BUCKLAND FILLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Community Day Centre, West Heanton

Thursday 21th March 2024, 7.30pm

Present, Cllr Bond (Chair) Cllr Salter, Cllr Balsdon, Cllr Davies, District Cllr Wheatley, Selina Woollacott (Clerk)

1. Apologies. Cllr Nethacott, County Cllr Saywell, District Cllr Cottle-Hunkin.

2. Declarations of interest. To declare interests in matters on the agenda. None.

3. Open Session for members of the public to speak. No members of the public present.

4. Reports

4.1) Report from County Councillor Saywell. No Report.

4.2) Report from District Councillor. Report given by Cllr Wheatley,

Full Council:

Roads:

The following notice of motion was proposed and voted through unanimously regarding the state of our roads here in Torridge, and the council also invited the leader and chief executive of Devon County Council to come and visit us to see how comfortable they feel driving along some of our roads in their own cars. We are yet to hear back…

"This council raises concern with Devon County Council over the level of maintenance of the highways, especially our 'A' routes and footpaths, across Torridge District. This goes beyond potholes, but into wider issues such as surface water drains, road markings, cats' eyes and general pathway maintenance.

We have concerns over the apparent lack of response to issues reported via DCC reporting systems, and the lack of clarity on maintenance levels across both our urban and rural areas. Here in Torridge the poor state of our roads and footpaths is resulting in considerable worry from residents over safety, even in regular weather conditions. This is leaving people feeling isolated and disconnected from vital services. At our budget meeting tonight, we heard that 72% of our council tax goes to DCC and we are concerned that we are not getting the highways we need and pay for.

Cllr Cottle-Hunkin proposed we send a letter to DCC Highways raising our concerns and invite them to come to our External O&S committee to explain the policies and organisation they have in place for the maintenance of roads and footpaths in Torridge and explore options to overcome admitted service shortfall."

Cllr Bond informed the meeting that the Dragon Patching which was completed on the Heanton Road has washed out in places. The Dragon patching was completed at the wrong time of the year as the dragon patching in Langtree which was completed earlier in the year has lasted. Cllr Balsdon the roads need grading off and re-surfacing. Cllr Bond, this business has had 9 new tires and 3 Alleys on Home Care cars this year because of potholes. Cllr Davis they have done an area of Tarmac near Moortown (Shebbear) the number of people they had on that job was unnecessary. Cllr Wheatley also informed the meeting that the new product that DCC started using on potholes in the Autumn is not lasting either. When DCC will agree to meet with TDC about the issues with the roads we can try and get answers.

Council tax:

Torridge Full Council voted to increase council tax in line with recommendations, but it's important to note that the bulk of council tax (72%) goes to Devon County Council with only 8% retained by Torridge. The rest goes to the Police and Fire services.

Devolution proposal- Devon and Torbay Combined Authority:

There were huge concerns raised that the districts are not being given fair representation and there's a bias in favour of Torbay. We highlighted the fact that Torridge already feels forgotten by Devon County and we don't believe this will change going forward, especially given our lack of voting rights within the County Combined Authority. There were comments made by district councillors at the last meeting that it was a "talking shop" and a "farce".

The public consultation is open to everyone to respond (including parish councils collectively) and the deadline is 24th March.

Southwest Water:

TDC and NDDC had a meeting with Southwest Water and we were horrified to find out that they do not measure the volume of sewage going into our rivers and seas at all, all they measure is a start/stop time which doesn't really tell us a lot to be honest as it could be a trickle or it could be blasting sewage into them.

We also raised concerns over bathing water quality. Current policies are to only monitor at a certain time of year (so-called bathing season). But we know that people are swimming in the sea all year round because of the health benefits it brings (but not if the water is full of sewage!)

SWW talked about their management plans and investment. This included desalination plants in Cornwall, pumping from rivers to storage reservoirs, and a potential new reservoir near Bristol.

Surfers against sewage reported 2000 people ill from being in the sea between 2022 -2023.

Cllr Balsdon there is too much rain and surface run off going into sewers Which shouldn't be happening with today's regulations. Cllr Davies asked what areThe Environment Agency doing about it? Cllr Wheatley TDC wants figures and information on what and how much is going into rivers and the sea. There doesn't seem to be government rules that state that SWW need to have a record of how much. This is likely why the Environment Agency is not doing anything.

