

LITTLEHAM & LANDCROSS PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Council Meeting held at Littleham Village Hall on Thursday 07 March 2024 at
19.15**

Present: Councillors: C Hassall, G Gray, G Smith, N Tregoning, A Longstaff, I Lawrence and L Batty.

Also Present: District Councillor P Pennington, County Councillor L Hellyer (arrived later in the meeting).
Mr and Mrs Adrian Wills

Apologies : Councillors: P Jollands (Chairman), S Beer (Vice Chair), M Brooks and S Read

In Attendance: *David Edwards Clerk to the Council*

2809 - WELCOME.

In the absence of Councillor Jollands, it was RESOLVED Councillor Gray take the Chair. The Chair welcomed everyone to the Meeting and apologies were accepted.

2810 – It was RESOLVED to co-opt Mr Luke Batty of Springwater, Landcross as a Member of the Council to fill the existing vacancy in Landcross.

[DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Councillors are invited to declare any declarable interest, including the nature and extent of such interests they may have in any items to be considered at this meeting. They are also reminded to consider whether any items within their Register of Interests should be updated].

There were no Declarations of Interest.

2811 - Public Open Question Time - The Council RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders and adjourn the Meeting to receive questions and comments from the public.
(Time limited to 15 minutes in total - Public can only speak for 3 minutes per person)

Mr Wills explained that he was the owner of Sea Lock Barn Weare Giffard Bideford Devon EX39 5JB which is subject to a Planning Application and is on the Council agenda for discussion. Mr Wills stated that he had complied with all the requirements for the application but the District Council had still not given its approval. The Application had received the comment "Decline to determine" from the Planning Officer.

The Torridge District Council website provided documents (these are attached to the Minutes) which gave some indication of the reasons for the decision and included a statement that the applicant resolve the outstanding matters and resubmit.

The Chair explained that the Councillors would discuss the application later as it is on the agenda, but advised Mr Wills that he needed to get the advice from his agent on how he should proceed.

Report by County and District Councillors *(Allowance should be made for the District and County Councillor to speak later in the meeting should they be unable to arrive in time).*

The County Councillor Report had been circulated and noted. There was no written report from the District Councillors.

County Councillor report The consultation on the future of the North Devon Link service has closed and Devon County Council (DCC) cabinet will decide on the future of the service at the cabinet meeting on March.13th. Officers and councillors recently met with service users to discuss how the service might look going forward with the mental health alliance and the voluntary sector e.g., Devon Mind. The plan is to retain the current building in Bideford for use by mental health services.

On February 15th DCC agreed a balanced budget for the financial year 2024/25. By law councils must set a balanced budget. The County Council will be spending some £43.8million extra next year, mainly on the young, the old and the vulnerable. Departments will still need to save some £49.6million by doing things differently in their departments to balance the budget.

DCC listened to the 3 scrutiny committees and put a bit more money into drainage, which helps preserve the highways, and into the homeless budget line. The latter was to support the district councils for another year. This gives more time to investigate how to work together in the future.

Consultation has started on plans for a combined Devon and Torbay authority. The combined authority will have extra powers to deal with transport, housing, skills, and support for business... Information can be found on the Devon and Torbay Devolution deal website. The County Council and Torbay Council will be holding and attending a series of meetings across the area, supported by online sessions for various stakeholders, including the business and education sectors, alongside meetings with District, Town and Parish councils. The website gives the opportunity for residents to comment and ask questions. There is a consultation that closes on March 24th, and it can be accessed via the website.

Devon County council has more than 800 children in care and is actively recruiting foster parents. It takes about 6 months to become a foster parent and ongoing support and training is given. Foster parents can come in all sorts of shapes and sizes e.g., couples, single people, and there are different sorts of fostering e.g., full time or respite. DCC is using a new system called "mockingbird", where foster parents in a cluster are linked to an experienced foster carer for help and advice. The idea is to replicate the extended family e.g... asking the grandparents for advice. They meet socially, and this gives the foster children a sense of the wider family group.

There is a national shortage of Educational Psychologists, and as a result there is a wait for assessment of e.g., Autism. Dcc wants children to get early help when they need it, rather than having to wait for a formal diagnosis. Consequently, it is setting up resource hubs in various schools that can take up to 10 children without waiting for an EHCP (Education and Health plan- a statement in old money).. There is one scheduled to open at Westcroft school in Bideford in September 2025. The idea is that the children can stay in mainstream school and still get extra help.

This week, wearing my councillor advocate "hat" for the office of the Police and Crime commissioner, I went to a meeting at Middlemoor police station in Exeter, for the launch of a website called "Criminal Justice and You". It is a resource for the victims of all crimes, whereby they can access every stage of the criminal justice journey to see what will happen and what rights and options they have. e.g., they can ask that a stalker is banned from going near them for up to 10 years. Please keep reporting routine matters direct to Devon County Council e.g., potholes, blocked drains, overgrown vegetation, streetlights, or signage issues. This can be done by telephoning the customer care desk. 0345 155 1015. Alternatively, if you google Devon County Council Report a problem, a page comes up with icons. Just click on the appropriate icon and follow the simple instructions.

Speeding, mud, or slurry on the road is a police matter. This can be reported to the police by telephoning 101 (999 if it is an emergency) or by going on the Devon and Cornwall police website. I am always happy for residents to contact me. Linda.hellyer@devon.gov.uk Telephone 07828758360

District Councillor P Pennington report:

The long standing Councillor Peter Christie passed away recently and his funeral service will take place at St Mary's Church Bideford.

Councillor Pennington confirmed that a 2.99% increase in respect of the District Council budget.

