

NEWTON POPPLEFORD AND HARPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of an Ordinary Meeting of Newton Poppleford and Harpford Parish Council which took place at The Pavilion, Back Lane, Newton Poppleford at 7.15pm on Monday, 18th December 2023.

Present: Cllrs. Bisseker, Carpenter, Compton, Dalton, Hughes, Lipczynski, Malawana, Tillotson, Tribble (Chair) and Walker
Jacqui Baldwin, Clerk and RFO
Cllr. Chris Burhop, Ward Councillor
Ted Swan, Parish Footpath Warden
7 members of the public

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave details of the evacuation procedure in case of fire. The Public Forum was opened at 7.15pm.

Public Forum

- a) Neighbourhood Policing report:
None received.
- b) County Councillor report:
Cllr. Jessica Bailey sent her apologies to the meeting and a short report received via email was read out by the Chair. In her report Cllr. Bailey confirmed that she had asked DCC to exercise their Compulsory Purchase Order powers to progress the replacement of Red Bridge. A site meeting is scheduled to take place with Highways in Venn Ottery on 20th December to discuss potholes and the road repairs. Cllr. Bailey also advised that a new area officer has been appointed by the Environment Agency and it is hoped that a meeting can be arranged to take place on 15th or 16th January. Finally, Cllr. Bailey extended her good wishes for Christmas to all Councillors.
- c) District Councillor report: Cllr. Chris Burhop
Chair welcomed Cllr. Burhop to the meeting. Cllr. Burhop referred to tv coverage and an article published in the Sidmouth Herald suggesting that there is a culture of bullying at EDDC. This arises from a governance audit which was carried out in 2021 since when action has been taken to address the issues raised. Following the retirement of the Chief Executive and pending a new appointment, a senior management team has taken on the CE function which is working well. The Strategic Planning Committee has made the difficult decision to include provision of a new town comprising 8,000 homes in the draft Local Plan to satisfy Government housing targets. Cllr. Burhop pointed out that EDDC is in a difficult position with 65% of land in the district having AONB protection requiring homes to be crammed into the remaining 35%. Over 7,000 acres of agricultural land will be lost in the process. A meeting took place on 28th November with residents of Burrow, DCC's Flood Risk team, the Parish Council Chair and Cllr. Bailey to further discuss flood prevention measures. Both Cllrs. Walker and Carpenter noted that they had not been invited to this meeting despite residing in Burrow. DCC is making good progress but the EA response to date has been poor. Hopefully this will improve with the employment of a new officer and Cllr. Burhop encouraged Council to initiate a dialogue with this officer as soon as possible. It has been reported that there will be no further maize production on the farmland at

Burrow with the farmer committing to the production of grass or silage. EDDC has made the decision to promote coach travel in the district which has not recovered since covid. Potentially this will result in dedicated coach parking and toilet facilities. The Sidmouth Beach Management Plan to alleviate the flood risk to the town has funding and detailed planning will commence in 2024 with work due to start in 2025. A member of the public asked whether this would mean increased heavy traffic through the village as had happened when the material for the existing groynes was transported to site. Cllr. Burhop said he feared that this would be the case. Chair thanked Cllr. Burhop for his report and attendance.

d) Report from Ted Swan, Parish Footpath Warden:

Mr Swan noted that he had still not received the Annual Footpath Survey forms from DCC. Cllr. Carpenter offered to follow this up with the Rights of Way team. Emma Hellier from DCC has confirmed that a contractor will instal gates at each end of the new Footpath 39. Mr Swan reported that there has been further significant erosion to the footpath from Harpford to Newton Poppleford on the NP side of the Red Bridge and the situation is becoming dire. A member of the public noted that the bridge over the Otter at Dotton has also been undermined by the river and has been closed off for safety reasons. Mr Swan confirmed that this is the responsibility of DCC. Chair thanked Mr Swan for his attendance and report.

e) Report from the Climate Change Group:

None received.

f) Questions and representations from residents/parishioners:

Members of the public present confirmed a wish to address the meeting on planning matters at agenda item 23/074. Chair confirmed that Standing Orders would be suspended to allow this. The Public Forum was closed at 7.45pm.