Councillor grants:

We are really pleased to be using our Councillor grants to fully fund a project organised by Appledore Book Festival which is p-roviding sessions for all three of the local schools in our ward (Shebbear, Langtree and Clinton, Merton) where authors will be going into the schools to inspire the children, and they will all go home with a signed book free of charge

External O&S:

Active Torridge- talking about their progress since setting up the council-owned company. Active Torridge runs the leisure centres at Holsworthy and Northam and the pool in Torrington. Northam gym is pretty much full for gym and classes, so plans are in place to set up a gym in Bideford "the old library".

Lendology CIC- worked in partnership with TDC since 2008, providing home-improvement loans with only 4% interest, open to anyone regardless of income. It all sounded positive so please spread the word.

Cllr Bond asked what can the loan be used for? Clerk looked up the website, Replacement Boilers, Central Heating Installations, Roofs, Windows, Electrics, Kitchens, Bathrooms, Structural Repairs, External Wall Insulation, Disability Adaptations, Other essential repairs.

4.3) Report from PCSO Baker.No Report.

5. Approve Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 11th January 2024. The minutes were sent to all Councillors prior to the meeting. Cllr Salter proposed the minutes are an accurate record of the meeting. Cllr Davies seconded the proposal. Cllr Bond signed the minutes.

6. Urgent matters raised by the Chairperson which are not included in the agenda. None.

7. Website. Facebook page. Clerk asked if the Council would like a Parish Council Facebook page. It was a firm no from all Councillors. Cllr Bond needs to get the Website sorted out.

8. Finance

8.1) Bank Account Balance and update on accounts.

On the 05th March 2024 the bank account balance was £11,995.15

One outstanding cheque to be presented. £50

The account holds £1,067.22 of P3 money.

This leaves a useable balance of £10,877.93

8.2) Any invoices received since the agenda was written. Cheque written out to Torridge District Council for the Clark Salary invoice which will be received at the beginning of April and will need to be paid before the May meeting.

9. Grant applications.

9.1) Village Hall. The Village Hall has 2 key targets for this coming financial year:

Replacement of our crockery – which is a little dated and becoming quite stained. Estimated cost - £1000.

Installation of a new sound system. This will be fully integrated and also support systems used by the hard of hearing. Estimated cost £5000.

Councillors are in full support to grant funds to the Village Hall, they would like to know which of the 2 projects is going to happen first and how much the Village Hall has toward the project already. Cllr Bond proposed asking for more information. Cllr Balsdon seconded the proposal. All Councillors agreed. Clerk will ask for more information.

9.2) Shebbear School Support Group. The SSSG would be interested in putting in an application for a grant from Buckland Filleigh Parish Council for £225 to go towards supporting Shebbear Community School purchase 7 more tablets to provide all KS2 children with one tablet each to help support their learning.

The school is able to purchase these for about £75 each. SSSG fundraising funds would go towards the additional 4 needed. No further funding/grants has been applied for, for these items.

Cllr Balsdon proposed granting the SSSG the £225, Cllr Bond seconded the proposal. All Councillors agreed. Cheque was written and signed.

9.3) Shebbear Youth Club. When emailing local Clubs and Charities the Clerk emailed Shebbear Youth Club as it is open to all children in Shebbear and the surrounding parishes School year 4 and above. There are Buckland Filleigh children who attend. Clerk has asked a number of times for a grant application email as she knows a small grant would help the club. One of the organisers doesn't think Buckland Filleigh Parish Council will grant funds to them. Cllr Balsdon stated he would be interested to see what the Youth Club would like a grant for as there is nothing in Buckland Filleigh for Children. Councillors agreed that the Clerk should email again saying the Council is interested in knowing what they would use a grant for. If no reply then not to take it any further.

10. Planning. Review of Planning Applications in Buckland Filleigh and adjoining parishes.

1/0193/2024/FUL Two storey extension with lower floor buried below ground and new bathroom within the existing house (Variation of condition 2 of planning approval 1/1106/2022/FUL) Modbury, Buckland Filleigh, Beaworthy, comments by 28th March 2024. The Councillors all agreed No Objection to this planning application.

