

Monksilver Parish Council

Draft Minutes of a meeting held on 14th August 2023 at 19:30

At the E.M.N. Hall, Monksilver.

Present:

Members of the public

Paul Brandwood, Alistair Cade, Zoe Freeman, Geraldine Goldsmith, Caroline Haley, Mike Haley, Christine Howe, Elaine Kempson, David Ibbott, Julie Notley, Nick Prettejohn, Paul Pryor, Susan Pryor, Chris Spink, Ros Stace, Ian Timmins, Stuart Tudor-Jackman, Wendy Tudor-Jackman, Ian Webster, Martyn Westbury

Statements in support were read out from Anne Bastick and Anne Preston Littlewood, Dr Tom Murray and Dr Harriet Gliddon,

MPC Councillors: Mervyn Orchard-Lisle – Chair, Andrew Howe – Vice Chair, Kate Adams, Dan Cotterill, Christopher Hill, John Stace, Sue Westbury

Somerset Councillor: Christine Lawrence

In attendance: Mary Jacobs – Clerk

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Somerset Councillor Marcus Kravis.
2. The minutes of the meeting held on 15th May 2023 and the extraordinary meeting of 29th June 2023 were agreed as correct and signed by the chair,
3. **Declaration of Interest.** No declarations were made.
4. **Declaration of acceptance of office form** was handed to Chris Hill for signature, together with a copy of the Code of Conduct.
5. **Highways.** Mervyn informed the meeting that Somerset Council emailed all town and parish councils on 5th July about an initiative for 20 mph speed limits. The key points in it were:
 - Traffic management to establish the suitability had already been undertaken.
 - The community funded project is estimated at £15,000
 - Applications with a £500 fee need to be submitted by 31st August 2023.
 - Consultation with residents was essential.

Some consultation has already been undertaken and many people have been asked for their opinions. This has established a strong desire to pursue Somerset's initiative. This evening's meeting forms part of this process.

Following a discussion with Katherine Tyson, it had been noted that the budget mentioned above of £15,000 was likely to be much less (say, £8,000) for a small village such as Monksilver.

Suggestions have also arisen about extending the length of the regulated speed limit boundary, (1) up Combe Cross Lane to the EMN Hall, (2) beyond Inglewood, and (3) at Woodford.

Mervyn stated that his role as chair was to listen to all sides of the debate. He would like to hear firstly from members of the public, and then from parish councillors starting with John

Stace who as the councillor responsible for highway matters and had carried out a large amount of research on the issue.

Comments and Questions raised by the public:

These can be categorised under separate headings, although the subjects are intertwined:

History of Accidents

- There have been several accidents and on more than one occasion a vehicle was travelling on the wrong side of the road around one of the bends. There was no definitive proof that these were speed related, but driving too fast around a bend must have speed as a contributory factor.
- One resident stated that she was not aware of any speed related accidents in the village.
- There have also been numerous accidents where vehicles have damaged adjoining properties.
- A regular runner has experienced several near misses.
- There are frequently near misses particularly on the bends.

Speed and Road safety

- No footpath through the village
- A number of people avoid walking in the area.
- Disability and immobility make it difficult to move out of the way.
- Electric vehicles, although better for the environment, run quietly and therefore are less likely to be heard, especially around blind bends. They also accelerate faster. Like them or not, their numbers will increase.
- Several blind bends meaning traffic does not have clear visibility splays of pedestrians, cyclists or horse riders.
- Somerset's iconic footpath, The Coleridge Way converges at Monksilver, at which point pedestrians share the B3188 where there is no pavement.
- Cars are getting bigger and can appear dangerous to pedestrians whether this is actual or perceived.
- Research has identified that lower speed means that people feel more comfortable to walk and cycle.
- Older people, disabled people or people with additional needs will feel more able to travel independently. 4% of Monksilver residents use wheelchairs or mobility scooters and several more use mobility aids. West Somerset has one of the highest number of elderly residents in the county. Monksilver's demographic profile reflects this.
- It is particularly hazardous when approaching Monksilver from Combe Sydenham or from Combe Cross Lane. Both roads converge following a sharp bend concealing the hazardous junction. Both roads are also on descending hills. The road then goes into another bend, the road narrowing by the river and the High Street junction and another bend all within a short stretch of road.
- There is a further pinch point bend by The Old School house on the High Street.
- There are 4 blind bends in less than a mile.

