

## HIGH BICKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

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### Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday 12 February 2020 at 7.30pm in the Community Centre, High Bickington

**Present:** Neil Parker (Chairman) Councillors: Adam Bunting, Roger Keen,  
Chris McWhirter, County Councillor Andrew Saywell,  
District Councillor Michael Clarke, Jenny Baker (Clerk)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited **County Councillor Andrew Saywell** to give an update:

#### The Plough

As you will have seen, The Plough Arts Centre is in some financial difficulty. It is essential that we keep this key facility going – it is more than just a local arts centre, it will be key to the health and wellbeing agenda in the coming decade and I regard it as an asset for Devon, let alone Torrington Rural.

I am working with The Plough and DCC to see whether the Council can support their crowd funder initiative... hopeful we can but it will involve some technical changes (the project has to become 'all or nothing' for it to be supported by DCC).

In the meantime if you want to donate please visit the link here - <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/power-the-plough>

#### DCC Budget

Main event this month will be passing the Budget for the next financial year, going to Full Council next Thursday.

Our settlement from Central Government was in line with expectations – it will not be a harsh budget. The overall revenue budget will increase from £498m to £541m. Of the three principle services, Adult Care and Health sees a £23.7m increase (10%), Children's Services £11.5m (8.5%) and Highways £2.8m (5%) increase.

These increases take into account inflation pressures. The next financial year also sees in Children's Services the launch of the 'Edge of Care' service which is designed to stop children from being taken into care. Previous financial investments in the last few years have started to have an effect with children being able to come out of high cost placements which is good news – both for the children and also financially as high cost placements were the main drivers behind previous overspends.

Finally, on schools funding, as previously reported, the coming financial year will see a very large increase in the Schools Funding budget of £47.7m (total gross budget is £603m) however it is up to the Schools themselves, not DCC as to how this money is spent.

Council tax – DCC's share of the precept is likely to go up by 3.99% - with 2% specifically for Adult Social Care.

I would rather we did not increase the council tax but with the growth in demand for our services to Adults and Children – along with Highways – without increasing the precept we won't be able to fund the services adequately.

## Potholes

New feature on the 'Report It' website, when a pothole is reported it goes out to the Pothole Inspector to look at. If it meets the safety defect criteria it will then have a 'roadworks' sign placed on it which you can see on the website along with an estimated repair time.

Example below:



**Potholes with Contractor for repair**

**Instruction Reference:** D203505018

**Created Date:** 05 February 2020 10:22

**Expected Repair Date:** 04 March 2020 23:59

**Detail:** POTHOLE (Safety)

There is though, a massive backlog at the moment, so it is taking time for repairs to come through. Extra gangs have been put out on pothole repairs though recent inclement weather conditions will not have helped. I would say though if you have reported something and after a month nothing has happened **then please tell me and I will investigate!**

Reminder that the link to report potholes, blocked drains, fallen trees is here - <http://devon.cc/report-it>

Hope all of the above is useful. As ever, any issues between now and the next meeting please don't hesitate to contact me.

### **Councillor Michael Clarke:**

Councillor Clarke was able to confirm that following the request by Councillor Charmaine Coxon at the last meeting he had been able to allocate £300.00 towards the Barton Meadow play area project and on completion of an application form the money would be available.

Regrettably there has not been any progress on the setting up of a 'Torrige Climate Change Group' so this is in abeyance for the time being.

The 'Disability Grant Scheme' is working well in the village and families are benefiting from the assistance that is available and anyone who has a need is urged to make contact.

With regard to the Armed Forces Covenant, Torrige Council have announced they will be adopting a local version and this will apply to individuals and to employees.

No other matters raised, the formal meeting commenced.

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

Councillors Charmaine Coxon and Bob Boothby both sent their apologies for not being able to attend.

### **2. Declarations of Interest:**

No declarations received.

**3. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020.**

Councillors present all confirmed they had read and accepted the minutes as accurate. Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

**4. Matters arising from the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020 not included elsewhere in the agenda.**

No other matters raised.

**5. Police Matters - Nothing to report.**

**6. Barton Meadow Play Area – Vice Chairman Adam Bunting advised he is waiting for the picnic bench to be assessed for repairs and will report next month.**

Several options for native hedging have been reviewed by the Council alongside the quotes provided for wooden and metal fencing. It was agreed at the previous meeting that a natural hedge to replace the fencing panels is the preference.

Councillor Chris McWhirter advised he had spoken to Albion Plants, local wholesale supplier, about buying hedging direct and obtained some prices and types of hedging available. The Council agreed that the best way forward was to arrange for a formal quote for the hedging plants to form a hedge around three sides of the play equipment approx. 80 metres. The hedge would follow the line of the existing wooden fence and eventually when established replace the fencing. New gates would also be installed to enable access for maintenance. There will be one section of fence removed to enable installation of the new swing the remainder of fencing will stay in place until the hedge is established.

The Council will look at doing a risk assessment for the play area including the new swing and goal posts. ROSPA inspection due in March.

**7. Matters raised by the Chairman -**

The Chairman advised he has been approached by the Woodland Group to include information about the location of the woodland in the new resident packs. The Woodland Group feel newcomers to the village are unaware of the existence of the woodland and how to access the woods. The pack currently has an information sheet on the woodland but not a location map. The Chairman is going to review the contents of the residents pack.

It was also suggested that in order to assist in identifying newcomers to the village, it would be helpful if villagers know of anyone who has just moved into the village, a new neighbour perhaps, if they let the Parish Council know then an information pack can be delivered.

**8. Maintenance -**

- (a) Highways - Councillor Roger Keen advised that following resurfacing of Nethergrove Lane water accumulates near Little Silver which could be a problem if we have freezing conditions. County Councillor Andrew Saywell has agreed to speak to Highways about the problem.
- (b) Footpaths and Byways – Councillor Roger Keen has completed his annual inspection on the footpaths and reported that no new maintenance work is required. The P3 Grant Application has been submitted to this effect. The Council will receive the statutory grant calculated based on the length of pathways in the village.

**9. Finance**

|     |  |                |                  |
|-----|--|----------------|------------------|
| (a) | Barclays current a/c statement as at 30 January 2020 |                | £8,400.68        |
|     | Cheques not cleared:                                 |                |                  |
|     | 100865 D Jones Grass Cutting                         | £140.00        | £8,260.68        |
| (b) | Cheques to be issued:                                |                |                  |
|     | 100870 CPRE Annual Membership                        | £36.00         |                  |
|     | 100871 SLCC Annual Membership                        | £92.00         |                  |
|     | 100872 J Baker Salary & Exp January                  | £329.17        |                  |
|     |  | <b>£457.17</b> | <b>£7,803.51</b> |

**10. Planning**

- (a) No new planning applications received.
- (b) Retrospective planning application Motorcross Site has been withdrawn.

**11. Correspondence -**

Invitation from South West Heritage Trust to an event at North Devon Library 24 March 2.00 – 4.00 pm.

**12. Items for information -**

Reminder Historical Society preview photo display in the Community Centre on 7<sup>th</sup> March at 2.30.

**Next Meeting**

**Wednesday 11 March, 2020 – 7.30 Community Centre**