

WIDECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held in Church House, Widecombe on Thursday 1 February 2024 at 7.30pm

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

Also attending: District Cllr John Nutley & Roger & Ann Claxton (Widecombe Website)

Members of the Public:

Clerk: Suzanna Hughes

Before the start of the meeting, the Chair asked members to observe one minute's silence in memory of District Cllr Huw Cox who had attended many meetings of this Parish Council as the Ward member for Ashburton and Buckfastleigh.

4956 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- District Cllr Rogers
- Rob Steemson (DNPA)

4957 OPEN FORUM

A representative from the Widecombe Hall Committee CIO explained the Section 73 (Variation of Conditions) application which has been submitted to DNPA (item 4962 (a)(i)) which include changes to the roofline and sewerage arrangements.

Roger and Ann Claxton were present to answer any questions relating to item 4961(a).

4958 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.

Cllr Elliott declared an interest in item 4962(a)(i) as Chair of the Widecombe Community Hall CIO.

4959 RATIFICATION OF MINUTES

Members received the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 4 January 2024 which were approved as a true and correct record.

4960 REPORTS

(a) County Councillor

No report.

(b) District Councillors

District Cllr Nutley advised that TDC's Executive has recommended to Council that it approves (a) the application of the current premium of 100% for all dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (empty dwellings) after 1 year instead of 2, with effect from 1 April 2024; (b) The application of a premium of 100% for all dwellings which are unoccupied but substantially furnished with effect from 1 April 2024; and (c) That the S151 Officer is given delegated powers to implement the policy in line with the Council's requirements and any guidance given by the Secretary of State. TDC's financial proposals for the next three years have taken into account various issues including:

- The level of council tax and the proposal to increase it by £5.70 (equivalent to 2.99%).
- Maintaining 100% council tax support.
- Reducing central funding and the need to make ongoing efficiencies using invest to save where possible.
- Continuing to react to the climate change emergency by maintaining ongoing budgets for a climate change officer and associated spending, temporary staffing resources in revenue and provision in the capital programme, including ongoing provisions for corporate decarbonisation schemes
- Infrastructure delivery plan investment funded by community infrastructure levy (CIL) and external sources where available
- Town centre investment in infrastructure and employment.
- Revenue contributions to capital being maintained at £500,000 per annum
- Introduction of a blue badge car parking permit at £215 per annum
- Support for housing, including the Teignbridge 100, whilst backing business and bringing people and organisations together for local neighbourhood planning.
- Councillors community fund set at £1,000 each.

District Cllr/Ashburton Postmaster Rogers was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report and updates:

- Scammers are operating over Dartmoor. Residents don't talk about it so please encourage residents to seek guidance from Ashburton Hub to stop the scammers.
- We are awaiting an update on support available for the digitally excluded.
- If anyone wants assistance on cost of living assistance please advise. I am liaising with Widecombe School to offer support.
- I will advise on dates for the Parish Council to meet representatives regarding the affordable housing.
- I want to end by remembering Councillor Huw Cox who funeral was on 26 January. Huw was the stone mason on the Ashburton Hub. Lloyd Mortimore will be assisting on a granite plaque in Huw's memory.

(c) DNPA Representative

Rob Steemson sent a report advising that he is aware of a tree down on FP7 below Jordan and DNPA is planning to do path surface work over the next financial year. The scheduled works on other paths, particularly new field furniture through Kingshead footpath, are with a contractor and await a spell of dry weather.

A question was asked about the responsibility for a boggy field at the Ponsworthy end of the Jordan path. Was this the responsibility of the landowner or is it part of the scheduled works? There is also Himalayan balsam growing in the field. It was agreed that the clerk would contact Rob Steemson for clarification.

(d) Police Report

PCSO Campbell-Moseley sent the following report:

We are pleased to announce PC 2367 Claire HURRELL has been selected as the new Neighbourhood Beat Manager for Ashburton and Buckfastleigh. She will be working alongside Police Community Support Officer Tamzin Campbell-Moseley. Claire begins the role on 12 February and we hope to introduce ourselves personally at a Parish Council Meeting in the near future.

January

In the period 1 – 31 January 2024 there were 3 criminal offences recorded for this area:

- 1 – Criminal Damage to vehicle
- 1 – Fear of Provocation of violence
- 1 – Assault by beating

There were 3 non-crime incidents which included concerns for welfare, firearms licensing management and road related incidents.