11. Planning Decisions. 1/1245/2023/FUL Equestrian sand school (Variation of condition 2 of planning approval 1/0890/2004/COU) - Removal of connection with Filleigh Moor Gate. Sand School At Grid Reference 248473 108808,Sheepwash. Application was granted permission. Read out to the meeting.

12. Footpaths and Roads

12.1) P3 money and repairs on Footpaths. The Clerk updated the Council. I have completed and sent the end of year P3 forms. I have been trying to contact the contractor via email with no joy asking what stage repairs to the bridge is at. I will ring him.

12.2) Drains. Clerk reported the large puddle of water near the Glede and sent the reply to all Councillors. This is the reply, Outside Glebe House there is a blocked grip which I have asked our contractor to clear. The water table appears to be very high in this area as ditches on both sides of the road still have a lot of water in them even though we have had much less rain lately, so even with the grip cleared I am conscious that the water may not drain away completely.

I also located and cleared several gullies which had been covered in leaves, down near Parsons Cottage, so the water is now able to drain into those.

Clerk asked Cllr Balsdon if she needed to report the drain near the Sawmills, No as it is not a council drain. Cllr Balsdon asked what is happening with the drain near the Lodge? Clerk said she will follow up on this drain. There is a drain which must be blocked near Alscott Farm (Peters Marland) as there is always a large puddle there. As well as the large puddle that forms near Paddon Cottage (Shebbear) these are all roads the people of Buckland Filleigh use. Cllr Bond proposed, a letter is written to Highways about the drains in these locations. All Councillors agreed.

Clerk updated that Dragon patching is planned for the Galmington road at the start of the new financial year. Also as the Council have a keen interested in Dipper Mill (Shebbear) clerk updated them that she had met with Cllr Morrish, John Hart(leader of the Council DCC) Donna Manson (Chief Executive of DCC) Maria (head of

legal) the landowner and 2 of Shebbear Parish Councillors at Dipper Mill on Monday 18th March. They were in the area visiting Holsworthy and Cllr Morrish brought them out to see how close the river was to the road. The road was very busy and showed them how much the road is used and by all sizes of vehicles. At the narrowest point there is currently 7 metres of land between the river and the road. The erosion for the last 2 years has been a metre a year. Looking at something needing to be done within the next 5 years. Maria is setting up an online meeting with all who have discussed this issue before the Environment Agency, River Trust, Highways,and those who met at the river on monday. Will give an update at the next meeting.

13. Correspondence email to Councillors prior to the meeting. None.

14. Matters for inclusion in the next meeting.
The next meeting will be held on Thursday 2nd May 2024 at 7.30pm
This will be the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Parish Council Meeting.
Grants, Dipper Mill, Footpath bridge. Website.

Meeting Closed 8.40pm

Report from Cllr Saywell emailed to Councillors. My apologies I can't be with you this evening. Please find my report below.
DCC Budgets – I am pleased to report the projected overspend on general expenditure for the outgoing 2023-24 financial year has fallen by a further £4.3m and is now down to just £291,000, effectively a break even position. I would hope that will fall to zero by the month end. This again is a strong achievement by the Council and has meant that we have not had to raid reserves to set this year's budget, or get ourselves into the financial situation that Somerset are experiencing…
For the incoming financial year, the Budget meeting was held on the 15th February and agreed. The overall revenue budget is set to increase to £743 million. Adult Care and Health gets a 6% (£20.5m) increase with an overall budget of just under £361m. Children's Services gets a £21.5m increase of 10.4% for a budget of just under £228m.
The Highways and Transport Directorate gets a more modest 4.7% increase of £3.9m… but that is still welcome!
In addition, the final Central Government Financial Settlement was more generous than expected – a further £1.5m will go into Highways Drainage on top of the proposed budgets.
Councillor Locality Grants will also be increased from £5,000 back up to £8,000.
DCC's share of the Council Tax will increase by 4.99%, of which 2% is specifically ringfenced for Adult Social Care. I know Council Tax increases are never welcome… but it is needed to fund the continued demand on social services and Highways and to ensure the Council has a sound budget. The alternative is to take money out of reserves to prop up day to day expenditure… and if we did that it would weaken Devon's financial position and start getting the Council into the mess that other authorities like Somerset and Birmingham have got themselves into…
Devolution – The Devolution Deal for Devon and Torbay has now been published. The 40-page proposed Deal sets out in detail proposals that could see the transfer of powers and funding to a Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority, subject to approval by Devon and Torbay following a public consultation.
The proposed Combined County Authority would be a partnership made up of Councillors representing the councils of Devon and Torbay, including District Councils, and representatives from business and education. Together, that partnership would deliver on a jointly agreed programme, working alongside a wide range of local stakeholders to tackle key local priorities.
The Government has chosen Devon and Torbay as one of only a small number of local authority areas in the country to form a Combined County Authority (CCA), that will not require an elected Mayor or changes to the current structure of local councils.
The Deal should allow important decisions to be taken locally by people who know their areas best, on priorities that matter to the people of Devon and Torrington Rural such as building more affordable homes, investing in new quality jobs and skills, and improving public transport.
Highlights of the proposal are:

