the month to catch up on village matters.

Cllr Jones expressed the role in the Parish Council providing opportunity for exercise through our network of footpaths and maintaining the Queen Camel Playing field through its Playing Field Management Committee. He thanked the band of volunteers who help to maintain the field during the year, so it is available for all. Cllr Jones thanked the Queen Camel Cricket Club for its continuing support to maintaining the Playing Field and updated the meeting of the success of the club with its two adult teams, youth teams from Under 8 upwards and this year the starting of an all-girls team. The other connected clubs were also highlighted with the Tennis Club in one corner of the Playing Field that are always keen for new members and also the Bowls Club that had been in the village for nearly 75 years and have an open day in June. They too are always keen for new members of all abilities with a chance for coaching and getting out into the sun. Those present were advised to seek more information from contacts in The Camels magazine or through the respective facebook pages.

Cllr Jones outlined work that is ongoing in relation to traffic matters through the village. The PC are part of a cross Parish Council working group looking into the issue of speeding along the A359. Specific enquiries have been made with the Police and Somerset Highways for data as to speeding through the village and explained that they have said it will be done, but that Queen Camel is lower on the list of priority areas than others due to the significant traffic calming measures that exist through the village. Heavy Goods Vehicles through the village in contravention of the Weight Restriction was also mentioned. Data had been asked for but declined by the Police and as contravention of the weight restriction is an absolute offence, those concerned were advised to report suspect vehicles to the Police and they would be duty bound to investigate, but the individual would be required to provide a statement for action to be taken.

#### **4. James Hamblin, representing David Warburton MP for Somerton and Frome Constituency**

Mr Hamblin explained how constituents can access support and advice on the recent flooding through David Warburton's website. He outlined the importance Parish Councils. He stated that David Warburton was concerned with the depleting number of Banks open within the constituency with 2 further, out of the 10 remaining, under threat of closure. Mr Hamblin informed the meeting that they are working with community funding organisations and stated that he has been informed that the National Lottery has stated that they have granted £90000 to Queen Camel for its new Play Area.

Questions were asked as to why Mr Warburton was absent from the meeting and from Parliament? Why there was no information forthcoming about his future and that they felt unrepresented in Parliament with the current situation? Due to the investigation being ongoing, there was no further information. It was also asked why Mr Warburton had voted against the Sewage Bill given that Wessex Water are believed to be pumping raw sewage into our rivers, which recently flooded? Mr Hamblin stated he would look into it and respond.

Cllr Jones confirmed the provisional offer from the National Lottery for a significant funding contribution to the new Play Area and explained that progress was being made to rectify an issue over some of the land on which it sits being owned by the County Council. He thanked individuals and groups involved in the fund raising through Village Fayres and acknowledged a contribution from ASDA. He also explained that as an acknowledgement of the local disturbance of the A303 work the Highways Agency have kindly donated a grant of £9980 for the purchase of specific equipment for the Play Area and picnic tables.

#### **5. David Gordon, Head Teacher of Countess Gytha Primary School**

Having been asked to keep his presentation brief, Mr Gordon provided a summary of the school in a Haiku format '**Countess Gytha School; A friendly, hardworking place; with the best children.**'

Mr Gordon acknowledged the significant contribution Cllr Mike Lewis provided to the school. He updated the meeting on events to celebrate the King's Coronation, thanking the Parish Council and the community for helping fund the commemorative coins for the Jubilee and Coronation. He finally thanked all members of the community for their continued support for Countess Gytha School.

#### **6. Dr Daniel Edmonds, Queen Camel Medical Centre**

Dr Edmonds acknowledged the impact on the community caused by the floods and reminded anyone struggling to ask for assistance. He explained the pressures being experienced by the Health Service and how QCMC continually review working practices to accommodate the changing demands. He identified the development of the role of Nurse Practitioner which means that there is someone to identify and deal with acute medical issues, leaving the GP's to deal with the more complex issues. He explained that a new Practice Manager was due to start soon and praised the outgoing Practice Manager for their work, especially in developing apprentices, some of whom continue to work within the practice.

