

WEST DOWN PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES
West Down Parish Hall
Wednesday 7th February 2024 at 7.00 p.m.

Cllr Ayre requested a Minutes Silence for Peter Knowles, previous Parish Councillor at West Down, who had passed away. She sent her condolences to his wife and family.

Present: Cllrs S Ayre, R Kenshole, H Knight, T Verney and S Whitby.

Also present: C Cllr A Davis, D Cllr M Wilkinson, Val Ford (Clerk) and 2 Members of the public.

Apologies/Approvals.

Cllr M Reeves due to illness. Accepted.

5163. Declarations of Interest

Cllr M Reeves declared an Other Registrable Interest in respect of the Parish Hall room hire charges for the Post Office Outreach Service.

5164. Public Participation

None.

5165. Approve & Sign Minutes of the 10th January 2023 Meeting of the Parish Council.

The Minutes had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. **Cllr Verney proposed that the Minutes of the meeting held on the 10th January 2024 be accepted as a true record which was seconded by Cllr Kenshole.** There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE MINUTES OF THE 10th JANUARY 2024 PARISH COUNCIL MEETING BE APPROVED AND THEY WERE DULY SIGNED

5166. Matters Arising

5143. Matters Arising. (5117) Matters Arising (5041). C Cllrs Report. Cllr Ayre asked D Cllr Wilkinson if there was any news from Mr Emery (Planning Officer NDC) on the traffic calming on Ilfracombe Hill. D Cllr Wilkinson reported that Mr Emery went through the Conditions of the Planning Consent but could not find anything that points to traffic calming. Mr Emery would like the Parish Council to let him have more information so that he can then enforce. Cllr Ayre will go back to the parishioner who raised this to see if they can point Mr Emery to the right place, with the information to be given to D Cllr Wilkinson to pass on.

5156. Review of the Equal Opportunity Policy. The Clerk had updated the front page and put this on the website. Information received from Rebecca Walker, DALC. She is not aware of any significant changes to equality law affecting Parish Councils in the last few years. She sent a legal topic note from NALC updating this subject last August. She also sent a template so that this can be compared to ours. The Clerk will keep an eye out for any further updates.

5161. Any Other Business. The Clerk had been asked to chase up two outstanding planning enforcement cases:-

Lynch's Barn. Enforcement No. 13818. Beth Coles, Planning Officer, attended the site in October and took some photographs and prepared an investigation/decision report and noted the parking layout is not in accordance with the plans 66175

approved. The Enforcement Officer had advised that further photographs are required to the rear of the site just to be certain that the development does not provide two parking spaces. Mrs Coles will be in the area this week so will deal with this then. The Enforcement Officer will notify us when a decision is made.

Peards House. Enforcement No. 13856. The Clerk had received an email to say that due to current resources and staffing issues, the Enforcement Team are not able to provide an update on this case as yet. They will be in touch once progress has been made.

5167. Police Report

Monthly Crime Figures.

The crime figures for January 2024 for Morteheo, Woolacombe & West Down (including Mullacott & Bittadon) were:-

Violence less Serious	2
Burglary Residential	1
Theft (Other)	2
Vehicle crime (theft of & from)	1
Drugs	1
Sexual Offences	2
Other Notifiable Crime	1

5168. Report from County Councillor.

C Cllr Davis provided a report (see Appendix A). This was circulated to Cllrs prior to the meeting. Cllr Davis had put the link in her report regarding possible sites for EV chargers, which the Clerk will complete with details of the village Car Park. Discussion took place about EV chargers and if there was a need for these in West Down but Cllr Davis reminded the Parish Council that at this stage it is only putting sites forward.

With regards to the future flashing sign in West Down, the Highway Officer could not find any poles within the 30 mph limit. This will need to be looked at again with Cllr Reeves.

The HGV sign at Stang Lane is fine but the bus shelters each side, with people having to cross the road, is unsatisfactory, particularly with electric cars. Cllr Davis saw the Highways Safety Officer who is going to look into this and draw something up. It may be that lorry drivers are using google maps and not the satnavs for HGVs. Cllr Davis also spoke about the 50 mph speed limit on the A361 with the Safety Officer, with this being monitored and the speed will be reduced to 40 mph if necessary.

