

## HIGH BICKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Mrs Jenny Baker, Homewell Cottage, High Bickington, UMBERLEIGH. Devon EX37 9AY

Tel: 01769 560628 e-mail: [highbickingtonpc@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:highbickingtonpc@hotmail.co.uk)

Website: [www.highbickingtonparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.highbickingtonparishcouncil.co.uk)

### Minutes of Virtual Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday 10 February 2021 7.30 pm

**Present:** Chris McWhirter (Chairman) Councillors: Charmaine Coxon, Adam Bunting, Bob Boothby, Franklin Spencer, Jenny Baker (Clerk) County Councillor Andrew Saywell, District Councillors, Michael Clarke and Rosemary Lock

**Apologies:** Councillor Roger Keen, PSCO Sandra Brown

The Chairman thanked everyone for joining the virtual meeting and asked County Councillor Andrew Saywell to give his update:

#### County Councillor – Andrew Saywell

##### Coronavirus

- Stats – As of 9<sup>th</sup> February DCC area of Devon now up to 18,506 coronavirus infections since the start of the pandemic.
- Since the 5<sup>th</sup> February that is a weekly increase of 475 infections.
- By way of comparison... in Torridge there were 15 new infections in the last 7 days, North Devon 24 in the last 7 days, West Devon 31 cases in the last 7 days. (West Devon's numbers had been affected by a couple of care home outbreaks but their numbers are now decreasing)
- There are now over 20,000 tests a week being carried out in the County.
- In the 'Winkleigh and High Bickington MSOA area' there were 0-3 new infections. When there are fewer than 3 infections the Government does not show the data to protect individuals' identities.

The good news is... **cases are falling, locally, District-wide and County-wide.**

**Locally we are still doing incredibly well to keep our infection rates low. Devon has the lowest upper-tier infection rate in England (59.2). Torridge has the lowest infection rate in England (22),** with only the Shetland and Orkney Islands recording lower infection rates in the UK.

However, these numbers can change quickly, and while the falling infection rates are good news, new infection cases are still around the same level now as they were at mid-October.

Infection cases in Devon are highest among the 20 to 39 year old age group. We are still seeing the virus spreading in some workplaces, often attributable to car sharing.

If car sharing is essential please follow the recommended guidance about reducing the risk to yourselves and fellow passengers – guidance can be found online [here](#).

Key workers should also look to use Community Testing sites when they become available (more information below).

**As infections fall and vaccinations ramp up, we must not let our guard down now. 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.**

## Community Testing

DCC has started to roll out Community Testing for coronavirus. Community testing will help to find individuals who have COVID-19 but do not have symptoms and need to isolate and who may inadvertently be spreading the virus. A positive or negative result will not remove the need to follow existing COVID measures socially and in the workplace.

Rapid lateral flow tests will be used, which will provide a result within thirty minutes. This will not be a substitute for the national coronavirus testing – **if you are symptomatic, people should book a free NHS test via the GOV.UK website or by calling 119. Do not use community testing.**

The first site opened at the end of January, at County Hall in Exeter, with other sites planned to become available across the County in February and March. Sites are being targeted at areas with higher levels of the virus first.

In Torridge a community testing site will be set up at Bideford – however the plan is to have a mobile testing facility to cover Torrington, Holsworthy, Hartland and Bradworthy up and running in March, dates to be determined. The aim is to have testing as accessible as it can be.

When this is up and running locally, please use [devon.cc/testing](https://devon.cc/testing) to book a test.

Please remember, if you have symptoms book a test through the Government website. Don't use DCC Community Testing.

## COVID Vaccinations

The rollout of the vaccine in Devon and in Torrington Rural has, so far, been going well.

Main points for vaccine rollout - 204,815 people in Devon received their first vaccine dose between 8<sup>th</sup> December – 31<sup>st</sup> January

- 91.6% (72,831) of over 80s have received their first dose in Devon
- 72.7% (39,993) of people aged 75-79 in Devon have received their first dose.
- Devon is on course to have offered everyone in the JCVI Groups 1-4 by mid-February.
- Nearly all older people's care homes across Devon have had vaccination visits.
- **Even when you have been vaccinated, you must still continue to follow the COVID-19 safety rules – stay at home as much as possible and remember hands, face, space.**
- Beware vaccine scammers – remember the vaccine is free and only available on the NHS; and you will never be asked for financial information if contacted for an appointment.
- **Torrington's GP Surgeries now administering vaccines locally** – Castle Gardens surgery held their first Covid vaccine clinic on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> January and plans are afoot to have a constant Covid clinic running throughout the week. They are targeting those that they know cannot make it to Barnstaple or other vaccine centres.
- I have suggested to the NHS about using other mass vaccine sites in Torrington though there are logistical challenges involved, however more local options are becoming available.
- The NHS is also looking at mobile roll out for more isolated rural communities.
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This remains a huge logistical exercise, very much dependent upon the speed and rate of vaccine supplies. Please wait for the NHS to contact you when it is your turn. Rolling is getting more localised, those who cannot travel far should be able to get their jab administered locally.