In the coming year QCMC are hoping to introduce a new approach to prescriptions, extending dispensary and investing technology to store and process prescriptions more efficiently and potentially introducing a collection machine. All in the coming months if they get the go ahead.

Dr Edmonds said that QCMC are looking to settle back into providing high quality general practice, without distraction, and thanks the people of Queen Camel for their understanding of the importance of appointments and how they are all pleased to be our doctors.

On behalf of the Community, Cllr Jones thanked Dr Edmonds and those at the QCMC for the work they do.

#### **7. Sam Landrigan, Galliford Try (Construction of new A303)**

Mr Landrigan introduced himself as the stakeholder and communications manager for Galliford Try and explained that he is the conduit between the project work and the public and was happy for people to contact him and he would try to clarify any issues. He outlined the work that has already been completed and that the coming months they were working towards traffic switches on to the new sections, the first of which was due two weeks ago, but they suspended it due to the local flooding. In relation to the flooding, he stated that Galliford Try were here to help through a small fund and through volunteer days and that he had been in consultation with The Community Land Trust to see how they could assist them following the floods.

Cllr Jones reassured the meeting that the Parish Council maintains regular contact with Galliford Try and are kept updated about impactive works. These are passed on to the community through the Parish Council Facebook group and encouraged people to join to keep up to date with village matters.

## **Focus of the meeting moved to Flood matters.**

### **8. Martin Lilley, Chair of the Queen Camel Flood Committee**

Explained the origins and make-up of the flood committee as part of the Parish Council. He expressed his gratitude to the village for the overwhelming offers of help and assistance to those affected by the recent flooding. He stated that the plan worked in that no one was injured or killed, however the speed and size of the flooding has identified several lessons. He explained that his home hadn't flooded for 150 years, but this year it did and that in a matter of 10-15 minutes the water level rose some 20ft, with other addresses not previously considered under the plan being flooded. The Plan is therefore in need of review given this new information and the likelihood of such flooding reoccurring more frequently in the future.

Mr Lilley has been in discussion with organisations over the plans for the future with key issue out of the flood being the timing and speed it occurred and very little warning being available. There are ongoing considerations at flood mitigation upstream, and downstream to protect other villages, in order to potentially lessen the impact of flash flooding such as that which happened in May.

### **9. Henry Hobhouse, County Councillor representing Queen Camel**

Mr Hobhouse firstly apologised for not coming out on the night, but he had been stuck in the flooding within his village. As a consequence of the flooding, he stated that he has worked to reintroduce a Duty Manager at the Council and also to look to creating a River Cam Emergency Flood Plan. He stated that he was in consultation within the Council in relation to identifying river pinch points, such as Queen Camel, and to put action in place to deal with them and that he was continually working to Wessex Water pumping raw sewage into the river Cam which he says was unacceptable.

Mr Hobhouse acknowledged the work of staff within the Council who ensured uninsured people were accommodated in local hotels and for arranging skips and rubbish collection of damaged property, recycling where possible.

### **10. Sarah Dyke Somerset Council lead on Environment**

Cllr Dyke outlined her environmental role within the Council and explained that there was a strategic effort ongoing across the country looking into mitigation measures against flooding, looking at both hard and soft engineering such as re-routing of rivers and natural defences. Pilot areas are ongoing and are proving positive at the moment.

She explained that as a result of May's flooding 143 residential properties and 21 businesses were affected, and the Council put in a response on the night and the days following to support individuals in need. She explained that they did not supply skips as they felt using vans was a better option as items could be sorted easier in order to maximise recycling. To date 41 Tonnes of waste had been collected.

Cllr Dyke provided an explanation into the situation moving forward and that a multiagency, including community consultation, investigation has been set up, called a Section 19 investigation. This would take 9 months to complete as it needs to be thorough. For those who wished to know the extent of such an investigation, she signposted people to the report online for a similar investigation as a result of flooding in Chard previously.