Cllr Davis urged people to report potholes online.

Cllr Davis will resend the link to the 20 mph scheme for the Parish Council to complete.

5169. Report from District Councillor.

D Cllr Wilkinson complimented Cllr Reeves on his work regarding the development of redundant barns following discussion at the last meeting. This accounted for

forty percent of planning applications last year at West Down.

D Cllr Wilkinson spoke about the balanced budget for North Devon Council, which is a great credit to Jon Triggs and very positive for a small authority. It is good to be going forward to 2024/2025 in this position.

D Cllr Wilkinson had been to two meetings in the last week. The Ilfracombe Regeneration Board and Ilfracombe Harbour. Carla Platt is the Harbourmaster, with Ilfracombe Harbour receiving the highest award possible. Carla would like to set up a Sea School, Fire Fighting Training and Certificates for Sailors. It would bring a lot of industry into Ilfracombe Harbour and the surrounding area. She has improved the face of Ilfracombe Harbour in the ten years she has been there.

D Cllr Wilkinson referred to Devolution being back on the table as a debate point, with North Devon Council being represented as much as South Devon. C Cllr Davis will be reporting on this at the next meeting, or earlier if possible. There will be events coming up to go to.

D Cllr Wilkinson referred to the North Devon Lottery, with the cut off date being the end of February 2024. This is for all good causes to put in an application form. 50% of the proceeds will go to local causes, such as Village Halls. Cllr Ayre had circulated this

D Cllr Wilkinson referred to the Coastal Issues Group he sits on. NDC have been asked to host the AGM, which is a real opportunity to show case what is going on in the local area and other areas around the coastline.

Cllr Ayre mentioned the Coronation Bench being in position outside the Village Hall, with D Cllr Wilkinson to sit on this and have his photo taken when the evenings are a bit lighter.

Cllr Ayre mentioned Neighbourhood Plans coming up at the Planning Forum meeting she attended online, with Tracey Blackmore willing to come out and talk further about these. D Cllr Wilkinson felt Neighbourhood Plans carry a lot of weight, with Braunton and Georgeham's being held up as exemplars. He referred to working on one in Woolacombe, which involves not just the Parish Council but everyone, i.e. school, shops etc. and he added that sometimes two or three pages are more readable than one great big document.

C Cllr Davis added that Neighbourhood Plans are a massive task and if West Down Parish Council are thinking of doing one they need to consider what they want to achieve, as Planning has to be in "cohort" with whatever is in the National Plan.

5170. Flashing Speed Signs

C Cllr Davis had mentioned this in her report (above).

5171. Car Park Lease

The Clerk had chased Jon Triggs (NDC) for a quotation for the cutting back of the shrubbery at the Car Park once a year. The figure was awaited.

The Clerk had contacted the Parish Council's auditor, Julie Snooks, to see if it would cause a problem if funds are built up towards future work on the Car Park if

Option 1 of the lease is the way forward. Mrs Snooks advised that this would not affect the audit and would likely only result in an external audit for the years where significant works were carried out. She added that the longer lease term gives the Parish Council better assurance of the car parking facilities for the parish.

Cllr Reeves had made enquiries about the legal costs in respect of the Car Park Lease. Quotations had been received from Brewer, Harding & Rowe, Samuels Solicitors, and Slee Blackwell. The fees were likely to be the same for either lease option. Option 1 (21 year lease) would have a Land Registry fee of between £45 and £100.

The quotations were as follows:-

Brewer Haring & Rowe - £1,800 excl. VAT (£1,200 without enquiries & searches).
Samuels Solicitors - £1,500 excl. VAT (£750 excl. VAT if the lease is relatively simple).
Slee Blackwell - £750 excl VAT.

