

High Bickington Parish Council
Clerk: Alan Matthewman
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Draft Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
Wednesday 13th December 2023 at 7.30 pm in
The Community Centre, High Bickington, 1st Floor Meeting Room

Present: Councillors Adam Bunting (Chair) Colin Kendall (Vice-Chair), Franklin Spencer
Michael Parker, Nik Topp, Grant Sheldon, Roger Keen
Also Present: Councillor Thomas Elliott (Torridge DC).
Alan Matthewman (Parish Clerk)
David Manley – Gas compression Project
Members of the village speed measurement team and two other members of the public

The Chair expressed his pleasure at welcoming Roger Keen back to the council after a period of illness, This was echoed by other members.

The Chair invited Councillor Elliott, ward member for the district council to address the meeting
Councillor Elliott:

- 1: He urged everyone to monitor all emails received from TDC as it has been confirmed that all messages sent out were monitored to see if they had been accessed.
- 2: Regarding effluent discharges he reported that South West Water were attending a full council meeting in January where their record on unauthorised discharges would be fully examined.
- 3: With regard to social housing: At present the number of social houses being provided in Torridge was at 21% compared to the target of 30%. This represents a significant improvement in part performance but with a distance to go. The last two years showed figures of 20 out of 324 (6%) in 2022/23, compared with the prior year 2021/22 when 48 were provided from a total of 193 (25%). To September in the current year a total of 29 from a total of 192 (15%). More substantial numbers are in progress. Policy was to spread the numbers around reducing options to avoid providing them. Work was intensifying on empty properties although the council does not have the funds to acquire them. Enforcement activity also being expanded and public reporting was key to success. Presentation (virtual) on these issues would take place in the new year.

David Manley joined the meeting to the outline planning application for a gas compression operation at Apple Tree Farm which lies less than 200 yards from the Parish Boundary but is in the North Devon District for planning purposes.

The company has a plant at South Molton and has a surplus of gas after the closure of its major customer. The plant supplies biogas and fertiliser and the proposal will take biogas from the South Molton plant and will inject it into the high pressure Wales and West facility at Apple tree farm. All buildings are c 20 ft high and craned in so construction issues are minimised and will be masked by a low devon hedge. After construction vehicle movements will be minimised and a noise limit of 35 db has been agreed. No financial advantage to HB would accrue.

Two neighbours, including the farm owner, were present and expressed their satisfaction, subject to compliance on the noise level which was essential to the operation of their child support and the neighbouring caravan site.

David Manley left the meeting and the Chair invited David Johnson, leader of the Village Speedwatch project to address the meeting.

They now have four participants which enables the project but delays had been inevitable. Now need to designate two active sites for police evaluation. Now looking to see if there is past data from the speed watch camera and wondered if the team could take over the active monitoring of the device. Agreed that a changeover meeting should be arranged. Also agreed that the box needed replacement probably. The question of signage. And

possibly flashing sign at school opening and closing times could be examined. Agreed that we should raise this matter with DCC. Other desirable possibility would be provision of an additional camera.

The Chair declared the formal meeting open:

- 1: Apologies for absence** – Councillor Andrew Saywell .
- 2. Declarations of Interest** – to receive any Personal and/or Prejudicial interests from Councillors regarding matters due to be discussed. Grant Sheldon declared an interest in the School PTA, Michael in the Playing Fields Association and Colin Kendall in the Library of things, all with grant applications up for consideration.
- 3: Urgent Matters at the discretion of the Chair:**

The matter of the raising of DALC fees and the c. 50% increase involved and this was noted and accepted.

The offer of a tree was accepted with a Rowan being the first tree of reference.
- 4. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 8th November 2023.** The minutes were accepted by all who had attended the meeting as a true and fair record and this was accepted unanimously.
- 5: Matters arising from the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 8th November 2023**

No progress had been made on the matter of the defibrillator as to where it can be located with access to power. Agreed to consider use of separate solar battery to power the box. CK to examine this possibility. Agreed to use postcode of EX37 9AP. Clerk instructed to compose a letter to be distributed to residents in the area
- 6: Council will discuss and agree a draft budget for 2024-25 and the consequent precept demand to be presented to Torridge District Council.**

Members had been sent an updated set of accounts and a copy of the precept calculator. The clerk suggested that the Council should have a policy to set aside an amount this year for a village development fund. Suggestion was made that the council agree a total of £14,000 based on objectives and the agreed budget.
- 7: Police Matters** – Update on any local police and/or Neighbourhood Watch matters
 - a) receive report on traffic speeds through the village – Councillors Parker/Bunting covered above
 - b) receive report on police activity since last meeting – nothing of significance reported
- 8: Maintenance:**
 - (a) To consider additional work required on BMX track and Hedgerows – work is ongoing
 - (b) Highways – To receive a report from Councillor Parker -
 - (c) Footpaths and Byways – to note any work requiring to be done on local footpaths.

- 9 **CPT Report:** consider report from Cllr Spencer on CPT activity. There has been a double failure on the biomass system with a consequent failure on the stand-by gas system. A new motor was procured and will be fitted on the 14th. The gas boiler was stripped and they discovered and replacement probes have been fitted but lockouts continued. Costs are becoming critical.

CPT finances are in a critical state in part reflecting the failure of the organisation to pass through the cost increases, particularly in energy.

10: **To consider grant applications received**

After considerable discussion amongst members the following list of payments was agreed to be made;

Playing Fields Association – claim for a contribution to insurance which has increased in the year by over 50% to £1200 – Final sum agreed: £600

William Dodds Charity - £100 (plus

Pyncombe Foundation £100

High Bickington Library of Things – charity to hire (for £1) application for insurance cost £250. Supported by the Repair Café

High Bickington Allotment Association – TDC Emptying fee £125.

Quarry Wood Committee – Community Woodland of the Year, Management Review £200

North Devon Archive - £100

School PTA – funds to help with school trips. £400

Football Club - £100 for new nets

It was proposed by Colin Kendall, seconded by Nik Topp that a sum of £1975 in total be distributed in the manner shown. The proposal was supported unanimously with all councillors who had declared interests recusing themselves on the individual grants relevant to them,

11: **Finance:**

- (a) Agree to payment of cheques following the meeting and cheques paid since previous meeting

12: **Planning**

a: To receive and comment on other planning applications and any decisions reached on prior applications since 18th September 2023 – Surprising decision regarding Weirmarsh on approval after initial refusal.

b: to note any matters arising from the discussions concerning a proposed development by Devon CC in Little Bickington Lane – Nothing disclosed.

13. **Correspondence:**

Date of next meeting, Wednesday 10th January 2024

Adam Bunting Chair of Parish Council