

## **WIDECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council

held on Thursday 6 February 2020

in Church House, Widecombe

Members Present: Councillor Hassell (Chairman), Booty, Edwards, Elliott, Morley, Partridge, Routley and Whiteside

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

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

Clerk: Suzanna Hughes

### **4513 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- Cllr Fenton
- District Cllr Cox
- District Cllr Nutley

### **4514 OPEN FORUM**

The Parish Council was welcomed to Leusdon Memorial Hall. The following comments were raised by members of the public: • A parishioner advised that they were present at the meeting to speak on behalf of a number of people from Leusdon about the item relating to Widecombe Community Hall. Those residents are concerned about the project in Widecombe and whilst supporting the project in principle, they do not wish to support it financially.

• A parishioner advised that about a year ago he had first raised the issue of the destruction of the walls along the Natsworthy Road following timber clearance but nothing has yet been done to rectify the problem. The bank has collapsed and debris has fallen into the road. County Cllr Gribble advised that he would follow this up with the Highways Engineer. • With reference to the item about Widecombe Community Hall, a parishioner requested that the Parish Council votes to support those parishioners who do support the new hall and reminds parishioners living in Leusdon that they received a substantial gift from the Merrymakers and other groups who have contributed to its upkeep and maintenance.

• A parishioner did not like to hear about the divide in the parish about the proposed Widecombe Community Hall. The parish should be working together as one. She thanked the Parish Council for its grant towards the cost of cleaning and polishing the hand bells. Additional funds have also had to be raised to cover the unexpected cost of replacing the leathers.

• A parishioner commented on the recent loss of a limb from the large sycamore on Widecombe Green. He advised the Council not to be too sympathetic as trees have a natural life span and this tree poses a risk at present.

• A parishioner asked whether anything had happened following a request by Peter Rennells some months ago for a traffic survey to monitor the speed of vehicles through Widecombe. It was understood that Cllr Nutley had been approached. A substantial village like Ipplepen has a 20mph speed limit so why not Widecombe?

• Has the Council made any plans to celebrate VE Day? It was agreed that this would be added to March's agenda for discussion.

### **4515 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & 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 Cllr Elliott declared an interest in item 7.1 (minute 4518 (a)).

#### 4516 RATIFICATION OF MINUTES

(a) Members received the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 2 December 2019 which were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

(b) Members received the minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council meeting held on 7 January 2020 which were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

#### 4517 REPORTS

(a) County Councillor Cllr Gribble advised that he had attended the budget meetings at County Hall. DCC is trying to make up the shortfall in government funding. He will meeting with the Commoners about installation of cattle grids for which they will have to fund.

(b) District Councillors Cllr Parker-Khan advised that TDC has been going through its budgeting process. The band D council tax will be increased by £5. The Rural Aid grant is being reviewed [though DNPA parishes are not eligible for this]. It has also been agreed to reduce the District Councillors' fund from £1500 to £1000. This will limit opportunities to make contributions to local projects. Owners of new homes will now be charged £80 for new bins. Free Sunday car parking is also ceasing. The Council Tax support grant is being changed – if you are entitled to relief it will unfairly affect larger families. There is a Climate Emergency meeting in Ashburton tomorrow evening. The Parish Council thanked Cllr Parker-Khan for her contribution to help save Ashburton Fire Station from closure. The Charman also thanked Cllr Routley for being the Council's representative and raising awareness of this in the community.

(c) DNPA Representative Rob Steemson reported that the Public Rights of Way network receives £43,000 from DCC which is shared across the Park. There is no additional funding. Fortunately, good support is given by volunteer wardens. There are ongoing issues at Spitchwick. The double yellow lines are obstructed in places and need cleaning before they can be enforced. New signs have been erected at Spitchwick Common – a 'no camping' sign and a directional sign to the defibrillator at Spitchwick Hall. Some erosion surveys, updated from 2003, have been carried out. The Donate for Dartmoor fund helps to fund specific projects and the Park is very grateful for donations through this fund. Through the Rural Crime Initiative, some 4x4s had been stuck in a bog and prosecution is pending. DNPA is making crucial links with the Fires Partnership in relation to wild fires but this is work in progress. Training nights involving commoners are being held. The 'Your Dartmoor' Management Plan (2020-25) consultation starts 10 February and runs to 20 April. Comments are invited. The Moor Otters are returning with their cubs. Finally, Rob advised that he has talked to the History Group and mooted a potential beating of the bounds event for next year. Cllr Morley asked about the responsibility for poo bags which people seem to leave all over the moor. Rob advised that these are treated as litter and DNPA don't have the receptacles to dispose of them. They are therefore the responsibility of the District Council.

(d) Police No report. (e) Delegate Reports No reports. 4518 ESTATES (Lead Councillors: Cllrs Fenton & Whiteside) (a) Sycamore Tree – Widcombe Green The Chairman reported that the sycamore tree on the green had lost a limb in the recent storms. He thanked Cllrs Fenton and Whiteside for their prompt and efficient action in respect of clearance of the debris and cordoning off the area to protect members of the public. He informed members that Brian Beasley, DNPA, advised the need for a tree report. An arboricultural, tree risk and aerial assessment of the sycamore tree has now been carried out and a report has been received. From the report, it seems that there are the following options: (i) to remove the tree completely (though this is unlikely to be supported by DNPA); the trunk could be left as a feature; (ii) pollard the tree dramatically but the tree is old and is unlikely to respond well to this); (ii) mulch an area around the tree base to assist the tree in gaining nutrients; or (iv) fence off the danger area under the limb to ensure nobody accesses the danger area. After discussion, members unanimously

agreed that the only action they would support would be for the tree to be taken down. They also supported the proposal to leave the trunk as a feature. It was therefore agreed to ask Aspect Tree Consultancy Ltd to submit an application to DNPA to remove the tree.

