

WIDECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Zoom on Thursday 3 December 2020

Members present: Councillor Hassell (Chairman), Booty, Clare, Edwards, Elliott, Fenton, Partridge, Routley and Whiteside

Also present: County Cllr Gribble, District Cllr Parker-Khan and Rob Steemson (DNPA)

Members of the Public: There were two members of the public present.

Clerk: Suzanna Hughes

4616 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

District Cllr Nutley

4617 OPEN FORUM

A member of the public advised that they were interested to hear the discussion about the precept and made a plea to the Council that the precept is not increased.

4618 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.

As council tax payers in the parish, all members present declared an interest in item 4624(b). A dispensation was granted to enable them to discuss the item.

4619 RATIFICATION OF MINUTES

Members received the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 5 November 2020 which were approved as a true and correct record.

4620 REPORTS

(a) County Councillor

Cllr Gribble advised that he had received correspondence from a parishioner regarding a spring in Ponsworthy which is emerging at the rear of Sweeton Farm. He will also look at the garage site as soon as he can as promised in the last meeting.

(b) District Councillors

Cllr Parker-Khan advised that council tax base numbers have reduced across the district as a result of the pandemic. She also advised that if anyone in Widecombe is applying for a youth grant, the deadline has been extended. A Community Safety Partnership meeting is being held next week to discuss the increasing problem of domestic violence. Teignbridge has planted 1500 trees in the district and a further 1500 will be planted in each of the following two years. The Rural Skip service has been terminated as it is no longer viable. The Parish Council has been formally notified of this. Cllr Edwards asked whether details of the trees could be sent to the clerk.

(c) DNPA Representative

Rob Steemson circulated the following written report:

I am presently undertaking and updating Public Rights of Way surveys within the Parish. Some reactive smaller work has already been undertaken, new Footpath sign and discs at Ponsworthy splash, new stile tread at Bittleford Footpath, gorse clearance on Bridleway between Bel tor & Mel to etc. Other slightly larger identified works will be undertaken soon with assistance of my Voluntary Wardens who should be allowed to work with us again soon.

I await a response from a landowner at Ponsworthy to undertake some Footpath repairs and improvements on the Two Moors Way route.

One of my main roles (again with support from Voluntary Wardens) across all Dartmoor Commons and Access land is to monitor and undertake erosion surveys and repairs. As we are well aware it has been a busy year and my observations so far indicate there is an increase in erosion at many sites. Apart from the well-publicised camping issues there is also an increase of illegal cycling activity and in particular exacerbated by e-bikes, eg. not on Bridleways or other designated routes. Whilst it is great that people are keeping active parts of Dartmoor are suffering and a good example is the Two Moors Way route across Hameldown which not only has mountain bike problems but also illegal off road motor bikes and some four-wheel drives.

DNPA is currently reviewing its signage policy in car parks etc, its general information provision and communication systems along with our current Byelaws and their respective enforcement. We have just appointed another Assistant Ranger and having worked closely with the Police all year, also look to strengthen our relationship going forward.

Last November I reported in to DNPA & Highways the need for repainting the double yellow lines and keeping them clear of detritus plus the necessity of repairing eroded banks that cars are parked either on or through. This has been mentioned many times this year particularly with the amount of vehicles illegally parked and the problem that the Civil Enforcement Officers had. It has now been agreed to sort the problems out and I am overseeing the banking repairs utilising local rocks (some from behind Leusdon hall) and others supplied by the Commons owner and using a local contractor. Once banking is completed Highways are to replace and add extra signs and repaint the lines. Our information centres at Princetown and Postbridge are re-opening on Tuesday with Haytor on Wednesday.

Rob also advised members that he has arranged to meet a contractor at Newbridge. Extra work is being undertaken to clear the path between Lizwell and Cockingford. He also reported that he has been involved with the gorse clearance today.

Cllr Fenton referred to the bright yellow signs which DNPA erected in laybys reminding camper vans that they can't stay overnight. He requested that the signs are 'dulled down'. Rob Steemson advised that the signs had been put up due to the pandemic to discourage people from staying on the moor. The signs are not permanent and DNPA are reviewing all of their signage. He offered to feedback Cllr Fenton's observation about their brightness.

(d) Police

PC Dudley sent a written report advising that there had been three crimes recorded between 1/10/20 and 2/12/20: two burglaries (dwelling) and one burglary (non-dwelling). The three burglaries all occurred in the last week or so to unoccupied premises. Two of the burglaries were

to the same house on the Natsworthy Road. Four men from the Newton Abbot area were arrested nearby late on Saturday 28th November on suspicion of burglary. They have all been released under investigation to allow for further enquiries to be made.

(e) Delegate Reports

Cllr Fenton referred to a notice he had circulated to members prior to the meeting regarding the National Trust Shop. The notice, advertising the availability of the unit to let, will appear on the National Trust shop door. Some interest has already been received.

Members received a report from the snow warden, Miles Fursdon, regarding the salt bins. All have been checked and low or empty bins have been reported via the "report a problem" website. It was agreed that a reminder to the public is circulated on the parish communication system that reporting low or empty bins is important, so please keep an eye on bins near you.

