

Minutes of Coldridge Parish Council Meeting 7.30 on Thursday November 21st 2019 in the Village Hall

Present: Councillors Andrew Green, Marion Born, Chris Burrows, Jim Sampson, John Daw, Jeff Burrows, John Smith

Apologies,

Clerk Keyth Richardson

Open Forum

There were two members of the public present. It was suggested that when the Friday bus contract is up for renewal that perhaps it could be arranged to go to Barnstaple once a month. As there is already a bus from Winkleigh to Barnstaple this may not be attractive to Winkleigh users, or to those on the route into Crediton.

	item	
2019/20-72	Recording of meetings	The meeting was not being recorded
2019/20-73	Apologies	none
2019/20-74	Declaration of interest	None reported
2019/20-75	Minutes	The minutes of the meetings on September 19 th and October 21 st were approved and signed
2019/20-76	Clerk's Progress Report	nothing to report
2019/20-77	Annual Clerks meeting 15th Oct	<p>The clerk gave an oral report summarising the notes below</p> <p>John Hart, Leader of Devon County Council addressed the meeting and explain that although it was a bit early to set out the coming budget, he could set the scene. He stated that all budget lines were struggling although adult services were doing OK. He explained that schools would get an extra budget but special needs services were overspending on a monthly basis He explained that the Council was receiving less complaints about potholes and that the Government had provided the county with £18m for road repairs. He informed the meeting that the highways teams were working at capacity to complete repairs but as 70% of the roads in Devon were originally designed for horse and carts it was a challenge to keep them all maintained. He explained that the County Council had originally signed up to a 2050 target to become carbon neutral, but this had been adjusted to 2030 and agreed by Cabinet. He informed the meeting that £250k had been invested to date in the Carbon Neutral Task Force and that the Council was working with other partners to work with a Citizens Assembly to establish the actions that would need to be taken to achieve the target. He expected that future funding would need required for the planting of trees and the installation of solar energy.</p>

He gave the meeting some background on the issues with the introduction of 5G and that although experts had stated that the technology was safe many members of the public had real concerns about the health implications.

He stated that the Government had given notification of a settlement for adult services and children services for next year. He explained that DCC had not borrowed money in 10 years and it was picking up Government Grants where available to bolster its income.

He confirmed that DCC had now bought school nurses in house and that it was working closer with health, although this was not easy. He explained that we all have budgets and if we work together it provides better value for the people.

Questions: -

How can you move the Carbon Neutral target from 2050-2030? A – It was agreed at a cabinet meeting, and the recording of that is available online for people to listen to the reasons why the Cabinet felt that this could be achievable. He explained that the new target was going to the Council meeting in December to be ratified but that he did not expect any objections from councillors.

Although you say 5G is coming to Devon, we are getting complaints that people can't get the internet in the District and there were areas of really poor coverage especially in Poughill. He responded stating that Mid Devon is not unique, and we have patches all over Devon without good internet coverage. We had employed BT, then Airband, then Gigaclear who we have just sacked but I will check out where Poughill is on the system. Gigaclear are continuing on a commercial basis. We have had problems as Devon is a large county, but the Government has backed us all the way. A new company has just set up from East Devon to deliver broadband in the rural areas.

If DCC is doing well on the highways budgets why aren't they dealing with issues in my Parish? Cllr Hart responded stating that the number of complaints has reduced but he would look into Lapford, Sampford Peverell, Morchard Bishop, Bow, Holcombe Rogus and Burlescombe and give an update to the clerks in those Parishes.

Kathryn Tebbey, the Monitoring Officer addressed the meeting and explained her remit she encouraged Clerks to pick up the phone or email her with any conduct issues they had and let her know of any deadlines that needed to be adhered to.

Questions

What does a Monitoring Officer do? She responded stating that District and County Councils are required by law to have a Monitoring Officer to assist with the lawfulness of decision making, register of interests, and Parish code of conduct and standards issues. The Monitoring Officer explained that the Parishes are responsible for their own decision making and that the District were not available to police everything that they did.

We have a problem in that the village Facebook page is making comments about the conduct of our councillors. Is it helpful if I give you a heads up or should we wait to complaints are made?

