

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, 26th February 2024.

Present: Cllrs. Bisseker, Compton, Dalton, Harrison, Hughes, Lipczynski, Tillotson, Tribble (Chair) and Walker
Jacqui Baldwin, Parish Clerk
County Cllr. Jess Bailey
Mr Ted Swan, Parish Footpath Warden

Prior to the commencement of the meeting Chair outlined the Fire Regulations and Evacuation Procedure and reminded those present that the meeting was being recorded.

Public Forum

- a) Neighbourhood Policing report:
There was no representation from the Neighbourhood Policing Team and no report was received.
- b) County Councillor report:
Cllr. Bailey reported that further meetings had been held with DCC and the Environment Agency concerning Red Bridge and footpath erosion. It has been confirmed that additional rock armour will be installed to protect the river bank and Cllr. Bailey stated that she was confident that this work would proceed shortly. Mr Swan pointed out that it was unlikely that this work could be carried out until the ground had dried out considerably. It is currently far too wet to access the area with heavy machinery. DCC will discuss a Compulsory Purchase Order in Part 2 of its April Cabinet meeting and Cllr. Bailey will request that the report is made available to Council. There has been no progress on the installation of a temporary bridge over the Otter at Dotton. As previously advised to Councillors, Cllr. Bailey confirmed that the Environment Agency's funding bid to support Natural Flood Management in the Otter catchment has been approved. Cllr. Bailey will be a member of the Steering Group for this project. Finally, Cllr. Bailey advised that the new wigwag signage would be replaced with signs stating "20mph when flashing". Clerk mentioned that the sign at the west end of the village is not currently flashing. Chair thanked Cllr. Bailey for her hard work on behalf of the parish.
- c) District Councillor report:
Cllr. Burhop sent his apologies for non-attendance and his report was circulated prior to the meeting.
- d) Report from Ted Swan, Parish Footpath Warden:
Mr Swan confirmed that the Annual Footpath Survey is now complete and he and the Clerk will meet early in March to finalise the forms for submission to DCC. An email has been received from Emma Hellier, PROW officer, requesting Council's views on the closure of Footpath 6 where it crosses Back Brook as the footbridge was washed away during the May flooding. Chair asked Mr Swan to forward the email to her for response and Cllr. Bailey agreed to urge DCC to replace the footbridge as soon as possible. Mr Swan advised that Bridleway 37 through Venn Ottery Quarry has been closed for public safety reasons as the result of a landslide.
- e) Report from the Climate Change Group:
On behalf of the Climate Change Group, Cllr. Hughes confirmed that three Swedish whitebeam had been planted on Venn Ottery Village Green in memory of the late Val Ranger. The lime donated by Devon Wildlife Trust will be planted shortly to replace the tree that fell during the mini tornado.
- f) Questions and representations from residents/parishioners:
Mr Swan advised that the area of Back Brook where it passes under Back Lane has silted up again. Chair asked the Clerk to contact the Environment Agency.
Mr Swan reported that he had cleared the site of the bonfire in Webbers Meadow and, in the process, collected more than 200lb of nails. He suggested that, in future, the site should be fenced off after the bonfire as it constitutes a safety hazard. It was agreed that clearance of the site is the responsibility of Council and, in future, a Working Party will be tasked with clearing the site within two weeks of the event. Cllr. Tillotson, on behalf of Council, thanked Mr Swan for his efforts.

There being no further questions, Chair closed the Public Forum.

		Action:
23/097	To consider apologies for absence and approve if accepted:	
	Chair proposed that apologies received from Cllrs. Carpenter and Malawana be accepted and approved. Seconded by Cllr. Harrison and resolved unanimously.	
23/098	Declarations of interest from members / Dispensations afforded:	
	<p>All members present are, by definition, members of the NPPFF Trustee Board and declare a personal interest in that capacity.</p> <p>Cllr. Tillotson was afforded a dispensation to discuss and vote upon matters pertaining to Parish allotments at the Annual Meeting of Council held on 22nd 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.</p> <p>Cllr. Hughes was afforded a dispensation to discuss and vote upon matters pertaining to trees at the Ordinary Meeting held on 27th 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.</p>	
23/099	To consider any matters listed on this Agenda that Councillors consider should be dealt with as confidential business as per the provisions of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960:	
	None so considered.	
23/100	<p>To consider and, if thought fit, approve the Minutes of the Council's Ordinary Meeting held on 29th January 2024 as previously circulated to members:</p> <p>Chair proposed that these Minutes be approved as a true reflection of the meeting. Seconded by Cllr. Dalton and resolved with 7 votes in favour and 2 abstentions.</p> <p>To consider any matters arising from those Minutes:</p> <p>a) Lower Way, Harpford – Flooding: Chair advised that since the last meeting there has been further correspondence with the local landowner, Highways and affected residents. Mike Brown, Area Highways Officer has confirmed that the mud on the road constitutes a hazard and is arranging for this to be cleared. Mr Brown is also hopeful that the ditches can be cleared early in the new financial year. In the meantime, Chair is trying to make contact with Clinton Devon Estates to see if they can assist.</p> <p>b) Otter Trail: Clerk has contacted the Chair of the Otter Trail Group and has requested further information about how Council can provide support. Clerk to add this item to the Agenda for the March Council meeting.</p> <p>c) MUGA re-opening: Chair thanked the MUGA Working Party, Exeter City Football Club, the Community Café and all those who attended the official re-opening of the facility. Cllr. Malawana was thanked for filming the event and providing a video that has been uploaded to Facebook and the parish website.</p>	Clerk
23/101	To review the Minutes of the Council's Finance Committee meeting held on 19th February 2024 as previously circulated to members and, if thought fit, ratify recommendations made therein:	
	a) Devon Air Ambulance Landing Site	