Cllr Reeves had sent a detailed email to Cllrs prior to the meeting which the Clerk read out. Cllr Reeves suggested Samuels Solicitors be used as they provided the most information to him and it was likely the lease would be relatively simple. **Cllr Ayre proposed that Samuels Solicitors be appointed, which was seconded by Cllr Kenshole.** There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE PARISH COUNCIL APPOINT SAMUELS SOLICITORS TO ACT FOR THEM IN RESPECT OF THE LEASE ON THE CAR PARK AT WEST DOWN.

- THAT THE CLERK WILL CONTACT SAMUELS SOLICITORS AND ASK THEM TO PROCEED.

Discussion took place about which Lease option to take. The general consensus was that the 21 year lease provides better assurance of the Car Park being a guaranteed asset for the village, with the Parish Council to build up funds for any maintenance and repairs. **Cllr Verney proposed that the Parish Council proceed with Lease Option 1 for 21 years which was seconded by Cllr Kenshole.** There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE PARISH COUNCIL WILL PROCEED WITH OPTION 1 OF THE LEASE ON THE CAR PARK FOR 21 YEARS.

- THAT THE CLERK WILL CONTACT JON TRIGGS (NDC) TO ADVISE HIM OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S DECISION.

5172. Planning Decisions

77728 – Parish Hall, West Down, EX34 8NF. Single storey extension to the West elevation to facilitate additional storage/amenity space. Approved.

The Parish Council had not received an invite to comment on this planning application. This was raised with NDC. It was agreed that if this happens again the Parish Council will ask NDC to review their procedures.

77957 – Huckleberry Barn, West Down, EX34 8NE. Demolition of barn and erection of a dwelling, water purification building and associated works (fallback on planning permission 75697). Approved.

PLANNING APPEAL INQUIRY

76269 – Bay View Farmers Caravan and Camping Site, Turnpike Cross, Woolacombe, EX34 7HG. Application for lawful development certificate for proposed siting of 167 touring caravans, static caravans, camper vans and tents, with the proportion of each type unrestricted, for tourist accommodation.

NDC advised the Parish Council on the 23rd November 2023 that they had refused to grant a Certificate of Lawful use for the above. The inquiry will be held on Tuesday 12th March 2024. Information circulated to Cllrs.

5173. Planning Applications

a) To comment on the following planning applications.

None.

b) To comment on any planning applications received after the Agenda was published.

None.

c) Discussion on the rising number of recent barn/outbuilding conversion to dwellings applications/approvals from information provided by Cllr Reeves.

Cllr Reeves had prepared draft information on this which was circulated to Cllrs on the 1st February 2024 for approval prior to an email to go to Tracey Blackmore (NDC). **Cllr Verney proposed that this information be emailed to Tracey Blackmore which was seconded by Cllr Kenshole.** There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT CLLR REEVES BE ASKED TO SEND THE INFORMATION TO TRACEY BLACKMORE (NDC) THAT HE HAD PREPARED REGARDING THE CONCERNS RAISED ABOUT THE RISING NUMBER OF RECENT BARN/OUTBUILDING CONVERSION TO DWELLING APPLICATIONS.

5174. Footpaths

a) Complete P3 Footpath Survey.

The P3 Rights of Way forms had been received for the Clerk to complete and apply for funding. The Clerk will liaise with Cllr Verney regarding which footpath forms are outstanding.

b) Advertise for Tenders for footpath work (if required).

This will depend on the outcome of the P3 Bid Form and will be discussed at the next Parish Council meeting.

c) Any other footpath matters.

It was agreed that Cllrs Verney and Reeves would provide details of which No Entry to Vehicle sign to purchase on Footpath 16. This sign will then need to be put up.

Cllr Ayre referred to the tender work being carried out by Gareth Hookway on the footpaths previously identified. Cllr Ayre will liaise with him to see how he is getting on. Cllr Verney will also liaise with Cllr Ayre on this matter.

Cllr Verney requested assistance in putting up finger stickers on the footpath signs. Cllrs Verney and Knight were going to liaise on a convenient time to do this.