The Monitoring Officer stated that it would be helpful to be given a steer before an official complaint was made because she can try and start to formulate a response. Social media is a big headache and that the Committee on Standards for Public Life had a section in their guidance about pressures of social media and how it undermines your work as parish councils. A working group of the Standards Committee were looking at this issue. She informed that meeting that DALC and Devon Communities Together could offer advice on social media

It would be nice to have a voice on the Standards Committee working group from the parishes – A – The Monitoring Officer stated that she would consider this request

Are you going to review your code of conduct?

The Monitoring Officer stated that yes, we do review it regularly but the LGA is going to be producing a model code and I assume they will consult on it. I will look at it and see if it is suitable for all tiers of councils including the parishes. We are looking at having a common code of conduct for all tiers and will publish any updates in the Town & Parish Newsletter.

Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning and Economic Regeneration gave a presentation about the Local Plan update.

Questions:

Will you bear in mind a lot of parish councils do not have meetings in December so any consultation on the local plan modifications would need to avoid this time.

The officer stated that she would try to avoid the Christmas period, but that if the consultation period did fall over Christmas then the consultation period would be extended.

Are you going to be specific about the main modifications?

The officer stated that yes, we will do tracked changes on the original document and we will make it clear to you what the changes are.

Is it a matter of course we get notified of all planning applications as we seem to miss out?

The officer stated all parish councils receive notification of planning applications in their parish, but some PNC applications did not require consultation.

Do you have a definitive list of material considerations that parishes should consider?

The officer stated that no not a Mid Devon one as such, but we are keen to do more planning training for the Towns & Parishes which will go into more depth about each of the considerations.

Andy Busby, Group Manager for Property Services and Commercial Assets gave an overview of services within his remit by way of a presentation.

Questions

It has been reported that the Council is to invest in hydro electric is this still the case?

The officer stated that yes colleagues in Planning have applied for grants and the scheme is very much live.

Do you offer training for people to inspect the play areas themselves?

The officer stated that yes we do offer training for individuals but we would have to work with your insurer to make sure they were adequately covered for this activity.

If the Councils objective is to increase the number of affordable housing units can we have some clarification, as people in Poughill are looking for low cost housing and the Council have just sold off the social housing we had.

The Chief Executive explained that at Poughill there used to be a few social housing units in the village but over time all but one of the units had been bought by tenants under the right to buy scheme. He explained that the Council had to weigh up the cost of maintenance of one property in the village against the possibility of providing affordable units elsewhere. He explained that any monies raised through the sale of Council houses on the open market was put back into the Housing Revenue Account and would be used to provide more social housing.

Sustainable Tiverton would like to know if MDDC intended to plant more trees on MDDC land and what the situation was if residents want to do any planting on MDDC land themselves?

The officer explained that the Environment PDG has set up a working group to look at interaction with the community with regard to carbon reduction initiatives.

Richard Gault - Accessibility Overview

He explained that they had produced a guidance document which he would send out to the parishes and that he would be contacting parishes who have MDDC hosted websites to check compliance to the new accessibility rules. He explained that the Mid Devon hosted sites would be changing the domain name.

Stephen Walford, Chief Executive - Climate Change

Explained that he would give a quick update on the topic which was of interest to all Town and Parish Councils and give details of how they could feed into the process.

Early this year various movements put pressure on Government to reduce carbon omissions and MDDC signed up at the end of June. The signing up was quite easy to do, it went through Council on a majority vote. The declaration committed MDDC to go and work out the baseline of our carbon emissions within 6 months. To achieve this we have been working alongside other districts to try and ensure consistency. It is an internal piece looking at our carbon emissions and we will bring this back to Council with options to reduce and how much it is going to cost. It's up to the elected Members to decide how far they want to go in terms of changing the way the Council operates to achieve the target they have agreed to. A second piece of work is taking place at County level to set up the net zero task force and over the next few months they will arrange for a number of hearings to hear evidence from a vast range of people to bring it together to come up with a Devon wide plan.

He explained that the District councils were not aiming to duplicate the work of DCC but that they would be feeding into the process to come up with a Devon wide plan. He outlined the work of the Environment PDG which had set up a Working Group to obtain the views of the local community on the subject.

Questions

Is the Biosphere in North Devon linked to the Devon Plan?

The Chief Executive explained that this was a different project example of why we are trying to link all the different ideas together through one Devon wide plan.

Where are the Citizens assemblies going to be?

The Chief Executive stated that the intention is to have the assemblies for Devon and he was fairly sure they will be held around Devon and not just in Exeter. There was no intention for a district by district or parish by parish citizen's assembly which would replicate the work of the Devon wide assembly.

