

HOLNE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held in Holne Village Hall on Tuesday 7 March 2023 at 7.30pm

Present

Cllr B Owen (Chairman), R Applegarth, T Crook, M Fairman and C McLean

Also present

Suzanna Hughes (Clerk), Bill Allen (DNPA), District Cllr Pannell and two members of the public

The meeting was opened by Cllr Owen at 7.30pm.

070323.01	Apologies for Absence <ul style="list-style-type: none">• County Cllr Thomas• District Cllr Smerdon
070323.02	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>
070323.03	Open Forum <p>Bill Allen, DNPA:</p> <p>It has been a very busy year with many challenges for the Authority, including the financial situation which is affecting the public sector. DNPA is applying to appeal the decision about wild camping. The Public Rights of Way network continues to keep the Rangers busy. Contracted works to improve Watery Lane are likely to commence mid-March. Thank you to the volunteers who helped clear the vegetation. There has been extensive maintenance work on Holne Moor Leat; this has been financed by DNPA and its Common Cause project. The RSPB has now taken on this side of the reservoir and they also commissioned works. It is now the lambing and ground nesting birds season; dogs must be kept on leads/under very close control. Signage will be going out. The Junior and Youth Ranger clubs have had a great year. Other events and walks have also been well supported. The Enjoy Dartmoor annual magazine is due out now and he will be delivering them locally.</p>
070323.04	County & District Councillors' Reports <p>District Councillors' report was circulated to members (copy attached).</p> <p>With regard to the request for a bottle bank (discussed last meeting and suggested to Buckfastleigh Parish Council), Cllr Pannell confirmed that everyone should be on the box scheme by June and therefore there would probably not be a need for a separate bottle bank.</p> <p>County Cllr Thomas' report was circulated to members (copy attached).</p>
070323.05	Ratification of Minutes <p>Members received the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 7 February 2023. It was agreed unanimously that they be signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record of the meeting.</p>

070323.06	<p>Finance and Governance</p> <p>6.1 The following payments were approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £30 - Paul Pearse - Playpark roadside hedge cutting • £500 - G Partridge - felling an ash tree in Playpark
070323.07	<p>Planning</p> <p>7.1 New applications/appeals</p> <p>7.1.1 0064/23 & 0065/23 – Village Holne Installation of PV panels and associated cabling and equipment</p> <p>Members agreed to support this application.</p> <p>7.2 Decisions</p> <p>None</p>
070323.08	<p>Memorial</p> <p>At the suggestion of the Village Hall Committee, members briefly discussed memorials to members of the community. It was agreed that this should be explored further and Cllr Fairman would seek the opinion of the Village Hall Committee as to how this might work. In the meantime, the Chairman suggested that the bug hotel built by John Bellamy could be named in his honour. Cllr Crook offered to enquire about a carved plaque.</p>
070323.09	<p>Playpark</p> <p>9.1 Members reviewed the playpark maintenance contract and agreed to accept the quotation from Geoff Partridge for £100 per cut (one per month + two discretionary cuts during the season).</p> <p>Some suggestions have been made to manage the molehills which Cllr Applegarth was happy to try and assist with by chain harrowing and rolling the field. The Chairman thanked Cllr Applegarth for all his help.</p> <p>9.2 Defect report</p> <p>Members received the defect report from SHDC. The items listed were advisory and it was agreed to monitor them. It was agreed to ask SHDC to confirm that the Parish Council is still part of the insurance and inspection scheme.</p> <p>The picket fence needs some attention and it was agreed to have an email discussion about its repair.</p> <p>9.3 Wildflower management plan</p> <p>Members received a copy of the proposed wildflower management plan. It was confirmed that the plan related to the wildflower area only rather than a management plan for the whole of playpark. It was agreed that a map of the specific area would be helpful so that it is clear what the plan relates to. Cllr Crook offered to create a map to attach to the document.</p>
070323.10	<p>Devon Air Ambulance Lighting Mast</p> <p>Cllr Applegarth has no further report on the solar battery option. There was a brief discussion about the current cost of energy to keep the mast operational which is currently being split between the Parish Council and Holne Books. Cllr Applegarth made a suggestion that Buckfastleigh West Parish Council may wish to share the mast and therefore the cost of energy could be shared between the two Parish Councils. Members were happy for Cllr Applegarth to approach them and ask.</p>
070323.11	<p>DNPA – Draft Housing SPD Consultation</p> <p>There were no comments.</p>

