

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 October 2020 7.30 pm

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

The Chairman thanked the attendees for connecting to the on-line meeting and invited the County and District Councillors to give their updates to the Council:

County Councillor Andrew Saywell

Coronavirus:

- Devon is in the 'medium alert' level, the lowest level of restrictions and we stay in line with current national and local restrictions. See the attached graphic.
- Stats – As of 14th October DCC area of Devon now up to 3,168 coronavirus infections since the start of the pandemic. There has been a substantial increase in infections County-wide since September
- This is a weekly increase of 615 infections... **BUT**, 337 (55%) of those cases were in Exeter. and the overwhelming majority of those cases are from the student population.
- By way of comparison... in Torridge there were just 15 cases in the last 7 days, for a total of 108 since the start of the pandemic.
- North Devon 38 in 7 days (239 in total), West Devon 22 in 7 days (129 in total).
- We have seen a small number of cases in Holsworthy (3 cases), Bideford (5 cases) and Northam (4 cases) and in North Devon in the Barnstaple area (12 cases) and South Molton (3 cases).
- Cases in Torrington Rural are between 0-2, though the post code/area data is only up to the 10th October.
- Regarding the University outbreak, DCC Public Health Team are working closely with the University, Public Health England, City Council and other agencies to contain the outbreak. Numbers have, crucially, started to stabilise and fall in Exeter but we can't become complacent.
- At the time of writing all close contacts have been traced and are self-isolating. DCC Public Health Team believe, looking at the data, a cohort of students brought the infection with them from their home cities/towns and then infected their student households. There is still no evidence at present of wider community transmission.
- Deputy Director of Public Health says we are **NOT** near a lockdown yet, for Exeter or for Devon – watch this video here: <https://www.devonnewscentre.info/deputy-director-for-public-health-devon-says-were-not-near-lockdown-yet/>
- **The publicised delay in the national reporting of the most recent cases did not hold up any local interventions.** It is important to point out more tests are being carried out in Devon – now over 14,000 a week compared with 6,500 at the start of September – and these are picking up more positive results.
- Overall, positive cases are still lower than the England average.
- All of the data is publicly available and can be found online here - <https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/coronavirus-data/>

Looking ahead...

- I don't have a crystal ball to predict the future but with new national restrictions having come in, I echo the words of the Council Leader, John Hart, **to say now is the time to be careful, follow the regulations, keep sticking to the basics – hand, face, space.** If you start to experience symptoms, self-isolate and book a test immediately.

- **We have seen good observance of this in Torrington Rural** – whenever I have been in Torrington and our villages I've been pleased to see social distancing being observed, and people wearing facemasks, sanitising hands etc. even when it has been busy. We must keep up our efforts. If we stick to those basics we reduce the risk of virus transmission and will keep our infection numbers in Devon low, avoiding the need for further punitive restrictions.
- I know we would all like to go back to normal, but this is the biggest national, if not world crisis since 1945 and the War. However irritating we may find the current restrictions, here in rural Devon these restrictions on our daily life are relatively minor compared to other parts of the country and what we had to go through during the war (when my grandparents and great-grandparents got bombed out during the Blitz!). If we stick to the basics we *should* (I hope!) avoid far more punitive restrictions.

Proud to Care

- The County Council have been running an initiative called 'Proud to Care' to encourage more people to go into the health and adult social care sector.
- If you know any jobseekers in the Parish, please encourage them to apply for jobs in care and health advertised on www.proudtocaredevon.org.uk and also to find out more about careers and education opportunities in the sector. We're currently advertising 283 jobs in 74 care and health organisations in Devon.
- Let them know (Email proudtocare@devon.gov.uk) if they hear about local redundancies first hand, as we can offer 1-2-1 support for people interested in finding out more about moving into care and health careers. Proud to Care are working with DCC's Economy team and Department of Work and Pensions, as part of Devon's Economic Recovery Plan. Jobseekers can register their interest on the [Proud to Care homepage](#) to access 1-2-1 support. They can also signpost people to help with their CVs, application forms and interview skills (with Learn Devon and other partners) and link them to information sessions with adult social care providers and Sector Work Academy Programmes with a guaranteed interview at the end of the short programme.
- Share, re-tweet and like Proud to Care posts on social media: Like them on [Facebook](#). Follow them on [Twitter](#)

Highways

- I know the Parish Council have reviewed the highways priorities for the year ahead but please take up the offer of a virtual meeting with Highways to discuss further. We had our first virtual meeting with Beaford Parish Council which went well. For those not online you can phone into a Microsoft Teams meeting – one Cllr in Beaford had to phone in due to technical issues but got through ok and was able to contribute.

Schools

- All Devon schools reopened in September and to date we have seen a good attendance of pupils attending. Latest figures up to 1st October have a 93% attendance rate (higher than 90% national average), vs a normal annual average of 95%.
- High Bickington has reported a 91% attendance figure.
- There have been 15 schools who, following Public Health England advice, have had to close to certain year groups or have self-isolated 'bubbles' of children, with pupils in 9 schools currently going through the self-isolation period.

