

Merton Parish Council

Clerks details: Alice Turner 01837 83484 / clerk.mertonparishcouncildevon@gmail.com

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 11th January 2021, 7:30pm via Zoom.

Parish Councillors Present: Steve Papworth (Chair), Bill Brown (Vice-Chair), Brian Stacey & Paul Scantlebury.

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

BUSINESS TRANSACTED

Item 5.1.21 moved up as awaiting arrival of Cllr and meeting not quorate at this point. The Clerk informed the meeting that recording had begun to assist in the preparation of the minutes.

5.1.21 Guest Speaker – Liza Oxford

Liza Oxford is the Census Engagement Manager for Devon (Teignbridge, Torbay, West Devon & Torridge) and will be talking about the upcoming 2021 Census.

This year the Office of National Statistics (ONS) are promoting a “digital first” census which may present issues for some people who may not be technically minded, have poor connectivity or from low income households.

More information is via www.census.co.uk

Cllr Papworth asked how the Census will be advertised to the public.

Liza Oxford responded that it will be advertised by the government, as well as via television ads, radio adverts, billboards, a postcard “letter drop” is planned with access codes being posted to households early March which will have the details needed to request a paper copy of the census form.

Chair asked guest speaker to send promotional information to the Clerk for circulation via Facebook and Merton Monthly.

The meeting became quorate at 7.35pm.

1.1.21 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.

2.1.21 Apologies for absence:

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

The Clerk reported she had received the following apologies: Cllr Lang (prior commitment), Cllr Knightley (Work commitment) & Cllrs Nancekivell & Twomey (unwell). Apologies have also been received from FPCSO Sandra Brown.

[Cllr Stacey proposed that apologies from Cllr Lang \(prior commitment\), Cllr Knightley \(work commitment, Cllr Twomey \(unwell\) and Cllr Nancekivell \(unwell\) be approved, seconded Cllr Brown. All in Favour – Motion Carried. \(RR2020/045\)](#)

3.1.21 Minutes of the Last Meeting:

Cllrs to consider the approval of the Minutes of the virtual meeting held Monday 9th November 2020.

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Cllr Papworth proposed that the minutes of the council meeting held on Monday 9th November 2020 be approved as a true and accurate record with signing to take place once physical meetings resume, seconded Cllr Scantlebury. All in Favour – Motion Carried (RR2020/046)

4.1.21 Declarations of Interest: None.

6.1.21 Public Speaking Time: None.

7.1.21 District / County Councillors & Police Reports.

a) County Cllr Andrew Saywell

Can I start by wishing you all a Happy New Year, and to thank everyone in Merton for everything you are doing to keep the community safe during this difficult time.

Coronavirus

- Stats – As of 10th January DCC area of Devon now up to 14,586 coronavirus infections since the start of the pandemic.
- Since the 5th January that is a weekly increase of 1,611 infections.
- By way of comparison... in Torridge there were 81 new infections in the last 7 days, North Devon 121 in the last 7 days, West Devon 74 cases in the last 7 days.
- There are now over 20,000 tests a week being carried out in the County.
- Locally, we have done incredibly well to keep our local infection rates as low as we have. **Torridge has the lowest infection rate per 100,000 in England (118.7)**, followed by North Devon and West Devon, and **Devon as a whole has the one of the lowest rates in Upper Tier Authorities in England (200.8 per 100,000)**. At present Devon is actually the lowest Upper Tier authority but things can change quickly.

However... **cases are still rising**. In the November lockdown we saw cases continue to rise for about 10 days after the commencement of the lockdown. So if those trends are replicated for the January lockdown, we would anticipate seeing the impact of that in the figures next week.

Cases in Devon are highest in the working age population and elderly (75yrs +), with elderly cases, sadly, mainly attributable to care home outbreaks. In Torridge cases are very much in the working age bracket, and we are seeing increases in cases and outbreaks in workplace settings and subsequently households.

So while the situation is not as bad here as other areas of the country, the situation remains extremely serious. Please **stay at home**, and only leave home if you absolutely have to. When you do go out, **don't forget to socially distance, wear a face covering in indoor public spaces and wash your hands regularly**.

