

Minutes of Yarnscombe Parish Council Meeting
Wednesday 28 February 2024
— D R A F T —

Present: Cllrs. Brice (chair), Cooke, Farr, Ellison, Jeffery, Newberry, Pengilley, Cllr. Elliott (Torridge District Council / TDC), M. Dymond (clerk) and representative of Village Hall / Social Club Committee

24.11 Apologies, Declarations of Interests and Dispensations

Apologies had been received and accepted from PCSO Brown and County Councillor Saywell. There were no declarations of interest and no requests for dispensations had been received.

24.12 Public Participation and Feedback — Faulty street lights

Two faulty street lights had been reported by clerk some weeks ago; they have now been fixed. Cllr. Pengilley pointed out that the street light near the top of the village is also not working.

Actions taken: Clerk to report faulty light.

24.13 Representatives Reports

1) County/District Councillors

County — Cllr. Saywell had spoken to chair, explaining that any grant money would only be available in the new financial year. He estimates to be able to give grant of approximately £500, as he has only £8,000 available to distribute among 18 parishes. He will send out a full report via email in the next few days and clerk can request grant application form from Cllr. Saywell.

Report as follows:

Local Highways Matters — Since the last meeting a ditching order has been put in by the Neighbourhood Highways Officer for the problem drainage area on the Road from Cloggshill Cross to Easton Moor Cross. He also spoke to Cllr. Brice about the problems being experienced here and will monitor the site given the overriding issues we've also experienced here.

Grants — I have been in contact with the Clerk about a grant towards the new playing field fencing and would be happy to make a contribution from my Locality Budget although grants from that are now closed for the changeover in financial year. They are likely to re-open again in late April / early May time.

DCC Budgets — The Budget meeting was held on the 15th February and agreed. The overall revenue budget is set to increase to £743 million. Adult Care and Health gets a 6% (£20.5m) increase with an overall budget of just under £361m. Children's Services gets a £21.5m increase of 10.4% for a budget of just under £228m. The Highways and Transport Directorate gets a more modest 4.7% increase of £3.9m . . . but that is still welcome! In addition, the final Central Government Financial Settlement was more generous than expected — a further £1.5m will go into Highways Drainage on top of the proposed budgets. Councillor Locality Grants will also be increased from £5,000 back up to £8,000.

DCC's share of the Council Tax will increase by 4.99%, of which 2% is specifically ringfenced for Adult Social Care. I know Council Tax increases are never welcome . . . but it is needed to fund the continued demand on social services and Highways and to ensure the Council has a sound budget. The alternative is to take money out of reserves to prop up day-to-day expenditure . . . and if we did that it would weaken Devon's financial position and start getting the Council into the mess that other authorities like Somerset and Birmingham have got themselves into.

Devolution — The Devolution Deal for Devon and Torbay has now been published. The 40-page proposed Deal sets out in detail proposals that could see the transfer of powers and funding to a Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority, subject to approval by Devon and Torbay following a public consultation which has now started. The proposed Combined County Authority would be a partnership made up of Councillors representing the councils of Devon and Torbay, including District Councils, and representatives from business and education. Together, that partnership would deliver on a jointly agreed programme, working alongside a wide range of local stakeholders to tackle key local priorities.

The Government has chosen Devon and Torbay as one of only a small number of local authority areas in

the country to form a Combined County Authority (CCA), that will not require an elected mayor or changes to the current structure of local councils. The Deal should allow important decisions to be taken locally by people who know their areas best, on priorities that matter to the people of Devon and Torrington Rural such as building more affordable homes, investing in new quality jobs and skills, and improving public transport. Highlights of the proposal are:

- Direct control of adult education to create up to 50,000 new training and retraining opportunities by 2030
- Government transfer of over £16 million to invest in new green jobs, homes, skills, and business growth, and accelerate Devon and Torbay's transition to a net-zero economy
- Stronger partnership with Homes England to create a joint local action plan for affordable housing schemes for local people and reduce homelessness
- Even closer working between Devon and Torbay to improve the efficiency and co-ordination of public transport. There is an ambition to introduce a single ticketing system for travellers and investment in services to provide greater access to public transport
- Devon and Torbay would be responsible for developing, designing and delivering the next stages of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund from 2025.

