

HOLNE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held in Holne Village Hall on Tuesday 1 March 2022 at 7.30pm

Present

Cllr Owen (Chair), R Applegarth, J Bellamy and M Fairman

Also present

Suzanna Hughes (Clerk), District Cllr Smerdon, Ross Gray (Tree Warden) and two members of the public

The meeting was opened by Cllr Owen at 7.30pm.

010322.01	Apologies for Absence <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cllr T Crook• District Cllr Pannell• County Cllr Thomas
010322.02	Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation <p>Members were reminded of their responsibility to continually update their Notice of Registerable Interests and invited to state whether they have any interest in the items to be discussed during this meeting in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Unforeseen requests for a Dispensation to be considered at this point only if there was no way a Councillor would have been aware of such before the meeting.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest and requests for dispensation.</p>
010322.03	Open Forum <p>A parishioner referred to her letter regarding the control of moles in the play park. She thanked the Parish Council for considering the ecological aspect of the moles. Her understanding is that it is important to look at the inter-connection of all species not just how to control the moles per se. She believes that the most motivating factor for controlling the moles is the aesthetic desire for an expanse of green, level grass. Instead, she asked the Parish Council to engage with ways in which to live with the moles. They are solitary creatures which traverse large distances. They are more prolific in the spring when males are looking for females. The ecological benefits are considerable in terms of how they work the soil organisms. She also received many comments from friends on Moor Meadows in support of living with moles. She suggested engaging more with children in the life of moles. She would welcome being part of a working party to take this forward. She questioned the industrial approach proposed by the Parish Council and referred to her offer to level the site before the mowers cut the grass.</p> <p>She also asked that the contractor does not mow the wild flower area as this was not included in the job specification. Cllr Fairman advised that he would give the new contractor instructions in advance of the first cut. She also asked that the bank of cowslips is not strimmed. After a short discussion, it was agreed that it was important that the Parish Council and the Playpark Committee communicated what each other was doing.</p> <p>The clerk informed members that DNPA is unable to advise the Parish Council on moles. A SHDC locality officer has not responded to the question about risk and safety but from other conversations he had had, it seemed that he could only comment on the safety of the equipment and not on the land itself. It was suggested that the Parish Council could contact Devon Wildlife Trust for advice about how to manage the moles. At the same time, the clerk would contact the Parish Council's insurers about liability.</p>

	<p>The parish's Tree Warden, Ross Gray, asked whether any progress has been made with regarding the planting of a Jubilee tree. The Chair advised that he has spoken to the PCC and they are interested in the Queen's canopy and they are proposing to plant a/some trees in the churchyard. There was no further information at this stage.</p> <p>He also asked about the planning conditions attached to the approved application at Sky Garden. The clerk offered to send a copy of the conditions to Ross.</p> <p>Re highways, he commented on the broken tarmac and potholes this side of Cumberstone caused by water run-off. A similar problem is occurring at around Priddons gateway and Fore Stoke Farm. It was agreed to bring the issue to the attention of the Highways Officer.</p> <p>Ross asked about the speed signs at Priddons which are only 15 yards from the junction. The Chair advised that the Parish Council has already discussed roundels on the road and additional signage but have been advised by DCC that there is no funding.</p> <p>He observed that nothing has been done to protect the undercutting at Mill Leat despite advising and suggesting a solution to DCC over a year ago.</p> <p>Holne Bridge – he appreciates that there is a problem with canoeists parking at this location but the current signs which have been erected by the landowner stating 'Private road, no parking' are incorrect as this is a public highway.</p>
<p>010322.04</p>	<p>County Councillor, District Councillors' and DNPA Reports</p> <p>District Cllrs Smerdon and Pannell submitted a written report (attached).</p> <p>Cllr Smerdon also advised that there is an expression of intent from the waste contractor to recommence the brown bin collections w/c the last week of March. He imagines that it will be a phased start.</p> <p>County Cllr Thomas advised that was unable to attend Holne's meeting he would be attending meetings of North Huish and Ermington Parish Councils this evening; he sent a report on the County's budget (attached).</p>
<p>010322.05</p>	<p>Ratification of Minutes</p> <p>Members approved and signed the minutes of the Parish Council meetings held on 4 February 2022.</p> <p>A request has been made by a parishioner that the minutes of the meeting are published three weeks before the next meeting. The clerk advised that this was not always possible on the limited number of part-time hours worked by the clerk and how those hours are prioritised over the course of the month. The priorities after the meeting are the actions from that meeting so that they can be progressed as soon as possible.</p>
<p>010322.06</p>	<p>Finance and Governance</p> <p>6.1 Payments for Approval</p> <p>None</p>
<p>010322.07</p>	<p>Planning</p> <p>7.1 New applications/appeals</p> <p>None</p> <p>7.2 Decisions</p> <p>None</p>

