

WIDECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held in Church House, Widecombe on Thursday 29 June 2023 at 7.30pm

Members present: Councillor Y Elliott (Chairman), J Bibby, D Edwards, T Guest (from item 4905), S Jones, C Partridge and S Zab

Also present: County Cllr Gribble and District Cllr & Ashburton Postmaster Stuart Rogers

Members of the Public: Four

Clerk: Suzanna Hughes

4895 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

4896 OPEN FORUM

Stuart Rogers (Ashburton Postmaster) updated the meeting about the mobile Post Office van which is currently in a workshop in Exeter. This will replace the smaller van and will be situated in the car park of the Café on the Green providing a Post Office service every Monday, 10am -12 noon. It will have internet connection which will be provided by Airband. The children of Ashburton Primary School have designed the logo for the van.

The initiative has become known as 'Operation Hub and Spoke'. The van is the spoke and the hub is currently being constructed in Ashburton. Three community banks are currently signed up – Lloyds, Nat West and HSBC. One day a week, they will send a representative to the hub to give help and advice in a private meeting room. They are also in discussions with Citizens Advice. The hub will be open by the end of September.

A resident advised that he had speaking to Cllr Gribble and had asked why we have to wait for small potholes to become large potholes before they are repaired. Cllr Gribble promised to pose the question to Meg Booth (DCC's Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport).

A resident advised that from the end of next year, analogue phone lines will no longer exist. For most residents, this will be replaced by VoIP. If there is a power cut, however, this doesn't work and there is no mobile phone signal. You can get it through Wifi but if there is a power cut, the Wifi signal drops and you can't use your mobile phone. Companies, these days, often send one time only passcodes by text message – with no mobile phone signal this is a problem. Similarly, smart meters do not work without a mobile phone signal. For residents using medical equipment, there are also issues when information is required to be sent direct to hospitals from the equipment via a mobile phone signal. The solution would be a network of short masts on individual dwellings.

After a brief discussion, it was agreed that the Parish Council will write to DNPA to find out what their position is on small household masts and to establish whether they are progressing anything with mobile phone companies on behalf of communities on Dartmoor.

4897 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 Partridge declared a potential interest in item 4900(c).

Cllr Jones advised that she would be abstaining from any discussion re the planning application to be discussed at item 4901(a)(ii).

4898 RATIFICATION OF MINUTES

Members received the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 11 May 2023 which were approved as a true and correct record.

4899 REPORTS

(a) County Councillor

Cllr Gribble advised that residents continue to approach him about potholes, hedgerows, road signage and traffic speed. He noted the lack of infrastructure for those coming to live in the area (particularly Bovey Tracey and Ashburton). Whilst there is an increasing requirement for infrastructure, there is a shortage of funds. Car parking charges (including DNPA) are currently being discussed. He asked that the clerk circulates to members a letter from Phil Durrant, Stakeholder Relations Officer (DCC) regarding the forthcoming pathing works on the B3387 Haytor Road near Bovey Tracey from Monday 3 July – Friday 14 July. It is noted that the road will be open over Saturday 8 July and Sunday 9 July. Whilst representations have been made by local businesses about the timing of the works, it is unlikely to change. Comments were also made about the planned diversion route though this is thought to now have been amended.

(b) District Councillor

Cllr Rogers advised that Cllr Cox is looking at how he can get support for the Community Hall through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. He also advised that following the closure of the General Stores, support might be available from the Plunkett Foundation if there is a desire in the community to reopen the shop. The Chair advised that the Parish Council has not been approached by any residents expressing a desire to reopen the shop and therefore there would probably need to be a consultation with the community before progressing anything with the Plunkett Foundation. TDC have limited funds; he is therefore looking at ways to pool resources to get more services within communities. TDC do not have the funds to clean the streets in Ashburton, Buckfastleigh and outlying areas and he is therefore looking at purchasing a road sweeper which can be operated by volunteers.

(c) DNPA Representative

Rob Steemson was not present at the meeting but sent a written report as follows:

- In the recent staff restructuring I have now become Sector Ranger and now cover five other parishes in addition to Widecombe.

- I have, along with others, been chasing Highways and TDC regarding sweeping of the yellow lines around Newbridge and the replacement of many signs relating to the restriction. Some sweepings have been done recently on Newbridge hill only.
- We will be replacing field furniture along the footpaths on land at Kingshead Farm. The funding has been secured, work agreed with landowners and a contractor has priced the work up
- I have been trying for the last three years to get Highways to replace damaged fencing at Dartmeet (a copy of his email was circulated to members for their information).

(d) Police Report

PCSO Paul Wilson (Chudleigh Police Office) sent a report covering the period 1 May 2023 – 31 May 2023; there were 4 offences recorded:

- Assault x 1
- Communication offence x 1
- Harassment x 1
- Theft x 1

There were a further 3 non-offence incidents in the same period, responded to by the police. These types of incidents include, for example, concerns for welfare, traffic incidents and anti-social behaviour.

