

LITTLEHAM & LANDCROSS PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the Council Meeting held at Littleham Village Hall on Thursday 07 November 2024 at 19.15

Present: Councillor – N Tregoning - Chairman
Councillors: S Read G Gray, M Brooks, G Smith, C Hassall and I Lawrence.

Apologies : Councillors P Jollands and L Batty

Also Present: County Councillor L Hellyer
District Councillor P Pennington

2 Members of the public (Mrs Janet Smith and Mrs Vanessa Hutchinson who arrived later in the Meeting)

In Attendance: *David Edwards - Clerk to the Council*

2876 - The Chair welcomed everyone to the Meeting, apologies were accepted.

Councillor Tregoning advised that a member of the public, Mrs Vanessa Hutchinson had asked to speak to the Council but her attendance would be delayed. The Chair explained that she had given her agreement for Mrs Hutchinson to speak when she arrived at the meeting.

[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.

The Council RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders and adjourn the meeting.

Public Open Question Time

Mrs Smith advised that she was attending the meeting as a representative of the Village Hall Committee in the light of the dispute over the Metal Cabinet and old Council papers.

The Chair explained that this was part of the agenda as a Matters Arising from the meeting in October. The Council agreed to Suspend Standing Orders to allow Mrs Smith to speak during this item.

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 was noted. The report is attached to the Minutes.

County Councillor Report:

Councillor Linda Hellyer made comment on her report with reference to the Levelling up Funding that was promised by the last Government (The position on funding the Marine Project at Appledore. Following the change in the Government It had been confirmed that the funding would continue).

She advised that she is one of the Members of a Committee dealing with the XLinks Planning Application (National Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and would ensure that all the Parish Councils affected by the project will be kept up to date with progress.

District Councillor Report:

There was no written report from Councillor Pennington. He made comment on

- The XLinks Energy project (Councillor Pennington explained that he had an interest due to the cables running through his land) His comments were limited to information on the development and no opinion expressed. It is planned that a parking area for 400 vehicles at Manteo Way will be built for the workforce. It is clear that there will be an increase in traffic and vehicles causing disruption for local residents
- £15.6M investment confirmed for the development of the Middle Dock area of Appledore There are no Electric charging points included in the parking area.
- The new District Council vehicle depot and Recycling Centre at East the Water.
- The Household Support Fund which can be accessed by low income residents to assist with heating and other household costs. There are advisers at the District Council that can assist residents with their claims

Questions and comments to the District Councillor:

The recent vandalism of the new Play Area in Bideford was mentioned and the Council expressed its anger and concern that this new facility funded by the Council and other organisations had been subject to this crime.

Councillor Pennington stated the restrictions the Council has with regard to its budgets and recent large items of expenditure which included the refurbishment of the Swimming Pool at Holsworthy and funding for the old library roof in Bideford.

Councillor Hassell asked that the Council be kept informed on the development on land at Little America where there is a Tree Preservation Order and the land is designated for commercial use.

8.40 - Councillors Hellyer and Pennington left the Meeting.

The Council reconvened

2877 - The Council RESOLVED to Approve Minutes 2867 – 2875 of the Parish Council meeting held on 10 October 2024.

Matters Arising - re Minute 2869 - Relocation of the Metal Cabinet and Council Papers.

The Chair explained that she had spoken to Mr Doug Hamilton a previous Council Chair and Chair of the Village Hall Committee. Mr Hamilton had confirmed that the metal cabinet had been donated to the Council. It was in a locked cupboard but became more accessible when a door was created through to the garage; in effect the cabinet was in a corridor between the Bar area and the garage.

It was RESOLVED that Council Standing Orders were suspended to allow Mrs Janet Smith to speak.

Janet confirmed that she had received the same information after also contacting Mr Hamilton. Janet explained that the Village Hall Committee volunteers work very hard to maintain the Hall. The Hall had collected many items that were now either damaged or obsolete and several organisations were using the Hall for storage. Due to the limited space available it was agreed to ask the various organisations to take away items that were not needed and each allocated a smaller space. The cabinet had been gifted to the Mens Shed as there was no record of an agreement between the Village Hall and the Council nor was it listed as a Council Asset.

Janet explained that she was engaged in other activities during the “clear out” day and she was the only volunteer that had some knowledge of the cabinet’s history. Janet expressed the desire of the Village Hall Committee to work with the Council to come together to find a satisfactory conclusion.

She made the request that a Member of the Council join the Village Hall Committee.

The Council reconvened.

The Council discussed how the matter could be taken forward and it was proposed by the Chair that the Council resolve to request the Cabinet be returned and a suitable location in the Village Hall be found.

It was RESOLVED to form a working party to look through all the old papers and retain any items of use within the legal framework of the Council. In future, all items that are pertaining to the Council kept at any time in the Village Hall will not be removed without the agreement of the Council.

The Chair thanked Mrs Janet Smith and she left the Meeting.

Mrs Vanessa Hutchinson arrived at the Meeting and as agreed the Chair allowed her to speak to the Council.

It was RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders.

The Chair explained that members of the public are allowed 3 minutes to talk to the Council.

Mrs Hutchinson stated:

“Unfortunately my complaint is with regard to Councillor Mary Brooks” (the offer was made that Councillor Brooks leaves the meeting). Councillor Brooks stated that she had no knowledge of the nature of the complaint and remained in the room.