Cllr Whiteside thanked Mark and Sharon Hutchings for loaning the emergency fencing. (b) 621 Two queries were raised: Clause 5.5 states that 'the Tenant shall not damage or make any opening in the boundary structure of the Property'. It was questioned whether this would conflict with plans being submitted by Widecombe Community Hall which include a new pedestrian opening in the hedge between the two fields. DCC confirmed that that as the accessway would not be created by the Parish Council (i.e. the Tenant), it would take the view that the Parish Council would not breach clause 5.5a of the lease. They suggest, however, that legal advice is taken by the Parish Council.

Clause 13 states that the Parish Council must not sublet the land. It was questioned whether this would prohibit the Parish Council from subletting the land to the Sports Group. It was agreed to query this with DCC. 6.2.2 Members were advised that the cost of preparing a sublease between the Parish Council and Widecombe; District Sports Group is in the region of £750-£1000. It was agreed that Cllrs

Whiteside and Fenton would arrange a meeting with the Sports Group to discuss the sublease once the head lease has been agreed. It was further agreed that independent legal advice should be taken before the head lease is signed. (c) Parish Field Tenancy Agreement The clerk advised that Stags has agreed to review the existing tenancy agreement, bring it up to date and to include a clause regarding the absence of water. They have estimated that this would cost around £100. Cllr Partridge reminded members that there was still work to be done in the field – fallen branches need clearing, the hedge needs cutting at the entrance to the field, the gate needs attention

and the trees still need to be surveyed. It was agreed that quotes would be sought to survey all the trees in the parish for which the Parish Council is responsible including those in the Parish Field.

(d) Poundsgate Noticeboard

Cllr Partridge reported that the noticeboard is in production. A copy of the interpretation panel will be circulated to members for observations.

4519 PROJECTS

(Lead Councillors: Cllrs Edwards & Morley)

7.1 Widecombe Community Hall

7.1.1 Members received correspondence about the recent Parish Poll. The Chairman advised that

the letter has been acknowledged and that no further action was necessary by the sender.

7.1.2 Members received correspondence from Widecombe Community Hall advising that they had

been offered an anonymous donation of £50,000 towards the project on the condition that it is match-funded by the Parish Council. Members therefore considered and accepted the following proposal:

That the Parish Council supports the building of a new Community Hall in Widecombe and will apply for a loan from the PWLB to help fund this so long as there is a plan to do so without raising the precept and there is a proposal for security of the loan repayments that satisfies the Parish Council prior to the loan being applied for.

The Chairman also asked members to formally vote on whether they supported the principle of building a new community hall in Widecombe. Members agreed that they had a duty to be

mindful of the impact a new hall might have on other local businesses etc. It was noted, however that the feasibility study showed support for the project from local businesses. After brief discussion, the majority of members supported Widecombe Community Hall in trying to bring about a new hall in Widecombe.

## 7.2 Affordable Housing

The Chairman advised that following the retirement of the planning officer who was assigned this case, the plans have had to be redrawn. A planning application should be submitted in the next month or so.

### 4520 PLANNING/LOCAL LIAISON

(Lead Councillors: Cllrs Booty & Elliott)

(a) New planning applications/appeals:

None.

(b) Planning Decisions/Withdrawals

The following planning decisions were received:

(i) 0519/19 – Erection of timber framed agricultural building (13.7m x 5.1m) at Bowden Barn, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Members noted that DNPA has granted conditional planning permission.

(ii) 0372/19 – Replacement roof covering, Higher Uppacott, Poundsage Replacement roof covering

Members noted that DNPA has granted conditional planning permission

### 4521 FINANCE & GOVERNANCE

(Lead Councillors: Cllrs Partridge & Routley)

(a) Payments

Members received and approved the following payments for approval:

- Cheque no 001034 – Royal Mail Group (Response plus service) – £66.80
- Cheque no 001035 – DNPA (Postage of Parish Poll letters) – £193.85
- Cheque no 001036 – Royal Mail Group (Response plus service) – £34.94
- Cheque no 001037 – Clerk's salary and disbursements (Feb) – £235.77
- Cheque no 001038 – Sam Hall's Tree Care (clearance of debris from fallen limb) – £260
- Cheque no 001039 – Greentrees Arboricultural Services Ltd – £270
- Cheque no 001040 – Aspect Tree Consultancy Ltd – £360
- Cheque no 001041 0 Bells of Whitechapel (grant approved in September 2020) – £500

(b) Annual Parish Meeting

It was agreed that the focus of the meeting should be an update on the Affordable Housing project. The clerk will invite Mary Ridgeway (TDC) and Colin Pike (Teign Housing).

### 4522 HIGHWAYS

There were no new issues raised.

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

[https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtr](https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/)

[ansport/report-a-problem/](https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/)Telephone: 0345 155 100 Email: [customer@devon.gov.uk](mailto:customer@devon.gov.uk)

### 4523 CORRESPONDENCE

(a) Members were invited to attend a Climate Forum organised by ACTION on Climate in Teignbridge on

13 or 19 February. The clerk advised that Roger and Ann Claxton have volunteered to attend on behalf of the Parish Council.

(b) Members were invited to attend a Dartmoor Assembly on the Climate and Ecological crisis on 7 March.

Cllrs Elliott and Whiteside both volunteered to attend.

4524 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.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.00pm.

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

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Thursday 5 March 2020 at 7.30pm in Leusdon Memorial Hall.