	<p>7.3 Members received a response from Chris Hart (Head of Development Management, DNPA) with regard to the role of Parish Councils in the planning process. It was agreed that in the future the Parish Council will engage with the DNPA's representatives if they wish an application to be determined by the Development Management Committee</p> <p>7.4 It was noted that an application for a new premises licence has been submitted from The Church House Inn. The application is for the sale of alcohol for consumption on and off the premises, Monday to Saturday from 11am to 12am and Sunday 11am to 11.30pm. Members had no comment.</p>
010322.08	<p>Highways and Footpaths</p> <p>8.1 The clerk advised that she had reported the broken gate at Greatcombe to Bill Allen who will take a look at it.</p> <p>8.2 There was a Highways lorry at the top of Bakers Park and part of the pothole has been filled but the condition of these was still poor.</p> <p>8.3 The planned work at Bakers Park to create more parking has not yet been completed. The contractors have cleaned the road but has built up the opposite bank in error. The Highways Officer is aware and will arrange for this to be sorted out.</p>
010322.09	<p>Playpark</p> <p>Cllr Bellamy advised that members of the Committee have met with Earthwrights. They have agreed to sort out the repairs under guarantee. They will also price up sorting out the Wicksteed equipment because Wicksteed's quotation was significantly more than was anticipated. Earthwrights will also put together a maintenance plan for future repairs.</p>
010322.10	<p>Leats</p> <p>The What's App group is working well.</p> <p>Members noted a letter from a parishioner about flooding through the churchyard. She has contacted the church. She has also suggested that a water engineer looks at it and independently assesses it but there was still the question about who would pay for this. Temporary measures were discussed but it was agreed that a more permanent solution was required.</p> <p>The Chair reported that she had observed the leat running through Waterleat was running down under the road and it was overflowing Michelcombe Lane as well. If it is blocking under the road, then it would be Highways responsibility. Cllr Applegarth advised that he would have a look and try and rod it and would report his findings to the clerk.</p> <p>Cllr Applegarth reported that he has been digging up the granite bed of the leat which runs underneath the clapper bridge at playpark. He intends to keep pushing the debris through over the course of 3-4 weeks which should hopefully clear it and improve the flow.</p>
010322.11	<p>Venford Reservoir</p> <p>Cllr Fairman reminded members that he had attended a stakeholder meeting on 18th June 2021 to discuss the land management plan for Venford Reservoir and despite being advised that the parish Council would be kept informed, there had been no further updates since that meeting. After various attempts to contact South West Lakes Trust and South West Water, he eventually spoke to the Biodiversity Delivery Manager at South West Water who advised that the long-term plan for Venford Reservoir is still the same as discussed at the meeting on 18 June 2021. There are still some issues to overcome over the extraction of felled timber and they are still in communication with Natural England, DNP and South West Water as to how they get the timber off site with minimal ground disturbance and avoid the bird nesting season. If these issues can be resolved, it is</p>

	<p>hoped that this operation will take place in September. It was originally planned to thin the trees below the dam around the water treatment works leaving the timber on the western side to waste. However, this is now not possible: the conifer timber is of poor quality and is beginning to fail already. Thinning the canopy will open the woodland up to more and increased risk of wind blow. Felling to waste will create a thick brash mat woodland floor impeding any natural regeneration. It would be irresponsible management for the timber and brash to be left for waste on the woodland floor due to the Holne Moor swailing plan. Stakeholders are continuing to discuss the felling and removing of timber as access to the lower woodland is very difficult.</p> <p>Cllr Fairman advised that he had no response to his question about what is happening to the iron fence and will continue to follow this up.</p>
010322.12	<p>Annual Parish Meeting – 24 May</p> <p>Members discussed possible formats but agreed to defer this until the next meeting.</p>
010322.13	<p>Clerk’s or Councillors reports on matters authorised by the Council at previous meetings not otherwise on this agenda</p> <p>The Chair advised that The Tradesmans Arms is keen to have a celebration and thought that it would be beneficial to put together a Committee to arrange a celebration across both parishes. The official beacon is on Thursday 2 June. The Chair offered to volunteer to represent the Parish Council on the Committee which was agreed by all members.</p>
010322.14	<p>Chair’s urgent business for action by the clerk if covered by delegated powers or for inclusion on the agenda of the next meeting</p> <p>None</p>
010322.15	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>None</p>
010322.16	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The date of the next Parish Council meeting would be Tuesday 5 April 2022 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.</p>

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Cllr B Owen
Chair

District Council Parish report February 2022

Second home tax benefit loophole removed

Following prolonged campaigning by this Council and others the Government has announced it's planning to remove a loophole that offers tax breaks to second home owners who make use of it to claim their properties are being used as holiday lets. As it stands, people who own second homes in England can avoid paying council tax and access small business rates relief by simply declaring an intention to let the property out to holidaymakers.