To consider the following business:

		Action:
23/068	To consider apologies for absence and approve if accepted (LGA 1972 S.85(1))	
	Clerk advised that no apologies had been received.	
23/069	Declarations of interest from members / Dispensations afforded	
	All members present are, by definition, members of the NPPFF Trustee Board and declare a personal interest in that capacity. Cllr. Tillotson was afforded a dispensation to discuss and vote upon matters pertaining to Parish allotments at the Annual Meeting of Council held on 22 nd May 2023. This dispensation applies until May 2027 (unless rescinded prior to that date) and is afforded in respect of her personal and disclosable pecuniary interests as an allotment tenant. Cllr. Hughes was afforded a dispensation to discuss and vote upon matters pertaining to trees at the Ordinary Meeting held on 27 th June 2023. This dispensation applies until May 2027 (unless rescinded prior to that date) and is afforded in respect of his personal and disclosable pecuniary interest as owner of Bowhayes Trees Limited, Bowhayes Farm, Venn Ottery.	
23/070	To consider any matters listed on this Agenda that Councillors believe should be dealt with as confidential business as per the provisions of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 other than those already listed at Agenda item 23/080. None so considered.	
23/071	To consider any Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 27th November 2023 not dealt with elsewhere on this Agenda: a) Multi-Use Games Area:	

	<p>Chair confirmed that the MUGA has now re-opened with the MUGA Working Party taking responsibility for security. A Facebook page has been published and Councillors are asked to like and share. A formal re-opening event will take place in February 2024.</p> <p>b) Community Speed Watch: The body camera has been purchased and is now in use.</p> <p>c) DCC Webinar Chair attended the webinar hosted by the Leader of the Council and a recording is available for anyone wishing to listen to it.</p>	
23/072	<p>To review the draft Minutes of Council’s Finance Committee meeting held on 11th December 2023 and to note and, if thought fit ratify, recommendations made therein:</p> <p>a) Cllr. Lipczynski to be co-opted as a temporary member of the Finance Committee: Cllr. Compton suggested that there had been irregularities in the co-option process. Cllr. Walker, as Chair of the Finance Committee, stated that to avoid the Finance Committee being inquorate when important decisions on the Budget and Precept were required an additional member was co-opted to cover the absence through ill health of one member of the committee. Cllr. Tillotson had given due notice of her absence and Standing Orders allow for a temporary co-option in these circumstances. Cllr. Walker therefore proposed that Council approve Cllr. Lipczynski’s temporary co-option to the Finance Committee. Seconded by Cllr. Dalton and carried with 8 votes in favour, one abstention and one objection.</p> <p>b) Cllr. Carpenter to become a full signatory to the Council’s account with Lloyds Bank: Chair proposed that the recommendation that Cllr. Carpenter become a full signatory to Council’s Lloyds Bank Account be approved. Seconded by Cllr. Walker and resolved with 9 votes in favour and one abstention.</p>	
23/073	<p>Correspondence received:</p> <p>a) Clinton Devon Estates – Landscape Recovery Project: Chair advised that Dr Sam Bridgewater has confirmed that Clinton Devon Estates application for development funding to progress a Landscape Recovery Plan has been successful. It is anticipated that the stakeholder group, of which Council is a member, will reconvene in February 2024.</p>	
23/074	<p>Planning Matters: Chair proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to allow members of the public to make representations. Seconded by Cllr. Hughes and resolved unanimously.</p>	
	<p>a) To consider planning applications received prior to publication: 23/2607 PIP – Land situated at the junction of Venn Ottery Road/Hunger Hill - Permission in Principle to build 5 homes. Council heard representations from several residents concerned by the lack of publicity and the lack of time given to respond to this application. Cllr. Burhop advised that the time constraints of a PIP application are prescribed in law not by EDDC. The determination process is much quicker than a full planning application. Concerns</p>	