Will there be planning policies to combat climate issues on commercial developments in the district?

		<p>The officer stated that we need to be clear that all development cannot be stopped because of the target but we constantly renew and refresh our policies. We are expecting national planning guidance to be updated by central Government and when this occurs we will be update our planning policies accordingly.</p>
2019/20-78	<p>DALC AGM 23rd October</p>	<p>The clerk gave a summary of these points</p> <p>Notes from DALC Conference 23rd October 2019</p> <p>DALC is moving to become a Company Limited by Guarantee for security and operational reasons. Increase in subs of 2.5% for 20/21. Ken Browse period of office increased by a year so he can oversee the transition and then he is standing down for ever. Currently using Merlin Accountancy solutions for audit but will move to tender in a year or two.</p> <p>Philip Norrey Chief Executive DCC</p> <p>Interesting statistics: 73% of DCC budget is spent on 3% of population: Adult and children’s social care. The population aged over 85 is growing by 3% each year with a corresponding increase in dementia</p> <p>Devon is 3rd largest county by area but has 50% more roads than the next biggest county road network. Traditional DCC has used scientific data rationally but lacked common sense. There can be 13 budget headings to maintain a section of highway. They are trialing a more proactive system in Torrington hoping to roll it out across Devon. There may be an increasing push for Coldridge Parish Council to take on minor road repairs in the future.</p> <p>Climate change as per DCC leader John Hart, taking a lead in how to take action to reduce climate change with Prof Devine-Wright of Exeter University.</p> <p>Eifion Jones Heart of SW LEP</p> <p>Not particularly useful for Coldridge. Responsible for local industry strategy, but do not bid for money. 80% employment in region, but not always good jobs with high income.</p> <p>Productivity Exeter £59,000 output per head Torrington £38,000 output per head</p> <p>Needs to grow high earnings employment, not very clear how!!!</p> <p>He mentioned the AGRI EPI Centre in Somerset, which may be of interest.</p> <p>Overall this was far too many slides which he skimmed through. Poorly thought out.</p>

Dr Jonathan Owen NALC

85% of councils are members. Costs each council 7p per elector, capped at £1780.

Average age of the electorate is 40, average age of a councilor is 61.

Good Governance workshop

No national codes of conduct and no prescribed sanctions. Committee on Standards in Public Life report Jan 2019 with 26 recommendations possibility of one national codes.

Disclosable pecuniary interest, [some unclear on this] only 1 prosecution for this. Discussion on measures versus sanctions on which is most effective in modifying behaviour of councilors

Pete Bond Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service. Asst Chief Fire Officer.

He worked his way through 22 years in the service and is now responsible for looking to the future.

67% of the operational staff see D&SFS as a secondary employer, despite being the largest non-Metropolitan Fire Service in the UK. It has 85 stations with 120 appliances, but only 12 are permanently manned. These require 4 watches to provide 24-hour cover so only 25% of staff are on duty at any one time.

Retained firefighters live or work within 5 mins of the station. Receive £3000 a year retainer and commit to being available 84 hours a week. Of this, 2 hours a week is training. The number of incidents is dropping. There were 10,000 fire incidents in 2001/2 and now it is 5000. The reasons include all new homes having smoke alarms so small fires are often caught by the householder, there is less smoking so less people falling asleep with a cigarette, and less chip pans due to oven chips being available. The income for the retained firefighters is dropping as a result which leads to less income, so it is less attractive and they get less experience and excitement. During the normal working day around 30 stations are not available as the retained firefighters work away from the station. A lot of the D&SFRS time is spent ensuring people at work are protected, which reduces call-outs.

Average age of a firefighter is now 48, retained firefighters have to give up leave from their main job to train which can mean 2 years without a holiday.

Rapid intervention vehicles being introduced in Dartmouth and other narrow roads.

