

HIGH BICKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of Virtual Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday 11 November 2020 7.30 pm

Present: **Chris McWhirter (Chairman)** Adam Bunting (Deputy Chairman) Councillors:
 Charmaine Coxon, Bob Boothby, Jenny Baker (Clerk)
 2 Members of the public – Mr Franklin Spencer, prospective new Parish Councillor,
 Mr David Halpin, representing the CPT.

The Chairman thanked the attendees for joining the virtual meeting and acknowledged the apologies received from County Councillor Andrew Saywell and District Councillor Rosemary Lock who were required to attend other Parish Meetings being held at the same time to discuss urgent matters.

The Chairman opened the meeting by congratulating District Councillor Michael Clarke on his appearance on TV during his attendance at the Remembrance Service held in London on the weekend. Councillor Clarke was one of very few guests invited to attend to represent the Merchant Seaman's veteran association.

The Chairman then read the report from County Councillor Andrew Saywell which had been emailed earlier in the day.

Coronavirus

- Stats – As of 11th November DCC area of Devon now up to 6,143 coronavirus infections since the start of the pandemic.
- Since the 9th November that is a weekly increase of 701
- By way of comparison... in Torridge there were just 42 cases in the last 7 days from 7th November, North Devon 95 in the last 7 days, West Devon 49 cases in the last 7 days.

In general, the cases are scattered, tending to be 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.

Currently Torridge has the lowest rate of all the Devon districts, at approximately two thirds of the overall Devon rate and a quarter of the national rate, which is good news.

At my request, the DCC Public Health Team have had a look at these and all are very low numbers – following the pattern of mostly single or household cases, with a few in workplaces, a couple from primary schools, and four cases picked up in care homes.

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 High Bickington, 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.”

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 lockdown.

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 lock down.

Applications opened 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

North Devon Link Road Upgrade

The Government has confirmed yesterday it is awarding DCC **£60 million** to upgrade the North Devon Link Road between South Molton and Barnstaple.

- Sections of the road will be widened to provide better overtaking opportunities and improve journey time reliability, and eight junctions will be upgraded to improve safety.
- Junction improvements also include improvements to Westleigh Junction, Haywood Rd Roundabout and Buckleigh Junction on the A39 in Bideford.

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).

Barton Meadow Yellow Lines

- Highways have confirmed they can place double yellow lines here to help alleviate the on-street parking issues. Please be aware though the legal process for laying down these double yellow lines can be and often is long and drawn out which will mean the lines won't get painted overnight.

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/>

Schools and School Transport

- Despite the lockdown there has been a good return to School with the latest attendance figures for schools at the end of last week in Devon at 93% (compared with 89% nationally). All Schools in Torrington Rural have had an attendance rate of over 90%, with High Bickington's attendance rate at 93%.
- 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.
- Since November 2nd it has been 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.

Support for Parents/Children

- The Government have awarded DCC more than **£2 million** to support vulnerable people, children and families over Winter.
- School Holiday Activities and Food Programme will be expanded covering Easter, Summer and Christmas in 2021.
- Councils will distribute the funds rather than Schools as they are best placed to directly help the hardest hit families and individuals, as well as provide food for children who need it over the holiday.
- Local Authorities will receive the ring fenced funding at the beginning of December.

Alongside this:

- The Healthy Start scheme payments are set to increase – they support pregnant women or those with children under four who have low income and are in receipt of benefits to buy fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Additional funding for food distribution organisations.

Report from the Police

PCSO Sandra Brown sent her apologies as she was not able to join this meeting but does hope to attend next month. The below report was submitted by email:

Police Report:

Incident Closing Category	Number of Incidents 10/10/20 to 09/11/20
Anti Social Behaviour	2
Crime Recorded	2
Public Safety	3
Transport	2
Total	9

Offence	Crime Recorded 10/10/20 to 09/11/20
Violence without injury	1
Total	1

The Chairman invited David Halpin to update the Parish Council on CPT matters.

