

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 3rd March 2020 at Rackenford School

Present: Cllr S Child, Cllr J Cox, Cllr T Hyland, Cllr G Lamb (Chairman), Cllr R Mathews, Cllr D Parry, Cllr F Phillips, Cllr S Warne

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

96. Apologies for absence – none, all councillors present

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

1920-98 Open Forum – A resident raised the issue of roaming dogs around the village. He has a nervous dog so is wary of walking it in the village. In order to report a stray dog to the Dog Warden you need to know who the dog belongs to. This has been a recurring issue in the village and in the past the Council has tried putting up notices etc. Last year a leaflet was distributed to all households within the main village area about this problem. If a resident sees a dog loose and fouling they should report it to North Devon Council's dog warden.

99. Approve Minutes It was RESOLVED to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2020 which were signed by the Chairman.

100. Report from District and County Councillor District & County Cllr J Yabsley gave a brief report about the planned changes for the Fire Service. Barnstaple Station is staying full time. The problem of retaining on call fire fighters in some area should be alleviated by improved conditions and pay; they will be paid for being available. In the past 20% of engines have never been available as the Fire Service did not have the staff to man them. A lot of the proposals have come from staff themselves. Two fire stations have closed in East Devon but can be covered from elsewhere. In some areas larger units will be removed and replaced with smaller more adaptable units.

101. The Common

(i) Clearance Since the last meeting Cllr Lamb reported that a quotation for clearing the brambles etc on the common had been received from Ed Nicholson. He had also walked round the Common with Gary Muchmore who will get back to him as soon as possible with a quote. He will also quote to do it twice yearly which would make the work quicker. The plan is to start at the north end where Ed Nicholson was not able to progress last year. As well as knocking back brambles, anything that is dead, hanging or is on the verge of collapsing will be removed. Any tree clearance will in any case be Ed's responsibility. Due to the weather any work may have to be done intermittently

(ii) Meadow View properties Cllr Lamb reported that the owners of the last four properties in Meadow View had recently removed the Devon bank at the end of their gardens and erected fences beyond its previous line. The work has damaged a few trees. Root stumps and other debris have been thrown onto the Common. Gateways in the fences have been installed giving access onto the Common. All this has been done without permission or discussion. Cllr Lamb believes the Devon bank and the trees on it belonged to the Parish Council. It was agreed that the Council needs to check Land Registry documents to establish ownership and where the boundaries of the houses should be. Cllr Hyland will do this and give guidance on how to proceed. Cllr Child will also look at local maps.

(iii) Drainage Cllr Lamb reported that problems with the weather have been such that it has not been possible to make further progress with drainage decisions or quotes. He is in touch with a local drainage expert who he will be meeting shortly. The common is as wet as he has ever seen it. He will let other councillors know when a meeting has been arranged.

RACKENFORD AND CREACOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

(iv) Earth Wrights' proposals Emails from Earth Wrights had been circulated prior to the meeting. As discussed at the November site meeting, costs for the play areas have been split between the zip wire and the area for the younger children with a view to completing the work in two phases. Phase 1 includes the zip wire together with stepping logs and the "sweet" track across the nearby marshy area, work which can be completed before the drainage needed for the main play area since it only requires some work with a mini digger to prepare the surface. They plan to raise the starting position as the ground below is so damp, bringing the total cost of this phase to £16,924.

Earth Wrights has also quoted for the cost of the materials for the groundworks for the main play area, but not for the labour. It has been indicated that the labour would be done for the community FOC. Final decisions regarding the surface have not been made yet. Earth Wrights quotes include three layers of material to create an air gap, essentially floating the playground on top of the water course which in their view would give it the best chance of staying as dry as possible. Their proposal for the top surface is grass. There was some discussion about whether to have a manmade surface instead. It was suggested that grass is tried first and if after a year it is not working then it could be replaced. Cllr Lamb said he would rather it was done correctly the first time. A rubber surface over the same drainage solution would cost £5400 more than the grass option.

It was agreed that costs for all the alternatives were now needed and in a comparable form. Cllrs felt that it was very desirable to provide some play option before the main area was closed down for several weeks, and it was pointed out that this should enable some VAT to be reclaimed before paying the final bill. It was RESOLVED to proceed with Phase 1. Cllr Lamb asked Cllr Phillips to provide the digger services that are required for this phase. The Clerk will contact Earth Wrights to give them the go-ahead.

Discussion and decisions regarding drainage etc need to take place at the next Working Group meeting, to be held on **Tuesday 24th March** before committing to Phase 2 which was anticipated could start in June. Cllr Lamb was asked to provide figures of quantities needed that could be compared with those supplied by Earth Wrights. If the Council undertakes the drainage work itself this would be done at the Council's own risk. Cllr Lamb said he may have found a project manager who will oversee the work FOC.

(v) Village meeting It was AGREED to hold a meeting on **Tuesday 31st March** at which Earth Wrights' plans and plans of the proposed events building would be displayed so residents can comment and contribute any further ideas. It will also be an opportunity to try to encourage some extra help in fundraising or voluntary work towards the proposed building. Cllr Lamb said he was in the process of putting together a pre-application for that. Cllr Child will design an explanatory poster for the event.

(vi) Children's Play Area – The ROSPA inspection is due to be done soon and there was discussion about cancelling it in view of its imminent replacement. It was AGREED that the Clerk would ring the insurance brokers to see if they would be happy with this course of action. If they are the Clerk will cancel the inspection.