(e) Delegate Reports

None

4961 PROJECTS & ESTATES

(Cllrs Edwards, Partridge & Zab)

(a) Widecombe Website

Members received correspondence from Roger Claxton about the future of the website following the withdrawal of Widecombe History Group. It is his intention to redevelop the site and hopes that volunteers will support him and/or groups will be able to manage their own content. The current website generates income through advertising and it is hoped that this will continue thus making the site self-sufficient. Initially, however, there would be an upfront cost for hosting (around £120 for two years) and a further £80 to migrate all the existing pages to WordPress.

It was his preference for the Parish Council to take over the site but after discussion, members were reluctant for the Parish Council to take over the ownership and management of the site at this stage. Instead, they agreed to support the aspect of the website which relates to the Parish Council by making a donation of £200 to cover the costs above with a view to reviewing it again

in the future. In the meantime, Roger Claxton would investigate the transfer of the domain name (which he currently owns) which the Parish Council may consider adopting in the future.

(b) Parish Field

The income and expenditure for the Parish Field (to 26 January 2024) was received. A balance of £1303.85 was noted.

(c) Farming in Protected Landscapes funding application

Members noted that the application for works on and around the Village Green and layby improvements at the bottom of Widecombe Hill has been successful and a grant of up to £2231.18 has been approved. Some of the funded items are only funded to Countryside Stewardship rates so there may be a shortfall for the Parish Council to make up but the bulk of the costs are covered. The works will need to be completed by 31 March.

The offer comes with the following conditions:

- New trees on Widecombe Green should be planted at least 5 metres away from the old trees. It was agreed that this is easily achievable.
- It is the responsibility of Widecombe Parish to ensure that the work on the Green and the layby are appropriately communicated and explained to the public (preferably before the work is carried out).
- It was agreed that works can be communicated via the Parish Link, notices and through the minutes of the Parish Council meetings.
- Both tree stumps should be ground down to ground level or below. A quotation has been received for this and Cllr Edwards offered to source an alternative quote.
- The applicant must confirm if they'd like a new bench installed for the public, but this must be on Parish land only. The FiPL team must add this in as an amendment if necessary. It was agreed to ask whether FiPL would fund a bench around one of the new trees in the style of the existing benches.
- The applicant must obtain consent from Planning ahead of any work being carried out. Cllr Partridge confirmed that she has communicated the plans to Planning and they are happy for the Parish Council to proceed with the proposed works.
- The applicant must confirm the extent of the high pruning to damaged trees behind the layby ahead of carrying out any works.

It was unlikely that any high pruning would be necessary but the funding was there if necessary. Members discussed the removal of the poorly sycamore tree. It was agreed that this should be carried out now. With time being limited, a quotation from Geoff Partridge for £250 to carry out the felling was accepted.

It was agreed to accept a quotation from Matt Storrs for £580 for the works to the layby. The funding also allows for a wildflower seed mix to be scattered on the layby bank and on the opposite side to the road.

Cllr Partridge was thanked for all her work in applying for and obtaining funding for these improvement works.

(d) North Hall underlease between the Parish Council and WDSG

At the last meeting, it was agreed that the Parish Council would support an application to Viridor to fund the cost of resurfacing the tennis court. In respect of the underlease, it was agreed to see what progress has been made with the application to Viridor and defer a decision about how to proceed with the underlease until it was known whether an application made in the name of the Parish Council for funding would be successful.

4962 PLANNING/LOCAL LIAISON

(Cllrs Bibby, Jones & Guest)

(a) New planning applications/appeals

(i) 0022/24 – Hayes Field, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Variation of condition 2 of approved planning ref: 0550/19 for erection of new Community Hall, associated new access point, parking and break-out space Members agreed to support this application.

(ii) 0034/24 – Bonehill Bungalow, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Single storey extension for utility/plant room Members agreed to support this application.

(b) Planning Decisions/Withdrawals

None

4963 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

(Cllrs Bibby, Jones & Guest)

(a) Payments

Members received and approved the following payment:

- Clerk's salary and disbursements – £283.37

4964 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

Cllr Partridge advised that she had been contacted by DCC in response to a report she had made last year about a contaminated grit bin. This has now been replaced.

Cllr Guest had been asked by a parishioner about obtaining a grit bin near Watergate. Members thought it unlikely that there would be funding available for a new bin in this location but if it was known that an existing bin was not being used it might be possible to relocate it. It was agreed that Cllr Guest would approach DCC. It was noted that the road had been closed without notice in Ponsworthy this morning by BT who have been replacing telegraph poles. The school buses were unaware and children were late attending secondary school due to the diversion.

4965 CORRESPONDENCE

None

4966 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

4967 NEXT MEETING

7 March 2024 at 7.30pm in Church House, Widecombe

Signed Dated