

Minutes of Yarnscombe Parish Council Meeting
Wednesday 17 January 2024
— D R A F T —

Present: Cllrs. Brice (chair), Cooke, Ellison, Jeffery, Newberry, Pengilly, Cllr. Elliott (Torrige District Council / TDC), Cllr. Saywell (Devon County Council / DCC), M. Dymond (clerk) and representative of Village Hall / Social Club Committee

24.1 Apologies, Declarations of Interests and Dispensations

Apologies had been received and accepted from Cllr. Lock (TDC) and PCSO Brown.

Cllr. Newberry declared a personal interest in item 24.06 Eagle Invoice and Cllr. Ellison declared a personal interest in item 24.03/5. There were no requests for dispensations.

24.2 Public Participation and Feedback

A parishioner had made clerk aware of a dead fox lying near entrance to playing field. Cllr. Cooke had dealt with the matter and removed fox. Councillors thanked him.

24.3 Representatives Reports

1) County/District Councillors

County:

Report any problems regarding major water/ice problems on roads directly to Highways, so they can deal with it straight-away. Any other problems regarding roads, especially potholes, councillors should ring or email Cllr. Saywell first. The Highway Officer will get in touch with Cllr. Brice and Cllr. Cooke regarding potholes within the parish.

Cllr. Saywell updated councillors re. DCC budget figures; at the moment it looks like a £4.5m overspend, hopefully though breaking even. This draft budget will be discussed in more detail, before final budget is decided upon. The two areas that most money will go to are Children/Adult Social Care and Highways/Drainage Maintenance. The issue of devolution will be discussed in February.

Responding to a question put to him a few months ago, Cllr. Saywell listed the average absence days within DCC AS 9.4 days (in previous years it had been 12.2 days), compared with 5 days in the private sector,

Actions taken: Await report from Highways Officer and Cllr. Saywell's report on finalised budget.

District:

TDC held a meeting regarding housing crisis in December. At the moment, 21% of all houses being constructed are affordable housing — it should be 30%. Regarding empty dwellings within district, so far 78 dwellings have been identified. Cllr. Elliott explained that members of the public can report empty dwellings (residential and commercial) to TDC. Turning these dwellings even into temporary accommodation can be difficult as TDC can only advise landlords and point them in the right direction.

Cllr. Elliott also raised the issue of planning enforcement. He called on public and parish councils to report any construction without relevant planning permission. TDC employs two permanent and one temporary enforcement officers; it is one of the highest performing planning departments regarding issue of enforcement. For the spring, a planning presentation is planned and South West Water will attend full council next week (week beginning 22 January 2024).

2) Village Hall / Social Club

Committee is applying for funding to repair leaking roof; this will include removal of Velux window and putting insulation in roof. Also, heating and lighting are in need of repair. Councillors suggested the installation of projector. It will be a three to four months wait for outcome of application. The cost for path lighting from hall to Northchurch Farm was quoted as £475.

Actions taken: Discuss parish council grant towards cost of path lighting at next meeting.

3) Youth Club — None

4) PCSO/Police Report — None

5) Playing Field — Update on fencing repairs

Parishioners had requested update on fencing repairs, which are still ongoing and will be completed as soon as weather allows. In the long term, councillors discussed replacing the wooden fence with galvanised steel at an estimated cost of £50/metre. TDC and DCC could be approached for grants, helping with cost of such a project.

Actions taken: Discuss replacement of wooden fence with galvanised steel at next meeting.

6) Snow Warden — Update on repair of gritter

New part had to be ordered from France; it has arrived now and gritter should be back in action at weekend, if needed.

24.4 Minutes of Meeting from 6 December 2023

Minutes were approved and signed off as a true record.

24.5 Matters arising from last Meeting

None

24.6 New Matters

Eagle Invoice £15.00

Cllr. Brice suggested paying £60.00 per year for a whole page, not just financially to support the “Eagle” but also to give the council opportunity to publish special announcements or longer monthly articles should the need occur. Cllr. Brice proposed, Cllr. Pengilley seconded. All agreed. (Cllr. Newberry had declared personal interest at beginning of meeting.)

Actions taken: Cheque written out and countersigned. Clerk handed cheque to Cllr. Newberry who will hand it to “Eagle” team.

Updated NALC Pay Scales

Clerk had circulated up-to-date pay scales which showed that salary had increased from £11.63 to £12.63 per hour. This increase came into effect on 1 April 2023, therefore clerk was entitled to backdated pay of £200.00. Cllr. Brice proposed, Cllr. Newberry seconded. All agreed.

Actions taken: Cheque written out, countersigned and handed to clerk. Clerk to inform Torridge Payroll department of change in salary.

Increase in DALC subscription £114.00

Clerk had received email from DALC informing of increase in subscription fee for 2024. Membership of DALC informs council of forthcoming relevant training opportunities and circulates legal information pertinent to councils. It also offers free legal advice. Taking all this into consideration, councillors decided to renew membership later in the year.

Actions taken: Include increased cost of subscription in budget 2024/25 and renew membership once invoice has been received.

24.7 PROW Monthly Report

None

24.8 Planning

Building at Gibbings Down, Yarnscombe, Devon, Ref. No.: [1/1132/2023/FUL](#). Received: Thu 16 November, Validated: Thu 16 November, Status: Application permitted

24.9 Additional Planning

None

24.10 Accounts

Proposed Budget 2024/25

During the last financial year, council had stayed within budget. For the forthcoming year, councillors had to consider the rise in clerk’s salary and also the rise in insurance, as the council’s 5-year contract with current company will come to an end in May. The council is in a comfortable financial position and following auditor’s advice had set some money aside in an Instant Access and interest earning Notice Account.

Actions taken: Councillors had received proposed budget 2024/25, clerk will circulate updated budget before next meeting.

Precept setting 2024/25

Precept form has to be signed and sent to TDC by 25 January 2024. Taking budget figures and council's current financial situation into account, Cllr. Brice proposed to raise precept slightly by £295 to £7920. That would mean in real terms an increase of £0.49 for a Band D property. Bearing in mind that, in all likelihood, the council will have to spend a considerable amount of money to replace/maintain playing field fence or install galvanised steel fence at much higher cost, it was argued that precept should be set much higher to absorb these costs. Chair explained that, after being told by auditor that in previous year amount of money held by council was too high, precept should only be raised to absolute necessary level.

Responding to the potential costs faced regarding fencing, council had funds available exactly for that purpose and would be applying for grants to TDC/DCC should the need arise. Cllr. Brice proposed setting precept at £7920, Cllr. Newberry seconded. All agreed.

Actions taken: Clerk and chair signed/dated precept form. Clerk to send off. Bank reconciliation October to December 2023

Bank reconciliation had been carried out and cash book had been signed.

Meeting closed 8.30pm.

4th February 2024