Average thatch fire costs D&SFRS time and resources to the value of £15,000-£20,000

2019/20-79	Amenity land update	There had been no response from Mrs Wastenage, and so the council felt the matter was closed for the moment. It would be re-visited if circumstances change.in future the use of the phrase “amenity land” should be used with caution.
2019/20-80	Highways	<p>Following a very productive site meeting between Andrew Green, Chris Burrows and the Clerk with Yvette Welsh of MDDC progress is being made. Ms Cesbron-Lavau contacted the Clerk who passed on the phone number to Andrew Green. He visited her, along with Marion Born and they had a very good discussion about the work needed to improve the visibility splay whilst respecting their privacy and not to cause unnecessary disruption to wildlife. a possibility of erecting a hedge just inside the property was raised. After a discussion a date of 29th November was set to do the work. There will a working party of 3-4 and all the cuttings will be removed.</p> <p>The clerk was asked to contact Yvette Welsh and thank her for her help with this.</p> <p>Several drains in the parish are blocked, especially in Church Lane and the road down to Hobby Moor Cross and needs jetting.</p> <p>The road from East Leigh to Chilverton is also flooding, possibly exacerbated by the overflow from the sewage treatment plant at East Leigh.</p> <p>Hawkridge Bridge has still not been repaired, after many months and several requests</p> <p>The clerk was asked to contact DCC Highways about these three problems</p> <p>The overgrown hedges alongside the highways in various places were discussed, and it was agreed to have this on the agenda for the next meeting.</p>
2019/20-81	Church Clock Centenary	<p>An excellent event with around 50 people attending. There was a lively talk from Dave Clarke and Luke Ridge on the clock and its history. it is in good condition and with continuing care and maintenance it may well go on for another 100 years. Ivan Krisnik’s talk on the men from the parish who died in WW1 was in depth and moving, and the associated display of all those who had served was interesting and showed some of the living links to current parishioners.</p> <p>The clerk was asked to write a report for the Calendar thank all but especially the three people mentioned above.</p>
2019/20-82	Councillors training	Councillors were reminded of the need to keep the clerk informed of any training done

2019/20-83	Update on ride-on tractor	The gearbox is beyond economic repair, and the deck is not good, but the engine is good. It needs to be disposed of, but it was agreed that if it can be traded in it will be. There is a gentleman in Coplestone who repairs and sells these tractors and Chris Burrows offered to follow this up with him. Councillors are asked to keep their ears open for a replacement, which will most likely be a mulching mower.
2019/20-84	Christmas tree	This will be purchased as part of the deal being done by St Mathews Church for their festival. It will arrive on Dec 10 th and it may be dressed that day or either of the two following days. Andrew Green will co-ordinate this.
2019/20-85	Finance to agree a budget for 2020/21	A budget was tabled by the Clerk, who talked the Council through it, and its implications. Bearing in mind the need for a new tractor/mower, and as part of the need to build up a reserve in case of any urgent work on the clock it was agreed to keep the precept at £6000.
2019/20-86	Finance	<p>The following payments were agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. clerk's wages £367.56 b. clerk's expenses £53.78 d. DALC conference fees £25 e. Village Hall hire for 2018/19 and 2019/20 £130 <p>it was agreed to consider the payment to the Ring and Ride at the January meeting, as there was feeling that it could be more than £100 as per the budget</p> <p>it was also agreed to consider the graveyard grants for this year at the same meeting.</p>
2019/20-87	Councillors reports	<p>There was a discussion on why the church was light up until the end of February. It was thought it was partly because the person who looked after the lights was away for a while. Some councillors thought it would be a good thing for the church to be illuminated all year.</p> <p>There was concern over Lindfield on the A377 just south of Morchard Road. John Daw informed the meeting that it had been given permission to operate in daytime [it supports people with learning difficulties] but that no-one can sleep at the site. The Down St Mary Parish Council felt this was not satisfactory but had no power to affect this decision by MDDC. [note: this is outside the parish so is not strictly a Coldridge Parish issue]</p> <p>Hedge-trimming alongside highways was raised and it will be on the agenda for January, with Councillors asked to bring specific details to the meeting.</p> <p>John Smith wondered if the phone box in village was at risk of being disconnected by BT. The Clerk believes that the decision by BT to offer phone boxes for adoption by the council a few years ago, when the Council took on the one at East Leigh and the one at Frogbury Cross was removed was a key date</p>

		<p>It is unlikely that at present BT would want to remove the last payphone in the Parish, and the council also has no desire to be party to the removal of the phone box. If it was ever at risk the Council would look to adopting it to preserve the conservation area scene.</p> <p>John Smith was asked to put an item in the next calendar raising the issue of dog poo being left in several places in the parish, not just in the village area.</p>
	<p>Dates of next meetings</p>	<p>These were confirmed as 16 Jan, 19 Mar 14 May, 16 July, 17 Sept, 19 Nov</p>

The meeting closed at 21:15

Signed: