

WIDECOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held in Church House, Widecombe on Tuesday 15 November 2022 at 6.00pm

Members present: Councillor Hassell (Chairman), Bibby, Edwards, Elliott, Fenton, Jones and Partridge

Members of the Public: Three

Clerk: Yvette Elliott/Suzanna Hughes (arrived 6.45pm)

4835 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Cllr Zab
- District Cllr Cox
- District Cllr Nutley
- County Cllr Gribble
- Rob Steemson (DNPA)

4836 OPEN FORUM

A resident spoke about her planning application, 0394/22, to be considered by members later in the meeting. The original planning application was refused by DNPA and this has now been appealed. A new application has been submitted for Wren Cottage to become recognised as a rural worker's dwelling; the Parish Council's support was being sought.

A resident spoke about his planning application, 0398/22. There is currently dangerous access that needs addressing. They want to make the house more comfortable and sustainable as their long-term home.

4837 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 an interest in item 4841(a)(iii).

4838 RATIFICATION OF MINUTES

Members received the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 1 September 2022 which were approved as a true and correct record.

4839 REPORTS

(a) County Councillor

No report.

(b) District Councillors

No reports.

(c) DNPA Representative

Rob Steemson sent a written update which was read out advising that he has recently replaced three broken Public Rights of Way (from edge of road) footpath signs. He has also undertaken the Devon County Council required annual random path condition survey which covered three routes within the Parish and all passed the required criteria. The footpaths that were surveyed were: Footpath 10 at Lower Natsworthy which goes across one field (160 metres), Footpath 17 from Lower Town to where it joins Footpath 16 by Spitchwick Manor (771 metres) and Footpath 18 up past Sweaton farm (579 metres).

(d) Police Report

A written report was sent by PCSO Paul Wilson (Chudleigh Police Office):

The Parish is served by the Neighbourhood Police team, working out of Ashburton Police station and Chudleigh Police office. The Parish forms part of the Teignbridge Rural sector. The team is led by Sgt Seth Saunders, supported by PC Andy Dudley, at this time there is no dedicated PCSO for the parish.

In October 2022, in the Widecombe area, there was 1 offence recorded, an assault. There were two other non-offence incidents in October responded to by the Police. From January 1st 2022 to 31st of October 2022 there has been a total of 11 recorded offences, this is down from 16 in the corresponding dates in 2021. This shows a decrease of approximately 31.3%. Other non-crime incidents are also down by approximately 19.5%.

Bearing in mind that for part of 2021 we were in lockdown, these figures remain very low and show that Widecombe is a very safe place to both live and work.

We are keen to hear any ideas that would help us support the local community in the future.

(e) Delegate Reports

Cllr Elliott reported that she had attended the new DNPA planning portal training along with Sue Jones and the Clerk. The new system will be improved but there are gaps in information currently as they merge and there are delays in documents becoming 'live'. Potential issues with viewing documents from certain devices were also reported.

Cllr Elliott also reported her attendance at the Brook Lane 'turf cutting' event with Cllr Fenton. A small, celebratory gathering at which the Parish Council and local steering group were thanked for their positive input which has helped to make this development a reality. Cllr Fenton highlighted that the 2-bed vacancy that had just arisen in Brook Lane could have been better publicised by the Parish Council. It was agreed that the clerk should request notification 4-6 months prior to the new housebuilding so this can be well-publicised.

4840 PROJECTS & ESTATES

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

(a) Parish Field

(i) To consider and approve the grazing agreement

Cllr Jones felt that the Parish Council is obligated to put grazing out to tender. Cllr Fenton advised that he would like sheep in the field in the Spring. It was agreed that the matter of the grazing agreement should be included on January's agenda following a Projects & Estates meeting to make recommendations on amendments to this licence. Advertising for tenders can commence at the beginning of January (unanimously agreed as a March-November 2023 licence, with certain dates needing to be sheep-free). It was unanimously agreed that this will be a sheep only grazing licence.

(ii) To agree whether the £350 licence fee achieved in 2022 should be ringfenced for use by the Parish Field Committee

The Chairman highlighted that a large amount of work has already taken place on the parish field since the Parish Field Committee was set up and sharing funds would be in the spirit of this new venture. It was agreed unanimously that the £350 licence fee from 2022 be ringfenced for the Parish Field Committee.

(b) Trees

(i) To receive and note the tree condition assessment prepared by Dart Forest Trees
The tree condition assessment prepared by Dart Forest Trees was noted. Cllr Fenton felt that the amelioration work may have sped up the decline of the tree. The recommendation in the report to remove the horse chestnut tree was unanimously supported.

