

WASHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

The Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday March 15th 2023 in Washfield Memorial Hall at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllr's Mrs A Taylor-Ross (Chair), M Balment, J Boundy, J Mock, R Webber, W Wood and Mrs A Wych.

In attendance: County Cllr R Chesterton, District Cllr A Moore, Mr and Mrs A Roberts (Footpath Wardens) and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

80/03/23. To receive apologies. There were no apologies.

81/03/23. Disclosure of interest in item on the agenda. There were no disclosures.

82/03/23. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2023 as an accurate record of the Meeting. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and they were duly signed by the Chair.

83/03/23. Matters arising from the minutes (not already covered by the agenda). There were no matters arising.

It was agreed the bring the following item forward on the agenda.

84/03/23. Reports

a) District Cllr. MDDC met last week to discuss the 2023-24 for a second time and agreed it just before the deadline. There will be no cuts to services but £600,000 of the Council's reserves had to be included to produce a balanced budget. Cllr Moore was concerned that some things in the budget were vague and the implications of that. Cllr Barry Warren is the caretaker leader of the council and is carrying the batten until the District Council elections on May 4th. Nomination forms are available for both the District Council and the Town and Parish Council elections. Voter ID will be needed in polling stations. The Council has agreed to move from a cabinet system, back to a committee system. This will take nearly a year to put in place.

Cllr Moore and Cllr Stanley have both decided not to stand for election again. Cllr Moore thanked parish councillors for their support and wished the parish all the best for the future. Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross thanked Cllr Moore for all that he had done for the parish. He said that the best part of his job had been helping the parishes. He was asked if he could help the parish obtain a waste bin for siting by the village hall, that is regularly emptied by MDDC and he agreed to make enquiries.

Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross asked if the change from a cabinet led system to a committee led system would affect the parishes and was told it probably wouldn't. The previous committee system caused delays but people say it will be different this time. A cabinet allows more streamlined decisions and gives some councillors power to do more.

Cllr Moore left the meeting.

b) County Cllr. Cllr Chesterton gave a verbal report and his written report was circulated by email following the meeting. The new DCC Chief Executive, Donna Manson, took up her role on 17th February and feedback has been positive.

At February's budget meeting councillors agreed an additional £2 million to go into roads and drainage above the 'target budget' that had previously been set. This winter has posed challenges for the Highways and Traffic Management Service. The mix of prolonged sub-zero temperatures and heavy rain led to a rapid deterioration in the condition of the network highlighting the fragility of the asset following decades of under investment. Since April 2022 their inspection team have assessed over 27,000 reports of potholes from members of the public. Over 10,000 reports were assessed in January alone, they were receiving as many as 500 reports per day. The team have been working hard to get on top of the backlog with a focus on the safety of the travelling public. Milestone, their term maintenance contractor, has increased their resources which has seen weekend working and over forty gangs working across the county. At the beginning of the month there were 3,000 potholes waiting to be repaired, this has reduced to approximately 2,000. Following a quiet November, in which there was very little in the way of gritting treatment, the extended cold snaps in December and January has seen over 15,000 tonnes of salt used across 2,094 runs (the equivalent to 55 full, Countywide treatments on their Primary Salting Network). The average across the last four winters for the same period has been 8,919 tonnes and 1,597 runs. This additional work has had a knock on effect with the planned improvement works. Gritter drivers are limited in how many hours they can work which often means planned improvement works have to be deferred. In addition, with the safety of the network taking priority, a number of the patching gangs have been redeployed on to pothole repairs.

Of the 20 Made in Devon members who needed to start paying for membership in December only 2 said they will not renew. Feedback has been very positive.

DCC has some way to go to convince Ofsted inspectors that its Children Services are getting better or can be called 'good' but frontline managers have "energy and commitment to implementing improvement plans", say inspectors. The latest Ofsted monitoring report published on Monday 30 January, says there are some positives, but note that serious issues remain with not enough progress in key areas since the full inspection 3 years ago. More details were included in Cllr Chesterton's written report.

Up until 31 March 2023 local bus companies and local authorities have continued to receive additional funding from the Department for Transport to support the recovery in bus services since the pandemic. This funding is due to finish at the end of the current financial year. In Devon, working with our bus companies, this funding has been used to maintain as much of the commercial and supported network as possible. Alongside the £2 fare initiative and improved driver position with Stagecoach locally improvements are starting to be seen and, linked with DCC's continued financial commitment thanks to the on street parking, alongside the improvements they have planned from their National Bus Strategy allocation, there is an excellent opportunity to build back confidence in the network and see more people back on the buses. This could all be in jeopardy though. There was an earlier indication that some additional Government funding would continue into the new financial year but there is no guarantee that anything will come forward. DCC are aware that nationally buses are the most popular form of public

transport and carry significantly more passengers than railways, but the funding invested into the mode is substantially less and the bus may miss out again. They are trying to get some feedback about the likely impact nationally as many areas will be seeing significant service reductions. In Devon it is hoped changes will not be on this scale but there is a possibility of some marginal services being withdrawn by the companies with the expectation that the local authority can pick them up when funding is already fully committed and DCC are seeing significant contract price increases. This article sums it up: <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Future-of-bus-services-hangs-in-the-balance-/55554>.

