

## **WIDECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council

held in Leusdon Memorial Hall on

Thursday 4 April 2024 at 7.30pm

**Members present:** Councillor Y Elliott (Chair), J Bibby, D Edwards, T Guest, C Partridge & S Raynor

**Also attending:** District Cllr Nutley and four members of the public

**Members of the Public:**

**Clerk:** Suzanna Hughes

### **4980 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- Cllr S Zab
- District Cllr Rogers
- Rob Steemson (DNPA)

### **4981 OPEN FORUM**

A resident asked whether the Parish Council should write to DCC about the poor standard of repairs to potholes. The Chair advised that this is raised repeatedly but it has little or no impact, District Cllr Nutley suggested that when the Council corresponds with DCC about highways matters, it should copy in Meg Booth (DCC's Director of Climate Change, Environment & Transport).

A resident expressed concern about the speed of traffic through Ponsworthy particularly where children are living. The Chair advised that the blanket 40mph speed limit across Dartmoor is not appropriate for many of the roads and therefore you have to rely on drivers to be sensible. Residents have also put up their own signs asking drivers to be careful and to drive cautiously.

The signpost at Ponsworthy splash is leaning. Residents are encouraged to report any highways

defects on [www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/](http://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/)

A resident advised that they will be submitting a planning application for aluminium windows and that will be coming to the Parish Council as part of the consultation process very soon.

### **4982 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

Members were reminded of their responsibility to continually update their Notice of Registerable Interests and invited to state whether they have any interest in the items to be discussed during this meeting in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct.

Unforeseen requests for a Dispensation to be considered at this point only if there was no way a Councillor would have been aware of such before the meeting.

The Chair declared an interest in item 4987(b).

#### **4983 RATIFICATION OF MINUTES**

Members received the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 7 March 2024 which were approved

as a true and correct record.

#### **4984 REPORTS**

(a) **County Councillor**

No report.

(b) **District Councillors**

Cllr Nutley gave the following report:

On the budget consultation report, 870 residents responded to the survey questions asking if there was anything else we should be prioritising. First on the list was leisure, followed by health and wellbeing, climate change and affordable housing. Asked then of the 2.99% increase in council tax, 76% were in favour of the increase and 64% were in favour of an increase to support affordable housing and jobs. Homes, climate change and jobs were the key priorities for residents.

Of the council tax demanded, Teignbridge District Council keeps just over 8% (£3.67) for the services it looks after, 72% goes to Devon County Council, 12% to the Police, 4% to the Fire service and 4% to Town and Parishes.

Green bin charges will stay the same for 24/25 £55 which is below the national average.

Changes to car parking charges are mainly inflationary to cover the increases in cost of inflation.

During the Queen Street alterations, the car park charges in the multi-storey car park will be £1 for 2 hours. This was an amendment in the budget put forward by Cllr Paul Parker which was accepted.

A vote was then taken on the budget and there were 32 for, 3 against and 7 abstentions. Therefore the budget was approved.

The other item I mentioned at the February meeting was the Empty Homes premium and second homes premium policy. This was to implement the councils tax premium on second homes and to bring forward the time period for levelling premium on empty homes from 2 years to 1

year. This was accepted and approved at council meeting.

The Grounds Maintenance Contract which covers the whole of the district is up for renewal and will be out for retendering. This is for an initial 5 year period with the option to extend for a further 5 years

using a restricted tender procedure. The contract is let at a fixed cost of £662,740 with an annual CIP (Consumer Price Inflation) increase using an agreed evaluation methodology. There are three options: 1. Open Tender 2. Restricted Tender procedure and 3. Further Competition via a framework. The preferred option is Option 2. The Restricted Procedure is a two-stage process. The first stage is a selection process where the bidder's capability, capacity, and

experience to perform the contract is assessed against a predetermined set of criteria. This means the number of bidders would be reduced to a maximum of 5 suppliers for the second stage, where detailed bids are assessed to determine the most economically advantageous tender based on quality and price.

I would like to see our present contractors Idverde which is a national company retain the contract as they have done an excellent job over the years and employ 15 local staff. The present contract ends in November and the tendering process needs to be completed by July.

Plant 1000 trees per year finished at the end of March. We are running out of budget and available land. If tree planting is to remain a priority, we will need to consider how it can and will be achieved.

Over 1500 have been planted, with over 400 being planted on Shaldon.

