

Merton Parish Council, Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 9th November 2020, 7:30pm via Zoom.

Parish Councillors Present: Steve Papworth (Chair), Bill Brown (Vice-Chair), Sarah Knightley, Nigel Lang, Rob Nancekivell, Brian Stacey & Laura Twomey.

Also in attendance: Alice Turner (Clerk), County Cllr Andrew Saywell, District Cllr Richard Wiseman & Mick Harrison OPPC – Guest Speaker. No members of the public were in attendance.

BUSINESS TRANSACTED

1.11.20 Welcome:

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed them that the meeting was being recorded by the Clerk to assist in the preparation of the minutes.

2.11.20 Apologies for absence:

Resolution required to approve apologies (with reasons) made to the Clerk prior to the meeting.

The Clerk reported that she had received apologies from Cllr Scantlebury prior engagement. Cllr Knightley proposed that apologies from Cllr Scantlebury (prior engagement) be approved, seconded Cllr Twomey. All in Favour – Motion Carried. (RR2020/039)

3.11.20 Minutes of the Last Meeting:

To consider the approval of the minutes of the meeting held Monday 14th September 2020. Cllr Brown proposed that the minutes of the council meeting held on Monday 14th September 2020 be approved as a true and accurate record with signing to take place once physical meetings resume, seconded Cllr Papworth. All in Favour – Motion Carried (RR2020/040)

4.11.20 Declarations of Interest: None

5.11.20: Guest Speaker: Mick Harrison OPPC

Invited by the Council following the January meeting to discuss the role of the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner.

The Chair welcomed Mick Harrison from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Mick's informed that his role is to support the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner rather than working directly for Alison Hernandez, it is a non-political role.

Mick mainly focuses on recruitment of representatives from the 623 parish & Town Councils in the area covered by Devon & Cornwall police as part of the Cllr Advocate Scheme, which is there to create a link between the police and Councils to allow information to be disseminated and for Councils to relay issues of the police to consider which Mick will ensure that it gets sent on to the right people. Please note: this is not for reporting of crimes or incidents which should be done by 101 or 999 depending on the severity.

6.11.20 Public Speaking Time: None

7.11.20 District / County Councillors & Police Reports.

a) County Cllr Andrew Saywell

Coronavirus

- Stats – As of 9th November DCC area of Devon now up to 5,935 coronavirus infections since the start of the pandemic.

~Minutes of meeting held 09-11-2020 ~ Initialled as a correct record: S.P

- Since the 7th November that is a weekly increase of 746
- By way of comparison... in Torridge there were just 33 cases in the last 7 days from 6th November. West Devon 51 cases in the last 7 days, North Devon 75 in the last 91 days.

In general, the cases are scattered, tending to be scattering of 1-2 cases cropping up in workplaces, cases picked up by routine staff and resident testing in care homes etc. Torridge is still one of the lowest places in the country and all positive cases are being followed up, by NHS Test and Trace or PHE.

The key message for our residents is to keep their distance, particularly important if they are over 60 or under 60 with poor health. The Government guidance is very good on this point. There is no doubt that the residents of Merton, Torrington Rural and indeed all of Devon have put in a magnificent effort to keep the virus at bay for as long as possible. Please do make sure that those who need support, be they shielding or in need, get support and please do follow the rules and guidance during this difficult time. If you need any help on anything please don't hesitate to get in touch and I will do all that I can to help.

The following statement from the Director of Public Health, Dr Virginia Pearson does help to set the context behind recent developments:

"The number of incidents of coronavirus in Devon is still below the national average, however cases have been rising across the county in line with the rest of the country over the past month, in all our communities and in all age groups, although the majority – 55 per cent – are in young adults aged 16 to 39.

"In Exeter, where we saw cases increase in early October mainly due to cases in university students, they have fallen significantly over recent weeks thanks to prompt action by the university and public health, and are now again below the national average. Around 40% of Exeter cases relate to the University of Exeter. Non-university student cases in Exeter are well below the national average, and there is no evidence of significant spread of the virus between student and non-student populations in the city.