### **Covid-19 Prompt Action Grant**

A reminder that 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/> Cum Page 1233

### **Free School Meals Voucher Schemes**

During Half Term DCC will be providing more than 15,000 children's families in Devon with food vouchers

Families of children currently receiving free school meals will automatically be sent supermarket vouchers by DCC to help them buy food over the week-long holiday to replace the meals a child would have received during term-time. This will be for more than 15,000 children in the County. The vouchers – worth £15 a week for each child – can be redeemed in major supermarkets across Devon. Arrangements are in place for families who cannot get to a supermarket.

More information can be found online here <https://www.devonnewscentre.info/drive-to-combat-holiday-hunger-in-devon-continues-for-february-half-term>

### **Locality Budget**

Following on from the last Parish Council meeting I'm pleased to have been able to award £400 to the High Bickington Playing Field Association to help with their fundraising efforts to purchase new play equipment.

### **DCC Budget**

The Budget has now gone through the Scrutiny process for approval at the Council's Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> February, followed by Full Council. Exact details are still TBC but the overall budget is set to increase by £37million with an uplift in the Adult Social Care and Children's Services Budgets. I will give the Parish Council a full briefing next month once all the details are available.

### **Highways – Potholes and Gritting**

Due to the inclement weather there is a large backlog of potholes to repair. Extra Gangs are being deployed to fix these however they are prioritising safety defects first, ahead of non-safety defects and serviceability patching.

There have also been localised flooding incidents on the highways around Torrington Rural.

I have also been in touch with the Clerk regarding gritting the road to the Community Centre, which will be discussed later in your agenda.

### **Elections**

The Government have confirmed that the May Elections to Devon County Council **will** be taking place on May 6<sup>th</sup>. I will be re-standing and am hopeful of re-election! I've worked hard for High Bickington these last four years and together I believe we have achieved a lot. There have been some significant road improvements within the Parish, and improvements to mobile and broadband connectivity but there is more to do. I remain though at your service until May, and I hope to be afterwards as well.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Saywell for his report and asked a question regarding some signs which have appeared in the village warning of 'ice' which the Parish Council were not aware were being installed. The Chairman asked why the Council would spend money on signs when the money could be better spent on fixing the drainage problems. Councillor Saywell advised that the signs would have been put up by the Contractor to warn drivers of ice on the road until such time that the Contractor could come back and do the necessary work to fix the drainage issue. This is the standard procedure when a problem cannot be dealt with immediately. Councillor Saywell will endeavour to visit the area to take a look at the problem.

### **District Councillor Michael Clarke**

Advised that he had spoken to Deputy Chairman Adam Bunting about a donation of £500.00 from his locality budget to go towards the cost of replacing play equipment at the Barton Meadow Playground. The application paperwork has been sent to the Clerk.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Clarke for his support and also thanked County Councillor Andrew Saywell for the amount he had been able to donate to the Playing Field Committee in support of their fundraising for new play equipment.

Councillor Rosemary Lock advised that she too may be able to provide some assistance to the Parish Council for the Barton Meadow play equipment and will confirm.

Councillor Lock referred to the correspondence from NALC regarding the reinstatement of formal meetings in May and the guidance that if Councils are not in a position or not comfortable holding formal meetings then they might want to bring the date forward of the Annual Meeting to enable it to be held via Zoom.

**Police Report - PSCO Sandra Brown** – sent her apologies and provided a written report:

No crimes recorded in the past month but 2 incidents reported, 1 of anti social behaviour and 1 transport.

The formal meeting commenced:

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies received from Councillor Roger Keen, PCSO Sandra Brown.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest** - No declarations of interest were received.

#### **3. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021** Councillors confirmed minutes had been read and accepted. Chairman will sign the minutes.

#### **4. Matters arising from the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 13 January** No other matters raised.