4621 PROJECTS

(Lead Councillors: Cllrs Edwards & Clare)

(a) Parish Field

Members received a report circulated by Cllrs Clare and Edwards. It was noted that they were exploring various uses for the field. The pre-school is looking for a new outdoor classroom. They would like a dedicated area where that can erect a small shed for equipment storage. They also wish to have a mud kitchen, firepit and in time, maybe an earth toilet there. The school have shown an interest to use the field but have not confirmed a specific interest or commitment. Devon Wildlife Trust would also like to install a bat box for research purposes. They are also able to supply a selection of native trees under their tree planting scheme. The planting of an orchard is a further idea. One third of the area could be planted with fruit trees for the benefit of local people. The report also referred to other issues for consideration including security, access to water, ongoing management and grazing rights. Members were informed that the History Group may be interested in looking into the restoration of the leat and pond. Cllr Fenton also suggested that an assessment of whether the land is a valuable meadow should be made before it is turned into woodland. Cllr Edwards clarified that coverage of only part of the land with trees was being considered. Rob Steemson suggested that the team makes contact with Richard Knott (DNPA Ecologist) who may be happy to look and advise on the proposals. There was also a discussion about whether change of use would be required and this should be discussed with DNPA. The Chairman emphasised the need for more detailed costings as the proposed outline costs represented 10% of the precept. Rob Steemson suggested that grants may be available and that the team should contact Emma Stockley at DNPA. County Cllr Gribble reminded members that he also had funds available for such projects. Cllr Partridge suggested that a phased approach might be considered as this would spread the cost out. The Chairman suggested that Cllrs Clare and Edwards may need some help with this project. Cllr Fenton and Rob Steemson both offered their support. In the meantime, it was agreed to allow the pre-school to use the field subject to firm proposal and confirmation of all details discussed above.

(b) Tree Stump

Members received a proposal from Cllr Edwards regarding the carving of a bench from the tree stump. She advised that she has found someone who would do it for no fee. However, as they have no public liability insurance, she would be prepared to sub-contract the work so that he would be covered under her own private insurance. The Chairman advised that as a contractor,

the Parish Council would be required to see copies of her risk assessments, method statement and a copy of the insurance. The majority of members were in favour of this arrangement. Documents would be sent to Cllr Edwards for completion.

4622 ESTATES

(Lead Councillors: Cllrs Fenton & Whiteside)

There were no items relating to Estates.

The clerk advised that the parish trees were due to be surveyed at the end of November/beginning of December and a report would follow.

4623 PLANNING/LOCAL LIAISON

(Lead Councillors: Cllrs Booty & Elliott)

(a) New planning applications/appeals

(i) 0527/20 & 0528/20 – Oldsbrim Shippon, Ponsworthy

Removal of oil boiler and oil tank and the installation of air source heat pump, water cylinder and the replacement of existing radiators

Members agreed to support this application on the following grounds:

- The proposed replacement heating system is modest in scale and designed to fit neatly into the existing space with minimal visual impact
- Heat pumps can be a little noisy, but there are no other nearby properties that would be disturbed by this
- The effect on Listed building status is not considered to be significant]
- It is in line with the Local Plan – COR8 Meeting the challenge of Climate Change and COR10 Providing for renewable energy

(ii) 0550/10 – Woodland, SW of Honeybag Tor, East of Bagpark Plantation, Widecombe Creation of hardstanding (12mx10m) and widening of gate entrance

Cllr Elliott advised that this was an application for Prior Approval (i.e. an application to determine whether planning permission is needed). It was therefore agreed not to comment.

(b) Planning Decisions/Withdrawals

None

The clerk advised that the application for affordable housing will be decided by the Development Management Committee at their meeting on 4 December. It has been recommended for approval.

4624 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

(Lead Councillors: Cllrs Partridge & Routley)

(a) Payments

Members received and approved the following payment:

- Cheque no 001060 – Clerk’s salary and disbursement (Dec & Jan) – £526.54
- Cheque no 001061 – HMRC (PAYE) – £61.80

(b) Budget and Precept 2021/22

Members considered the draft proposals for next year’s budget.

The clerk reminded members that TDC has made an adjustment in the council tax base number for 2021/22 due to a fewer number of anticipated new dwellings on the register. This means that in order to keep the Parish Council element of the council tax at the same level as this year, the Parish Council will receive 5.89% less. Members agreed that it had been a difficult year for many as a result of the pandemic and they were therefore reluctant to increase the precept this year. It was therefore agreed to demand a sum of £5945 representing a 0% increase.

It was further agreed that Cllrs Partridge and Routley would look in more detail at the budget proposals in relation to the Parish Field and come back to February’s meeting with some costings.

4625 HIGHWAYS

There were no new highways issues.

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

4626 CORRESPONDENCE

None

4627 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

The Chairman advised that he had been approached about whether there should be a Christmas tree in the village centre. After brief discussion, it was agreed that this was not something the Parish Council wished to organise.

The Chairman informed members that the affordable Hastoe house on Brook Lane has been allocated to someone with a local connection.

The Chairman requested that all reports for future meetings be sent to the clerk no later than the Friday before the next meeting so they can be circulated together with the agenda.

4628 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Zoom on 4 February 2021 at 7.30pm.

Signed Dated