	<p>Cllr. Walker advised that, having considered the quotation received for repairs to the lighting column and the limited funds in the Landing Site reserve fund, the Finance Committee recommended inviting quotations from local contractors to disconnect and remove the lighting column. Chair noted that Councillors also have the option to ask other contractors to quote to repair the lighting column as it is a parish asset and useful for community events. It was agreed that, subject to cost, it would be better to have a functioning light.</p> <p>Clerk to contact local contractors and obtain quotations for consideration.</p>	Clerk
23/102	<p>Correspondence received (not previously circulated):</p> <p>a) Request for use of Venn Ottery Village Green: Chair advised that a request had been received from a resident of Venn Ottery who is marrying at St. Gregory's and wishes to use the Village Green on her wedding day in August. It was agreed that the resident should be given permission on the proviso that she communicates with Cllr. Hughes who can provide information about insurance and Event licensing. Resident also to be requested to make a small donation to be split 50/50 between St. Gregory's and the Parish Council. Any such funds received by Council to be used for VO village green maintenance.</p> <p>Clerk to communicate with the resident accordingly.</p>	Clerk
23/103	<p>Chair proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to allow Mr Swan to contribute to this discussion. Resolved unanimously.</p> <p>To consider matters pertaining to footpaths and public rights of way in the Parish:</p> <p>a) Red Bridge Mr Swan reported that Simon Jupp MP carried out a site visit on 15th February and had been horrified by the extent of the erosion. Mr Jupp had promised to do what he could to progress this matter and had suggested that a notice be erected to warn walkers of the danger. Cllr. Bailey said that this was a matter for DCC as the responsible authority.</p> <p>b) Footpath 1 and Footpath 3 Mr Swan confirmed that a working party had made progress levelling and widening Footpath 1 but there is a major issue between King Alfred Way and School Lane where a handrail has collapsed and there is a drop of around 10 feet to gardens below. DCC is unable to replace the handrail as there is no longer anything to attach it to and a more significant repair will be required. DCC has offered to close the path on safety grounds but the alternative route to the school along the A3052 is more dangerous than the footpath in its current state. It was agreed that the footpath should remain open but that a temporary solution should be found to make the path more secure. Cllr. Tillotson offered to provide some plastic fencing which can remain in place until DCC can carry out a proper repair. Chair agreed to make further contact the landowner regarding the removal of the gate at the entrance to Footpath 3.</p> <p>c) Temporary closure of Bridleway 37 Closure order is effective to Saturday 24th August.</p> <p>Chair thanked Mr Swan for his contribution and proposed that Standing Orders be reinstated. Resolved unanimously.</p>	
23/104	<p>Planning Matters:</p> <p>a) To consider planning applications received prior to publication: 24/0255/FUL – Waterleat, High Street, Newton Poppleford Chair hoped this application mean that, at long last, development is going to commence on this site. Cllr. Harrison noted the comments of the Ward</p>	