(e) Delegate Reports

None

4900 PROJECTS & ESTATES

(Cllrs Edwards, Partridge & Zab)

(a) Parish Field

(i) Water supply:

It was noted that the field now has a water supply; the supply is spurred off the water feed in the disabled toilet and has isolation valves in place. The Parish Field Committee has been asked to take monthly readings and submit them to TDC. TDC will then invoice the Parish Council for the water used.

(ii) Grazing licence:

No applications have been received. As there is now a water supply, it was agreed that the grazing opportunity should be re-advertised.

(b) Widecombe Fair

Members reviewed the letting agreement and agreed that the fee will be £1200 this year, payable by 1 September. It was agreed to inform Widecombe Fair Committee that the fee will be reviewed next year.

(c) Village Strimming

Members discussed whether the village should be strimmed. It was noted that the stinging nettles have grown very large having not been cut back last year. It was recommended that these might be sprayed. After discussion, it was agreed to ask Geoff Partridge to spray the nettles at a cost of £150. It will then be decided in September's meeting whether they will also be a need to trim them back before Widecombe Fair.

(d) Affordable Housing

(i) Posters have been printed and will be circulated around the parish and posted on noticeboards advising interested parties to register on Devon Home Choice if they wish to be considered for the new housing.

(ii) Correspondence from a resident commenting on the allocations policy was circulated to members. A response from Mary Ridgway, TDC, was noted advising that the allocations policy follows national guidelines and Dartmoor planning policy as set out in the s106 agreement and cannot therefore be changed. Members agreed that the Parish Council could not take any further action.

(e) Village walkabout

It was agreed to reinstate this. A date will be agreed by email.

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

The clerk advised that she has written to the solicitors for an update.

4901 PLANNING/LOCAL LIAISON

(Cllrs Bibby & Jones)

(a) New planning applications/appeals

(i) 0249/13 – Rowden House, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Agricultural building

Members agreed to support the application on the following grounds:

- The building would have no impact on any neighbours
- Will only be used for storage as it has no access to a power supply
- Proposed new building is in keeping with existing wooden stable block

(ii) 0221/23 – Great Cator Farm, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Conversion of traditional stone barn to holiday let with associated garden and parking area

The majority of members agreed to support this application on the following grounds:

- The application is modest in size and there is minimal external change to the existing building.
- It makes use of a currently redundant building that has no real modern-day purpose, other than non-commercial storage, and provides a farm diversification opportunity

- Overlooking / loss of privacy is a consideration for the neighbours, so the positioning of windows in new openings in the stonework should take account of this.
- The electrically managed sewerage system is a potential issue, with a question over the impact during power outages.

(iii) 0268/23 – Dartmoor Christmas Tree Farm, Lower Cator, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Retention of agricultural storage building, approved under Prior Notification 0051/18 but not built in accordance with plans

Members agreed not to comment.

(iv) 0180/23 (Prior Approval) – Corndon Farm, Poundsgate

Polytunnel on land opposite Corndon Farm

Members agreed not to comment.

(b) Planning Decisions/Withdrawals

(i) 0075/23 – Glebe Farm, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Renovation and change of use of barn including roof extension (increase in height) to create ground floor interpretation room and first floor storage area for historical agricultural implements previously excavated on Glebe Farm, Widecombe-in-the-Moor

Members noted that DNPA has granted conditional planning consent.

(ii) 0394/22 – Wren Cottage, Poundsgate

Use of building as rural worker's dwelling

Members noted that DNPA has granted conditional planning consent.

4902 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

(llrs Bibby & Jones)

(a) Payments

Members received and approved the following payments:

- Clerk's salary and disbursements (July & August) – £511.04
- Leusdon Memorial Hall (hire of hall in May) – £20
- Mark Hutchings (installation of water meter) – £50

4903 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

(a) Fencing around the cattle grid at Dartmeet:

Members noted that Rob Steemson has been trying for a number of years to get Highways to take responsibility for the fencing. It was agreed that the Parish Council should also write to Highways to support Rob. It was noted that Highways have carried out works on other similar sites. Cllr Partridge agreed to draft a letter to send to Highways.

(b) Haytor Road closure – July 2023:

The road closure will still go ahead. The work will be split into three phases but will be open at the weekend (8/9 July). The official diversion route has been amended though is still not ideal. This will now be via Liverton – Ilsington and Haytor Vale.

(c) Other highways matters:

It was agreed to write to TDC about cleaning all of the yellow lines at Newbridge.

4904 CORRESPONDENCE

Judy Southcombe has emailed to confirm that she will continue as the Parish Council's representative on the Widecombe Educational Foundation. She will also continue to represent the Parish Council on the National Park Forum and will continue to look after the defibrillator. Members thanked Judy for her ongoing support.

4905 VACANCIES UNFILLED AT THE ELECTION BY REASON OF INSUFFICIENT NOMINATIONS

An application was received from Tom Guest. Having confirmed his eligibility, it was agreed that he is coopted into one of the vacant seats. He signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office. This now leaves two remaining vacant seats.

4906 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

Cllr Partridge advised that she has joined the Church House Committee.

4907 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is Thursday 7 September at 7.30pm in Leusdon Memorial Hall.

Signed Dated