Cllr Rogers sent the following update:

I am seeking an option of a part 2 type meeting on social housing and would Councillors support a specific meeting on this subject.

In his role as Postmaster, he reported that the past few weeks as seen Ashburton PO Hub has become an Evri agent. Vinted is a growing business that young people are using trading on their Platform.

Unfortunately, Scammers are finding ways to scam customers of all ages and individuals of all ages do not communicate when they have been scammed Important Scammers typically ask for your contact details, sensitive data or login information. Phishing messages might also contain links to malicious sites or have infected files attached. Don't open suspicious links or attachments and do not fulfil any of their requests. Please share this number BUT DO NOT ANSWER 01364 655698. This is a scam number

If you think you may have been a victim of fraud or cyber crime, and live in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, you should report this to Action Fraud at [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk) or by calling 0300 123 2040.

**(c) DNPA Representative**

No report.

**(d) Police Report**

During the period 1 March – 31 March, there were no criminal offences recorded in this parish. There were 2 non-crime incidents across the area. These involved a handbrake failure and a van versus motorcycle.

**(e) Delegate Reports**

The Chair circulated a report following a meeting she had had with Anthony Arnold (Headteacher, Widecombe Primary School) regarding the discussions at the last meeting regarding the parking of the school buses.

She advised that the school is actively seeking solutions to the parking situation outside of school at 3.30pm, particularly. They recognise that the school has grown, almost to capacity,

and this is the result of more families enrolling from out of the area and hence driving children to the village.

Positive discussions are under way with Widecombe Fair Committee to try and have access to an area of land on the fair field for parent parking. This would require an area of hard-standing and likely planning permission from DNPA. Parish Council support would be much appreciated if this goes ahead. It will cost approximately £10k to complete this work, which the school may be asked to cover.

Annual parking restrictions come into effect from 1 April, which sees more of the village out of bounds for parking after 10am. Mr Arnold has negotiated parent parking permits for the Teignbridge car park for drop-off and pick-up times during term. These will be distributed to parents after the Easter holidays. Parents are regularly reminded of parking restrictions and are encouraged to park more considerately – avoiding gateways, driveways or on the roadside where this restricts the ability for larger vehicles to pass. This is a work in progress and requires habitual change.

Paul Edmonds, DCC, visited the school on 26 March to observe the parking situation and bus/taxi pick-up process. His recommendation was that the buses should continue as they are now – blocking the road temporarily to load children, as this is safer than getting the kids to cross the road to alternative points, such as the Fair gateway.

Cllr Elliott suggested requested designated parking spaces outside the school for buses / taxis for picking up/dropping off children to avoid the road needing to be blocked. This is something Mr Arnold and Mr Edmonds had already discussed. It seems the process of requesting allocated parking spaces can be drawn out and bureaucratic and the desired outcome is not guaranteed, but if the PC and school worked together on this it would seem a positive attempt at solving the current problem.

Harveys are not renewing their bus contract at Widecombe at Easter, so a new company will be appointed following a tender process. This provides an ideal opportunity for a new start with agreed processes in place from mid-April onwards when children return to school.

Cllr Elliott wondered if changes can be requested for the yellow lines in the village – some locations could do with double-yellows, others have single yellow restrictions in locations where permanent parking would not cause obstructions or issues. Would the PC have any interest in seeking to make changes to the current designations? Traffic regulation orders – Roads and transport ([devon.gov.uk](http://devon.gov.uk))

Mr Arnold is keen to work positively with the PC and local community to improve parking and traffic flow past the school, whilst keeping children safe as they arrive and leave each day. Cllr Elliott and Mr Arnold to catch-up again at the end of April.

It was noted by members that there are various things happening to try and improve the situation. After brief discussion, members agreed to support a joint application for allocated bus parking spaces outside the school. It was also agreed to look into whether the parking permits allocated to parents would extend to the single yellow lines at drop-off and pick-up times.

#### **4985 PROJECTS & ESTATES**

*(Cllrs Edwards, Partridge & Zab)*

- **Parish Field**
- The income and expenditure for the Parish Field (to 31 March 2024) was received. A balance of £1353.85 was noted.

Cllr Bibby sought the Council's permission to approach the adjacent landowner to reinstate the water supply. The idea is to bring it in to create a small, natural pond and take it back out into the river. They would also like to look into restoring the stone bridge. Concerns about water safety were expressed and members suggested that advice should be sought about this. As a step forward, however, an informal, first approach to the adjacent landowner was agreed.

