

Winkleigh Parish Council.

Draft: Minutes of the meeting of Council meeting held on Wednesday 27th October 2021 at 7.30pm at Winkleigh Community Centre.

Present: Cllrs Hodgson (Chair), Whitehead (Vice-Chair), Bayley & Turner.

Also present: County Cllr Saywell, District Cllr Newton and 2 members of the public.

Minutes of the meeting to be taken by Cllrs.

PUBLIC SESSION I – 3 minutes per person, maximum session time 20 minutes.

A. Members of the Public

1. Parishioner raised a view that the discussion during the public period should be minuted.
Cllr Hodgson responded verbally to the concern, Cllr Whitehead said he felt that he more should be recorded in the minutes in future.
2. Parishioner raised a concern on item 92.1.2 Planning Matters and asked for clarification of the hierarchy of planning policy to be added to a future agenda.
3. Parishioner raised a query and asked if the meeting is being recorded?
4. Parishioner raised a query regarding the status of the investigation into the actions surrounding the Cemetery inspection.
5. Cllr Newton relayed parishioner queries regarding the status of the investigation into the cemetery inspection. Cllr Hodgson responded that he will be making a statement under Agenda item 101.2.
6. County Cllr Saywell suggested that the corresponding minute be amended to include a summary of the public period, and possibly a link to the newspaper article online.
7. Members present raised a question that the recording of the council meeting should have been released to the council – intellectual property rights even if it was on a personal device.

B. Report From Devon County Council – Cllr Saywell

The latest update from DCC.

Highways – Eggesford Road

The poor condition of this road in the village has been a priority of mine for some time and after reporting the potholes on this road for the ‘umpteenth time’ I raised its condition with the Head of Highways at DCC as it seemed to me we were spending an inordinate amount of time repairing potholes on a road that will continue to pothole until it is either patched or resurfaced.

Following my discussions with the Head of Highways, the road has been identified for serviceability patching which is likely (but not 100% confirmed yet) to take place during the October half term week.

Serviceability patching is not quite as good as full patching/resurfacing but is similar, and recent examples of it in the village include the patching on Coopers Hill and Townsend Hill. It should improve the current quality of the road substantially and keep it in good condition ahead of full resurfacing works in 2-4 years’ time if they are deemed necessary after these works. We have done similar patching on the A377 near High Bickington and Umberleigh, and the B3227 in Langtree.

There is a lot of demand for serviceability patching across Devon so these works may yet get pulled, but I am hoping not and once they are done, I will continue to lobby and fight for more improvements in the rest of the Parish and Torrington Rural.

Work Hub Update

Since the last meeting a possible two alternative sites have emerged and I am working with Torrington District Council officers and DCC officials to see whether these new sites will be viable. As and when I have more information, I will let the Parish Council know. It is very early days but am hoping site visits can be arranged soon.

Covid

Covid cases in Devon have fallen since the summer and are now below the England average (216 per 100,000 in Devon, 258 in England). Latest weekly data to 17th September there were 1751 new infections, a fall of 532 (23%) on the previous week.

School age children are accounting for a large proportion of positive cases and are driving the case numbers across Devon although we are still seeing some outbreaks in care homes and some workplaces. I sent the Parish Clerk the latest vaccination briefing on Friday but as of 17th September 93% of people aged 16+ in Devon have had one dose, 85.6% have had both doses.

Exact details of the booster vaccine rollout and for children aged 12-15 are TBC but I am hoping to find out more at a meeting of the 'Team Devon' outbreak board. As and when I have details, I will let the Parish Council know.

Covid hospitalisations remain, thankfully, stable, but there is pressure on the NHS, in part due to the pent-up demand in the system post lockdown.

Children's Services

In September the Cabinet approved proposals to improve recruitment and retentions of Children's Services Social Workers, with an additional £3.4m being invested into the service. The new measures include better pay for key roles, retention payments, more administrative support to free up social workers to focus on doing direct work with children and families and expanding training schemes and workforce development. There is a national shortage of social workers, so this is a challenging 'market' in which to recruit and retain new staff, however these measures are intended to improve the situation in Devon and also reduce our use of agency staff.

We are now turning attention to Adult Social Workers and what additional support can be given there too.