(ii) To consider quotations for the felling of the horse chestnut, as recommended in the tree condition assessment

Quotes assume that the metal seat remains in situ and the tree is felled above this level. Three quotations were received and considered. After brief discussion, it was unanimously agreed to accept the quotation from Sam Hall for £560 + VAT as this was the cheapest quote and he is a known local contractor with good reviews. The clerk/Cllr Fenton is to confirm this to Sam.

Cllr Bibby is aware of a charity that collects wood for free and chops and stores it to supply to those in fuel poverty. This could be considered in the future, if appropriate, as there is an assumption that Sam Hall will be taking and selling the felled wood. Cllr Fenton will confirm with Sam whether this is the case or not. Cllr Fenton suggested that planting something new on the green should be considered.

(c) Advice Clinic

To consider a proposal to sponsor a one-day 'clinic' in Widecombe, limited to local residents who need advice on benefits or debt

(The Parish Council would need to provide the publicity and premises – with an internet connection, somewhere to wait and somewhere to see people privately. Citizens Advice to be approached see if they would be prepared to support the one-day 'clinic' and make appropriate advisers available for the day.)

It was agreed that the potential location would need internet connection. Cllr Elliott advised that the pre-school has wifi at Church House which they may allow use of for a donation. Publicity would be the key to the success of such a clinic. The issue of anonymity was also considered essential as people may not feel comfortable attending if their privacy is not maintained. After brief discussion it was agreed to support the idea in principle pending further

details. The Projects and Estates team agreed to explore the idea and come back to January's meeting with some proposals.

4841 PLANNING/LOCAL LIAISON

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

(a) New planning applications/appeals

(i) 0398/22 – Northway Farm Widecombe

Resiting of existing driveway and entrance, replacement of single glazing to double glazing throughout main house, replacement guttering and downpipes (partially retrospective), new slate tents to chimneys, alterations to the fabric of the tractor barn and the incorporation of a new renewable energy strategy comprising of a biomass boiler and integrated solar PV array. The plans are modest in size and will provide disabled access into the existing property.

Members unanimously agreed to support this application for the following reasons:

- The materials proposed are appropriate and in-keeping with existing.
- The proposals are sympathetic to the style and traditions of the existing buildings and this is important to the applicants.
- The proposed re-routing of the driveway addresses current inadequacies in terms of practical access and safety, including egress from the property onto the highway.
- The sensitive incorporation of renewable technologies will provide a modern and environmentally friendly energy solution to an historic building, making it fit for purpose in the 21st century.

(ii) 0394/22 – Wren Cottage, Poundsgate

Use of building as rural worker's dwelling

Members unanimously agreed to support this application for the following reasons:

- The applicants have been living in the property for some time and are a long-standing local family.
- There are no proposed changes to the property, internally or externally.
- There is a demonstrated need to be on-site for the purpose of managing the applicant's businesses, both of which are well established and bring visitors to the area and are consistent with the National Park's special qualities.

(iii) 22/0047 – Proposed tree works, 2 Manor Cottages, Widecombe

Fell one lime

Having declared an interest, Cllr Partridge abstained from voting.

Members unanimously agreed to support this application.

(b) Planning Decisions/Withdrawals

No decisions

4842 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

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

(a) Employee salary award

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 2022. The clerk's salary will be backdated accordingly.

(b) Payments

Members received and approved the following payments:

- Cheque no 001115 – Judy Southcombe (replacement defibrillator battery) – £205
- Cheque no 001116 – Clerk's salary and disbursements (Nov & Dec + backdated salary + community meeting refreshments) – £646.54
- Cheque no 001117 – HMRC (PAYE Q3) – £201
- Cheque no 001118 – Leusdon Memorial Hall (hall hire May & Sept) – £40
- Cheque no 001119 – Dart Forest Trees (tree condition assessment) – £624
- Cheque no 001120 – T Hassell (Wine for Community Meeting) – £39

(c) Budget and Precept 2023/24

To consider draft budget proposals for 2023/4

(deadline for submission of precept request is 31 January 2023)

Members received and discussed the Finance Committee's budget proposals for 2023/24 suggesting a 2% increase.

There was a general discussion about rising costs and falling levels of reserves and there was overall support given to increasing the precept. It was agreed that it would be useful, however, to see the financial impact on residents if the precept was increased by 2%, 5% and 7.5%. It was agreed that the calculations would be presented in January's meeting before a final decision on the precept request is made.

4843 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

The clerk advised that a list of missing signs has been sent to the Highways Officer, Scott Riddell (cc. County Cllr Gribble). No response has been received as yet.

There was a general discussion about grit bins including the two which have recently been installed in a shoddy manner and with ill-fitting lids. The Snow Warden, Miles Fursdon, has

compiled a list of the 34 grit bins in the parish and the attention they each require. This has been forwarded to the Highways Officer for action.

4844 CORRESPONDENCE

None

4845 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

4846 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held in Leusdon Memorial Hall on 26 January 2023 at 7.30pm