- It was noted that the field has now been let.
- **Devon Air Ambulance Night Landing Site**

The owners of a field in Lower Dunstone who have put forward their field as a possible night landing site are now aware of the requirements and are happy for DAAT to survey the field to assess its suitability. The headteacher of Widecombe Primary School is also happy for the school sports field to be considered.

- **D Day celebrations**

A parishioner asked whether the Parish Council would be organising an event to celebrate the 80 year anniversary of D Day on 6 June. It was agreed that the Parish Council would not be arranging an event but would make enquiries as to whether the Church and/or Ashburton RBL had any plans underway.

#### **4986 PLANNING/LOCAL LIAISON**

*(Cllrs Bibby, Raynor & Guest)*

- **New planning applications/appeals**
- [0125/24 – Lowen Cottage, Poundsgate](#)

[0126/24 – Lowen Cottage, Poundsgate \(Listed Building Consent\)](#)

Dry stone granite garden wall

Members agreed to support the application. There is no doubt that a retaining wall is required in this location and the building will continue to be under threat without it.

#### **(b) Planning Decisions/Withdrawals**

- 24/0014 – Village Green, Widecombe

Permission to fell sycamore tree T1 (tree is in poor physiological health and has cambial dysfunction and bark necrosis on the main stem)

Members noted that DNPA has no objections to this proposal.

Cllr Partridge advised that the works to fell this tree will cost an additional £50 as the tree will now need to be climbed to avoid the new tree which has already been planted. Members were happy to accept this additional cost.

It was also agreed to send an article to the Parish Link to update and reassure parishioners about the work that has been done to the trees on the green.

## **4987 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE**

*(Cllrs Bibby, Raynor & Guest)*

### **(a) Payments**

Members received and approved the following payment:

- Clerk's salary and disbursements – £277.37
- HMRC (PAYE Q4) – £189
- Leusdon Memorial Hall (hire of hall – April) – £22

Members also noted the receipt of £200 from David Fursdon as a donation towards one of the new trees on the green.

- **Small Grants Scheme**

Two applications were received for a small grant. It was agreed to allocate funding as follows:

- £500 to Widcombe Community Hall towards new granite kerbs at the entrance
- £500 to Widcombe Pre-school towards the cost of a new outdoor shelter subject to planning permission being granted by DNPA. If permission for the shelter is not given, it was agreed that a grant of £200 will be made for other equipment, as mentioned in their application. It was further agreed that the Parish Council would like to see a list of those items before payment is made.

## **4988 HIGHWAYS**

***Potholes and other highways maintenance issues can be reported direct to DCC:***

Online: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/>

Telephone: 0345 155 1004

Email: [customer@devon.gov.uk](mailto:customer@devon.gov.uk)

Members discussed the Community Road Warden Scheme – a formal agreement, between Devon County Council and a parish council, which enables them to deliver minor works in or around the public highway. The Road Warden Scheme allows communities to:

- Organise minor works either on or off the live carriageway
- Carry out minor works either on the live carriageway or away from the live carriageway

Communities are able to carry out minor works which DCC are no longer able to resource and do not have a

legal responsibility to carry out such as pothole repairs (when they do not meet our intervention criteria),

clearing weeds, cleaning signs, cleaning drainage (gully grating), cutting grass, repairing finger posts, cutting

hedges and managing verges for wildlife.

DCC provide third party insurance for the works and there is free training on DCC arranged courses.

All works must be discussed, in the first instance, with the local highway neighbourhood officer.

**A Road Warden should** be nominated as suitable by the parish council, be the communication link between DCC and the parish council, agree to work within the arrangements set forward by the Road Warden agreement, co-ordinate any minor works which are undertaken within the parish and ensure that [risk assessments](#) are undertaken and are easily accessible upon DCC request.

Cllr Raynor proposed that, as a first step, the Parish Council advertises the scheme in the Parish Link seeking volunteers. This was agreed by all.

**4989 CORRESPONDENCE**

None

**4990 MEMBERS' ITEMS FOR INFORMATION OR GENERAL DISCUSSION, FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS AND/OR ITEMS REQUIRING URGENT ATTENTION**

*Members are reminded that they have not received the statutory notice of this business to be transacted and should therefore recognise that any decision made may be taken to be unlawful if challenged in the future*

None

**4991 NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on 2 May 2024 at 7.30pm in Church House, Widecombe.

Signed ..... Dated .....