

HIGH BICKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Mrs Jenny Baker, Homewell Cottage, High Bickington, UMBERLEIGH. Devon EX37 9AY
Tel: 01769 560628 e-mail: highbickingtonpc@hotmail.co.uk
Website: www.highbickingtonparishcouncil.co.uk

Minutes of Virtual Parish Council Meeting, Wednesday 14 April 2021 7.30 pm

Present: Deputy Chairman Adam Bunting, Councillors: Bob Boothby, Franklin Spencer, Jenny Baker (Clerk) County Councillor Andrew Saywell,

Apologies: Chairman, Chris McWhirter, District Councillor Rosemary Lock, District Councillor Michael Clarke, PSCO Sandra Brown

The Deputy Chairman, Adam Bunting opened the meeting and asked County Councillor Andrew Saywell to present his update to the Council:

County Councillor – Andrew Saywell

Coronavirus

- Stats – As of 14th April the DCC area of Devon now up to 20,029 coronavirus infections since the start of the pandemic.
- Since the 9th April that is a weekly increase of 58 infections, with most new infections coming from the East and South of Devon.
- By way of comparison... in Torridge there were just two new infections in the last 7 days, North Devon was zero in the last 7 days, West Devon 3 cases in the last 7 days.
- **At 7.2 per 100,000, Devon has the second lowest upper-tier infection rate in England, just behind East Sussex.**

Infection cases continue to fall in Devon, over Easter the decline has accelerated but I will wait to see what the next couple of week's data brings in case this has been a bank and school holiday effect.

Torridge also has one of the lowest, lower tier local authority infection rate in England (2.9), with North Devon currently at 0 after they went a week without recording any new infections. However when numbers are so low it only takes 2 or 3 extra cases to see our infection rates increase. For example, on the previous few days statistics Torridge had the lowest rate in England!

Nevertheless, we are continuing to do well in keeping our infection rates down. While we hope the vaccine rollout will lead us back to normality, for the time being it is vital that we keep up our efforts to follow the guidance of staying at home and if and when we are out and about to follow the 'hands, face, space' guidance.

COVID Vaccinations

The rollout of the vaccine in Devon and in Torrington Rural continues to go well.

I sent a briefing note from the NHS to the Parish Council this week but the main points for vaccine rollout:

- **652,345 people in Devon received their first vaccine dose** between 8th December – 4th April, while more than 100,000 second doses have been given.
- **Latest estimate is more than 90% of anyone over 50 in Devon has received their first dose. In total 65.3% of the adult population in Devon, those aged 16 +, have received a first dose.**

- The NHS in Devon are focusing on people aged 50 and over, second doses, and those who are clinically vulnerable. **Anyone eligible for a vaccine (50+ or clinically vulnerable) who hasn't yet had one is encouraged to come forward and book their appointment.**
- Despite the supply issues that may happen in the coming weeks, **if you already have an appointment for a first or second dose these appointments remain in place and its really important that you attend it as planned.**
- 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.

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. The roll out is getting more localised, those who cannot travel far should be able to get their jab administered locally.

Return to School

The return to school has gone very well, with a 95% attendance rate reported for Schools in Devon. The testing regime for Schools also appears to have worked well so far.

Support for Families over Easter – Holiday Activities and Food Programme

As reported at the last meeting, Devon County Council has been awarded £1.69 million from the Department for Education to provide Holiday Activities and Food for children aged 5-16 on benefit related Free School Meals.

Bluecoats School in Torrington are participating in this scheme for Easter and it is hoped that it will be rolled out across Devon for the summer holidays.

DCC would welcome applications from Torrington Rural if they can demonstrate it is for the eligible children on Free School Meals. If High Bickington is interested in participating, contact the relevant officer, Melissa Filby 01392 383000 or email at melissa.filby@devon.gov.uk, she would be happy to discuss your project and if it fits the HAF criteria.

Local Highways Matters

Cllr Boothby has alerted me to the condition of the road past Yelland Farm. According to the online system the road was inspected on 12th April and several potholes marked up for repair. I have also alerted the Neighbourhood Highways Officer to the condition of this road.

The amount of mud that was also on the road as you pass 'Yelland Common Wood' was appalling. If this situation does not improve I would be grateful if the Parish Council could let me know.

Elections and thank you!

As you know, this is my last Parish Council meeting before the May Elections to Devon County. I will be standing again but should I not be returned I would like to place on record my thanks to the Parish Council for their kind support over the years and to thank you for all the work you have done for the Parish during the time I have been on the County Council. It has been a real honour and privilege to represent High Bickington and I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to the residents of the Parish for their kindness and support over the last four years.

Campaigning in the local elections had been paused due to the sad death of Prince Philip, but resumed on April 13th, but will be suspended again for the funeral.

If anyone is unsure or uncertain about voting in the election they can apply for a Proxy Vote. Emergency Proxies will also be available for anyone who is told to self-isolate.

I remain at your service until May and as ever, if there are any issues you'd like me to look into please get in touch.

As ever, if there are any issues you'd like me to look into, please get in touch.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Saywell for his report and thanked him for the hard work and effort he has put into looking after High Bickington Parish during his time as County Councillor responsible for Torrington Rural.

Prior to the meeting the Chairman suggested that the temporary 'ice' signs on the main road into the village could be changed to 'slippery road' signs which could stay in place all year round until such time that the drainage issues with road could be fixed. Cllr Saywell agreed this was a good idea and would discuss with the Highways team and let the Chairman know the response in due course.

Cllr. Saywell also commented that it had been agreed work would be arranged to fix the pot hole in Pound Lane by patching the road which should be a more permanent repair but no date had been given. Cllr. Boothby commented that he had seen some activity on the road today.