Finally, thank you again for what you have done and all that you have done in in the Parish during this unprecedented time. As ever, any questions or issues please get in touch.

Councillor Bob Boothby asked if it is known what has driven the increase in numbers of cases in Devon. Councillor Saywell said he understood the numbers mainly reflect more testing of key workers and the number of cases of students in Exeter. Councillor Boothby also asked the question whether there is any guidance to schools on when parents should be informed if a teacher is self-isolating or whether the information is treated as confidential. Councillor Saywell felt that it would be up to each school to decide what information to give to parents but he would seek further clarification on both questions and let the Council know.

Councillor Roger Keen asked the County Councillor if he knew whether the road from Umberleigh Garage to the village would be repaired soon because it had become very bad. Councillor Saywell commented that most of that stretch of road falls under North Devon but he also stressed the importance of the Council engaging with the Highways Department via a virtual meeting to discuss local issues. North Devon falls under a different Highways Team, but potholes should continue to be reported.

The Chairman asked Councillor Saywell if he was aware of the recent planning application for Eaglescott Airfield and the concern regarding any future changes to the use of the Airfield. The planning notification has not officially been received by High Bickington Parish Council. The Chairman was approached by a resident outside of the village who had concerns that the granting of planning for a residential property on the airfield would lead to increased flight traffic at the airfield and asked the Parish Council to object to the application. The question the Chairman had was whether any future changes to the operating licence at the airfield would be circulated to all parishes in the area that could be affected. Councillor Rosemary Lock advised that there was no obligation on the part of the Planning Department to inform other parishes of planning applications not within their Parish. As the current application is for a residential property the Planning Department would be reviewing the application on that basis alone. Rosemary did confirm that there had been a number of objections to the application and it had been called in for a formal Plans Committee consultation. Any Council or member of the public can add their comments to the planning portal for North Devon. If in the future there were changes requested to the operating licence it would be likely the information would be shared by word of mouth from Council to Council.

Councillor Michael Clarke:

Reported there had been correspondence with Ridgeway Green residents regarding clinical waste and hoped the matter had now been resolved. The matter was dealt with by Janet Williams, Head of Environment at Torridge District Council who would make sure that both parties were happy with the result.

Councillor Clarke referred to a leaflet which was sent to the Clerk for sharing with the Council. The leaflet has been produced to show the steps people can take to help tackle climate change. The leaflet is going to be re-branded with the Torridge District Council logo and details and will then be circulated to all residents and businesses in the Torridge area. The Chairman asked whether the information in the leaflet had been fact checked to be true and accurate and Councillor Clarke confirmed that it had been checked and endorsed by Torridge District Council.

Councillor Clarke confirmed that the new shelter for the homeless has been opened in Bideford. He advised the accommodation over several floors is luxuriously appointed and very comfortable. The property has CCTV cameras inside and outside for the safety of the residents. The shelter is currently being used as a refuge but will be used to house anyone who finds themselves homeless in the future.

Police Report:

Incident Closing Category	Number of Incidents 12/08/2020 – 10/10/2020
Anti Social Behaviour	3
Crime Recorded	1
Public Safety	3
Transport	5
Total	12

Offence	Crime Recorded 12/08/2020 to 10/10/20
Other Theft	1
Public Order Offences	1
Other Offences	1
Total	3

From 12/08/20 to 1/10/20 there have had 3 crimes, a theft, use of threatening and abusive words and the use of a communications network to make threatening communications. Over the same period there have been 12 incidents reported, 5 transport reports – trees down and RTC's, ASB relates to the communications and the public safety are concerns for persons welfare.

No further comments or reports – formal meeting commenced.

1. **Apologies for Absence** - PCSO Sandra Brown sent her apologies, she was unable to join the virtual meeting.
2. **Declarations of Interest:** None received.
3. **Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 12 August 2020** – Councillors confirmed minutes were read and accepted. Chairman will sign the minutes.
4. **Matters arising from the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 12 August, 2020**
No other matters raised.
5. **Police Matters** – refer report above, no other matters raised.
6. **Barton Meadow Play Area** - Deputy Chairman Adam Bunting reported he has requested a quotation from TK Play Ltd for repairs to the play equipment. Quotation expected in the new couple of weeks.
 - (a) James Brown, Tree Surgeon had been asked to inspect a tree suspected of having Ash die-back disease. James confirmed the tree is infected and provided a quote for £100.00 to remove the tree. Council agreed work should be undertaken and quotation accepted.
7. **Maintenance**
 - (a) **Highways** – Barton Meadow Road – The Chairman asked the Council to confirm they had seen the recommendations from Highways Department regarding parking issues in Barton Meadow Road. One recommendation was to have yellow lines added to the area causing the parking issues and the Council agreed this would be the best course of action. Highways Department will be contacted to start the process.
 - (b) **Footpaths and Byways**
Councillor Roger Keen advised he had nothing to report. The Chairman commented that following the previous discussion regarding usage of the Bridleway it has been confirmed that bicycles are permitted on to use the bridleway and asked Councillor to convey this message if the matter is raised again.
8. **Matters raised by the Chairman:**
 - (a) **Parish Website** - a quotation has been received from The PC Geek, the current IT support contractor for setting up and hosting of a new website and annual maintenance as required. Total estimated cost is £475.00. The Chairman had approached another local contractor who subsequently declined to quote.