- In the distance a 20mph car can stop, a 30mph car will still be doing 24mph.
- People stand a better chance of surviving a 20mph impact than a 30mph impact.
- In dry conditions the average family car with tyres in good condition and inflated to the correct pressure travelling at 20mph can stop within 40ft./ 12 metres. At 30mph this increases to 75ft 23 metres.
- Exiting from some driveways is difficult, particularly as visibility splays are poor on some stretches of the village. This is made even more difficult with faster traffic.
- Wildlife such as hedgehogs have a better chance of survival with slower traffic
- From a resident who has nursed people with injuries, there was no question that the speed limit should be reduced.
- From two doctors, there are numerous medical, both physical and mental, problems which are linked to excessive speed.
- If it only saves one life, or encourages a healthy lifestyle, it is worth it.

Volume and Type of Traffic

- The rise in home deliveries has increased the volume of vans and lorries through the village.
- The number of road closures and diversions has increased the amount of traffic flowing through the village. Monksilver has become a rat run especially in the rush hour periods.
- It is likely to increase further due to the large-scale projects (*such as Hinkley*) and the current new builds and the planned future development in nearby towns and villages.
- Cars are getting bigger and therefore passing other vehicles on narrow roads and tight bends is more hazardous.
- Meeting oncoming farm machinery or lorries, particularly around one of the bends is hazardous and therefore the slower they are travelling the less likelihood of serious injury.

Signs and Maintenance

- What is the point of proceeding with the cost of implementing the scheme when the foliage is so overgrown that they conceal the existing signage?
- The non-maintenance by Somerset Council is neglect. It requires a change in their behaviour.
- There are not enough signs and they are too close to bends to slow down in time.
- Whose responsibility is it to maintain the hedgerows and the signage and why is this not being undertaken?
- Will additional road markings such as hatching or red tarmac be available?
- Could measures such as those in place at Washford be considered identifying priority signage?
- The signage is in poor condition and overgrown by foliage.
- Even when signs are visible, they are too close to the bends making it difficult for vehicles to brake in time.
- Maintain the asset we already have.
- All approaches to the village will require new signs.
- All types of signage need to be considered including flashing lights and stripey lines.

Costs

- If the Welsh Government are funding their changes, why is the scheme to be community funded rather than funded by Somerset Council?
- If the scheme is to be funded by Monksilver why is this by donation rather than as a charge on the precept?
- We would like more clarity about the cost.
- Signage is expensive, could more cost effective signs such as the “20 is plenty” be used?
- Large sums of money had been mentioned. Can we find out how much it will cost before we are committed?
- There are people for whom an increase in the precept would be serious. Therefore, MPC are seeking fundraising from the community. Only as a last resort will the precept be raised, and if so, nominally.

Enforcement

- A solar powered speed gauge could be effective.
- How will the speed limit be enforced?
- No mobile speed limit in the village is enforceable, due to lack of straight road of the regulation length.

Other Matters

- Are the councillors expressing prejudicial views as some of them reside along the B3188? (Subsequent to the meeting, the Clerk checked the wording of the relevant Code of Conduct and ruled that this did not represent a prejudicial view).

Statements in support were read out from Anne Bastick and Anne Preston Littlewood, Dr Tom Murray and Dr Harriet Gliddon,

In Summary, whereas no residents gave reasons for not having a 20mph speed limit, and there were a few who did not think it would make much difference, the overwhelming majority supporting the idea. This backs up the conversations around the village before the meeting which showed 51 people in support of the 20mph, representing nearly all of the residents who were asked.

Mervyn hoped that if there was a strong consensus of opinion amongst residents in either direction, then councillors would vote to represent that view.