Police Report - PCSO Sandra Brown – was unable to attend the meeting and sent the following report: 5 incidents recorded during the previous month. 1 crime recorded, 2 incidents, road traffic issues of traffic lights stuck on red and 2 concerns for welfare.

Cllr Boothby reported that several Parish members had reported to him concerns about the amount of mud on the road beyond Millbrook going towards Yelland Woodland which appears to be from work being carried out at either the woodland or a quarry. There are safety concerns that the amount of mud on the road could cause vehicle breaks to fail and result in a traffic accident. PCSO Sandra Brown would be asked to investigate to see if the person responsible could clean the road.

This concluded the public session and the formal meeting commenced.

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Chairman, Chris McWhirter, District Councillor, Rosemary Lock, and Michael Clarke, PCSO Sandra Brown
2. **Declarations of Interest:** No declarations received.
3. **Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 10 March 2021.** The minutes of the meeting were accepted as correct and will be signed by the Chairman.
4. **Matters arising from the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 10th March.** No separate matters raised.
5. **Police Matters** – covered in report above.
6. **Barton Meadow Play Area** – Deputy Chairman Adam Bunting confirmed that the Annual Rospa safety inspection had taken place and the Chairman Chris McWhirter and the Clerk met the inspector on site to discuss the state of the equipment. It was confirmed by the report that nothing had changed since the previous inspection. The multi play unit is considered to be well worth repairing and could give another five years of life when the work is completed. The quote received from SNC to carry out the timber repairs totals £795.00 this also includes some work on the BMX ramp. The Councillors were asked if they agreed to the proceed on this basis and they all confirmed their agreement. Adam will contact SNC to ask them to commence the work as soon as possible. Councillor Michael Clarke will be contacted when appropriate to ask if the money kindly given towards new equipment could be used instead towards the repairs.

7. Maintenance

- (a) **Highways** - The Clerk reported that a request had been received by the Chairman to move the 30 mph sign on Paws Road to beyond the new properties on this road as the families with children are concerned at the speed of vehicles using the road and not slowing down until they reach the 30 sign which is beyond their houses.. The matter will be raised with the Highways Team to see if moving the sign is feasible.
- (l) (ii) Repairs to Pound Lane and removal of ice signs covered earlier with Councillor Andrew Saywell.
- (b) **Footpaths and Byeways** – Councillor Roger Keen wanted to put on record his gratitude to the Chairman, Chris McWhirter and to Peter Tucker for their assistance in planting the lovely Copper Beech Tree given to him to celebrate his long service as a Parish Councillor. Councillor Keen is planning on putting a plaque on the tree to explain why the tree has been planted.

Councillor Keen reported he has spoken to the Pathways Co-ordinator at Torridge about the request for a new gate on the pathway, who explained that due to Covid contractor work has been delayed. As soon as Councillor Keen hears more on this matter he will report.

8. **CPT Update** - 'Councillor Franklin Spencer reported a new contractor has been appointed for the maintenance of the Biomass System. Also a new maintenance contract has been agreed for the backup gas boiler. Both of the new arrangements effective from 1 April. Next week a major service will be carried out on the Biomass system and in the following week an annual service will be carried out on the backup gas boiler. The current supplier of wood chip fuel for the Biomass system is unable to deliver the size of load required so the CPT will look for a new supplier.

9. Matters raised by the Chairman:

- (a) Removal of overgrown fir trees, Barton Meadow road has not been resolved. Devon County Council have advised they will only take action if the trees are impacting on the highway. The Clerk was asked to find out whose responsibility the trees are.
- (b) Wolf Meadow – Cllr Adam Bunting has been approached by several members of the Parish who have raised concerns over a site being used for wild camping, mainly as the site access off the A377 could cause issues and lack of facilities on the site. The Planning Department will be contacted to find out if the site has in fact been approved for such use.

9. Finance

(a)	Barclays current a/c statement as at 30 March 2021		£25,900.62
	Less cheques not cleared:		
	100918 H.B. Football Club cancelled to be reissued	(£200.00)	
	100920 SLCC Membership	(£95.00)	£25,605.62
(b)	Cheques to be issued:		
	100921 Playsafety Ltd (Rospa Inspection)	£157.80	
	100922 DALC (Annual Membership)	£224.70	
	100923 Information Commissioner (Renewal)	£40.00	
	100924 J Baker Salary & Expenses March 2021	£340.66	
		<u>£763.16</u>	<u>£24,842.46</u>

All Councillors present accepted the financial position and approved the payments due as listed. Councillors were also asked to review the end of year figures and budget as circulated prior to the final sign off at the May meeting.

11. New Planning Applications

1/0320/2021/FUL

Stone Cottage, North Road, High Bickington

Demolition of existing conservatory to allow for a single storey rear extension, removal of chimney and alterations to the roof to create living accommodation, porch extension to the front elevation and installation of solar panels to the rear elevation. (re-submission of application 1/0085/221/FUL)

3 Councillors present voted to approve this application.

PC Decision: Approved

TDC Decision:

1/0335/2021/FUL

2 Cross Park, High Bickington

Erection of a single garage

3 Councillors present voted to approve this application.

PC Decision: Approved

TDC Decision:

Application Decisions:

1/0067/2021/FUL

Hoopers Farm, High Bickington

Proposed replacement of fenestration and bargeboards

PC Decision: Approved

TDC Decision: Granted

12. Correspondence – no new items for discussion.

13. Items for information: The Clerk advised the meeting that regrettably she has given notice to the Chairman of her intention to resign as Clerk. The vacancy will be advertised in Ramblings, on the Website and on the Notice Boards. An application form and job description can be obtained from the Website or by emailing the Parish Council.

14. Next meeting - AGM & Parish Meeting 19th May 2021 – Community Centre