#### **5. Police Matters** – refer report above, no other matters raised.

#### **6. Barton Meadow Play Area** – Deputy Chairman Adam Bunting Advised that an approach had been made from a member of the Parish asking if the bank at Barton Meadow could be planted with wild flowers. The Councillors discussed the pros and cons of removing the grass on the bank and planting wild flowers and agreed that keeping the grass on the bank was the best option for the play area.

#### **7. Maintenance:**

- (a) **Highways** – The Chairman advised that the response from Devon Highways Department regarding additional gritting had confirmed that they have a large gritting network which covers main roads only and its not possible to add minor roads to the gritting network.

Councillor Saywell had suggested that it might be an idea to move one of the existing grit bins in the village to the Cole Meadow location. The Council discussed this option but agreed the existing bins should remain in their existing locations and another option should be found. Councillor Lock suggested the Parish Council could purchase a grit bin and she would be happy to help with the cost. Councillor Saywell agreed to discuss with the Highways department whether they would be able to fill a new bin if one was bought by the Council.

- (b) **Footpaths and Byways** - In the absence of Councillor Keen, the Chairman advised that a suggestion had been received to replace one of the bridleway farm gates with a gate that has a smaller gate built in that can be opened independently to allow pedestrian access only. The Chairman felt that this could be looked at as an option when the existing gate was due for replacement.

## 8. CPT Update

Councillor Franklin Spencer advised that there has not been a CPT meeting since the last Parish Council Meeting, the next meeting is on the 18<sup>th</sup> February. The survey to determine interest/demand for workshop or office space had been circulated. The rental of the piece of land adjoining the allotments has generated the most interest from the members of the Allotment Society who are very keen for the land to be joined to the allotments as the piece of land for rent has road access and this would benefit the existing allotment holders.

Biomass - the current biomass system is at about mid life. A system would normally last between 15 – 20 years depending on how it has been maintained during its life. The current system is estimated to have 10 years remaining. CPT trying to set up a meeting with the current maintenance provider but it is proving difficult. They would like to find out what maintenance has been done and what is planned. A new contract has been circulated which prompted the questions regarding the status of the current system. Need to plan and look at options for what a replacement system would be. It is not clear at this stage what the Government Policy is likely to be on Biomass moving forward.

9. **Matters raised by the Chairman:** New website – Councillors asked to provide photograph and short biography to the Clerk as soon as possible. Wording for 'About the Village' has been updated and circulated to all Councillors for their approval.

## 10. General Finance

(a)	Barclays current a/c statement as at 31 January 2021		£26,280.24
	Less cheques not cleared:		
	100902 H.B. Football Club	£200.00	
	100912 Chris Seage	£40.00	
	100914 CPRE	£36.00	
	100908 J Brown Treecare to be cancelled and reissued this month:	(£120.00)	
			<u>£26,124.24</u>
(b)	Cheques to be issued:		
	100916 J Brown (as above)	£120.00	
	100917 J Baker Salary & Expenses	£343.06	
		<u>£463.06</u>	<u>£25,661.18</u>

**11. Planning - New Planning Applications:**

Two new applications received since the last meeting.

**1/00 67/2021/FUL**

**Hoopers Farm, High Bickington**

Proposed replacement of fenestration and bargeboards

Application and drawings had been circulated, all Councillors present voted to approve.

**1/0085/2021/FUL**

**Stone Cottage, North Road, High Bickington**

Demolition of existing conservatory, chimney single storey rear extension. Alterations to the roof and porch on the front elevation, addition of solar panels to rear elevation including creation of pitched roof over existing flat roof, first floor dormer and widening of door to front elevation.

Details of the application and drawings circulated to the Councillors for their review. All Councillors present confirmed they had no objections and voted to approve.

**1/004/2021/DIS**

**Land at Town Farm, North Road, High Bickington**

Discharge of condition 4 of planning approval 1/0552/2017/0UT – Construction Method Statement

The above application was circulated to the Councillors for their information.

**Previous applications:**

**1/0982/2020/OUTM**

Outline application for 14no. Holiday lodges and associated works with all matters reserved except access

Land at Libbaton Golf Club, Libbaton Golf Course, High Bickington

PC Decision: Approved

TDC Decision: Pending

**Status Previous Applications:**

**1/1068/2020/FUL**

Erection of five holiday lodges

Forest Park Lodges, High Bickington

PC Decision: Approved

TDC Decision: Approved

- 12. Correspondence:** Introduction email from Adrian Avery, new Community Engagement Officer, Torridge District Council. Clerk will invite Adrian to attend a Parish Council Meeting.

- 13. Items for information:** No other matters raised.

The Chairman closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their participation.

Next Meeting 10 March 2021