		Councillor on the planning portal regarding the use of tarmac and surface water run-off. Chair noted.	
		b) To consider planning applications received after agenda publication: None received.	
		c) Planning determinations/decisions advised: 23/1779/FUL - Pemarita, Farthings Lane, NP – approved with conditions 23/2279/FUL - Land off Back Lane, NP – approved with conditions	
		d) To consider Council’s Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Report: Update circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting	
23/105		Financial Matters:	
		<p>a) To consider and review Financial Reports to 14th February 2024 as per documents previously circulated to members and published on-line.</p> <p>b) To consider and, if thought fit, approve payments for February as per documents previously circulated to members and published on-line. Cllr. Walker proposed that invoices in the sum of £4,894.31 be approved for payment. Seconded by Cllr. Harrison and resolved unanimously. Clerk to make payments on the due dates.</p> <p>c) Questions to RFO from members of Council relating to the financial reports. No questions raised.</p>	Clerk
23/106		BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED:	
	A	<p>To consider a recommendation from the Finance Committee that Council’s Cemetery Fees be increased from 1st April 2024: After discussion Cllr. Walker proposed that, from 1st April 2024, Exclusive Rights of Burial Fees be increased by 20% and all other cemetery fees be increased by 10%. Seconded by Cllr. Harrison and resolved unanimously. Clerk to update fee notices and publish on the parish website and cemetery noticeboards.</p>	Clerk
	B	<p>To receive an update on refurbishment proposals and responses to an Invitation to Tender from the Public WC Working Party: Chair advised that an Invitation to Tender had been prepared based on a Scope of Works provided by Cllrs. Malawana and Compton. The documents were published on the website on Friday 2nd February, advertised on Facebook and sent direct to local contractors and contractors who had carried out work for Council on previous occasions. Four quotations were submitted by the deadline of Friday 23rd February and a summary of those quotations was circulated to members prior to the meeting. Cllr. Compton said that he was encouraged by the figures provided which showed that the facility could be upgraded within the available budget. Chair reminded Councillors that it had been intended to hold a final vote on the future of the WC at this meeting, but it would be inappropriate to do so when Councillors had not had time to consider the submitted tenders. However, a final decision must be made soon. Cllr. Tillotson suggested that, as residents pay for this facility via the precept, their views should be obtained. Councillors have debated this issue many times and failed to reach a consensus and, therefore, public opinion should be sought to assist Councillors in coming to a decision. Leaflets could be delivered to every household setting out the facts and requesting a response. A majority of Councillors supported this suggestion (8 in favour, 1 against) and it was agreed that a further meeting would take place at 7pm on 12th March to consider holding a parish referendum and, if approved, agree its wording. Clerk to note and action</p>	Clerk
	C	To consider all alternative venues available for the holding of Council meetings in rotation to better provide access to members of the wider public and to reach out	

	<p>to the smaller districts within the Parish such as Harpford, Venn Ottery and Southerton:</p> <p>Cllr. Compton noted that, in the past, Council meetings had taken place in NP Village Hall and Harpford Hall. He suggested that the Pavilion is not a convenient venue for those without a car which is evident from the lack of attendance. Cllr. Hughes stated that Council had debated this issue previously and the Clerk confirmed that it had been agreed that sub-committee meetings would take place at Harpford Hall during the summer months. Both Harpford Hall and the Pavilion have wi-fi access which the Village Hall does not.</p>	
D	<p>To note receipt of the 'Heaths to Sea' Landscape Recovery Stakeholder Advisory Group Terms of Reference:</p> <p>Cllr. Walker advised that the first meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Group would take place in April.</p>	
E	<p>To consider and, if thought fit, approve the payment of a grant to Exmouth & District Community Transport as recommended by the Finance Committee:</p> <p>Cllr. Walker proposed that a grant of £200 be made to Exmouth & District Community Transport for the financial year 2024-25. Seconded by Cllr. Hughes and resolved unanimously.</p> <p>Clerk to note and schedule payment in April 2024.</p>	Clerk
F	<p>To consider a recommendation from the Finance Committee that Council should enter the Devon Investigations Scheme to protect Council land from unlawful access:</p> <p>Councillors debated whether entering into this scheme was necessary. On balance it was felt that parish property, including Venn Ottery Village Green, is vulnerable to trespass and Council has a responsibility to protect its land and parishioners from such activity. Cllr. Harrison proposed that Council accept Option 2 of the quotation from Devon Investigations, to include protection of Venn Ottery Village Green, at an annual cost of £2,000 plus VAT. Seconded by Cllr. Tillotson and resolved with 8 votes in favour and one abstention.</p> <p>Clerk to liaise with Devon Investigations and arrange erection of signage.</p>	Clerk
G	<p>To receive quotations for carrying out the Annual Parish Tree Survey:</p> <p>Cllr Hughes proposed that Michael Davis, independent tree specialist, be requested to carry out a parish tree survey at a cost of £300. Seconded by Cllr. Lipczynski and resolved unanimously.</p> <p>Clerk to note and action. Cllr. Hughes to accompany Mr. Davis when the survey is carried out.</p>	Clerk/HH
23/107	<p>To consider matters viewed as urgent by presiding Chair for discussion only:</p> <p>None raised.</p>	
23/108	<p>Date of next Ordinary Meeting:</p> <p>Monday, 25th March 2024 at The Pavilion, Back Lane, Newton Poppleford</p>	
23/109	<p>It is 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.</p> <p>Proposal not made as there were no confidential matters to discuss.</p>	

With no further business to consider the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.20pm.