

## **WIDECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held in Church House, Widecombe on Thursday 4 January 2024 at 7.30pm

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

Also attending: Ashburton Postmaster/District Cllr Rogers

Members of the Public: None

Clerk: Suzanna Hughes

### **4944 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- Cllr Guest
- District Cllr Cox
- District Cllr Nutley
- Rob Steemson (DNPA)

### **4945 OPEN FORUM**

Speaking as the Ashburton Postmaster, Stuart Rogers advised that they have been made aware by the police and the banking industry that fraudsters are targeting rural communities. A series of things have been planned to try and combat rural fraud. Lloyds, HSBC and Barclays have agreed to work collaboratively irrespective of their customers. On Mondays Barclays will be present at the Hub, Tuesdays will be HSBC and Thursdays will be Lloyds. If people want to know more about staying safe from fraud and avoiding scams, those banks will be able to help. They are also working with the Priory School and other heads of local schools about financial awareness. Free legal advice is also being offered in the Hub. Beers Solicitors will be attending every other Wednesday and will offer a free 20 minute consultation. He is really keen for local people to use Bespoke (the vehicle which attends Widecombe on Mondays); the Postal minister will be visiting some time in March and wants to come out in the vehicle to understand the reality for rural communities. Stuart wants to demonstrate how rural communities are helping themselves to sustain services and combat fraud.

### **4946 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.

### **4947 RATIFICATION OF MINUTES**

Members received the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 2 November 2023 which were approved as a true and correct record.

(a) County Councillor

No report. District Cllr Rogers advised that he would be happy to refer any County matters to DCC.

(b) District Councillors

Cllr Rogers advised that at the next meeting of the District Council, members will be discussing the budget for 2024/25. A 2.99% increase is being proposed. He has asked some questions relating to rural communities (which account for 47% of the council tax contribution for the district). Teignbridge officers have agreed to come to the Hub to see what services they can bring to rural communities. They will also make them aware of the services being offered by the rural van.

(c) DNPA Representative

Rob Steemson had nothing to report relating to Widecombe.

(d) Police Report

PCSO Campbell-Mosely sent the following report:

This report covers the area of the Widecombe, Poundsgate and Dartmeet.

The area is served by the Neighbourhood Policing team, working out of Ashburton Police Office, Conway House.

The team is led by Sector Inspector Sean Roper and Police Sergeant Seth Saunders with the Neighbourhood beat manager PC Andy Dudley and Police Community Support Officer Tamzin Campbell-Moseley.

PC Andy Dudley is scheduled to retire on 8th January 2024, we are currently waiting to see who the replacement Neighbourhood Beat Manager will be.

December

In the period 1 – 31 December 2023, there were no criminal offences recorded for this area. There were 5 non-crime incidents which included concerns for welfare, firearms licensing management and road traffic collisions.

(e) Delegate Reports

None

4949 PROJECTS & ESTATES

(Cllrs Edwards, Partridge & Zab)

(a) Parish Field

(i) The income and expenditure for the Parish Field (to 30 December) was received. A balance of £1303.85 was noted.

For clarity, it was agreed that the income from the grazing (£50) is ringfenced for the Parish Field as laid out in the 2023/24 budget document.

(ii) Members discussed the tendering process for the grazing licence. It was agreed to advertise the field from 1 April-30 November. Tenders would be invited and a decision will be made in March's meeting.

(b) New Trees on Village Green

Cllr Partridge advised that she has been exploring a funding opportunity through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. As well as funding the cost of two new trees there would also be an opportunity to carry out other work including grinding out the chestnut stump, felling and replacing the poorly sycamore tree, purchasing tree guards and tidying up the layby area at the bottom of Widecombe hill. Cllr Partridge explained that works are funded in line with the Countryside Stewardship rates. Due to timescales, she has already completed and submitted the forms; works will need to be completed by the end of March. She will receive costings for two new trees to be planted on the green. Members thanked Cllr Partridge for initiating this and were fully supportive of the funding application.

(c) Affordable Housing

Members were in agreement that the houses were fabulous and appeared to have been built to a very high standard but the allocations process has been disappointing and has caused a lot of upset amongst those who have been unsuccessful. A request was made by the Council to meet with Teign Housing to discuss the allocations but rather than sending someone from the allocations team, Teign Housing were represented by someone who arranges the tenancy contracts and who was therefore unable to address or answer the Council's concerns regarding the allocations. The Chair advised that feedback has been given. Cllr Stuart Rogers also offered to feedback the Council's concerns to TDC and will report back next meeting.