"But we know that the virus has been spreading in adults of working age, often in social settings. We must continue to take extra care and must never drop our guard.

"Testing capacity has increased in Devon, and the number of tests completed has been rising steadily since August, with the number of tests done doubling.

"Most current cases have had contacts traced through the NHS Test and Trace system. The latest performance shows over 75 per cent of contacts are followed up in Devon.

"It should be said that by and large, Devon residents, shops, businesses, educational establishments and care homes, have all behaved impeccably to limit the impact, and have followed national guidance around social distancing, hand hygiene and wearing of face coverings. And that has undoubtedly kept the number of positive cases lower in Devon, keeping us in the lowest of the government's alert levels.

"However, national data emerging in more recent weeks has shown that, should the country take no additional measures beyond the current restrictions, England would be exceeding the 'worst case scenario' levels.

"Public Health Devon supports the need for a time-limited lockdown. If we don't take extra steps now, numbers will continue to rise and it will put additional pressure on our busy hospitals. We are already seeing our local hospitals having to cancel non-urgent operations."

"Devon's response has been first rate, and we have all pulled together – Devon residents included – to limit the impact of coronavirus, and that is what has kept the number of positive cases low, sufficient that we are at the lowest alert level in the country. However, more needs to be done to halt the rising case numbers and the impact on the NHS. We now need to make sure we are in the best possible position to come out of the national lockdown by driving down rates. We are asking all local people to help by following the public health guidance to the letter."

~Minutes of meeting held 09-11-2020 ~ Initialled as a correct record: S.P

I know it will be a difficult month – but we got through the first lockdown and I know we will get through the second. Please do continue to follow the public health guidance – hands, space, face – and together I know we will get through this latest

Covid Grants

Devon County Council has temporarily re-opened the COVID-19 Fund to provide flexible resources to organisations working with communities who are disproportionately impacted by coronavirus including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable to help mitigate for the social and economic consequences of the second National Lockdown.

Applications will open on Monday 9th November 2020 and will close on 2nd December 2020. Applications will need to include details of how much funding will be required and how you have assessed the need for that amount. Grants will typically be between £300 and £700, although in exceptional circumstances we may make offers of up to £1,000

Deepmoor Recycling Centre

Remains open for essential use but please note it will be undergoing resurfacing works on Saturday 21st November 2020. Due to the nature and scale of these works, the Recycling Centre will have to be closed to the public on that day (1 day only).

Highways

If you want a follow up meeting with Highways to discuss their Parish priorities please do so. You may have noticed a traffic order go out for the road heading past Langham – this is to take samples from the road and also thoroughly investigate the drainage in the area to make sure there are no drainage issues ahead of patching/resurfacing works. Will mean it'll take slightly longer for works to get done, but they will be done in a more thorough and 'joined up' approach than before.

Speed Survey

Unfortunately due to the lockdown this has been postponed but it will be re-arranged post-lockdown.

Cycle Path Link from Tarka Trail to Torrington

There is a consultation out to use the 'Rolle Rd' route to Mill St and the preferred 'link' between the Trail and the Town. You can respond here:

<https://www.torringtoncommons.org/2020/10/taddiport-cycle-path-proposal-2020/>

School Transport

- It is now mandatory for pupils to wear face coverings on school transport. Previous guidance asked pupils aged 11 and over to wear face coverings unless they were exempt, however some did not.
- From November 2nd it will be a condition of travel.
- The County Council will operate a 'two strikes' policy. If a student is found not wearing a face covering by the school or transport operator on two occasions, and there is no record of them being exempt from using one, they will be refused travel for a period of time.
- Those travelling on Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport will not be included in this new policy, as the majority of children are in categories which exclude them from wearing face coverings. However, passengers with SEN who can wear a face covering are encouraged to do so.

b) District Cllr Richard Wiseman

Cllr Wiseman reported on the current Covid provisions (food banks, business rates support scheme) from TDC with some details still awaiting clarification.