We don't have definitive proof yet but it is extremely likely that the new variant of coronavirus is here, and this strain is much more infectious than previous strains – where there have been outbreaks, in a workplace or care home, the number of infections has been much higher.

COVID Vaccinations

On the more positive side... the good news is that residents of Torrington Rural aged 80+ and residents and staff of care homes **have started to receive their vaccinations**. County wide, **1000s of people have received their first vaccination dose**.

Main points for vaccine rollout:

- We now have vaccination hubs up and running at all four acute hospitals in Devon -these are vaccinating hospital staff and over 80's inpatients about to go home and outpatients
- 16 Primary Care Network vaccination sites up and running with 4 more coming on stream end of this week
- Mass Vaccination sites in Plymouth and Exeter to be opening before the end of January

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- Vaccination of care home staff and residents has started prioritising largest care homes in the first instance (50+ residents)
- Locally, there have been vaccination sites at Holsworthy, Okehampton and Barnstaple. This has been due to the complexities of storing the Pfizer vaccine. Now that the Oxford vaccine has arrived, I know from talking to the head of one of Torrington's GP Practices that they are looking at rolling this out more locally so people do not have to travel long distances.

Priority for Phase 1 according to JCVI priority list is: Care home residents, over 80's and frontline health and care staff.

Thousands have been vaccinated already with each Primary Care Network having received at least one batch of vaccines (975 vaccines per batch); we received the Oxford vaccine last week and we have the workforce in place to undertake the vaccine programme. It is, however, a huge logistical exercise, very much dependent upon the speed and rate of vaccine supplies. Please though wait for the NHS to contact you when it is your turn.

Covid-19 Prompt Action Grant

DCC's COVID-19 grants have opened again for the third lockdown. The guidance is slightly amended and can be found on this link along with the online application

form. <https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/document/covid-19-fund/>

The biggest difference to the first two waves is that DCC are working in partnership with Devon Community Foundation to fund food projects. So any project that is for food provision needs to apply here <http://devoncf.com/apply/community-food-programme-2/>

Libraries and Recycling Centres

- Devon's libraries are now temporarily closed for the new lockdown.
- Household Waste and Recycling Centres remain open for essential use only.

Can I again thank you for all you are doing to stay safe and to keep our communities safe during this difficult time. Hope is on the horizon with the vaccine... but we must not let our guard down or become complacent. Please follow the rules. DCC will do all that it can, as it has done during the first and second lockdown, to support the people of Devon during this difficult time and to protect the old, the young, and the vulnerable. We will recover from this pandemic and the lockdown. But in the meantime, please stay at home and stay safe.

b) District Cllr Richard Wiseman

District Cllr Wiseman reported that TDC have repairing the Slipway at Westward Ho! Making good after the recent storm. New visitors centre at Northam burrows has received planning and works are hoped to be underway soon.

A new COVID -19 vaccination centre will hopefully be set up at Northam.

There are several grants available, for businesses and individuals, via the TDC website

<https://www.torrridge.gov.uk/coronavirus.>

c) Police report - FPCSO Brown

FPCSO Brown had informed the Clerk that no crimes were recorded between 12-11-2020 and 08-01-2021.

During the same period 2 transport incidents were recorded, which is the same as this period from the 2019-20 year.

8.1.21 Governance Documents & Policies

To consider the approval and ratification of the following documents (document circulated to Cllrs and available at the meeting):

a) Review of effectiveness of Internal Audit 2019-2020

Cllrs discussed the document and [Cllr Papworth proposed that the review of effectiveness of Internal Audit 2019-2020 be approved, seconded Cllr Brown. All in Favour – Motion Carried \(RR2020/047\)](#)

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9.1.21 Current Business:

a) Update on Flowerbed in Square (Cllrs Papworth/Nancekivell)

Deferred to next meeting due to absence of Cllr Nancekivell.

b) Website compliance with WCAG 2.0 - update (Clerk)

New website is now live and the Clerk has taken over management of the site.

c) Traffic & Highways Concerns (Chair)

Clerk to circulate report it link to Cllrs to report faults/potholes.

d) Update on street name signs (Clerk)

No new update at this time. Clerk will continue to monitor.

