

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 12th November 2019 at Rackenford School

Present: Cllr S Child, Cllr G Lamb (Chairman), Cllr R Mathews, Cllr D Parry, Cllr F Phillips

In attendance: W Sweet (Clerk), 1 x member of the public, District & County Cllr J Yabsley

1920-60 Apologies for absence – Cllr Cox, Cllr Hyland, Cllr Warne

1920-61 Declaration of Interests (re. matters appearing on this agenda) - None

1920-62 Open Forum – James Smaldon updated the Council on the situation regarding the intruders he had caught on CCTV at the egg farm. He had posted the pictures on the Rackenford Facebook page and three residents had contact him identifying the people involved. He has spoken to the police in South Molton and they are aware of one of the individuals. As Mr Smaldon could not see that any damage had been done and only trespass had taken place the police were not going to take any further action but the incident is on file. He hoped that the intruders know that it is known who they are. He had recently upgraded the entrance camera and has installed a couple more on site since the incident. He extended an invitation to local people and councillors to come and visit the farm to see what they do there. In response to a question about the house for a farm manager that is due to be built on site, it was hoped that they would start laying concreting for it either just before or just after Christmas. Once there is someone living on site it will make things safer.

1920-63 Approve Minutes It was RESOLVED to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd September 2019 after making the following amendments, which had been raised by two members of the public:

- (i) Minute ref. 1920-45, first paragraph, line 3, remove “Colleton Hall” and replace with “Hilltown Cross”.
- (ii) Minute ref. 1920-45, last paragraph, line 3 delete from “and that ...” to end of sentence.

1920-64 Report from District and County Councillor Cllr Yabsley said he was still trying to get Highways to come out on a visit and hoped it would be just before Christmas. He had encountered some flooding on his way to the meeting, near Hilltown Farm, and said that the hedge there needed to be prodded. There was also some significant flooding this side of Nomansland. He had reported the piece of sinking road previously discussed. Various potholes in the parish including one on the Witheridge side of the common which is fairly deep, several between Tollhouse and Creacombe and on the Rose Ash road towards the Wind Farm were brought to Cllr Yabsley’s attention which he will follow up. The road from Haresdown to the picnic area is getting really bad. Cllr Yabsley said that if potholes are reported on the County Council’s website they do get repaired. Cllr Phillips said he had been having trouble getting hold of Richard Sables to report a telegraph pole that was going over onto the highway. Cllr Child asked if there was any news regarding the damaged signpost – Cllr Yabsley said there had been no positive response yet and that there is not a lot in the budget for signage. He said that the budget for patching had been exhausted for this year. Schemes are being put into the system and will done if there is money left after the winter. The drainage budget is uncapped and there is some money available for drainage work.

1920-65 The Common

- a. Update on the regeneration project – the Clerk reported that the DCF panel would be meeting this week with a decision expected to be communicated during week commencing 18th November.
- b. Children’s Play Area – nothing to report but if things start falling apart they will have to be removed as they are now irreparable. Cllr Warne had emailed to report that the tennis court will need some sort of moss killer application. It had been power washed a couple of years ago. Cllr Lamb said he would deal with it.
- c. Approve arboreal inspection policy – Cllr Lamb reported that this is nearly ready and will be circulated before the next meeting.
- d. Misappropriate use of the common – possible signage had previously been discussed following problems in the summer when a moped had been ridden around the common. When the new noticeboard is installed on the edge of the Common an appropriate notice will be put on that.

1920-66 Fireworks Display 2019 – Cllr Child reported that the event had gone well with wonderful fireworks but having it on a weekday had meant that there were not many people around to help on the

day itself. There had been well over 200 people attending and all the burgers had been sold. For the first time more had been received as donations than paid out in costs. She had supplied figures to the Clerk. The excess of £175 stays with the shop to be put towards something for next year, for example polycarbonate glasses. 150 of those would cost about £200 and Cllr Child asked whether the Council would consider making a contribution towards their purchase. A formal proposal with an exact amount will be on the next meeting's agenda. With regard to buying a marquee, the Cox's have a suitable marquee which was used this year and will probably be acceptable for another year. After that the Council will have to look at it again.

1920-67 Highways & Footpaths: Highways – covered under item 1920-64. Footpaths - nothing to report other than that Cllr Warne will be undertaking his annual survey of the footpaths in the Parish.