Cllr Wiseman reported that under the current government legislation play areas run by Torridge will remain open also at the swimming pool in Torrington asbestos has been discovered during routine maintenance, which is being safely removed. With other leisure

centres in Torridge hopefully will be ready to reopen in December if government guidelines permit.

Slipway at Westward Ho! has been replaced to improve access.

c) Police report - FPCSO Brown: No report received from FPCSO Brown.

8.11.20 Governance Documents & Policies

To consider the approval and ratification of the following documents (Circulated to Cllrs & available from the Clerk upon request):

a) MPC 012 Risk Management Policy V2.0

b) MPC 013 Internal Financial Control Policy V2.0

c) MPC 019 Internal Audit Policy V1.0 R1

Cllr Papworth asked for amendments to be highlighted to assist Cllrs when policies are amended in the future.

Cllr Papworth proposed that the following policies be approved and ratified with immediate effect MPC 012 Risk Management Policy V2.0, MPC 013 Internal Financial Control Policy V2.0 and MPC 019 Internal Audit Policy V1.0 R1, seconded Cllr Knightley. All in Favour – Motion Carried. (RR2020/041)

9.11.20 Current Business:

a) Update on Flowerbed in Square (Cllr Papworth)

Cllr Nancekivell will continue liaise with the contractor and hopes to have this done by the next meeting.

b) Website compliance with WCAG 2.0 - update (Cllr Knightley/Clerk)

The Clerk & Cllrs extended their thanks to Cllr Knightley for all the time she has spent setting up the new website which will hopefully be going live by the end of the month.

c) Traffic & Highways Concerns (Cllr Knightley)

Speed survey is still pending so this item cannot proceed much further until the new data comes in.

d) Update on street name signs (Clerk)

The Clerk reported that she has had a phone call from TDC who say “Clarke’s Lane” signs have been done. They hope that the new “Back Lane leading to” sign will be done as soon as possible but no date given at this time.

10.11.20 New Items

a) GDPR refresher training for Clerk & Cllrs (See agenda support document) – Clerk

Drewsteignton Parish Council have asked Merton to consider paying half of the Clerks training cost this will be a cost of £15 for the Council.

No Cllrs felt the required a refresher course at this time.

Cllr Papworth proposed that the council authorise the Clerks attendance on the DLC GDPR training on the 3rd of December and agree to pay £15 to Drewsteignton Parish Council to cover the cost of this, seconded Cllr Brown. All in Favour – Motion Carried. (RR2020/042)

b) Doing what Matters – Consideration of invitation to virtual meeting to discuss priorities (See agenda support document) – Clerk

Cllrs discussed the priorities suggested by the Doing What Matters (DWM) team.

Clerk to liaise with DWM team to arrange meeting for meeting and ask that info be sent to Clerk and she will send out, Cllr Papworth stated that he would be willing to attend.

11.11.20 Clerks reports:

- a) **Planning application 1/0510/2020/FUL Construction of a covered slurry pit at Yeory Farm, Merton – Granted**

A copy of the Decision and the Delegated Report can be viewed by entering the application reference on the [TDC planning portal](#).

- b) **Planning application 1/0650/2020/FUL Construction of three dwellings - alteration to house types and site (resubmission of 1/0381/2015/FUL) at Land At Grid Reference 252607 111991, Clarkes Lane, Merton, Devon –Granted.**

A copy of the Decision and the Delegated Report can be viewed by entering the application reference on the [TDC planning portal](#).

- c) **Clerks Annual Leave Monday 14th December to Sunday 3rd January inclusive.**

The Clerk reported that she would set an out of office response prior to closing the office for the Christmas break.

- d) **Consideration of reimbursing Clerk for part of Zoom subscription cost.**

Total cost of subscription £59.95+VAT = £71.94

Cllrs discussed this matter and [Cllr Knightley proposed that the Council reimburse the Clerk £35.97 inc. VAT for half the total cost of this year's subscription, seconded Cllr Papworth. All in Favour – Motion Carried. \(RR2020/043\)](#)

- e) **Arrangements for effectiveness of Internal Audit to be carried out for approval at the January meeting.**

Cllrs asked the Clerk to draft a response document and circulate to Cllrs for consideration at the January Meeting

12.11.20 Cllr reports and Items for future agendas:

Cllr Papworth reported that the Defibrillator is back

Cllr Stacey: reported that the groove up middle of the road is still a concern – The Clerk agreed to report the issue on the highways website.