Devolution Bid

DCC has on behalf of 'Team Devon' (the County Council and Devon District Councils) submitted a devolution bid to Government. Key priorities of the bid are:

- Increase the supply of social housing and affordable homes for key workers
- Create a single pot of national and local funding to improve skills and training to increase business productivity and tackle poverty
- Promote a clean growth agenda that would see Devon achieve net zero carbon emissions with key priorities for transport, housing, energy, and land use
- Support local regeneration and investment in coastal and market towns
- Maximise pupil premium to raise the aspirations of Devon's young people and promote social mobility

The Government appears to be receptive to these proposals, but as ever it will take time to see them come to fruition even if approval is granted. 'Watch this space' would be my thoughts on this at the moment! We will hopefully hear back from the Government soon as to whether Devon's bid is likely to attract support...

Afghan Refugees

DCC is involved with the Home Office programme to resettle refugees from Afghanistan and is working closely with the District Councils to facilitate this. up to 15 families are expected to move into 'bridging accommodation' at Exmouth but this is only temporary until they are found permanent accommodation in the rest of the country. The numbers re-settled in both Devon and locally in Torridge are likely to be very low.

I hope this is helpful – any local matters you would like me to look into then please let me know.

October half term week, getting Eggesford Road patched.

C. Report From Torridge District Council – Cllr Newton

District Cllr Newton reported TDC have agreed with North Devon Council to form a joint committee to review the Joint Local Plan as it is due for review to ensure legislation is current – expected to take 1 year. TDC have created a trading company to manage leisure facilities in the District, this is because of issues with the swimming pools that are managed in the district. The management is now being brought semi-in-house and hope to start in the spring, the current contractor is not being overly co-operative, so this is not an easy task. Leisure facilities are not a statutory duty of the District Council, although they hope to be able to keep the 3 current facilities open.

TDC have commissioned an external body to review housing accommodation in the district, as Private rentals are at a premium in the district as the tourist industry is taking most of the potential availability. TDC had a bid in for the Governments Levelling up scheme, they were not successful in securing funding.

Business Transacted.

95.21 WELCOME: Chair to formally open the Council meeting.

The Chair formally opened the meeting and informed everyone that an audio recording of the meeting was underway to aid in the preparation of the minutes.

96.21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE to be received and considered for approval – None.

97.21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS to be received

Cllr Turner declared a prejudicial interest in item 101.1 as a family members headstone was identifies as a priority 1 during annual inspection.

98.21 MINUTES TO BE APPROVED

Motion to approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 22nd September 2021 as a true and accurate record.

Cllr Hodgson proposed that minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 22nd September 2021 as a true and accurate record and that the Council will publish a supplementary document on the public session of the meeting in due course following approval by the Council, seconded Cllr Whitehead. All in Favour *RESOLVED RR127/21*

99.21 COUNCIL VACANCIES

99.1. To note that there will be an election to fill 6 Casual Vacancies on Thursday 11th November 2021 the cost to the Parish is expected to be between £4000 and £4500.

The Chair reported that this is being run by TDC and there are 8 candidates standing and is expected to cost between £4000 and £4500 depending on the number of postal votes applied for, which is unknown at this time.

99.2. To note that there is one vacancy for co-option.

The Chair noted that there were no co-option candidates at this time.

100.21 FINANCE MATTERS

100.1. Members to discuss and consider approving the financial statement as presented at the meeting. ([Appendix A](#))

Cllr Hodgson read the financial Schedule of payments to the meeting. Cllr Hodgson proposed that the Council approve the payments, seconded Cllr Bayley, 3 in Favour and 1 abstention. *RESOLVED RR128/21*

101.21 Current & New Business (Chair)

101.1. Cemetery Headstones

Cllrs to retrospectively approve remedial action to make safe headstones carried out by F.J Stevens and Son monumental Masons at an approx. cost of £750 + VAT. Budget: General Reserves - Power to spend: LGA 1972 S214

Cllr Hodgson reported that following the Council resolution that the Council will pay to reinstate headstones on this occasion, discussion has been underway with F.J. Stevens and Son, and this figure is the cost to reinstate the 5 headstones which have not already been reinstated by persons unknown. Cllr Hodgson proposed that the Council accept the quote for remedial action to make safe headstones carried out from F.J Stevens and Son monumental Masons at an approx. cost of £750 + VAT, seconded Cllr Bayley 3 in favour 1 abstain. *RESOLVED RR129/21*

Cllrs to also consider approval of NAMM inspection to verify overall safety of the Cemetery monuments at a cost of £375. Budget: General Reserves - Power to spend: LGA 1972 S214

Cllr Hodgson reported that he has received a quote from a registered NAMM member to inspect all headstones to ascertain overall safety with the procedure to be agreed prior to the inspection being carried out and the community informed.