(d) North Hall sub-lease between the Parish Council and WDSG

Members were reminded of the issues previously discussed. Cllr Partridge advised that if the only way forward was for the Parish Council to take control of the Sports Group, she and Judy Southcomb would be happy to support this. The Chair advised that the Sports Group may be able to access funding through Viridor to resurface the tennis court if the Parish Council is the named applicant. After discussion, it was agreed that this would be a sensible option as the Parish Council would also be able to reclaim VAT whereas the Sports Group would not. Members therefore supported an application being made by the Sports Group with the Parish Council as the named applicant. There was a general discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of sub-letting the field but no decision was made pending further thought.

4950 PLANNING/LOCAL LIAISON

(Cllrs Bibby, Jones & Guest)

(a) New planning applications/appeals

None

(b) Planning Decisions/Withdrawals

(i) 0470/23 & 0471/23 – Northway Farm, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Variation of conditions 2, 15 and 16 of approved planning application ref: 0398/22 for re-siting of existing driveway and entrance, replacement of single glazing to double glazing throughout main house, replacement guttering and downpipes (partially retrospective), new slate to chimneys, alterations to the fabric of the tractor barn and the incorporation of a new renewable energy strategy comprising of a biomass boiler. Members noted that DNPA has granted conditional consent.

(ii) 0410/23 – Great Cator Farm, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Conversion of traditional stone barn to holiday let with associated garden and parking area. Members noted that DNPA has granted conditional consent.

(iii) 0427/23 & 0428/23 – Lower Cator Farmhouse, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Replacement garden room extension to front elevation. Members noted that DNPA has granted conditional consent.

(iv) 0369/23 & 0370/23 – Hayloft Cottage, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Repair of existing roof structure, replacement roof covering to barn for installation of PV panels, related cabling and equipment. Members noted that DNPA has granted conditional consent.

(c) Enforcement Matters

Regarding planning application 0252/21, the clerk advised that the Enforcement Officer has met with the new owner on-site and has gone through the planning history with him. He has agreed to come back in the New Year to agree a way forward to tidy up the site.

#### 4951 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

(Cllrs Bibby, Jones & Guest)

(a) Members noted that the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) has reached an agreement on the new rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2023. Clerk's salary will be backdated accordingly.

(b) Payments

Members received and approved the following payments:

- Clerk's salary and disbursements (January + backpay since April 2023) – £421.37
- HMRC (PAYE Q3) – £217
- DALC (Training) – £181.20

(cc) Budget 2024-25

Members considered the Finance Committee's budget proposals for 2024/25 and the impact of a 2% and 5% increase were considered.

After a general discussion the budget proposals were approved. It was also agreed to demand a sum of £6798 representing an increase of 5%. In real terms, this will equate to an increase of £1.11 perhousehold for the year (based on an average band D property).

#### 4952 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)

(a) Following a request to DCC for the drains to be cleaned on Widecombe hill, members noted DCC's response advising that they simply need scrapping off as the chambers are almost certainly not full. DCC suggested that someone locally should be able to do that. Following a suggestion by the Council that the whole verge is taken back to fully expose the drains, DCC responded that the gullies are setback from the live highway and the verge would only need a slight scrape back. Whilst unhappy with the response, Council felt there was little else it could do.

(b) Members discussed recent road closures. It was noted that the parish has not been notified of the 9- day road closure from Dartmeet to Brimpts Farm from 16th January. Given the impact it will have on parishioners, it was thought that the Parish Council should have been notified.

#### 4953 CORRESPONDENCE

None

#### 4954 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

Members received the notes of a meeting attended by Cllr Edwards, Cllr Zab and Roger Claxton regarding the future of the Widecombe website. This will be included as an item on February's agenda.

#### 4955 FUTURE MEETING DATES

Subject to hall availability, the following dates were agreed:

- 1 February – Widecombe Church House
- 7 March – Widecombe Church House
- 4 April – Leusdon Memorial Hall
- 2 May – Widecombe Church House
- 6 June – Widecombe Church House
- 4 July – Widecombe Church House
- 5 September – Leusdon Memorial Hall
- 3 October – Widecombe Church House
- 7 November – Widecombe Church House
- (No meetings in August and December)

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held in May (either 22/23 May – date to be confirmed)

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