Bideford's former cattle market, redundant for 20 years, is to get a new lease of life thanks to the town's rugby club. The club wants to install a 4G pitch at the derelict site as their current pitches are used too often. Torridge District Council's community and resources committee agreed to transfer ownership of the land under a community asset transfer process at no cost to the club.

The Council had had to make some difficult decisions with a reduction of funding for some discretionary services. This includes the leisure centres although he pointed out that the services provided are of good value per head compared to Cornwall. [In Torridge the 4 swimming pools (include sea pool at Westward Ho!) provide for a population of 68000 approximately. This equates to 17000 approx per pool compared to Cornwall where the ratio is 50000+ per public pool.]

19.45 hrs – Cllr Hellyer arrived.

In addition to her written report she advised that the petition organised by Sir Geoffrey Cox MP to try and obtain additional funding towards road repairs in Devon was still open for signature.

Councillor Hellyer reiterated the tight economic pressures Devon County Council is facing. The Adult and Children Social Care budgets are particularly affected. For example, as stated in her report, children with Autism have a 2 year wait before receiving specialist support.

Questions to the County Councillor:

The Council expressed its concerns:

- over the delays in reinstating the road markings at Moorhead Cross.
- the poor workmanship and what appeared to be the lack of "joined up thinking" when repairing potholes.

Councillor Hellyer explained that she had very little control of the Highways budgets as it was controlled by senior Highways Officers.

It was RESOLVED to reconvene the Meeting

2812 - To Approve Minutes 2797 – 2808 of the Parish Council meeting held on 02 February 2024.

It was RESOLVED to approve the Minutes.

Matters Arising -

2800 - The Clerk reminded the Members that the music event in memory of Rosemary Gent is taking place on Tuesday 19th March and Lorraine Matthews from Bideford Music Group had asked for the numbers attending from each organisation. The Council agreed not to support but individual Members would attend in personal or another organisation capacity. Councillor

Norma Tregoning is giving a tribute as Rosemary was her neighbour and she agreed to also represent the Council in the absence of the Chair.

2804 - The Clerk advised that a quote had been received but a second is being chased.

2813 - To resolve the date of the Annual Parish Meeting and to discuss the format. To decide if an invitation is made to a guest speaker. The Annual Parish Meeting must be held between 01 March and 01 June.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk ask for a senior Highways Officer to come and give a presentation on the County Council management with regard to the Asset Management criteria of the Highways and the difficulties it faces with the budget restrictions. The Meeting to be arranged towards the end of May.

2814 - PLANNING:

To note and/or make comment to Torridge District Council with regard to the following application:

Reference: 1/0017/2024/FUL
Address: Sea Lock Barn Weare Giffard Bideford Devon EX39 5JB
Proposal: Use of camping barn as an unrestricted dwelling

Note: the application has been considered with the following statement: Decline to Determine

Comment was made that the comment from the Planning Officer was not clear and there is not a specific planning reason that can be seen to refuse the application. The Chair was of the view that the Council should not comment but await a resubmission.

It was RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders to allow District Councillor to advise on the Planning procedures.

Councillor Pennington did not want to discuss this specific application but pointed out the manner in which some policy restrictions were relaxed during Covid to allow some holiday accommodation to be full residential. The applicant can also complain to the Ombudsman or make an Appeal against the District Council decision. Councillor Smith referred to the previous planning decision on the property and there is a statement that the application was in breach of planning control. The current application might be held in abeyance because the prior application remains in breach of planning control.

The Council RESOLVED to make comment to Torridge District that it needs clarification on the status of this application and an explanation for the comment of “Decline to Determine” when the applicant has stated that he had resolved the outstanding issues.

2815 - FINANCE:

It was RESOLVED:

to ratify and approve the Cashbook (see attached) as at 23.02.2024. [Councillor Beer to sign the Cashbook statement and Bank Statement to ratify the balance being reported but in her absence a non bank signatory Councillor to undertake this duty]

- i. To review the Financial Regulation document (see attached) and up date with regard to the procedures related to the internet banking payments.
- ii. To ratify the payment to 361 Energy CIC of £150 to replace cheque number 30 dated 06.04.2023 which has been lost.
- iii. To note the final transfer of £150 from Nat West account to the Lloyds Account to close the Nat West account.

The Clerk advised that the system to make automated bank transfers through the new Lloyds account was now in place. The Council would confirm the payments prior to them being made through the existing systems except there will be no requirement for a cheque to be signed. Invoices would still be initialled by 2 Councillors and a non authorised bank signatory (Cllr Sue Beer) would sign off the copy of the bank statements.

2816 - To resolve any further action on the issue of white line markings and signing at Moorhead Cross Littleham.

In view of the discussion held with the County Councillor this item was noted that no further action can be taken at this stage.

2817 - To receive an update on the actions of the Biodiversity Group and the planning for the event on 16 March 2024.

- i The Council has set aside in its budget £500 towards Biodiversity work and projects.
- ii. To decide if individual Members wish to take part.

This was noted

2818 - To consider correspondence & communications requiring attention. Emails circulated include:

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| DALC/NALC newsletter/updates/events | Public Sector - various |
| Devon County Council - various newsletters | Torrige DC – various |
| Torrige DC - Weekly Planning applications | |
| The Rural Bulletin | Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust |

2819 - Items for next meeting and Next Full Council Meeting - 04 April 2024.

(Please can you ensure that any items for the next meeting are received by the Clerk by Monday 25 March 2024)

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and the Meeting closed at 21.05

Signed..... Date.....

Chair of the Council