Mrs Hutchinson explained that Councillor Brooks is her neighbour and the driveway to their respective houses is a shared driveway. Mrs Hutchinson added that Councillor Brooks is her neighbour and had been verbally abusive and other ways for last few years. With regard to the parking issue, she advised that Vehicles are not permitted to be parked on the driveway as each resident has a separate designated parking space. Mrs Hutchinson had on several occasions asked Councillor Brooks to park in her designated space. Each resident contributes to the upkeep of the shared space. In this respect, Mrs Hutchinson explained that she had set up a fund which Mary did contribute to, however, she had not made any contributions for the last 2 years.

Mrs Hutchinson made the statement that Councillor Brooks actions with regard to payment were unreasonable and it leaves her with the option of going to court. In addition there is a dispute over the cutting of a hedge between the properties. During this particular dispute Councillor Brooks was shouting at Mrs Hutchinson.

Mrs Hutchinson explained that she would incur costs and charges if she were to take this to a Court. Mrs Hutchinson stated that this did not seem fair and also said that it was not in her interests to be involved in formal legal proceedings. She said that she had come to the Council to ask for its help in resolving the situation.

The Clerk explained that Mrs Hutchinson is entitled to bring any matter that relates to the actions of a Councillor to the Council. The Council is not the body that can legislate in matters of a Civil dispute between neighbours. The Council needs to consider the action it should now take and take advice from the Compliance Officer at the District Council who regulates on Councillor behaviour.

Further statements were made by Mrs Hutchinson and Councillor Brooks regarding the issues presented. Each party gave counter arguments regarding the right of way over the shared space and the past individual actions and disagreements that had taken place.

Councillor Smith recommended the Citizens Advice Bureau as an organisation that would help and in his experience there is no charge for this service. Mrs Hutchinson

It was confirmed that the Clerk would contact the Compliance Officer to obtain appropriate advice as to whether Councillor Brooks had breached the Council Code of Conduct.. Mrs Hutchinson was advised that she had the right to also contact the Compliance Officer herself.

Mrs Hutchinson thanked the Council for its time and left the Meeting.

As a postscript to the Minute: It is a detailed account of the statement made by Mrs Hutchinson. These statements have not been substantiated by any independent evidence. The Monitoring Officer has since the Meeting confirmed that Councillor Brooks has not breached the Code of Conduct. As stated in the Minute this dispute is a Civil Matter and not an issue that the Council has any jurisdiction.

To ensure that the record of the item is the interpretation of all parties I add this postscript of an email from Mrs Macleod referred to and introduced initially at the meeting as Mrs Vanessa Hutchinson.

I have been mis quoted in some of the text in the minutes, could you please amend?

I'm Mrs. Vanessa Macleod

MB did in fact say aloud 'this is probably about parking'.

I explained MB was my neighbour and had been verbally abusive and other ways for last few years.

I stated MB had not paid contributions as stated in deeds for 3 years. MB interrupted and said 2 years.

I didn't state in regard to payment were unreasonable. I stated MB has told me to take her to court and I am the legal landowner and is unfair for me to incur costs.

I didn't comment that its not in MB interests to be involved in legal proceedings.

I stated CAB would direct me to a solicitor.

I concluded that this is how a parish councillor is behaving.

The Council reconvened.

2878 - To discuss and respond to the consultation asking “Should Councils be able to meet remotely?”

There is a National debate regarding the agreement for Councils to hold Council and Committee Meetings remotely. The agreement by a Council to allow remote meetings will not preclude it from meeting face to face.

It was RESOLVED that the Council would continue with face to face meetings but retain the right to hold a remote meeting if it is deemed to be appropriate to the circumstances. Any change to a remote meeting would be by a separate resolution of the Council.

2879 - FINANCE (documents attached and will form of the Minutes)

To approve the Cashbook as a reconciliation of the Bank balance as at 30.10.2024 of £8766.80.

It was RESOLVED to approve the Cashbook

2880- To discuss any action the Council can take to support its policy for reducing the Carbon footprint and improving the bio-diversity in Littleham and Landcross. Up date on recent

Biodiversity Group Meeting and Lottery Grant Application (Note: Councillor Jollands has increased the Grant Application by £250 to cover the cost of a Speaker at the Biodiversity event - Total Grant £2175)

The Clerk explained that this was to note the additional £250 being requested in the overall Grant.

2881 - To discuss the letter from the Citizen's Advice Bureau requesting Grant support with details of the residents helped by the Organisation.

The letter is attached and forms part of the Minutes. It provides information on the number of residents of Littleham and Landcross that have been helped by the Citizens Advice Bureau. The Members did not express any support for any Grant to be made and the item was noted. Further consideration might be given should any additional information is forthcoming. There was a general discussion on Council support for the Village Hall and other groups. It was the view of some Members that it was not right that the Council pays for improvements to the public realm or supports community groups with grants. The Members suggested that local volunteers undertake this work.

2882 - To undertake the annual review of the Council Standing Orders as required by the Audit regulations.

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Standing Orders without amendment.

2883 - To discuss the representation from the Council at the Torridge District Council Area Advisory Group Meeting at Bideford Town Hall on Monday 11 November 2024 at 6pm.

It was noted that the Chair and the Clerk would attend.

2884 - To consider correspondence & communications requiring attention. Emails circulated include:

1. DALC/NALC newsletter/updates/events
2. Public Sector - various
3. Devon County Council - various newsletters
4. Torridge DC – various
5. Torridge DC - Weekly Planning applications
6. Rural Services Network
7. Devon Countryside Access Forum
8. Royal Devon University Healthcare nhs Foundation Trust

The items were noted.

2885 - Items for next meeting and Next Full Council Meeting - Thursday 05 December 2024 at 19.15 .

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the Meeting closed at 21.05 hours

Signed:
Councillor N Tregoning (Chair to the Parish Council)

Date.....