10.1.21 Clerks reports:

a) Update on transfer of @mertondevon email accounts & website to new server.

Website and emails will be transferred one evening next week to minimise disruption. Clerk will send new login information to Cllrs personal emails when received from provider.

b) Additional Employment.

In line with the terms of her employment contract the Clerk informed the Council that she has accepted a job offer from Monkleigh Parish Council to become their new Clerk & R.F.O.

11.1.21 Cllr reports and Items for future agendas:

Drainage in the square –Cllr Scantlebury: Cllr Scantlebury reported that there is vase amounts of mud at the drain in the square, and suggested that a quote be obtained from installing a new drain at the back of Moorview.

Clerk to contact Wayne Mansfield and Colin Newell for quote, Clerk to see if square is listed. Post Office - Cllr Brown: Concerns have been raised by parishioners regarding the Post offices limited opening times pre-lockdown and that is it currently not open during this lockdown. Clerk to write to Merton Post Office raising concerns and asking for clarification.

12.1.21 Finance: Clerk to present documents for this item at the Meeting.

a) To approve financial schedule of payments as presented by the Clerk. (Appendix A)

Cllr Papworth proposed that the financial schedule of payments as presented by the Clerk at the meeting be approved, seconded Cllr Scantlebury. All in Favour – Motion Carried (RR2020/048)

b) To receive budget report up to 31.12.2020. (Appendix B)

Cllr Papworth proposed that the 3rd quarter budget report as presented by the Clerk at the meeting be approved, seconded Cllr Scantlebury. All in Favour – Motion Carried (RR2020/049)

c) To consider draft Budget for 2021-2022 and precept request. (Appendix C)

Cllr Papworth proposed that the 2021-2022 budget for £8660.00 be approved with a precept request for £8350.00 being submitted by the Clerk to TDC, seconded Cllr Scantlebury. All in Favour – Motion Carried (RR2020/050)

The Chair and Cllrs thanked the Clerk for all her work on the budget.

13.1.21 Confirmation of next meeting date:

The next meeting of the council will be on Monday 8th March 2021 at 7.30pm via Zoom.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.35pm.

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

Payment Ref	Amount	Payee	Details	Power	Expenditure approval Minutes Ref & RR
PM2021/034	£250.56	Alice Turner	Clerks Salary 9.11.20 - 06.12.20	LGA 1972 S.112	11.9.20 b) RR2020/035
PM2021/036	£35.97	Alice Turner	Pre-approved Expenses.	LGA 1972 S.112	11.11.20 d) RR2020/043
PM2021/037	£313.20	Alice Turner	Clerks Salary 7.12.20 - 10.1.21	LGA 1972 S.112	11.9.20 b) RR2020/035
Total	£599.73				

Payments for authorisation (retrospective approval):

Payment Ref	Amount	Payee	Details	Power	Funding Source
(PM2021/033)	£61.69	Steve Jennings	Grass Cutting	Highways Act 1980 S.96	Running Costs / Grass cutting
(PM2021/035)	£122.50	C. Jones Design	Website & Email hosting fees	LGA 1972 S.111	Admin/Website
PM2021/038	£36.00	Alice Turner	Clerks Expenses (Dec & Jan)	LGA 1972 S.111	Staff Costs/Office exp.
TOTAL	£220.19				

Receipts since last meeting for information:

Payment ref	Payment method	Details	Amount
PR2021/018	Bacs	Grass Cutting Contract Payment from DCC	£392.00
TOTAL			£392.00

Virment between budget headings for approval:

Amount	FROM	TO
£100.00	Admin/Hall Hire	Earmarked reserve "Hall Hire 2020-21"
£200.00	Prof Fees/IA&EA	Earmarked reserve "Defib Supplies"
£100.00	Assets / Defib	Earmarked reserve "Defib Supplies"
£500.00	Assets / Maintenance	Earmarked reserve "Assets Fund"
£950.00	Assets/Purchases	Earmarked reserve "Assets Fund"

Monies held as Reserves:

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

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£636	TAP Fund
£1,000	Precept Contingency
£500.00	General Reserve
£12,136	TOTAL

Bank Total 11/01/2021	£16,261.98
Less Payments presented	£36.00
Plus receipts Received (if after Balance date)	£0.00
Less Money held as reserves	£12,136.00
Available Balance	£4,089.98

Appendix B: 3rd quarter Budget report.