More information about the Deal and the public consultation can be found online at www.devontorbaydeal.org.uk.

District — Cllr. Elliott reported that Council Tax is set to increase by 2.99%. Clerk had emailed him before the meeting, asking for advice in relation to funding for project of metal fencing in playing field. Cllr. Elliott confirmed that he had sent links to clerk, among them Lottery Community Fund.

Actions taken: Clerk to fill in relevant forms.

Grants for fencing — see 24.13/5

2) Village Hall / Social Club — see 24.15

3) Youth Club — None

4) PCSO/Police Report — None

Actions taken: Clerk to ask about next Microsoft Teams meeting.

5) Playing Field — Update on fencing repairs

Quotes for metal fencing

Ongoing repairs for the wooden fence surrounding the playing field have proved costly over the years. The idea of installing a metal fence is based on the principle that this investment will pay for itself over the years as it will require little or no maintenance and last years longer than any wooden fence. The issue of having three comparable quotes to hand before making a decision was raised. Cllr. Cooke explained that two of the firms he approached would only supply the fence but not install it. A local firm in Alverdiscott would install and also be close by, should any issues with the quality of the fence arise. Also, Cllrs. Cooke and Farr offered to take the old fence away and prepare holes for the metal fence to be concreted in.

Two other issues regarding the new fence were raised: firstly, the issue of Health and Safety and secondly, questions were asked what would happen if the fence were to be damaged from Cllr. Ellison's side. Councillors decided that risk assessment is not needed and once the fence is installed, agreement will be drawn up between council and Cllr. Ellison.

Actions taken: Cllrs. Cooke and Brice will obtain quote and present at next meeting.

6) Snow Warden — None

24.14 Minutes of Meeting from 17 January 2024

Minutes were approved and signed off as a true record.

24.15 Matters arising from last Meeting

Feedback from Highways Officer — see 24.13/1

Also, since council is now paying for a full page in "Eagle", it was suggested to put a monthly reminder on the bottom of the page on how to report potholes.

Actions taken: Clerk to include relevant information (phone number, website) in “Eagle”.

Parish council grant towards cost of path lighting

A member of the Village Hall Committee had written to clerk and asked for £475 from council to pay for installation of a new light at the end of the Village Hall path closest to the Northchurch Farm drive. Numerous residents had complained that it was difficult to navigate in the dark. Relevant information for grant application had been supplied to clerk. Councillors discussed the request and decided to give a grant of £200 towards cost. This was proposed by Cllr. Brice, seconded by Cllr. Newberry. All agreed. Representative of Village Hall, who was present at meeting, will put this proposal to committee and report back to parish council.

Actions taken: To be put on next agenda.

24.16 New Matters

Reimbursement of £200 by clerk to Yarnscombe PC (correction by TDC payroll) — Council had issued clerk with cheque for £200 at last meeting to cover backdated pay. As backdated pay is liable to tax, clerk will reimburse council and TDC payroll will issue correct payment to clerk.

Actions taken: Clerk to pay back £200 into council account.

24.17 PROW Monthly Report

Local PROW had informed clerk that repair works on footpath 6 near Cleeve Farm had finally started.

24.18 Planning

Demolition of existing outbuilding and erection of single dwelling (Variation of condition 2 of planning approval 1/0680/2023/FUL), Land at Northchurch, Yarnscombe — Councillors had no concerns.

24.19 Additional Planning

1/0155/2024/AGMB

Prior approval for the change of use of agricultural building to one dwelling and associated building operations under class Q, Barn At West Greylake, Yarnscombe, Barnstaple, Devon

Councillors questioned environmental issues that had been raised, also close to proposed dwelling there were agricultural buildings and application does not seem to fit into local needs.

Actions taken: Councillors to email comments to clerk for forwarding to planning department.

24.20 Accounts

Finalised Budget 2024/25 — Clerk had updated finalised budget, but two errors were pointed out.

Actions taken: Clerk to correct errors and send out budget.

Meeting closed 8.15pm.

12th March 2024