- Direct control of adult education to create up to 50,000 new training and retraining opportunities by 2030
- Government transfer of over £16 million to invest in new green jobs, homes, skills, and business growth, and accelerate Devon and Torbay's transition to a net-zero economy
- Stronger partnership with Homes England to create a joint local action plan for affordable housing schemes for local people and reduce homelessness
- Even closer working between Devon and Torbay to improve the efficiency and co-ordination of public transport. There is an ambition to introduce a single ticketing system for travellers and investment in services to provide greater access to public transport
- Devon and Torbay would be responsible for developing, designing and delivering the next stages of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund from 2025
- Boosting and supporting high growth business sectors in Devon and Torbay, such as advanced marine engineering, defence, photonics and digital

The consultation remains ongoing. Some interesting feedback is being received from the District Councils… feedback from the business community so far is generally positive.
I am happy to talk about this in more detail when I am back but, if people are wondering what benefits we may get from Devolution, I happen to believe that had we had this set up in place already, it would not have taken 30 years to regenerate the old Creamery site by Taddiport... The combined authority would have, in conjunction with our District partners, the clout and access to funding to have unlocked the regeneration of that site a lot sooner than what it took in the present with our un-devolved structures.

More information about the Deal and the public consultation can be found online at www.devontorbaydeal.org.uk

Family Hub Consultation – The Council is changing the way that young families are supported at Children's Centres, and is inviting those who use the services, as well as professionals and community groups, to help influence the changes. It follows a national move, announced by the Government last year, for Children's Centres to become Family Hubs, as part of its Start for Life Programme initiative.
In Devon that means extending the age range, from current services that deliver targeted support to 0 to 8 year-olds, to future services that provide targeted and universal support to 0 to 19 year-olds, or up to 25 year-old young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
And it would mean a wider range of services than present, including support from local community groups, working together to help young families.
Having agreed at the end of last year to make the change in line with national thinking, Devon County Council is now inviting families, professionals and community groups to help shape what the new Family Hubs support network will look like in Devon.
Exactly which services will be integrated into a Family Hub will very much depend on the needs of local families. But the kind of services that families could access include early years services and education; Public Health Nursing and Midwifery services; activities delivered by local groups; drug, alcohol and domestic abuse support; mental health support and youth services.
So no, we are not talking about service cuts and/or reducing services, but expanding them and changing the way they are delivered. In particular I am keen to see engagement from young families in our rural areas because it shouldn't necessarily be the case that a family in Peters Marland should be told to travel to a building in Bideford, for example, to access a service.
Family Hubs are likely to be located in areas of greatest need, with outreach services extending from them into local communities. I know from talking to the team they are still keen to use Great Torrington as a base. Much of the support families currently receive will still be available.

The consultation is available by visiting our Have Your Say webpage.
www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay/consultations/family-hubs-engagement The survey will run until March 23.

Selina Woollacott, Buckland Filleigh Parish Clerk.
Email: bucklandfilleighparishclerk@gmail.com Telephone: 01409 281280