Income

INCOME	Budget			
	2020/21 Budget	Actual Income 31-12-2020	Difference	Notes
Precept	8000.00	8000.00	0.00	Precept set at £8000 + £2000 released from reserves to offset budget.
Parking Permits	8.00	16.00	8.00	
Other/grants	392.00	1298.66	906..6	£906.66 COVID-19 Grants from TDC/DCC
TOTAL	8400.00	9314.66	914.66	

Expenditure

	2020/21 Budget	Actual expenditure to 31-12-2020	Difference	Over/ Under/ On Budget	NOTES
STAFF COSTS	£4,100.00	£2,763.92	£1,336.08	Under	No Concerns at this time
Clerk Salary & costs	£3,600.00	£2,531.44	£1,068.56	Under	
Office Expenses	£400.00	£217.48	£182.52	Under	
Training	£100.00	£15.00	£85.00	Under	
ADMINISTRATIO N	£925.00	£633.60	£291.40	Under	No Concerns at this time
Insurance	£500.00	£490.28	£9.72	Under	
Website	£200.00	£122.50	£77.50	Under	
Hall Hire	£100.00	£0.00	£100.00	Under	Virment to earmarked reserve requested
Norton Anti-virus	£25.00	£20.82	£4.18	Under	

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Contingency	£100.00	£0.00	£100.00	Under	
RUNNING COSTS	£392.00	£350.87	£41.13	Under	No Concerns at this time
Grass Cutting & Village Maintenance	£392.00	£350.87	£41.13	Under	
PROFESSIONAL FEES	£460.00	£212.00	£248.00	Under	No Concerns at this time
Audit internal & external	£350.00	£150.00	£200.00	Under	Virment to earmarked reserve requested
Data Protection Registration/ICO	£40.00	£0.00	£40.00	Under	
Subscriptions/Memberships	£70.00	£62.00	£8.00	Under	
ASSETS	£1,922.00	£372.00	£1,550.00	Under	No Concerns at this time
Maintenance	£500.00	£0.00	£500.00	Under	Virment to earmarked reserve requested
Purchases	£950.00	£0.00	£950.00	Under	Virment to earmarked reserve requested
Defibrillator	£350.00	£250.00	£100.00	Under	Virment to earmarked reserve requested
Play Equipment	£122.00	£122.00	£0.00	On	
GRANTS/DONATIONS	£698.00	£467.00	£231.00	Under	No Concerns at this time
Standing Grants	£528.00	£300.00	£228.00	Under	
Poppy Wreath	£20.00	£17.00	£3.00	Under	
Other Grants/Donations	£150.00	£150.00	£0.00	ON	
Reserves	£1,500.00	£1,500.00	£0.00	ON	
General	£500.00	£500.00	£0.00	On	
Precept Contingency	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	£0.00	On	

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Unbudgeted Spending	£1362.08	£883.68	£478.40	Under	
Unbudgeted Spending	1362.08	£883.68	£478.40	Under	DCC COVID-19 Grant remaining
TOTALS	£9,997.00	£6,299.39	£3,697.61		

Appendix C: 2021-22 draft Budget & Precept recommendation report by RFO.

Precept recommendation:

I recommend that Merton Parish Council approve a precept request of £8350 which although higher than last year, due to an increased tax base, is a reduction per band D household of £0.01 or 0.01% (see table below).