Councillors responses to these comments and questions:

Somerset Councillor Christine Lawrence responded that:

- She was pleased to see so many members of the public attending. She is responsible for 12 parishes and all of them are interested in the possibility of introducing 20mph limits. This happens automatically if there is a school in the village.
- Somerset Council has an obligation to maintain the signage. If you are aware of a problem report it online at www.somerset.gov.uk. However, there is a lot of pressure on the finance and works have to be prioritised. We can all do more to help ourselves.

We can all help to maintain our environment snipping back at the first sign of growth; this will help to keep the signage visible.

- Somerset Council is facing budgetary restrictions and increasingly new projects will require community funding.
- Somerset Council will not make accurate costings until it is sure that parish councils are committed. Submitting the application with the £500 confirms a council's commitment.
- Additional road markings and signage may be available. Cllr. Lawrence urged close liaison with Katherine Tyson to get the best outcome for Monksilver.
- "20 is Plenty" and other similar signs are not legal and therefore they may be removed by the Highways, particularly if the signs are considered to be a distraction or hazard.
- Cllr. Lawrence recommended submitting the bid for 20mph in its entirety and then working / liaising with Katherine Tyson on where the new signage should be located and whether a transitional speed limit will be more effective. She also advised that where signage is placed affects the cost, e.g. erecting in concrete or tarmac is expensive whilst erecting on soft verges less so.

Parish Councillors:

John reported that the Police undertook a traffic survey during 21st to 29th January 2023:

- The average speed was 22.5mph so we are at the sweet spot to change.
- On the Sunday 2 vehicles were travelling over 55mph
- 4219 vehicles were coming from the Williton direction. Of these 39 were above the speed limit.
- 2504 vehicles were travelling from Elworthy. None were above the speed limit.
- The monitoring had to be undertaken within the existing limit.

John is liaising with the Police about the possibility of installing a community speed indicator device (SID) at either end of the village. Two sets of poles would be erected with one machine which would be switched around. These signs display vehicle speeds and help to raise driver awareness of local speed limits and have been proven to reduce speed limits. Kate remarked that the trees on the Elworthy side would make the solar-powering of that sign difficult. The fact that the survey showed no vehicles above the speed limit from this direction would suggest that no SID was necessary from this direction.

John reported that Katherine Tyson (Highways) is supportive of the project and is meeting with John again next week (22nd August).

John stated that people stand a better chance of surviving an 20mph impact than an 30mph impact. Although not every vehicle will adhere to the new limit, the volume of traffic travelling at 20mph will increase.

Kate commented that one of the (non-financial) cost of measures to reduce the speed limit such as flashing signs, red tarmac and hatching is how ugly and inappropriate they would be in a rural village.

Extending the distance of the speed limit:

Dan stated that there have been accidents on the Inglewood corner, the most recent one being in March this year when Dan had had to pull the car out of his field. Dan believed that the proposed extension to the speed limit zone to beyond Inglewood was essential; he would only support the 20mph proposal if the extension was included within the scheme.

Both Dan and Andrew were also concerned that drivers may have speed limit fatigue if the limit is lowered to 20mph for this stretch of the road, with drivers ignoring the signs and increasing the speed. Andrew also wondered whether implementing a 30mph limit from beyond Inglewood through to Dan's farm encourage natural slowing in readiness of the approaching 20 mph limit?

As a totally separate issue, the Somerset Council has already agreed that new advisory signage needs to be placed both at the Faircross and Elworthy junctions to deter heavy vehicles from travelling through Woodford and Monksilver.

Funding:

John reported that £6k of the anticipated £8k has already been raised. Should tonight's consultation decide that a bid should be submitted MPC is only committing to a £500 application fee at this stage. MPC will be seeking community fundraising in the first instance. Only as a last resort will the precept be raised, and only then by a nominal amount.

Because of the understandable concerns about costs expressed by some residents, only after the Somerset Council have costed the proposals can it be established how much additional funding is required from the village. MPC will undertake further consultation if Somerset Council give the go ahead.