David Halpin – CPT Representative

David thanked the Council for inviting him to the meeting and for the reply sent to the CPT regarding workshops/office space. Now that more people are working from home and finding it difficult with noisy family and pets around they may be looking for somewhere quiet to work for a short time. Planning already exists for additional workshops and the CPT have spoken to the Planning Department about possible changes to the layout of the workshops to provide smaller units. They have confirmed they would not be too worried about the internal layout and how they are fitted out as long as there are no changes to the outside and that remains the same. Torridge have three sites they are using as pilots for office work hub space but sadly we are not one of those sites despite having planning in place. The lead on this is Mr Chris Fuller and following a conversation with him he is very interested in what we have to offer and even more interested if they have any slippage from any of the other sites. There is no more money available so we would have to wait for the next round of funding. He would however like to meet up with the Parish Council and the CPT in December to have a chat to take the matter forward. The CPT does have some money for the project but requires extra funding and maybe this is something the PC is willing to look at helping with. The next step is to scope the need among the village and a questionnaire circulated within the parish to seek expressions of interest both for work space and workshop rental. The questionnaire will contain details of estimates of rental charges. It has been decided the best time to canvass on this is in January so the aim is to get the questionnaire out in January 2021.

On another matter to keep the PC in the picture, the CPT are interested in developing further affordable housing. There are plots of land identified for future development in the 10 year plan. The CPT would like to hear from the Parish Council if they are approached by any developers planning to build in the area. The CPT would like to ensure that any future developments include affordable housing. The CPT have considerable expertise in this area and are well placed to work with a developer and have money available for a new scheme but not sure at this time what it would be.

The Chairman thanked David for the update and explained that his experience was limited with regard to previous relationships between the CPT and the Parish Council but is very keen to have better communication between the two and did suggest in the letter which was sent to the CPT that it would be a good idea to have a representative of the PC on the CPT Board and vice-versa. The Parish Council's financial position in the short term is very limited but they are not averse to looking into this further down the line but there would need to be a much closer working relationship for that to go ahead. CPT need to help the Councillors understand what the CPT is doing.

David explained that he has not been involved in the CPT Board for long and the actual CPT Board consists of only 4 members. He would not be in a position to become a full member of the Parish Council but agrees there should be better contact and trust. At the CPT AGM he suggested that the CPT re-launch itself in the village. It was set up to develop the woodland, the housing and the community centre but that's done now so there is a need to show what the CPT is doing and that it is a resource for the future. He suggested a re-launch flyer which could go out with the questionnaire discussed earlier. The Chairman asked David if the CPT are looking for help with the questionnaire. David explained they have the resources to do this themselves. The Chairman expressed interest in seeing any mailings before they are sent out. David confirmed that he is happy to come to future Parish Council meetings to keep the Council updated and build a better relationship. If there is a member of the Parish Council available to attend the CPT Board Meetings, they have one meeting a month and there are a few emails exchanged in between the meetings so the role is not onerous.

The Chairman finished this session by saying he would be more than happy to meet with Chris Fuller either by Zoom or preferably on site at Little Bickington. Councillor Bob Boothby also expressed an interest in joining this meeting. David Haplin will speak to Chris Fuller and arrange.

No further comments or reports – formal meeting commenced.

1. **Apologies for Absence** - County Councillor Andrew Saywell, District Councillor Rosemary Lock, Councillor Roger Keen, PCSO Sandra Brown.
2. **Declarations of Interest:** None received.
3. **Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 14 October, 2020** 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 14 October 2020**
No other matters raised.
5. **Police Matters** – refer report above, no other matters raised.
6. **Barton Meadow Play Area** - Deputy Chairman Adam Bunting, advised he is awaiting quotation for repairs from TK Play and will follow up to see if the inspection has taken place. He confirmed that the tree infected with Ash Die back has now been removed.

7. Maintenance

- (a) **Highways** – Barton Meadow Road – covered in Councillor Saywell's report above. The Chairman asked the Councillors present to confirm they had seen the location plan and were happy to proceed. As it has been explained several times the process for getting the lines approved and painted will take several months the Chairman felt it was in the best interests to move the matter forward.

Deputy Chairman, Adam Bunting advised that he had been alerted to a problem with conifer trees near the zebra crossing and adjacent to garages in Barton Meadow Road. The trees are now too big and encroaching on the garages. Photographs will be taken by Adam and the Clerk will then send them to Highways to see if they are able to remove them.