102. **Highways & Footpaths**

(a) Update and any repair or maintenance matters to report. There was nothing to report regarding footpaths. With regard to hedges overhanging the highways that have not been cut, it was reported that Cllr Phillips had been to see the landowners concerned.

(b) Review landowners' responsibilities regarding drainage and hedges An email had been received from DCC about this and Cllr Lamb proposed that the Council sends a letter to all landowners who have road frontage reiterating what DCC has said about Ash dieback and trees within felling distance of the highway, along with a leaflet showing who is responsible for drainage.

A landowner is not supposed to have water running off their fields onto the Highways, ie they cannot put a pipe through a hedge onto the highway. Where ground is higher and the water naturally comes out onto the Highway then it is down to the Highways Department to deal with it. C/Cllr J Yabsley said he planned to visit the parish mid-month with Richard Sables and Tom Vaughan to look at some of the problems.

RACKENFORD AND CREACOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

It was pointed out that water is overflowing again this week onto the road (near Canworthy) where the previous problem had been and there had been an accident. There are problems with blocked drains around the parish and water generally which has caused every mended pothole to blow again. The gully in the middle of the road near Trinity Well is sinking. C/Cllr J Yabsley said that officers cannot deal with the level of complaints. A number of County Councillors are trying to resolve these issues and have held a special meeting. CC members are angry – Skanska is not doing its job. There is money in the budget that has not been spent from the previous year. Drainage clearance work has not been done. The public have been told there is no money for work but there is. More money will be put into a community fund for Parish Councils to undertake their own work. They have been promised more officers to be employed in the Neighbourhood Teams. It is hoped that with a bit more money and a 'can do' attitude things will start getting done. Not so much tar and chip is going to be done but more proper patching will be.

103. War Memorial: Nothing to report

104. Trinity Well: Update It was reported by Cllr Child that the thatching does not need to be renewed. .

1920-105 Planning

- a. Applications for consideration - None
- b. 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 - decision pending.
- c. Notifications / decisions from NDDC.
 - **70886** Erection of one building for agricultural and equestrian use at Blindwell Farm, Rackenford EX16 8ER – approved
 - **70404** The siting of a digestate storage bag - Land North West of Kendon Farm, Nomansland, Tiverton EX16 8QW (Witheridge Parish) – decision pending
- d. Update on any NDDC planning enforcement action – None

1920-106 Finance

a. Financial report – the accounts to date, previously circulated, were REVIEWED. Since the last meeting the Clerk had been trying to find an interest bearing account that was available to organisations. Santander has an account which pays 0.6% gross (variable) and has branches in Barnstaple or Exeter. The opening of an account is best done in branch and would need two councillors to go along to open it. The Clerk will check to see if it can be opened online. In due course the Nationwide would be closing its savings accounts so the money held in that account will need to be transferred to another account at some point in the future.

- b. Payments to approve:
- | | |
|---|---------|
| • W Sweet clerks wages (18/12/19 – 18/02/20) | £199.16 |
| • W Sweet expenses | £5.80 |
| • Rackenford Shop – purchase of polycarbonate glasses | £92.07 |

It was RESOLVED to settle the above accounts.

1920-107 Assets: To review and agree the assets for year-end accounts and insurance purposes. The Asset register was reviewed. There were queries about the declared values of some items, eg the War Memorial which was shown as £1. The Clerk will check what insurance coverage the Council has for these items and the register will be reviewed again and agreed at the next Council meeting.

1920-108 Risk register: after reviewing the register, previously circulated, it was RESOLVED to approve the risk register.

RACKENFORD AND CREACOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

1920-109 Website Compliance legislation – The Clerk gave a brief update. She had been in touch with Website Development Ltd, who are based in Tiverton and who built and host Knowstone Parish Council’s website. They would be happy to undertake an assessment of Rackenford’s website FOC and produce a report; however as they did not build the site they have said that they may not be able to rectify any accessibility problems. It was AGREED that the Clerk will ask them to review Rackenford’s site and to then discuss with them what could be done. The Council’s current website provider has notified the Clerk that he does not think the site is compliant but he is not sufficiently qualified to remedy it. The Council has until September 2020 to be compliant and publish a statement of accessibility.

1920-110 Batsworthy Cross Wind Farm: Nothing to report

1920-111 Shop/School: Nothing major to report

1920-112 Correspondence – receipt of the following correspondence was NOTED:

- (a) Letter from The Pensions Regulator acknowledging the council’s re-declaration of compliance
- (b) Email dated 2.03.2020 from USL Group on behalf of BT Openreach re. proposed road closure on lane past Malson Farm on 16th June 2020.
- (c) Email dated 2.03.2020 from Julie Hubbard, Assistant to the Town Clerk, Tiverton Town Council requesting permission for the Mayor of Tiverton to wear his Chain of Office at the service of the late Heather Calver on 9th March in Tiverton Church. It was AGREED to grant permission for this.
- (d) Letter received 17.02.20 from Selaine Saxby MP with poster and contact details. The poster will be displayed on the Council’s noticeboard.

18. Matters of Urgency for noting only - None

19. Future meeting dates: The following meeting dates for 2020/21 were AGREED:

Tuesday 5th May 2020: Annual Parish Meeting at 7.00 p.m., and Annual Meeting of the Council at 7.30 p.m.

Tuesday 7th July 2020

Tuesday 1st September 2020

Tuesday 3rd November 2020,

Tuesday 12th January 2021

Tuesday 2nd March 2021

The meeting closed at 21.38.