Mervyn thanked the room for the consultation and asked for a show of hands for those in favour of submitting an application to Somerset Council. Although several members of the public had left the room at this stage, several made confidential disclosure to the chair upon exiting and all were in favour. Those that remained were in favour. No-one was against.

Andrew asked for clarification as to whether the application would be for a speed limit or a speed zone. Mervyn confirmed that it is for a speed limit.

Mervyn read out a resolution for the Council to consider **“Monksilver Parish Council formally agrees to submit an application to Somerset Council for the regulated speed limit of all road traffic to be reduced from 30mph to 20mph and approves the spending of £500 being a non-refundable application fee.**

It also agrees to include in the application three alterations to the positioning of the speed signs.

The motion was proposed by John and seconded by Chris.
All councillors voted in favour with no abstentions.

The motion is therefore carried unanimously.

After the application has been made the exact details can be agreed with the Council.

A second proposal “Monksilver Parish Council formally agrees to submit an application to the Police Road Safety Fund for them to finance a SID (Speed Indication Device) at each end of the main road through the village” was deferred until a later date.

A 10-minute adjournment followed. Most members of the public left with the exception of Christine Howe. The meeting reconvened at 9:35.

6. Somerset Council Ward Councillors reports.

Reports from Councillors Christine Lawrence and Marcus Kravis were submitted.

7. No matters outside Monksilver (except item 10 below) were considered.

8. Matters arising:

- The newsletter has been published. The Welcome Pack to Monksilver requires updating.
- The Coleridge Way path through the churchyard will be discussed when quotations have been received.
- BT Openreach have advised that they have a pole waiting to be erected.
- The website has been refreshed by Black Cat. There are still some errors and gaps, but it is easier to identify where these are. The work is ongoing.

9. Clerk: Mary informed the meeting that the MPC laptop computer runs extremely slowly. Although it operates on Windows 10 system it will not install upgrade patches and that there is an increased security and virus risk accordingly. All the data is stored on the hard drive with no backups being made. It was agreed that Black Cat be asked to quote for the cost of repair. A USB stick may be purchased for secure data backup storage. Approved. Proposed by Andrew, seconded by Sue. Mary also stated that the 3000 emails are now reduced to 1800 and are being moved into Outlook folders for efficiency and easier retrieval. Clarity was provided on what Councillors needed to see as a group and what individuals only needed to see.

Mary asked to attend the three SALC induction training sessions on Governance, Minutes and Finance. These online courses cost £30 each. As the Transparency Act had been enshrined and the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts had been updated since she had retired from Somerset County Council, she felt that it would be beneficial to attend a refresher which is covered on the minutes training. Approved. Proposed by Andrew and seconded by John.

10. Planning Application relating to the former Wansborough Paper Mill. As this application will not affect traffic flow through the village the councillors have no comments to make.

11. Flooding issues including those relating Highways Matters.

- The Monksilver stream should be referred to the “Monksilver River” as it is identified as such on the Environment Agency maps.
- A discussion took place on how to encourage residents to implement their riparian rights and responsibilities to ensure the free flow of water with no conclusion being reached.
- **(Clerk’s note The Environment Agency has recently published a guide Living on the Edge”** which details the riparian rights. A copy could be published on the Monksilver website at the agreement of the councillors).
- John and Kali Martin and Richard Gay had had a successful meeting around the village on 14th June to discuss roads, drainage and flooding risks. Since then, additional drainage work has been carried out in Birchanger Lane near Orchard House. Some re-surfacing work is still needed to ensure that the water reaches the new drains. Also since then, additional drainage has been created at The Granary, but there is still work to carry out in Viv’s yard.
- John and Mervyn had had a meeting with Brenda Maitland-Walker on the 19th July. The Flood Plan has been updated and the publication is imminent, but Brenda had suggested that it should be more detailed in order to obtain support from the EA.
- The 4” drain running along the main road will be cleaned before winter.
- John contacted Colin Skellett, CEO of Wessex Water in order to discuss the floodproofing of the Monksilver Sewage Pumping Station, where the village is at risk from an overflow of raw sewage. Subsequently Colin Skellett agreed to do this as a matter of urgency.
- The telemetry device was fitted to the bridge over the stream by the Old Forge on 9th August. We have been asked to provide "critical levels" which will trigger an alert [subsequent to the meeting, Andrew has made some suggestions].