	<p>were expressed about access, increased traffic, disruption caused by construction vehicles and approval setting a precedent for future development. Comments were also made about misleading and factually incorrect statements in the application. Cllr. Burhop advised that the planning department does not have the resources to fact-check all applications received. Cllr. Hughes confirmed that the Parish Council would come to collective view and respond to the application as one voice, but it was important that members of the public also added their objections to the planning portal and pointed out any inaccuracies in the application. Cllr. Tillotson stated that the site in question is Grade 1 Agricultural land, outside the Built Up Area Boundary of the village, within the AONB and with poor accessibility to village amenities in contravention with Neighbourhood Plan policies.</p> <p>Chair proposed that an Objection to this application be drafted for circulation to, and approval by, Councillors. Seconded by Cllr. Tillotson and resolved 9 votes in favour with one abstention. Chair then proposed that Standing Orders be reinstated precluding the public from make any further representations. Seconded by Cllr. Carpenter and unanimously resolved.</p>	Chair
	<p>b) Planning determinations/decisions advised: 23/1503/FUL – Minors, Venn Ottery – approved with conditions to ensure the preservation of trees on the site. 23/1427/CPE – Court Place Farm, Harpford – refused 23/1985/FUL – Land south of Knapps Lane, Harpford - approved</p>	
	<p>c) To note planning correspondence received: Clerk advised that EDDC has resolved to approve an application from West Hill Parish Council to designate a new Neighbourhood Area for West Hill only and to remove the parish from the Ottery St Mary Neighbourhood Area.</p>	
	<p>d) To consider Council’s Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Report: Update circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting.</p>	
23/075	Financial Matters:	
	<p>a) To consider and review Financial Reports for November as per documents previously circulated to members and published on-line: No comments or questions raised.</p> <p>b) To consider and, if thought fit, approve payments for December as previously circulated to members and published on-line: Chair proposed that invoices totalling £10,724.83 be approved for payment. Seconded by Cllr. Walker and resolved 9 votes in favour, one abstention. Clerk to note and make payments on the due dates.</p> <p>c) Questions to RFO from members of Council relating to these financial reports: None received.</p> <p>d) To consider draft Budget and Precept calculations and recommendations from the Finance Committee meeting held 11th December 2023: Cllr. Walker stated that during the period 2017 to 2021, in order not to increase the financial burden on residents, Council had not increased its Precept. However, this policy resulted in Council having to use its</p>	Clerk

	<p>reserves and now being in a poorer financial position. Throughout the past year exceptional expenditure to cover flood damage repairs, the new footbridge at Venn Ottery and trespass by travellers had further strained finances. It is important that, in future, Council has the reserves to face unanticipated costs. Cllr. Compton pointed out that setting the Precept at £74,571 as recommended would mean that the Precept had doubled in two years. Cllr. Hughes noted that, pre-covid, the country was experiencing low inflation and low interest rates, the world is now a very different place. Cllr. Tillotson stated that this was why the Finance Committee had recommended the closure of the Public WC as this would allow funds to be reallocated to other projects.</p> <p>Chair proposed that the recommendation of the Finance Committee to set a Budget for 2024-25 of £100,452 with a Precept of £74,571 be approved. Seconded by Cllr. Dalton and resolved with 9 votes in favour and 1 against. It was further agreed that all Councillors would be invited to attend the Finance Committee meeting to be held on 15th January 2024 to scrutinise the 2024-25 Budget in detail and carry out a forecasting exercise.</p> <p>Clerk to note and issue Notices accordingly.</p> <p>e) To note the return deadline for completed Precept forms: Clerk confirmed that EDDC had set a deadline of 17th January 2024 for receipt of completed Precept forms.</p>	Clerk
23/076	BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED:	
	<p>A To consider recommendations of the Finance Committee relating to the award of the Parish Council’s 3-year Grounds Maintenance Contract following a competitive tender exercise:</p> <p>Cllr. Walker advised that three tender submissions had been received for the 3-year grounds maintenance contract: Contractor X - £37,900 Contractor Y - £70,290 Contractor Z - £31,494</p> <p>The Finance Committee had scrutinised all submissions and had been impressed by the proposal made by Contractor Z. In the light of current budget constraints, the Finance Committee would recommend that a 3-year contract be offered to Contractor Z subject to receipt of acceptable references. Clerk confirmed that the contract could be terminated by either side giving three months’ notice.</p> <p>Cllr. Walker proposed that the recommendation of the Finance Committee be approved. Seconded by Cllr. Tillotson and resolved unanimously. Clerk to take up references provided by Contractor Z and circulate. If references are acceptable the three contractors to be advised of the outcome of the tender exercise.</p>	Clerk
	<p>B To review required actions relating to the Public WC in School Lane: Chair confirmed that a letter had been sent to EDDC withdrawing the Notice of Termination of Lease. A subsequent telephone conversation with Robert Harrison, Senior Estates Surveyor, had established that EDDC is happy to await the outcome of Council’s deliberations. Chair requested that the Public WC Working Party meet early in the New Year to agree on the scope of work required to refurbish the WC to an acceptable standard and within the</p>	