The report concluded with the findings from the DCC Kerbside Residual Waste Composition Analysis.

85/03/23. Public questions. None.

86/03/23. Footpaths:

a) P3 update. A written report from Mr & Mrs Roberts was circulated by email prior to the meeting. They reported that all paths and bridleway have now been checked, some waymarkers added, brambles cleared and a couple of minor adjustments have been made to latches etc. All will be in good order once all the requested work has been done. Stuart Howell is going to send them the list of places where grass etc has been cut as part of the routine annual cutting.

Footpath 1 - Haydon to Charterhouse. Sleepers have been laid over the boggy bit at the Haydon (Long Lane) end, though it is still soggy just before the sleepers start. They will monitor it. They have dug steps and put woodchips on the slope from the stile to the walkway which became very slippery during the work. The stile into the field has been mended and new signposts put up.

Footpath 2 - Mousebeare to Long Lane. The posts in the field going towards New Park have been moved out giving a much safer path past the very uneven bit. Some drainage has been done on the lane at New Park but it is still very wet. Steps from the end of the path from the field down to Long Lane are not done yet.

Footpath 3 - New Park to Ennerleigh. New gateposts and a signpost for Courtenay farmyard agreed but not done yet. Problems with 2 or 3 gate posts on Winbow land. Farmer liaising with the landowner and will do the work and will charge.

Footpath 4 - Brook Lane to Long Lane. Agreed that non-slip strips will be put on the bridge.

Footpath 5 - Bullfinches to Courtenay. The Stanterton Landowner has mended the two gates nearest the Stoodleigh road and a couple of way marker posts. A new signpost on Stoodleigh road, pointing the way to Courtenay, has been agreed but not done yet.

Footpath 6 from below Smiths to Slade. They have checked as far as where the change in the path will happen and all is okay. Planning signs are on the gate where the changed path meets the road.

Bridleway 7 from Smiths to Ramstorland Lane. The latch on the gate over the stream does not work. Both posts are well fixed and the gate closes by gravity. They have attached a chain to loop over the gate as a 'temporary' measure to secure the gate. This works well. They have freed off and oiled the gate latch at the top of that field. The signpost at the top of the next field has been reset on the line of the path.

Footpath 8 from Beauchamp to Lower Washfield. Checked and all okay.

Footpath 10 from Beeches to Lower Washfield. Checked and all okay.
The Clerk reported that a payment of £200 has been received from DCC to cover the work on Footpath 3.

Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross reported that she had walked Footpath 1 yesterday and thought the sleepers were working well. Once everything has been done it will just be maintenance. The landowners are doing their bit. The next priority are the gateposts at Courtney and the Brook Lane bridge and steps.

The Clerk reported that she had met with Mr and Mrs Roberts to discuss how she could support them with the administration for the P3 scheme.

b) Washfield Definitive Map Review – to report on the decision made by the DCC Public Rights of Way Committee on Proposal 1. A report on proposal 1 of the Definitive Map Review in Washfield was considered at Devon County Council's Public Rights of Way Committee meeting at County Hall, Exeter on Thursday 9th March. The members agreed the officer's recommendation and therefore no Order will be made in respect of proposal 1 for the addition of a public bridleway through Barehills Wood. The landowners had sent a letter of thanks to the Parish Council for their support.

Mr and Mrs Roberts joined the meeting.

87/03/23. Planning

a) To make a recommendation on any planning applications received before the meeting.

23/00039/HOUSE Installation of 80 m2 ground mounted solar panel array to accommodate 15kw system | Land and Buildings at NGR 294662 114771 (Worth House) Washfield. Councillors noted the panel array was not visible from surrounding areas. Comment: Washfield Parish Council has no objections.

b) To note any decisions on planning applications made by MDDC.

23/00016/PNAG Prior notification for the erection of extension to agricultural storage building. Buttermoor Farm, Loxbeare, Tiverton. Decision: Prior approval not required.

23/00279/PNAG Prior notification for the erection of an agricultural storage barn. Land at NGR 293549 119075 (Dryhill Farm), Stoodleigh. Decision: Prior approval not required.

c) Any other planning matters. None.