1920-68 War Memorial: As agreed at the last Council meeting, a letter was sent regarding the outstanding money for the damage, which has now been received direct into the Council's bank account. It was AGREED that the Clerk will write a thank you letter.

1920-69 Trinity Well: Cllr Child reported that the thatch is looking tatty. If it gets worse the Council can apply for a grant from SWEET who had previously granted the Council money towards the Well. Cllr Child will obtain quotes and hopefully those quoting would say how long they think the existing thatch will last.

1920-70 Planning

- a. Applications for consideration: 70609 Prior Approval for proposed change of use of Agricultural building to a dwelling house (Class Q A&B) – Sydeham Farm, Rackenford EX16 8ER. It was AGREED that no comment needed to be submitted as it was a Class Q application.
- b. Discuss and agree Council's response to Woodward Smith's email dated 25.09.19 re. Coles Yard, Housing Proposal. Cllr Lamb said that there was nothing to discuss as the email received referred to an extra piece of ground to possibly be added to the development but that idea has been side-lined and the applicant has appointed another architect. D/Cllr Yabsley said that the applicant wants to work with the parish to achieve something that everyone is happy with. The applicant/architect needs to come to a Council meeting with an outline of what is planned so the Council can comment. Properties at the bottom of the private market are what Rackenford needs the most but Planning does not recognise them as affordables. There is no planning guidance for low cost open market houses. The Council would be against too many houses being built on the plot as this could cause traffic issues. This matter will come up again when plans are put in front of the council.
- c. Applications awaiting MDC decision:
 - **18/01711/FULL:** formation of an open clamp (4630m²) for the storage of silage and alteration to existing access, Gibbet Moor Farm (Stoodleigh Parish, MDC). Comments submitted on traffic concerns and size of proposal. It was reported that this was discussed on 23.10.19 but no decision yet made.
- d. Notifications / decisions from NDDC.
 - **70404** The siting of a digestate storage bag - Land North West of Kendon Farm, Nomansland, Tiverton EX16 8QW (Witheridge Parish) – the Parish Council has submitted a response to this application and asked D/Cllr Yabsley to call it in which he has done although the officer concerned was reluctant to do so. Main problem with biodigesters in Mid Devon is that all their muck is coming into North Devon and the question was asked - are planners in North Devon aware of what is going on in Mid Devon? In their objection, Cllr Yabsley said that Witheridge had referred to the leak in South Molton which had been an accident but shows what can happen. Highways have yet to respond to the application. There needs to be a transport plan stipulating where and when stuff will be moved. Everyone is legally allowed to use the Highways and lorry traffic cannot be stopped but contractors can be asked to vary their route. Lorries using lanes makes it difficult for people to walk along them. There are no weight limits on roads unless there is a bridge. There should be liaison between Mid and North Devon Councils but it does not always happen. D/Cllr Yabsley is aware of the situation and is doing what he can. The main concerns are sabotage or accidental leak and increased use of small roads. Cllr Parry expressed surprise that MD Council's environmental report did not raise any concerns.

- **70276** (1) Retrospective application for the permanent siting of 2 static caravans on touring pitches 57 & 58 together with the permanent siting of 1 static caravan used as washroom. (2) Retrospective application for the formation of 14 pitches for seasonal use for tents / touring caravans / motor homes (pitches 36, 37 & 43 to 54). (3) Additional use added to 12 seasonal pitches for tents / touring caravans / motor homes to also allow for the seasonal or permanent siting of static caravans (pitches 17 to 21, 30 to 34, 59 & 60) at Creacombe Parsonage Farm Rackenford Tiverton EX16 8EL – approved
 - **70292** Erection of garage at Highfield Farm, Lane from Landfoot Moor to Lower Tidderson Cross, Rackenford EX16 8EU – approved
 - **70231** Change of use of land from agriculture to equine to allow for the creation of a horse riding arena at Field Adjacent to Rackenford Cross, Rackenford – approved
- e. Update on any NDDC planning enforcement action – Cllr Lamb reported that he had received a call from an Environmental Health Officer re. chimney wanting evidence that it was causing a nuisance. The case is still open. Nothing has been heard back yet regarding Cobbs Castle – change of use from agriculture to commercial.

1920-71 Finance

a. Financial report – the Clerk reported that payment had been made to SW Ambulance Service for the defibrillator but unfortunately there had been a problem with the cheque received from the Village Fund which had not cleared the account, possibly due to a scanning error at Lloyds. A replacement cheque will be sent to the Clerk. Since the last Council meeting the final 50% of the precept and grants has been received from NDC. No correspondence has been received yet from NDC regarding the 2020/21 precept. It was RESOLVED to agree the accounts which were signed by Cllr Child.

As a point of information the Clerk informed the Council that 1st October had been the 3 year anniversary of the Auto Enrolment staging date. As the Clerk's salary is below the threshold there are no financial implications but a declaration will need to be submitted to the Pension Regulator which the clerk will undertake to do by the deadline of 2nd March 2020.

Expenditure against budget to date had previously been circulated to Councillors. A couple of items have gone over budget but most budget heads are within planned cost. It is likely that the Clerk's expenses and salary will go over budget by the end of the financial year.

b. Payments to approve:

- W Sweet clerks wages (26/08 – 22/10/19 plus back pay) £342.09
- W Sweet expenses £35.83
- Glendale Countryside Ltd – Knotweed control £360.00 (incl £60 VAT)

It was RESOLVED to settle the above accounts.

c. It was RESOLVED to renew the McAfee security software which expires on 18.11.19 at a cost of £99.99 for two years.

d. It was RESOLVED to make a donation of £100 to Torridge, North, Mid & West Devon Citizens Advice in response to their letter dated 26.09.19 previously circulated.

1920-72 Draft Budget 2020/21 – A draft budget had been produced by the Clerk and circulated prior to the meeting. Increases to four of the budget headings have been suggested – Clerk's Salary, Clerk's Expenses, Memberships/subscriptions and website costs. After some discussion it was AGREED to increase the Salt spreading/snow ploughing cost centre by £250 to £500. The Chairman and Clerk will review the budget again before the next meeting and councilors were asked to contact the Clerk if they had any suggestions for things they would like included. It was AGREED to keep the reserves at their present levels.

D/Cllr Yabsley said that it had been proposed that there will be no Parish Grant in the next financial year. Instead the money held back would be kept in a fund to which smaller Parish Councils would be able to apply for projects that tied in with District Council priorities.

1920-73 Defibrillator – Cllr Lamb reported that the new contract for the next four years had been signed for the defibrillator. New batteries have been fitted to it. He hoped that it does not have to be used but it is there just in case.

1920-74 Batsworthy Cross Wind Farm - Cllr Child briefly gave an update on the current situation in which there has been a small amount of progress. Six residential locations have now been re-monitored with the Council paying for one of these. Five of them were more or less compliant but the sixth one is not. The developer has been asked to reply within 30 days to say what they are going to do to mitigate it. The operator has challenged the non-compliant result and asked for more information. It has been suggested that a further meeting with residents would be appropriate with local council members attending and this should take place before Christmas. A further reply from the operator has not yet been received.

1920-75 Shop/School: Cllr Child reported that the shop annual accounts had been produced and a modest profit of £300-£400 had been made. The shop's turnover had started to go up earlier in the year and the trend is continuing, probably due to increased marketing through Facebook. The volunteer position is good.

The school is also doing well with the role going up. Its outdoor activities featured in the recent ITV film of Rackenford which may pull in more children.

1920-76 Correspondence The following had been received:

- Email from CPRE with links to the documents presented at its recent planning workshop;
- Email from North Devon Council re. a special Parish Forum to take place on 3rd December focussing on planning issues;
- Autumn Newsletter 'Devon Voice' from CPRE;
- Email from Toby Russell at Devon Air Ambulance asking if the plans for a night landing site in Rackenford were being pursued. A reply had been sent informing him that they were on hold for the time being.

1920-77 Matters of Urgency for noting only

- Salt – Clerk will order.
- Cllr Mathews raised concern over the lack of visibility at the junction by the school during school times – can anything be done? In the absence of a traffic warden it is difficult to know what can be done about it. In the past letters have gone out to parents at the school and playgroup.
- Cllr Parry raised the need to keep the common cleared as brambles have started to come back. Item to be brought up at the next meeting with a view to getting together a working party. This would still be in time before restrictions re. nesting birds.

1920-78 Next Meeting: Tuesday 14th January 2020 at 7.30pm

The meeting closed at 21.02.

Signed as a correct record _____ Date _____