

AUST PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Tuesday 12th November 2024 @ 7:30pm at Elberton Village Hall

Present: Councillors Steve Meredith (chairman), Heather Bayston, Julian Cooper, David Spratt, Jeremy Warren, Anne Wiseman

In attendance: Ward Councillor Matthew Riddle (SGC), 3 members of the public

Clerk: Emma Pattullo

Approved at the subsequent meeting held on 10th December 2024.

Signed copy held by the Clerk.

1 To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr. Ian Jenkins.

2 To receive declarations of Interest and requests for dispensations

Cllrs Meredith and Spratt had requested dispensations under the Localism Act 2011 s33 to speak and vote on all matters related to the EDF proposal for development of a saltmarsh. Both own land within the proposed area. It was RESOLVED that such dispensations should be granted for a period of 12 months, as it would be in the interests of residents to have their viewpoint as landowners.

Cllr Meredith stated that he did not wish to chair any discussions on the EDF plans.

It was therefore RESOLVED that in the absence of the vice chairman, Cllr Bayston should chair the meeting for item 5.

3 Public Forum

No matters raised.

4 To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 8th October 2024

It was resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8th October 2024 be approved as a correct record. The minutes were signed by the Chairman.

Cllr Bayston took the chair.

5 EDF saltmarsh development proposals

5.1 To note the draft minutes of the Parish Assembly held on 17th October 2024

The draft minutes were NOTED.

5.2 To note feedback from residents and correspondence received following the meeting

Following the Assembly, the other three parishes which are potential sites (Arlingham, Westbury-on-Severn and Kingston Seymour) had issued a joint statement of their opposition to EDF's plans. The clerk explained that Aust PC had been invited to sign up to this joint statement but that timing issues meant the other parishes wished to publish before Aust PC had chance to discuss it and so the other three parishes went ahead.

This has caused some concern amongst residents of Littleton as it was seen that this was leaving Littleton as the 'easy option' for EDF.

Cllrs Cooper and Warren reported that they had organised a confidential poll of Littleton residents to gauge their opinions of the EDF plans following the parish assembly. The poll showed a large majority to be against the proposals, though some residents were in support or wished to have more detail before making up their minds.

There has been no equivalent survey of residents in Aust or Elberton, but some residents have expressed concerns particularly around the possible displacement of surface water run-off and whether this would increase flood risk in Aust.

5.3 To note outcomes of discussion with Claire Young MP

Cllrs Meredith, Cooper, Warren and Jenkins had met with Claire Young MP on 8th November.

Ms Young is aware of the EDF proposals and had written to the Secretary of State on the matter but had not yet received a response. The Secretary of State will ultimately decide whether EDF must meet their current planning obligation and install the Acoustic Fish Deterrent device (in which case the saltmarsh project would not be needed.) The decision will be taken following a recommendation from the Planning Inspectorate.

Ms Young also advised that, since there will be differences in opinions amongst residents, the council may wish to consider holding drop-in sessions prior to any formal response to the EDF consultation, so people have the opportunity to give their views in a non-confrontational setting.

The councillors agreed to keep Ms Young informed.

5.4 To determine next actions required by the council

It was RESOLVED that the council's agreed policy would be to oppose the EDF plans.

It was further RESOLVED that:

- Cllr Warren will contact the other three parish councils to find out if they are planning any more public statements and to request that Aust PC be added as a signatory to the joint statement;
- Cllr Cooper will draft a request under the Freedom of Information Act to the Environment Agency, asking for details of what meetings they have held with EDF and what advice was given to EDF about the proposed saltmarsh, including its location and required area.

5.5 To appoint council representative(s) to any residents' committee which may be formed

A residents' committee is being formed and will focus on gathering data to feed into the coming consultation and any subsequent public inquiry.

It was RESOLVED that Cllr. Cooper will be the council's appointed representative on the residents' group and will report back to the council as required.

Cllr Meredith resumed the chair.

6 Other parish matters

6.1 To receive Environment Agency advice re: discharge to Littleton pond and determine action required

The Environment Agency have advised that the pond would not be classified as running water in terms of the General Binding Rules for small sewage discharges, and thus that any discharge into the pond would require a discharge consent.

As the pond is part of registered common land with no known owner, the council has the power to protect it from unlawfully interference. It was agreed that an unconsented discharge into or near to the pond would count as interference and thus RESOLVED that the clerk should contact the resident to check whether they were intending to install a private sewage discharge and if so, whether a discharge consent was held.

7 Planning

7.1 To note applications received and resolve response

No planning applications have been received.