The Council agreed the quote was acceptable and it makes sense to keep to one IT support company for both the new site and the on-going IT Support needed. The need for a new website has mainly been brought about by the previous site administrator moving out of the area and not being able to continue to maintain the site and the need to make the site easier to use for both the administrators and members of the public.

- (b) **Updating Business Directory** - The Council would like to commence the collecting of information and updating of the directory ready for publication of a new version next year. Councillor Adam Bunting suggested he may know someone who could help with this process and would discuss with them and report back for the next meeting.
- (c) **Recruiting New Councillors** - The Chairman asked all Council members to actively engage with members of the community in an effort to recruit new Councillors. The Council runs the risk of not being able to function if more Councillors are not found. The message will be circulated as widely as possible around the village. If anyone is interested in finding out what being a Councillor involves then please speak to an existing member of the Council.

9. Finance:

(a)	Barclays current a/c statement as at 29 September 2020		£29,140.05
	Less cheques not cleared:		
	100885 Data Protection Subscription	£40.00	
	100895 Chris Seage	£80.00	£29,020.05
(b)	Cheques to be issued:		
	100898 The PC Geek IT Services	£60.00	
	100899 Chris Seage Grass Cutting BM x 4	£160.00	
	100900 J Baker Sal. & Exp. September	£344.88	
		<u>£564.88</u>	£28,455.17

The Finance Committee met on the 7th October and agreed the following grant awards for 2020. The Council approved the issue of the cheques totalling £995.00

Name of Organisation	Parish Council Decision
H.B. Allotment Association	£70.00 awarded to cover cost of 2 green bins for 1 year
H.B. Football Club	£200.00 awarded to cover the additional costs the club has for PPE and sanitising materials needed to ensure the club is COVID secure during the pandemic
H.B. Playing Field Association	£100.00 awarded towards the costs involved in maintaining the pavilion and play equipment in addition to the premium paid by the Council for annual insurance.
H.B. School P.T.A.	£200.00 awarded to help the PTA provide additional play equipment now needed to ensure children can play safely during the pandemic.
Pyncombe Foundation	£125.00 awarded to support the foundation to continue to provide leavers gifts for children moving on to their senior schools
William Dodds & Joshua Tucker Charity	£150.00 awarded to support the charity in providing gifts for families who have suffered hardship or bereavement during the year.
H.B. CPT Woodland Group	£150.00 awarded towards the cost of purchasing shredding equipment to support on-going maintenance of the woodland.

10. Planning

(a) Planning Applications received and commented on since August meeting.

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

Councillors all confirmed no objections to this application

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

Councillors all confirmed they have no objections to this application.

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

Councillors all confirmed they have no objections to this application.

(b) Decisions on Planning Applications:

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 Decision: Pending

1/0440/2020/FUL

Erection of a wooden shed for forestry purposes

Garage at grid reference 262305 119156 Kingford Devon

PC Decision: Approved

TDC Decision: Pending

Councillor Charmaine Coxon informed the meeting that she had been threatened by a member of the public with regard to a recent planning application which has subsequently been approved by Torridge Planning Department. Councillor Coxon asked if there was any protection for Parish Councillors in these circumstances. It was felt that incidents of this nature are rare and it was correct that the matter was referred to the police. All Councillors agreed that there was no excuse for abusive behaviour towards Parish Councillors and they should not be intimidated when responding to Planning Applications. The Parish Council are a consultee on all planning applications affecting the village and should be allowed to follow the democratic process. Councillor Coxon advised she has since received a written apology from the resident concerned.

11. **Correspondence:** The Chairman advised that the Council had received a letter from the CPT asking if the Council knew of any enquiries about workshop space or office space in the village. The letter also asked if the Council would be able to offer any financial support with any future workshop development or help the CPT find suitable funding. The Chairman asked if any of the Councillors knew of anyone looking for space to work and the suggestion was made that with the recent pandemic situation and more people working from home there may be an interest for people to rent a space for a short period of time to give them a working space outside of the family home. The Councillors were asked to try and help by asking around to see if there is an appetite for this type of arrangement. The Chairman will draft a suitable response to the CPT.

Next Meeting: 11 November 2020