12. The road will be closed at Woodford in September to undertake essential drainage work. The notice has been published.

13. Pathways: Ownership and responsibility of the church path was discussed. It is likely that the pub owns the hedge running alongside their boundary and that the church owns the hedge running alongside the churchyard. Exact ownership of the path has not yet been determined.

14. Deer Management: Nothing to report.

15. Neighbourhood Watch. The community beat poster needs to be published on the website. With Tina having left the Council, Dan agreed to take on Councillor’s responsibilities.

16. Finance:

- Receipt of the AGAR has been confirmed by L. K. Littlejohn.
- During Qtr.1 the precept of £2,500 was received.
- Payments were made to Zurich £112, West Somerset Flood Group £5, SALC (2022) £31.69 and Mervyn was reimbursed for urgently paying the Black Cat fee of £170, Making the total expenditure of £318.69. The bank account was reconciled at 30th June with a balance in hand £6,742.

- Financial commitments: An invoice for £45 has been received from Black Cat for uploading documents. The 2023 SALC subscription is due. 3 x £30 SALC training fees and the £500 payment to Somerset Council will need to be made.
- Mary was asked to complete the applications to make her a signatory to the bank account.

17. Any other business – none.

18. The dates of the next four meetings are:

- 27th November 2023 at 7.30. Sue sent her apologies for this meeting.
- 26th February 2024 at 7.30
- 13th May 2024 Annual meetings to include the review of the standing orders and the approval of the 2023-2024 annual accounts and AGAR.
- 12th August 2024 at 7:30

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.30pm

APPENDIX

Evidence based research:

- A study by Imperial College London found that the 20mph limited areas were “pollution neutral”. Many things contribute to pollution levels. They include driving style, acceleration, braking, vehicle condition, distance travelled and engine temperature. However, the research concluded that lower speed limits will encourage more people to choose active ways to travel and that there will be fewer polluting cars on the road.
- The World Health Organisation states that the most effective way to improve pedestrian safety is to reduce the speed of vehicles.
- There is evidence from across the world that vehicle speeds are one of the main reasons why people do not walk or cycle.
- From the international evidence base, it can be concluded, on average, a person is around five times more likely to be killed when hit by a vehicle travelling at around 30mph than they are from a vehicle travelling around 20mph.
- ROSPA - One of the first studies of pedestrian injury and car impact speed found that at 20mph there was a 2.5% chance of being fatally injured, compared to a 20% chance at 30mph.
- The Welsh Government is introducing country wide speed limitation in September 2023. Research to reach this conclusion has suggested that there is “moderate to strong” evidence that casualties are reduced as a result of 20mph limits, although evidence on issues such as improving air quality was weak. The Task Force found “overwhelming evidence” that lower speeds result in fewer, and less severe, collisions. The task force also suggested that reductions in the perception of road danger is expected to lead to more walking and cycling which will improve public health and replace some short car journeys...More walking and cycling is also likely to lead to greater social cohesion which brings further societal and health benefits.
- Conversely, the UK Government’s 2018 research on the effectiveness of 20mph limits found that there is insufficient evidence to conclude that there has been a

significant change in collisions and casualties following the introduction of 20mph limits in residential areas...

- **Research from Queen's University** points to **the distinction** between 20mph zones, where traffic calming measures are in place, and 20mph limits enforced only by signage – as is being rolled out across Wales. It found that while there was clear evidence 20mph zones reduced the frequency and severity of collisions and casualties, there was a lack of evidence on the effectiveness of 20mph limits.
- The World Health Organisation states that increasing physical activity and minimising the time spent sitting down helps to maintain a healthy weight and reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer and depression.