7.2 To note the following SGC planning decisions

The following SGC planning decision was NOTED:

- i. P24/00866/F - Land at Hope Farm Village Road Littleton Upon Severn - Temporary stationing of 1no. mobile home for a 3 year period to provide rural workers accommodation (retrospective). SGC decision: *Refused*.

8 Council administration

8.1 To identify a solution for storage of council paper records

The clerk holds a number of historic files which are not suitable for deposit in the county archives, but which cover issues which may arise again in the future and so should not be destroyed. The files are currently stored in cardboard boxes which are not suitable for long term storage. It was RESOLVED that damp-proof plastic storage boxes should be purchased to allow safe storage of records at the clerk's home.

8.2 To review and re-adopt the Biodiversity Policy

The clerk presented a revised Biodiversity Policy which has been adapted to include the Woodwell Meadows volunteer group and Biodiversity Net Gain requirements under planning legislation.

It was RESOLVED that the revised policy should be adopted.

8.3 To determine a provisional date for an additional council meeting in December 2024

It was RESOLVED that, since the situation with EDF is changing and the council needs to be kept up to date, an extra meeting should be held on Tuesday 10th December. The additional meeting may be cancelled if there is no significant business to be transacted.

9 Finance

9.1 To receive the quarterly finance report & budget statement

The quarterly finance report to the end of September 2024 was NOTED. Bank reconciliations were checked and signed by Cllrs Bayston and Wiseman.

9.2 To note receipts

The following receipts were NOTED:

Item	Amount
South Gos. Council – Grant for Woodwell volunteer group equipment	£300.00
South Gos. Council – Precept second instalment	£3,410.00
Unity Trust – bank interest Q2	£85.65

9.3 To note payments made under prior approval

The following payments, made under the given prior approval, were NOTED:

Item	Amount	Minute (where applicable)
Clerk's salary & home working allowance for month to 16th Sep. 2024	£285.86	May '24 item 9.9
Nature Conservation Services – purchase of tree popper	£272.00 +VAT	Sep '24 item 5.1.1
Unity Trust – bank charges Q2	£18.00	May '24 item 9.9
Clerk's salary & home working allowance for the month to 16th October 2024	£285.86	May '24 item 9.9
South Gos Council – emptying of litter bin Q2	£47.70 +VAT	May '24 item 9.9

9.4 To approve payments

The following payments were RESOLVED to be made. All will be paid via bank transfer. A record of authorisation will be held by the Clerk.

Item	Amount	Power to spend
Clerk's overtime October (10 hours)	£132.60	LGA 1972 s112

9.5 To note increase to NJC salary scales applicable from 1st April 2024 and approve payment of back pay and change to salary standing order

The national pay award has now been agreed and there is a contractual obligation to honour the increase, including payment of back pay from 1st April to date.

It was therefore RESOLVED that back pay of £104.80 and a revised monthly standing order of £299.72 should be approved.

9.6 To consider a draft budget for 2025/26 financial year

A proposed draft budget was considered and broadly accepted. Cllr Bayston requested additional budget allocation to fund equipment for the Woodwell Meadows volunteer group and offered to draw up indicative costs.

The budget and precept requirement will be finalised at the meeting of January 2025.

10 To review correspondence received and determine response

10.1 Resident re: litter picking

A resident who carries out litter picking around Aust had requested that the council consider organising a public litter-picking session. It was felt that the liabilities arising from a council-led event would be too great but that the resident should be thanked for her personal efforts.

10.2 Resident re: planned Freedom of Information request to South Glos Council

A resident is gathering signatories to a Freedom of Information request into how SGC handled recent enforcement action at Whale Wharf. It was RESOLVED that the parish council should support the request.

11 To consider responses to consultations received

11.1 Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government - "Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings"

It was RESOLVED that the response should be sent in support of the ability for councillors to attend meetings remotely.

12 Any other minor matters for discussion (no decision required) or items for next agenda

Woodwell Meadows – the recent volunteer sessions have been very well attended and have succeeded in clearing a significant amount of scrub. However the hedge encroachment into the open meadows will be difficult to clear by hand as will the large clumps of brambles. Cllr Meredith offered to arrange mechanical trimming.

Recent complaints of anti-social behaviour and dangerous driving on Whale Wharf Lane have been passed to the police.

It was noted that South Glos Council have responded quickly to recent episodes of fly-tipping and have also recently cleared the ditch in Elberton which has improved the situation during heavy rain.

13 Meeting closure

The meeting closed at 9:21pm.

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Tuesday 10th December 2024.

Items for the agenda should be with the Clerk by 3rd December

Signed on approval:(Chairman)