Cllr Dyke stressed the need for preparation and stated that she was pushing for an Extreme Weather Resilience Plan., across the County. This would be a 'spiders web' approach to prepare communities for extreme weather. She stated that Cllr Hobhouse was looking into this for around the river Cam.

Cllr Dyke stressed that she and Cllr Hobhouse were here to support the communities and so asked that

any issues could be raised through them to take forward on their behalf.

### **Discussion and Questions from the Meeting**

Cllr Jones noted the response, and thanked Fire Crews on the night. The teams on the south of the village had responded from Weymouth. Cllr Hobhouse explained this was because the Fire Service had declared a silver response that evening, meaning they would pull resources from surrounding areas.

Cllr Jones outlined the volunteer effort from the village in response to the flood, with a special mention for Annie Price who set up a Queen Camel SOS page on facebook and coordinated the volunteer effort to support those affected. He also stated that there is a need for learning, and we need to look at how messaging gets across the community and how we respond to incidents with an effective contingency plan. The weekend prior to the flood, the Parish Council stated its 'Camel Alert' WhatsApp group for emergency and important messaging. It proved its worth almost immediately with important messaging about the flood and subsequent road closures, with membership increasing significantly in the days following the flooding. He encouraged more villagers to embrace the use of technology to help people stay informed, especially as the use of such systems have been being used in other communities since 2013!

It was asked whether such local information could be sent out using the national Alert system that was tested a few weeks ago. Not many in the room received the test message and although local messaging would be useful it was not known if it was possible. It was asked if an early warning system would have heled in the events of May. It highlighted that there would be chance to move livestock and furniture upstairs.

The mitigation of future flooding was discussed. It was noted that the flow of the river was not affected as it flowed freely, however the volume was just too much for the river to cope with and therefore mitigation upstream was a necessity. It was suggested there should be less pressure on having to build on farmland. Other mitigation issues were suggested such as compulsory purchasing land identified as potential flood run off areas and just leaving them to nature. Cllr Dyke was asked if anything is being done about the increase demand in building houses on rural land as it was felt with more building the available land for flood mitigation becomes less. Martin Lilley stated that he was in conversation with organisations about potential mitigation contingencies.

The Section 19 investigation was discussed, with it being hoped that all those involved would be truthful about events and actions in May. It was asked if there were to be quantifiable objectives and why it would take so long. It was also asked, but unable to answer, if the investigation resulted in legal recommendations. Although recommendations will come from the investigation, the feeling was that they would not be legally binding and therefore we would most likely be having the same discussions in years to come after subsequent flooding events.

A resident asked whether the Environment Agency was going to walk the river to ensure all debris was cleared. The meeting was informed that this had been done and that the Environment Agency would fall back on riparian responsibility for keeping rivers clear.

The river monitoring station, upstream at Wyke Bampfylde was mentioned and how it can be monitored online. The meeting was advised that the link to this was under the Flood Committee information on Queen Camel Parish Council website. The meeting was also advised of a County Council website 'Somerset prepared' which gives advice on preparing before, during and after a flood event. It highlights the need for a community flood resilience plan, which is already in place in queen Camel through the Flood Committee.

The community was thanked for its support to the Community Land Trust who updated the meeting of how the clear up was progressing with some businesses reopening and a new launderette had been delivered and installed.

**11. Motions put forward by electors**

No electors chose to put forward a motion.

**12. Questions and Answers**

A question was raised in relation to the planned widening of the junction at the bottom of Traits Lane for fear of the opening of the junction will encourage faster speeds. Concern was raised as to the amount of hedgerow being taken out and was it necessary and could a more common-sense approach be considered. Mr Landrigan understood the concerns and had had a site visit with residents. His understanding was that only the minimal amount of hedgerow was to be removed and would feed the concerns back to those concerned.

**The meeting closed at 8.40pm**

Following the meeting attendees were able to socialise within the Village Hall and speak privately with guest speakers.

**Minutes by Cllr Phil Jones**

Signed: ..... Date.....