88/03/23. Highways

a) To report on any highways work carried out in the parish and to note any highways work needed. Cllr Chesterton reported that he was chasing up highways to see when repairs would be carried out on the road surface at Lower Washfield and was making sure it wasn't missed with the change to the Neighbourhood Highways Officer (NHO). The NHO has driven all the roads in the parish with him and he felt that she seemed keen to listen and learn. It is clear however that money has already been allocated for the next 5 years. It was noted that DCC have responsibility for the roads and drains and the landowner has responsibility for verges, hedges and ditches. DCC no longer pay contractors to do side ploughing but the landowner can do it if they

want. Some potholes have been filled at Badcott and another opposite Cuckoo's Nest. There are at least 4 potholes in Long Lane that need filling. Cllr Chesterton encourage everyone to keep reporting potholes online. It was announced following the Government budget today that DCC will receive a further £9million to repair potholes. However, filling potholes is only a temporary fix. He explained that in the past contractors used a sealant around potholes but following a court case when it was claimed that a bike had skidded on the sealant around a pothole, contractors have been told to stop using it. It was made clear to the NHO that the workmanship for filling potholes is very poor. She said there is very little she can do about the flooding in Long Lane. There is so much soil in the middle of the road that it is catching on the underside of cars. The wide wheelbase of tractors and trailers using the road is causing issues. Drains should be checked annually and it is possible to check when this was last done.

b) Update on meeting with Neighbourhood Highways Officer and proposal to join the DCC Highways Self Help Scheme. There is a requirement for at least one person to do a one day Chapter 8 training course and online highway safety awareness training. They can then oversee others. The person doesn't have to be a councillor. If a parish joins the scheme they can be given 52 bags of pothole filler. These are a good option as they can be used before potholes get very big and the size that DCC requires before they will fill them. A lengths man can be employed for larger jobs. Councillors queried whether landowners know that verges and ditches are their responsibility.

c) Any other highways matters. It was suggested that the Parish Council might consider joining the DCC Snow Warden Scheme. It was noted that DCC do not regularly check that grit bins are full. Cllr Boundy has been reporting online when grit bins need to be filled up.

Cllr Chesterton left the meeting.

89/03/23. Finance:

a) To approve any payments. It was resolved to make the following payments:
Mrs J Larcombe - £113.52 Clerk's salary and office expenses for 2022-23 (Chq no 557)

HMRC - £21.00 PAYE (Chq no 558)

Washfield Memorial Hall - £60.00 hire of meeting room (Chq no 559)

The Clerk reported that since the last meeting a payment of £84.48 had been made to Mr A Roberts to refund him for the cost of hand tools etc purchased for P3 work (Chq no 556).

b) To note the bank account balances. Current account balance – £6379.25.
Business Reserve Account - £287.23.

c) To agree the appointment of the Internal Auditor. It was agreed to appoint Karen Ward as the internal auditor.

90/03/23. To discuss replacement of fencing around the village green. It was decided

that the fencing would be replaced with like for like fencing. Cllr Boundy will obtain quotes.

92/03/23. To discuss arrangements etc for the Parish Council elections on May 4th.

Councillors were reminded that their terms of office ended on 9th May and they would need to submit a nomination form to MDDC by 4pm on 4th April if they wanted to stand for re-election. Nominations can be submitted from 20th March and need to be submitted in person. Some nomination forms were available at the meeting and the Clerk will email the nomination form to anyone who wants one. The Notice of Nominations will be published on April 5th. Voter ID will be needed at polling stations for the first time.

93/03/23. Community Resilience Plan for Washfield. A draft plan was circulated by email prior to the meeting. When completed the plan could be logged online and put on the parish website. Funding is available to pay for an initial community meeting to produce a plan and for equipment. It isn't a parish councillor responsibility to be on the community response team but the Parish Council can be a co-ordinator. It was felt the plan didn't need to be anything too onerous. The draft plan will be discussed at the Annual Parish Meeting.

93/03/23. Update on arrangements for the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting. Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross told councillors she was not available on 22nd March due to family reasons and it was agreed to change the date to March 23rd. Cllr Mrs Taylor-Ross will bring tea, coffee and biscuits.

There will be a Chair's report for 2022-23, the Parish Council accounts for 2022-23 and a discussion on the Community Resilience Plan.

94/03/23. Chairman's Announcements and Correspondence. The grass on the village green will be cut this summer by a young person who is completing the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and needs to do some volunteering.

The last bench will be sited on a verge along the Exe Valley Way subject to permission from the landowner.

95/03/23. Date of next meeting: date in May 2023 to be agreed for Annual Parish Council meeting. It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Thursday May 18th at 7.30pm.

Signed:
Chair

Date: