

WIDECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held in Leusdon Memorial Hall on Thursday 26 January 2023 at 7.30pm

Members present: Councillor Hassell (Chairman), Bibby, Elliott, Partridge and Zab

Also present: District Cllr Nutley, District Cllr Cox and Rob Steemson (DNPA)

Members of the Public: Three

Clerk: Suzanna Hughes

4852 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Cllr Edwards
- Cllr Fenton
- Cllr Jones
- County Cllr Gribble

4853 OPEN FORUM

The Snow Warden, Miles Fursdon, reported that he is becoming increasingly frustrated by the lack of assistance he is receiving from Devon County Council. Having compiled a list of grit bins which need refilling and identifying and reporting bins which are damaged, the County Council has failed to respond. The clerk also confirmed that the list has been forwarded to the Highways Officer but no response has been received. Miles asked whether the Parish Council wished him to continue as Snow Warden. He advised that he has a brilliant team of people helping him but it is very difficult to operate the snow warden scheme effectively without the support of Devon County Council.

Miles and his team were thanked for all that they do and the Parish Council absolutely wish them to continue. It was agreed that the Parish Council would write to DCC, copying in Meg Booth and John Fewings, asking for a response to the email previously sent and asking for their commitment to supporting the Snow Warden Scheme in Widecombe. District Cllr Nutley advised that he would also write.

Kathryn Massey, on behalf of Leusdon Memorial Hall, requested that the Parish Council pays for the replacement battery for the defibrillator in Leusdon (having recently paid to replace the battery in the one sited in Widecombe). The Chairman advised that the Parish Council owned the defibrillator in Widecombe and therefore had a responsibility to maintain it. It does not own the defibrillator in Leusdon. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that Leusdon Memorial Hall should submit to the Parish Council an application for a small grant. All applications are due to be considered in March's meeting.

4854 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.

There were no declarations of interest or requests for dispensation.

4855 RATIFICATION OF MINUTES

(a) Members received the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 15 November 2022 which were approved as a true and correct record.

(b) Members received the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 3 January 2023 which were approved as a true and correct record.

4856 REPORTS

(a) County Councillor

No report.

(b) District Councillors

Cllr Nutley reported as follows:

'This month the council considered and resolve to approve the proposed council tax base for 2023/24. We have been supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis, boosting job opportunities, combatting climate change and protecting the local environment are the priorities of the draft budget currently being considered.

Before final decisions are made next month, residents were encouraged to comment on the council's priorities via its annual budget survey. This actually ended yesterday and we await to see the comments of residents that took part in the survey.

The majority of Teignbridge residents look set to have an expected council tax rise cancelled out thanks to a planned cost-of-living payment to households. The District Council, which receives nine percent of a household's total council tax payment, is proposing to increase its portion by 2.99 per cent in the next financial year – an annual rise of £5.54 for a band D property.

However, to help with the cost of living, Teignbridge plans to give all households liable for council tax on their main home a one-off payment of £5.54. The payment, which will need to be agreed by the council, would be universal for properties in bands A-H, including those that are on 100 per cent council tax support. It is estimated this could cost the council in the region of £330,000 plus administration costs.

As well as using Teignbridge's share of the proposed council tax increase to provide a one-off £5.54 cost-of-living payment to all households liable to pay it on their main home on 1 April 2023, the draft budget proposes a range of other financial measures designed to support local people and build economic prosperity.

When you consider only 9 pence in every pound raised by council tax comes to the District Council and from this Teignbridge provided the essential services that local people need such as recycling and collecting household waste, cleaning the streets, tackling graffiti and fly-tipping, provide car parks, ensuring food is safe, supporting people in need with housing and council tax reduction schemes as well as voluntary organisations.

“Our aim is to be as efficient as possible, using our share of council tax to provide responsive, effective services, and we think this budget represents the best way of achieving our goals and tackling the priorities of local people.”

If the draft budget is approved next month, councillors will continue to provide 100% council tax support to those who need it most through its council tax reduction scheme and will for a second year provide £20,000 for town and parish councils to support local cleanliness initiatives through the ‘Tidy Teignbridge’ scheme.

Teignbridge will continue to invest in town centre regeneration and will provide £2 million capital investment in employment sites aimed at encouraging new and existing businesses to set up, move into and stay in the area, boosting business expansion and creating better paid jobs. Councillors also want to continue to invest in the Teignbridge 100 affordable and social housing initiative which has seen the first council houses built in the district for decades.

To support local initiatives, each councillor who was receiving £1200 will now have £1000 through the councillors’ community fund to back local good causes in their local wards.’

Cllr Cox was thanked for his help in resolving the matter of the water supply to the Parish Field.

(c) DNPA Representative

Rob Steemson advised that a full public rights of way survey has been undertaken:

Footpath 2 (at the bottom of Widecombe Hill) – the work that is due over the next few weeks includes the replacement of two stiles with shutting gates.

Footpath 29 (Kingshead) – new signs and gates have been earmarked for next year’s budget.

DNPA is looking very closely at its budget. Like a lot of agencies, it is suffering from cut-backs. There has been a staff consultation which has been stressful for all involved. Some members of staff have either left or will be leaving and not replaced. The role that Rob does as a Community and Landscape Manager/Ranger will be changing and he will be finding out more about this over the coming days. Princetown Visitor Centre is still due to be shut.

DNPA has been reviewing the byelaws. Members will also be aware of the recent wild camping decision which has taken up a lot of officer time. A government minister has visited today to gain a better understanding of the land. At tomorrow’s National Park meeting, they will be discussing the byelaws and will be reflecting on the camping decision and deciding whether it wishes to appeal that decision.

He advised everyone to report potholes online. From his experience, the system does generally work.

There is still no signage to support the double yellow lines at Spitchwick and Newbridge. They have set up a Whats App group for residents to communicate their concerns which is working well. The issue of lack of fencing on Thorny Hill Lane is currently being looked into.

The Chairman asked if Rob could send the Parish Council a list of the missing signs so the Parish Council can also follow this up along with its usual request to sweep the yellow lines.

(d) Police Report

PCSO Paul Wilson (Chudleigh Police Office) asked whether the Parish Council thought a quarterly police surgery would be a good idea. It was agreed that they would particularly if they tagged on to an existing event such as a coffee morning. The clerk will liaise with PC Wilson about this.

(e) Delegate Reports

None

4857 PROJECTS & ESTATES

(Lead Councillors: Cllrs Fenton, Partridge, Butcher and Bibby)

(a) Advice Clinic

Members considered a leaflet which had been circulated by Cllr Bibby. It was agreed that 'supported by the Parish Council' could be added at the bottom of the leaflet.

Venues were discussed. It was agreed that Church House would be the preferred venue subject to the agreement of Citizens Advice as there is no disabled access. The issue of privacy was also discussed. The event will be advertised via posters, in the Parish Link and via the Parish Council communication email. A date needs to be agreed. The only cost to the Parish Council will be the hall hire.

(b) Parish Field

(i) Water connection – with the help of District Cllr Cox it appears that the water supply issue has been resolved and therefore no need to accept a quotation from South West Water.

(ii) Grazing licence – members approved the wording of the licence though it was agreed that the maximum number of sheep (currently 20) may be slightly increased depending on the successful bidder's requirements. Tenders, if received, will be agreed by Extraordinary Meeting before the commencement of the licence on 1 March.

(c) Coronation

There was no formal proposal to consider. However, it was agreed that members should talk to the community to assess whether there is a desire for a community event. Cllr Bibby to explore potential funding.

4858 PLANNING/LOCAL LIAISON

(Lead Councillors: Cllrs Edwards, Elliott, Jones & Zab)

(a) New planning applications/appeals

(i) 0501/22 – Primms Cottage, Poundsgate

Replacement house and studio

Members agreed to support this application for the following reasons:

- The current cottage is absolutely uninhabitable as it stands and would probably cost more to put right than knocking it down and starting again (with the added ongoing costs of running the cottage in its current design).

- The planner and the new owner share a vision of a cottage not much bigger than it currently is, and built so that it fits in with the surroundings. They have been at pains to ensure that the local flora and fauna are not impacted by adding bat boxes to the new build and shutters that will stop light escaping and confusing said bats. There are some overbearing mature laurels which will be removed and the landscaping will be with indigenous species (which laurel isn't). The studio, which is a separate building replacing a small dilapidated shed, will be sited slightly differently so it doesn't impact on the roots of a mature beech tree.
- It is planned to be sustainably built and with every possible method of reducing energy needs and will be a bit bigger than the current house, but within the permitted footprint. The building materials proposed are sympathetic to the surroundings, with planned reuse of the granite that will be saved from the current property.
- The access track to the property requires some improvement, but there is no intention to tarmac or markedly change the current appearance of this.
- It is going to be the main residence of the applicant.
- The Parish Council is aware of the proximity of the water supply for Poundsgate and, as such, that could be endangered while the work is going on. The applicant is aware of this and will safeguard against it.

(ii) 0022/23 – Kings Cottage, Ponsworthy

Certificate of Lawfulness for an existing use (Use as a residential dwelling house)

Members agreed not to comment.

(iii) 22/0060 – Proposed Tree Works, Widecombe Green

Fell horse chestnut

This application was submitted on behalf of the Parish Council and is supported by members.

(iv) APP/J9497/X/22/3310773 – Wren Cottage, Poundsgate

Appeal against DNPA's decision to grant a Certificate of Lawfulness for use of building as a rural worker's dwelling

It was noted that the Parish Council has been notified of this appeal but has not been invited to comment further.

(b) Planning Decisions/Withdrawals

(i) 0448/22 – 1 & 2 Dunstone Cottages, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Hanging slate to the East and North elevations

Members noted that DNPA has granted conditional planning permission.

(ii) 0359/22 – Blackdown Piper Farm, Cator, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Permanent use for temporary agricultural workers dwelling (principal dwelling) granted ref0257/18

Members noted that DNPA has granted conditional planning permission.

4859 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

(Lead Councillors: Cllrs Edwards, Elliott, Jones & Zab)

(b) Payments

Members received and approved the following payments:

- Clerk's salary and disbursements (Jan & Feb) – £511.04
- M Brown – Tree stakes (Parish field) – £119.52
- G Fenton – Tree guards (Parish field) – £912.00

(b) Budget and Precept 2023/24

Members considered the Finance Committee's budget proposals for 2023/24 and the impact of a 2%, 5% and 7.5% increase were considered.

After a general discussion the budget proposals were approved. It was also agreed to demand a sum of £6418 representing an increase of 5% .

(c) Annual Parish Meeting

It was agreed that the Annual Parish Meeting would be held on 2 March at 7pm.

4860 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

Highways issues had already been raised in the open forum.

4861 CORRESPONDENCE

Members noted correspondence updating them about the affordable housing development. The Chairman advised that he had written to Chris Hart, DNPA, about the play area and was waiting to hear back from him.

Cllr Partridge commented that the sign only says 'Affordable Housing coming through' and that it would have been preferable to have included the word Local or Community to avoid any confusion about who would be eligible for the housing.

Members also noted the Allocations Plan. It was agreed that this should come to the March meeting for approval.

4862 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

4863 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on 2 March 2023 at 7pm in Church House, Widecombe.
This will be immediately followed by the Parish Council meeting at 7.30pm.

Signed Dated