5175. Emergency Plan

Cllr Kenshole had no further update on the plan. The only thing left now is funding being required for equipment. He mentioned items such as batteries, which will need replacing, and the situation with this going forward. Cllr Ayre thanked Cllr Kenshole for steering the Emergency Plan to completion. There are going to be table top exercises in March. Andy Odell had done a lot of work on the items required for the two sites, which would come to approximately £1,500. This includes a television for the Parish Hall but there needs to be a discussion about who would pay for the licence. The Parish Council will need to apply for the funding. **Cllr Verney proposed that the application for funding be completed which was seconded by Cllr Kenshole.** There was unanimous agreement to this proposal. **RESOLVED – THAT THE PARISH COUNCIL WILL APPLY FOR FUNDING FOR THE ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT REQUIRED FOR THE EMERGENCY PLAN.**

5176. Air Ambulance Light

The Clerk had circulated information about the 3G Switch Off and the GSM Testing. Discussion took place about the need for the light as the Air Ambulance Service now have night goggles. Also responsibility and budget need to be looked into. Cllr Ayre felt the way forward would be to meet with Graham Coates and she offered to contact him to set up a meeting. There was unanimous agreement for this action.

5177. Post Office Outreach Service

Cllr Ayre had sent an email to the External Affairs Dept. at the Post Office and received a reply which was circulated to Cllrs. The Post Office replied to say that they regularly review provision across the Post Office network to ensure they are using their limited funding to meet the needs of as many customers as possible. Their review identified that West Down Parish had an average of only 42 customers per week between August and November 2023. The change of service to a single two hour visit will ensure that the service remains sustainable for the Post Office and their operator.

Discussion took place about funding now the hours for the Post Office Outreach Service at West Down have changed. An amount was put in the precept for 2024/2025 for the shortfall in the room hire charges prior to the Parish Council becoming aware of this change. It was felt that information is needed from the Parish Hall before this could be considered further. This will be put on the Agenda for the March Parish Council meeting.

5178. Parish Councillor Vacancies

The Clerk had put new Notices on both websites and both noticeboards. An application had been received for one of these vacancies from Mr Steve Tanton which was circulated to Cllrs prior to the meeting. **Cllr Ayre proposed that Mr Tanton be sent the forms for co-option on to the Parish Council which was seconded by Cllr Kenshole.** There was unanimous agreement to this proposal. **RESOLVED – THAT MR TANTON BE INVITED TO JOIN WEST DOWN PARISH COUNCIL.**
- THAT THE CLERK WILL SEND MR TANTON THE CO-OPTION FORM AND OTHER DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED.

At the last meeting it was agreed to look at how the number of Parish Councillors could be increased. Cllr Verney suggested a Meet & Greet session which could be

put on the noticeboard so that people could find out more about the Parish Council, what the Cllrs do for the village and ask any questions. After further discussion it was felt that one session in the Crown Pub on the 22nd March 2024 and one session at the Parish Hall Coffee Morning on the 19th March 2024 could be the way forward. The Parish Hall Committee would need to be asked if this would be acceptable. Cllr Ayre will put information on Facebook and will advise the Clerk what to do about posters when these sessions have been set up.

5179. IT Policy – Annual Review

Councillors had been asked to look at this policy online prior to the meeting. As there had been several new Parish Councillors recently, with another about to join, Cllr Kenshole felt new questionnaires should be sent out regarding using personal IT equipment for Parish Council work to ensure passwords and anti virus programmes are adequate. The Clerk will deal with this.

Cllr Squire resigned on the 30th December 2024 and needs to sign a Declaration to say that to the best of her knowledge everything to do with the Parish Council has been deleted, including hard copy data. The Clerk will contact Cllr Squire about this.

Cllr Kenshole proposed that the IT Policy be updated as correct which was seconded by Cllr Verney. There was unanimous agreement to this proposal..

RESOLVED – THAT THE IT POLICY BE ACCEPTED AS CORRECT.

- THAT THE CLERK WILL UPDATE THE FRONT PAGE.

- THAT THE CLERK WILL SEND THE IT EQUIPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE TO CLLRS FOR COMPLETION AND RETURN.

- THAT THE CLERK WILL CONTACT EX-CLLR SUE SQUIRE ASKING FOR A DECLARATION BY EMAIL THAT EVERYTHING TO DO WITH THE PARISH COUNCIL HAS BEEN DELETED/DESTROYED.