Parish Tax base in 2021/22:

Tax base for 2020/21	119.98
Changes over the last year	5.26
Tax base for 2021/22	125.24

Precept request for 2021/22	£8350
This is an increase (reduction) in total precept (budget requirement) of:	£350
We estimate that your parish Band D rate will be:	£66.67
This is an increase / (decrease) of	£-0.01 or -0.01%

Proposed Budget for 2021-22:

INCOME	Draft Budget			
	2020/21 Budget	Actual Income to 30-10-20	Predicted total Year End	2021/22 Draft Budget
Precept	8000.00	8000.00	8000.00	8350.00
Parking Permits	8.00	16.00	16.00	10.00
Other/grants	2381.00	2000.00	2392.00	300.00
TOTAL	10389.00	10016.00	10408.00	8660.00

	Draft Budget			
BUDGET HEADS EXPENDITURE	2020/21 Budget	Actual expenditure to 30-10-20	Predicted total Year End	2021/22 Draft Budget
Staff Costs	4100.00	2763.92	3730.92	4000.00
Administration	1375.00	633.60	636.10	905.00
Running Costs	350.00	350.87	392.00	400.00
Professional fees	460.00	212.00	247.00	310.00
Assets	1900.00	372.00	1822.00	1225.00
Grants/Donations	720.00	467.00	467.00	570.00
Reserves	1500.00	1500.00	1500.00	1250.00
TOTAL	10405.00	6299.39	8795.02	8660.00

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	2020/21 Budget	Actual expenditure to 31-12-20	Predicted total Year End	2021/22 Draft Budget
STAFF COSTS	£4,100.00	£2,763.92	£3,730.92	£4,000.00
Clerk Salary & costs	£3,600.00	£2,531.44	£3,319.92	£3,500.00
Office Expenses	£400.00	£217.48	£336.00	£400.00
Training	£100.00	£15.00	£75.00	£100.00
ADMINISTRATION	£1,375.00	£633.60	£636.10	£905.00
Insurance	£500.00	£490.28	£490.28	£550.00
IT (previously Website)	£650.00	£122.50	£125.00	£155.00
Hall Hire	£100.00	£0.00	£0.00	£100.00
Norton Anti-virus	£25.00	£20.82	£20.82	£0.00
Contingency	£100.00	£0.00	£0.00	£100.00
RUNNING COSTS	£350.00	£350.87	£392.00	£400.00
Grass Cutting & Village Maint.	£350.00	£350.87	£392.00	£400.00
PROFESSIONAL FEES	£460.00	£212.00	£247.00	£310.00
Audit internal & external	£350.00	£150.00	£150.00	£200.00
Data Protection Registration	£40.00	£0.00	£35.00	£35.00
Subscriptions/Memberships	£70.00	£62.00	£62.00	£75.00
ASSETS	£1,900.00	£372.00	£1,822.00	£1,225.00
Maintenance	£500.00	£0.00	£500.00	£250.00
Purchases	£950.00	£0.00	£850.00	£500.00
Defibrillator	£350.00	£250.00	£350.00	£350.00
Play Equipment	£100.00	£122.00	£122.00	£125.00
GRANTS/DONATIONS	£720.00	£467.00	£467.00	£570.00
Standing Grants	£550.00	£300.00	£300.00	£300.00
Poppy Wreath	£20.00	£17.00	£17.00	£20.00
Other Grants/Donations	£150.00	£150.00	£150.00	£250.00
Reserves	£1,500.00	£1,500.00	£1,500.00	£1,250.00
General	£500.00	£500.00	£500.00	£250.00
Precept Contingency	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	£1,000.00
TOTALS	£10,405.00	£6,299.39	£8,795.02	£8,660.00

NOTES:

Grants for consideration	
N.D Records Office	£50.00
ODCTG	£50.00
Plough Arts Centre	£100.00
Citizens Advice	£50.00

ALSO NOTE:

Assets/Defib: Budget £350 = £250 replacement accrual + £100 Supplies

Administration/Norton: Budget £0 as it has been added into the IT Budget for 2021/22

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Proposed Reserves as of 01-04-2021:

Amount	Details
£1,500	Election cost
£8,000	Square Improvements
£500	Defibrillator unit replacement
£300	Defibrillator supplies
£1,350	Assets Fund(inc. display Cabinet)
£100	Hall Hire 2020-21
£636	TAP Fund
£1,000	Precept Contingency
£500.00	General Reserve
£13,886	TOTAL

Signed as a true record: _____

Printed _____ **Date:** _____

Approved by Resolution number: RR2020/061

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