	<p>available budget. Quotations for the works to be brought to the January meeting.</p> <p>Cllr. Hughes proposed that Cllr. Compton be co-opted to the WC Working Party. Seconded by Cllr. Malawana and resolved unanimously.</p>	
C	<p>To discuss matters pertaining to persistent flooding in Lower Way, Harpford:</p> <p>Cllr. Malawana described the problem of persistent flooding along Lower Way which is being caused by a build up of silt in the ditch system alongside the lane. DCC has confirmed that both they and the adjacent landowner have riparian responsibilities and the drain under the A3052 is a DCC maintained structure. DCC have advised that, without the permission of the landowner to access, remove and deposit the silt on his land, de-silting would be hugely expensive. DCC has also confirmed that it does not have the time or resources to remove rubbish from the watercourse that has been washed down in recent floods.</p> <p>Cllr. Malawana stated that the ditch was last cleared in March but subsequent flooding has resulted in it being blocked again. This will happen time and again if the ditch is not regularly cleared. DCC then incur costs clearing the silt and mud from the road. Cllr. Hughes pointed out that this is a county-wide problem and, with no help coming from elsewhere and a proper flood management plan being some way off, it may be worth considering carrying out community action with the permission of the landowner.</p> <p>It was agreed that Cllr. Malawana should approach the landowner on behalf of Council and open a dialogue. In addition, Chair will approach Cllr. Bailey to obtain clarity on the subject of riparian rights and responsibilities.</p>	<p>JM Chair</p>
D	<p>To note the outcome of the “Wild About Devon” Awards 2023:</p> <p>Chair advised that the Clerk had entered the Parish Council in the Devon Wildlife Community of the Year Awards. At an awards ceremony held on 1st December, Council was awarded Wildlife Parish Council of the Year for the steps taken by the Climate Change Group and other volunteers to improve the wildlife value of the area and promote awareness of nature, social interaction, wellbeing and the health of the community. The plaque received will be displayed in the Pavilion. Chair congratulated Gill Cameron-Webb, all members of the Climate Change Group and other volunteers for their tremendous work.</p> <p>Clerk confirmed that details of the award had been published on the website and Facebook and an article will appear in the January PCC magazine.</p>	
23/077	<p>To consider matters viewed as urgent by presiding Chair for discussion only:</p> <p>None</p>	
23/078	<p>Date of next Ordinary Meeting</p> <p>7.15pm on Monday, 29th January 2024 at The Pavilion, Back Lane, Newton Poppleford.</p>	
23/079	<p>Chair proposed that, under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1972, the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed. Seconded by Cllr. Carpenter and unanimously resolved.</p> <p>Chair thanked members of the public for their attendance and closed the public meeting at 9.20pm.</p>	
23/080	<p>Business to be considered in committee session:</p>	

	<p>a) To consider a proposed amendment to the draft Minutes of the Council meeting held on 27th November 2023. Having advised the Clerk in advance of his intention to do so, Cllr. Compton tabled a proposed amendment to the draft Minutes of the meeting as previously published and circulated to members. This proposal was seconded by Cllr. Hughes and carried with 4 votes in favour and two abstentions. Clerk to publish a revised version of the Minutes and bring to the January meeting for approval and signature. Increase to Clerk’s salary to be placed on the Agenda of the meeting for ratification by Council.</p> <p>b) To review and, if thought fit, approve the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 27th November 2023 as previously circulated to members and published on-line. Proposal not made as 23/080(a) carried.</p>	Clerk
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With no further business to consider, the Chair thanked Councillors for their contributions to discussion and debate throughout the year and declared the meeting closed at 9.50pm.

Signed as a true reflection of the business of the meeting:

Signed Chair

Date