The change will see second homeowners forced to pay council tax if they cannot show they are genuinely renting out their properties on a commercial basis. This new measure will apply to second home owners who let their properties for less than 70 days a year. Those who let their homes above the threshold will still pay nothing. It is reckoned that second home owners in the South Hams who have registered for business rates (meaning in effect they pay nothing) have received £20million in Covid grants.

Council tax

Discussions around the 2022/23 SHDC budget are taking place, with Members receiving briefings from Lisa Buckle, our Finance Officer. As usual, a selection of proposals came forward which will be voted on at the Full Council Budget meeting on 10th February. The proposals include a recommendation to increase Council Tax by £5 a year for Band D properties – equivalent to 10p a week. The Government has factored in this increase – the maximum allowed without a referendum – into funding presumptions for the coming year.. A LibDem recommendation that £322,000 extra be allocated to the Climate Change Action Plan will also be debated and is likely to receive approval.

Refuse/recycling

An all party working group has been set up to consider the way forward, looking at a number of alternatives. Performance by the contractors is slowly improving but we can't yet say when the switch to recycling boxes will resume. The budget proposals going to the Executive next week include a £200,000 commitment to invest in community composting.

Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant

In December, the government announced a one-off grant payment for hospitality and leisure businesses including restaurants and pubs. It is worth up to £6,000 and is designed to help those who have struggled in what should have been the most profitable time of the year. We are administering the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant; the Council has now directly contacted local businesses by email, which, based on previous grant applications, might be eligible for this financial help.



The Council is urging local hospitality and leisure businesses that meet the criteria to check their email and junk mail folders and follow the instructions to claim the government grant. Contact the council via their website - <https://southhams.gov.uk/businesscovid19> - if you think your business is eligible.

The deadline for grant applications from businesses has been extended from 28 February to 18 March. All business grant payments have to be made by 31 March.

Community Funding News

Devon Funding News is a great place to go to see what new grant funding schemes are available to our communities. It can be found online at devon.gov.uk/community-funding



The website is updated regularly and some of the new schemes added in January include:

- Up to £5,000 for the repair or improvement of community buildings [Screwfix Foundation](#)
- Up to £10,000 for community groups and artists planning activities focusing on art, creativity and culture in celebration of the Platinum Jubilee Just a couple of the schemes that may be of interest to our communities.

Role of AONBs could be expanded



Plans to safeguard England's protected landscapes for future generations and to boost nature recovery have been set out by Environment Secretary George Eustice.

Proposals to strengthen England's protected landscapes were announced on Saturday 15th January 2022 when the Government published their response to the *Landscapes Review* of National Parks and AONBs.

Strengthened AONBs are central to the response that seeks to strengthen purposes, powers and resources for AONBs.

The proposals, which are subject to consultation, are set out in the Government's response to Julian Glover's independent Landscapes Review (known as the 'Glover Review') which looked at whether the protections for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are still fit for purpose.

The Government's response sets out ambitious changes to increase access to nature and ensure protected landscapes can deliver more for climate, nature, people and place for the next 70 years and beyond, as we build back greener from the pandemic and level up all parts of the country.

The 12-week consultation also asks for views on proposals to drive nature recovery within our landscapes and support for the communities that live and work within them, such as the design and delivery of new agri-environment schemes and an ambitious management plan for each area,

AONBs are to receive a 15% uplift in funding. Sadly this does not apply to National Parks.

Town and Parish Council Guide to Net-Zero



Some Parish and Town Councils have reached out to us over the past year looking for advice on tackling the Climate Emergency. Over the past few months we have been working on pulling together some resources and tips on what Town and Parish Councils can do.

The guide isn't intended to be prescriptive but rather offer to some help or inspiration to Town and Parish Councils looking tackle to the Climate Emergency. The guide is web based and intended for all audiences, whether they have yet to declare a Climate Emergency or simply looking for action ideas or tools and resources to help them along the way. The guide is published on our Climate Change website.