Cllr Stacey: asked if there are any plans to resurface the square and ask for it to be discussed at a future meeting. Clerk to consult Historic England for guidance on how to proceed and see if the square is on the listed buildings register.

Concerns of parishioner in Clarke's Lane: There is water running off the square into their garden. Cllr Papworth agreed to investigate and report back at the next meeting.

13.11.20 Finance: Clerk

- a) **To approve financial schedule of payments as presented by the Clerk at the meeting.**

[Cllr Knightley proposed that the financial schedule of payments as presented by the Clerk at the meeting be approved, seconded Cllr Twomey. All in Favour – Motion Carried \(RR2020/044\)](#)

- b) **To consider first draft of Budget for 2021-2022 (see agenda support document).**

Cllrs were happy with the first draft and asked the Clerk to bring the final draft back to the January meeting with proposed reserves for next financial year for consideration prior to agreeing the Precept request.

14.11.20 Confirmation of next meeting date:

The next meeting of the council will be on Monday 11th January 2021 at 7.30pm via Zoom.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 9pm.

Appendix A:**Pre-authorised payments made since last meeting**

Payment Ref	Amount	Payee	Details	Power	Expenditure approval Minutes Ref & RR
PM2021/027	£71.08	Alice Turner	Clerks retrospective Salary & O/T	LGA 1972 S.112	11.9.20 a) RR2020/034
PM2021/031	£250.56	Alice Turner	Clerks Salary 14.9.20-11.10.20	LGA 1972 S.112	11.9.20 b) RR2020/035
PM2021/032	£250.56	Alice Turner	Clerks Salary 12.10.20-8.11.20	LGA 1972 S.112	11.9.20 b) RR2020/035
Total	£572.20				

Payments for authorisation (retrospective approval):

Payment Ref	Amount	Payee	Details	Power	Funding Source
(PM2021/028)	£37.13	Steve Jennings	Grass Cutting	Highways Act 1980 S.96	Running Costs / Grass cutting
PM2021/029	£534.60	Bazeley, Barnes & Bazeley	Solicitors bill	LGA 1972 S.111	Unbudgeted Expenditure / contingency (VAT)
PM2021/030	£59.08	Alice Turner	Clerks Expenses (Oct & Nov)	LGA 1972 S.111 & S.112	Staff Costs/ Clerks Costs & Staff Costs/ Office exp.
TOTAL	£630.81				

Receipts since last meeting for information:

Payment ref	Payment method	Details	Amount
PR2021/014	Bacs	2nd Half Precept - £5.42 Covid grant reclaimed	£3,994.58
PR2021/015	Bacs	Parking Permit x1	£1.00
PR2021/016	Bacs	Parking Permit x1	£1.00
PR2021/017	Bacs	1st Half VAT re-claimed	£132.65
TOTAL			£3,994.58

Virment between budget headings for approval:

Amount	FROM	TO
£450	Admin / Website	Unbudgeted Expenditure

Monies held as Reserves:

Amount	Details
£1,500	Election cost
£8,000	Square Improvements
£500	Defibrillator replacement
£636	TAP Fund

~Minutes of meeting held 09-11-2020 ~ Initialled as a correct record: S.P

£1,000	Precept Contingency
£500.00	General Reserve
£12,136	TOTAL

Bank Total 09/11/2020	£17,247.58
Less Payments presented	£593.68
Plus receipts received (after Balance date)	£0.00
Less Money held as reserves	£12,136.00
Available Balance	£4,517.90

Signed as a true record: S. Papworth ~~Chair/Vice-Chair~~

Printed Cllr S. Papworth Date: 11th January 2021

Approved by resolution RR2020/046 with signing of the physical minutes when face to face meetings resume.

~Minutes of meeting held 09-11-2020 ~ Initialled as a correct record: S.P