5180. Finances

a) To receive the balance in the bank accounts.

Balance in the Treasurer's Account as at 31.01.2024	£13,152.53	
Balance in the Business Account as at 31.01.2024	£ 4,858.19	

b) To receive and agree the invoices received for payment.

The Clerk had emailed a list of payments to the Councillors prior to the meeting.

North Devon Council	Clerks Salary (Incl back pay	£622.87	
	Additional Hours (Incl back pay)	£233.00	
	Admin Charge	£ 7.72	£863.59
Parish Hall	Shortfall in Hire Charge (PO)		
	(January 2024)	£ 51.00	
	Room Hire for Emergency Plan		
	Meetings x 3	£ 68.00	
	Room Hire for Parish Council		
	Meetings (Jan to June 2024)	£114.00	£233.00
Mrs S Ayre	Refreshments – Emergency	£ 10.42	
	Planning Meetings	£ 15.35	£ 25.77

Allwaysthere	Grass Cutting & Bus Shelter Cleaning	£412.40
Total Payments		£1,534.76

Cllr Verney proposed that the invoices totalling £1,534.76 should be paid which was seconded by Cllr Sarah Whitby. There was unanimous agreement to this proposal.

RESOLVED – THAT THE INVOICES TOTALLING £1,534.76 SHOULD BE PAID

The Clerk will work out the total spent so far on Emergency Planning Meetings.

5181. Correspondence

- a) NDC Planning Forum. Copy of the presentation on the 31st January 2024 was sent to Cllrs with a reminder to review their Registrable Interests forms regularly.
- b) Devon & Cornwall Police. There was good news that Devon & Cornwall Police Force have made significant improvements and the Office of National Statistics confirm that the area is one of the safest in the country.
- c) Information received from NALC about the S137 expenditure limit for 2024/2025 which is £10.81 per elector.
- d) Email received from Councillor Advocate about the Community Speedwatch 2023 Annual Report. Circulated to Cllrs.
- e) Susi Batstone, WDVGFA, thanked the Parish Council for the previous NDC Climate & Emergency Grant Fund. She also enclosed a very detailed recent Ecology report on the Community Park with suggestions for 'greening' this year. Cllr Reeves advised her that unfortunately NDC did not run this fund for the 2023/24 financial year but he understands it is to be reinstated for 2024/25. Full details yet to be received.
- f) Susi Batstone also sent an email to Cllr Reeves about tree branches touching electricity cables in Garden Lane. As Garden Lane is part of Footpath 12 he felt the Parish Council should have a look for themselves. Following discussion, the Clerk will advise Mrs Batstone to report this to National Grid.
- g) Notification of Road Closure on Road past Fairview Farm, West Down. South West Water have applied for this road closure to complete utility works near the caravan site. These works, subject to approval from Devon Highways, will take place between 20.5.24 and 24.5.24. It was agreed that once these works have been approved, information will be put on both websites and on Facebook.
- h) Cllr Ayre referred to the Community Speed Watch information she had been sent. She will distribute this in the village and maybe at the Coffee Morning.
- i) Devon & Cornwall police are having some 'Meet your Local Policing Team' sessions over the next couple of months. Details of the locations and times can be obtained from the Parish Clerk.

5182. Unresolved Questions

None.

5183. Items to be added to the next meeting Agenda

- a) Post Office Outreach Service.
- b) Flashing Speed Sign.
- c) Car Park Lease.
- d) Footpaths

Cont'd

- e) Emergency Plan.
- f) Air Ambulance Light.
- g) Parish Council Vacancies.

5184. Any Other Business

a) The state of the road at the top of Ilfracombe Hill was a concern as it was covered in mud and was very slippery. This is a contravention of the Highways Act 1980. It was agreed that a letter would be sent to the landowner reminding them of their responsibilities regarding the Highway, with a need to keep this clean and put a warning notice out until this is done. Cllr Ayre will let the Clerk know who to write to.

The meeting closed at 21.17 pm