- (b) **Footpaths and Byways**
Councillor Roger Keen was not available to report. The Clerk advised that the P3 Survey for 2021 has been received. Also that the money due to the Council for 2021 has not been received but a follow up has been made and the money, should be received before the end of the year.

8. Matters raised by the Chairman:

- (a) **Recruiting new Councillors:**
The Chairman thanked Franklin Spencer for attending the meeting and putting himself forward as a prospective Councillor. If at the end of the meeting Franklin is happy to proceed arrangements will be made to co-opt him to the Council next month. In the meantime the Chairman asked all Councillors to think hard about how to recruit more new Councillors and come up with an idea for the next meeting.
- (b) **Updating Business Directory** - Councillor Charmaine Coxon explained that previously the Council had put a notice in the Ramblings to those businesses in the current directory to confirm their details and that they want to be included in the new directory and for any new businesses in the area that want to be included to send their details to the Parish Clerk. A suitable notice will be drafted for approval at the December meeting for inclusion in the January Ramblings.
- (c) **Work Hubs** – Nothing further to add on this, report to be given following the proposed meeting with Chris Fuller detailed above.

9. Finance:

General Finance

(a) Barclays current a/c statement as at 30 October 2020		£28,269.54
Less cheques not cleared:		
100899 Chris Seage	£160.00	
100902 H.B. Football Club	£200.00	
100904 H.B. School PTA	£200.00	
100905 Pyncombe Foundation	£125.00	
100906 Wm Dodds & Joshua Tucker Trust	£150.00	
		<u>£27,434.54</u>
Cheques to be issued:		
100908 James Brown Tree Care	£120.00	
100909 J Baker Sal. & Exp. October 2020	£341.48	
	£461.48	<u>£26,973.06</u>

- (b) **Budget** - All Councillors have been sent the details of the current financial position as at end October, 2020 and the current budget information. All Councillors present accepted the figures. The Clerk will now prepare the draft budget for 2021/22 for approval at the December meeting.

10. Planning - New Applications

1/0877/2020/FUL

Proposed extension and alterations
9 Fountain Fields, High Bickington

Councillors present confirmed they have no objections to this application,

1/0969/2020/FUH

Proposed extension to provide garage and workshop with ancillary accommodation
Silverweir, High Bickington

Councillors present confirmed they have no objection to this application.

Status Previous Applications:

1/0762/2020/FUL

Erection of a single storey side extension, single storey rear extension with alterations to rear and conversion of existing garage to form additional living accommodation.

15 Fountain Fields, High Bickington

Parish Council – Approved

TDC: Granted

1/0793/2020/FUL

Demolition of single storey side extension and garages and erection of two storey side extension and double garage with ancillary room above.

1 Cross Park, High Bickington

Parish Council – Approved

TDC: Granted

1/0797/2020/REM

Reserved matters application for appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of 5 no. dwellings pursuant to application 1/0552/2017/OUT

Land at Town Farm, North Road, High Bickington

Parish Council: Approved

TDC: Pending

1/0440/2020/FUL

Erection of a wooden shed for forestry purposes

Garage at Kingford

Parish Council: Approved

TDC: Granted

1/0643/2020/FUL

Change of use from an ancillary annexe to a separate residential dwelling

The Shippen, Weirmarsh Farm, High Bickington

PC Decision: Approved

TDC: Pending

1/0392/2020/FUL

Conversion of derelict stable into 1 dwelling house
Libsters Farm, Pound Lane, High Bickington
Application withdrawn

District Councillor Michael Clarke, was able to join the meeting having finished with his previous meeting. The Chairman repeated his Congratulations on his TV appearance. Councillor Clarke advised that his visit to London had been a very surreal experience. The only item of news he had to report was that following the previous lockdown the Torrington Pool would remain closed. This has happened because during routine maintenance asbestos was found and work must now be conducted to remove it from the site. This has been delayed due to the second lockdown which means for the time being the pool must remain closed.

12. Correspondence: None

13. Items for Information: None

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

Next Meeting 9th December 2020