DNPA report (February) – Cllr Smerdon

Government publishes its proposals for a National Landscapes Strategy

The Government's response is both a statement of what they will do/intend to do and a consultation on proposals that require changes to primary legislation.

The key changes include:

- Strengthened AONBs – this is a key theme in the response. AONBs have received a 15% increase in funding for 2021/22, they are to be 'renamed' as 'National Landscapes' (though this phrase is also used to refer to AONBs and National Parks together).
- National Landscapes Partnership – non-statutory partnership involving National Parks England, National Association of AONBs, Natural England and others. Focusing on generating additional income through green finance and championing national landscapes.
- Amended purposes for National Parks – a focus on nature recovery and access for all. The duty to have regard to socio-economic well-being of our local communities will not become a purpose.
- A National Landscapes Strategy and outcome framework.
- Consultation on new powers of enforcement for National Parks – powers to potentially issue fixed penalty notices, make Public Space Protection Orders. This is welcomed as the Government response does recognise the challenges of visitor management – the Landscapes Review did not.
- Planning reform – commitment to 'consider the special role of protected landscapes' in the reform of the planning system and strengthened role for AONBs
- Local governance – consultation on independent chairs for NPAs, performance standards, reduced board size and improved diversity with 'merit-based' appointments/nominations
- General power of competency for NPAs, strengthened Management Plans and clearer role for other public bodies
- Sustainable financing – a focus on green finance and commercial sponsorship which is described as a missed opportunity.

If you wind the clock back 12 months we were facing an uncertain future – The Secretary of State was keen on merging all National Park Authorities and AONBs into a single central National Landscapes Service. Given this context the Government's response is positive – we are to remain as independent authorities and retain the full range of services/roles that we currently perform (i.e. planning remains with the Authority) and the Secretary of State is really positive about FiPL.

Farming in Protected Landscapes

The Government's Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL) has now been running for six months. Each protected landscape in England has received a ring-fenced financial allocation of money. The majority of this money is to be spent on grants to farmers, landowners and other eligible applicants. The financial allocation for 2021/22 has to be spent within the financial year. There are four categories of intended outcomes, Climate, Nature, People and Place.

An assessment panel has been set up to consider applications. At the end of December 35 applications have been submitted, of these 27 have been approved, 6 deferred and 2 refused.

Introduction of Body-Worn Cameras

At the Authority meeting on Friday 4th Feb Members will be asked to consider approving the introduction of body-worn cameras for use by Authority staff, principally the Ranger Team, for a trial period of time. (max 2 years)

This proposal has been introduced following the problems encountered with members of the public over the last two years, particularly during the lockdown of 2020 when Dartmoor was used as an out of doors playground by people desperate to escape the confines of their houses. The primary aim of the proposed pilot is to assess whether body worn cameras will help address incidents of verbal and physical abuse, and a secondary aim is to assess their usefulness in situations where we need to enforce existing laws through legal action.

Community Protection Notices

Also at the Authority meeting Members will be considering a recommendation that DNP staff will work in partnership with our constituent Local Authorities (Teignbridge, South Hams and West Devon) to better tackle anti-social behaviour within the National Park. The suggestion is that DNP Rangers could support their powers to issue Community Protection Notices through the gathering of information and evidence. The CPN process already exists across Dartmoor and is operated by the Councils.

Byelaws Review

Consideration of the 3000+ responses submitted to the review is ongoing, and how we proceed will be decided over the next few months.

County Report March

Just one item this month to report:

Budget

Council tax increase of 2.99%, meaning a rise of £45.18 for a Band D – the total for Band D now being £1556.46 for the year.

Extra £29.6 million on adult care and health (up 10.5%)

Extra £17.1 million in Children's Services (up 10.8%)

Highways – no change in real terms which is going to cause us a significant headache with local requests going forward, I'm sorry to say, as I had hoped for an increase here too.

Much of this extra money is going to have to be found out of Council reserves. Not only is the Govt not giving local authorities enough cash to carry out their statutory duties, but it is also actively insisting that all Councils raise Council Tax by the highest amount allowed. I believe this to be the wrong approach, not least because it (Council Tax) is a regressive tax which takes no account of income and bases everything on outdated property values.

The other piece of very bad news is that the locality budget given to each County Councillor to support your local schemes has been reduced from £10,000 to £8,000. This reduction, representing saving of £120,000 - or 0.0024% of the Council's total spending power (some £600 million) seems difficult to justify, in financial terms, in meeting our requirement to help communities stay strong, connected and resilient, but most of all in supporting local projects that do not attract other funding streams. All opposition councillors voted against this but were defeated by the ruling administration.