Cllr Hodgson proposed that the Council approve the appointment of NAMM member to carry out an inspection to verify overall safety of the Cemetery monuments at a cost of £375. Seconded Cllr Whitehead All in favour. *RESOLVED RR130/21*

101.2. To retrospectively approve the appointment of Local Government resource centre (LGRC) to carry out the independent review of the decisions taken regarding the Cemetery inspection at a cost of £600+VAT. Budget: General Reserves - Power to spend: LGA 1972 S.111

Cllr Hodgson reported that at the previous meeting it was agreed that an independence review on actions leading up to and including the recent inspection of the headstones in the cemetery, LGRC are a company based in Bristol many of whom are ex-Council officials.

Several people will be interviewed, and information gathered, the investigation is underway. The employment committee will meet to discuss the report and the way forward.

Cllr Hodgson proposed the retrospective approval the appointment of Local Government Resource Centre to carry out the independent review of the decisions taken regarding the Cemetery inspection at a cost of £600+VAT. Seconded Cllr Bayley All in favour. *RESOLVED RR131/21*

101.3. To consider approval of the revised Employment Committee Terms of Reference ([Document available on the Council website](#)).

Cllrs discussed the document and Cllr Whitehead proposed that the revised Employment Committee Terms of Reference as published as a supporting document for this meeting be approved and ratified with immediate effect, seconded Cllr Hodgson. All in favour. *RESOLVED RR132/21*

101.4. To consider arrangements for a Locum Clerk & RFO.

Cllr Hodgson reported that the Council has not appointed a locum Clerk to avoid the additional expenditure and Cllrs have managed so far to undertake the duties between them. However, there may be a time when the Cllrs are unable to undertake this, and a locum would need to be found to keep the Council functioning. Cllr Bayley proposed that this item be deferred to the November Meeting, No seconder, Motion withdrawn, *RR133/21*

Cllr Turner proposed that the Council delegate authority for the employment committee to investigate, advertise and interview a locum Clerk should it prove necessary for one to be appointed, seconded Cllr Hodgson All in favour. *RESOLVED RR134/21*

101.5. To consider adding Cllrs Hodgson and Whitehead as signatories on the Council Bank accounts.

Cllr Bayley proposed that Cllrs Hodgson and Whitehead be added as signatories on the Council Bank accounts. Seconded Cllr Hodgson All in favour. *RESOLVED RR135/21*

Mandate to be completed and submitted.

102.21 Next Meeting - Wednesday 24th November 2021 7.30pm – Winkleigh Community Centre

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.54pm

PUBLIC SESSION II – 3 minutes per person, maximum session time 10 minutes.

Member of the public raised – does the Council consider itself to be in purdah as an election has been called to be fill vacancies? Cllr Hodgson responded that he believed as it is a bye-election that the Council would continue as normal.

Parishioner asked if the NAMM inspection would be after the Monumental Masons have reinstated the headstone?

Parishioner stated that he felt that the LGRC fee was a bargain and raised concern as to the detail of the report.

Parishioner – commented that he felt if a new clerk was to be appointed, then they should live in the Parish.

Parishioner – asked for clarification on is the Clerk being suspended with Pay. Follow on query as to how the terms of reference were set regarding the investigation by the LGRC and asked for clarification was it only relating to the Cemetery inspection not on other historical issues.

Website: <http://www.winkleighpc.org.uk/>

Email: Winkleighpc1@btconnect.com

Cllr Hodgson reported that inspection is actions leading to the inspection of the headstone and the inspection of the inspection itself.

Parishioner asked if the current Council will be standing down and stand for re-election to allow the parish to exercise their democratic rights, although acknowledges that this could cost the parish another £4000 to £4500. Cllr Hodgson said this is a matter for individuals and not for the Council to respond on. The Parishioner raised concerns that the future Council could be fractured

Appendix A: Financial Statement.

Wednesday 27th October 2021.

Temporary payment Reference	Amount	Payee	Details	Power	Budget provision
TPM/01	£620.00	CB Property Services	Grass Cutting	Highways Act 1980 S.96	Running Costs / Grass Cutting
TPM/02	£1,045.83	Melanie Bickell	Salary and re-imburements	LGA 1972 S.112 & S.111	Staff Costs
TPM/03	£12.18	Cllr Turner	Re-imburement for Postage	LGA 1972 S.111	Admin/ Postage