070323.12	<p>Leats</p> <p>Members received a letter from the PCC regarding the churchyard leat detailing actions taken by the PCC to mitigate any risk of flooding from the leat while flowing through St Mary's Churchyard. In response to the PCC's request that the Parish Council writes to all those persons who either own or tenant land regarding their riparian responsibilities, it was agreed that the Parish Council would send an article for publication in the Parish Link and post a polite reminder on the Holybrook Exchange reminding landowners of their responsibilities. It was also agreed that landowners should be reminded that they should not divert water away from their leats. The Parish Council did not feel that it was appropriate to write to all individual landowners/tenants.</p>
070323.13	<p>Highways and Footpaths</p> <p>It was noted that there are many potholes and these should continue to be reported online.</p> <p>The work behind Bakers Park has still not been completed.</p>
070323.14	<p>Clerk's or Councillors reports on matters authorised by the Council at previous meetings not otherwise on this agenda</p> <p>14.1 Elections information has been circulated. Hard copies of the nomination packs will be sent to Cllr Crook for circulation to existing members. The deadline for submission is 4pm on 4 April.</p> <p>14.2 An email was circulated offering funding to support plans to celebrate the Coronation. Members were not aware of any plans within the parish.</p>
070323.15	<p>Chairman'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>Cllr Crook reported that last Friday, the gritter was unable to pass through the centre of the village due to cars being parked on both sides of the road. He suggested that a sign could be put up near the leat asking people to park on only one side. It was also suggested that the route could be changed. This will be included on the next agenda for further discussion.</p>
070323.16	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>16.1 An email from a resident was received asking for a correction to a November minute which, according to the resident, implied a lack of willingness to engage in producing a wildflower management plan. Members did not feel that the minutes implied this but wished to reassure those involved that they did not consider the management team to be disinterested or not wanting to engage.</p> <p>Clarification was also sought about the ongoing maintenance of the willow structure. It was agreed to ask the contractor, who had recently cut it back, to provide a quote for a day of weaving/cutting out the new willow growth in late summer/early autumn.</p>
070323.17	<p>Meeting Dates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Parish Meeting – 4 April at 7.00pm • Parish Council Meeting – 4 April at 7.30pm

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Cllr B Owen
Chairman

District Councillors' Report – March 2023

Council Tax - South Hams District Council has agreed a rise in the council's element of the Council Tax of £5 a year for a Band D property. This equates to just under 2.8%, less than 10p a week, and is slightly less than the maximum 2.9% allowed by the Government. A Band D property will pay £185.42pa.

Devon County Council's increase is the maximum 4.99%, a rise of £77.67 a year for a Band D property - £1,634.13pa), Devon and Cornwall Police 6% (£15) and Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue 5.45% (£5 - £96.79pa). Council agreed to charge double Council Tax on second homes. This is dependent for this year on legislation being passed by the end of March and will make a useful addition to Council income.

Public toilets in Council ownership will return to having free admission, and there will have discussions on supporting town and parish councils which have taken on responsibility for their toilets.

Voter ID - there may be residents without access to the internet or a computer who require extra support applying for Voter ID. Residents can call the election team to make an appointment to help complete their application. Call the team to make an appointment to help complete your application for Voter ID online or at our offices. Tel: 01803 861434. We will need your National Insurance number and date of birth.

Key Dates for Residents. Register to vote by 11:59pm on Monday 17 April. Apply for postal vote by 5pm on Tuesday 18 April. Apply for Voter Authority Certificate by Tuesday 25 April.

Election Jobs – we are currently recruiting for polling staff at the upcoming Local Elections on 4 May 2023!

We are looking to fill the following roles:

Presiding Officers - Pay £348

Poll Clerks – Pay £230

Applicants must be available from 6.30am to 10.00pm on the day. Find out more on the SHDC website.

Garden Waste Update - the new South Hams garden waste collection service first collections will take place within two weeks of 6 March. Our teams have been creating the new collection rounds based on the 10,000 plus subscriptions we've already received, allowing us to deliver a high quality and reliable service for our residents. As this is a new service, it may mean that a resident's garden waste bin is collected on a different day to their refuse and recycling. Residents can now check which day their collections will take place online – visit www.southhams.gov.uk/findmycollectionday. Please note that the garden waste service starts on the 6 March so any collection dates shown online prior to this date should be ignored. Residents have asked us: 'Where does the sticker we've received need to be fixed to on the bin?'

A: The sticker should be fixed to the outside / top of the lid so it's visible when the lid is fully shut, or to the front of your garden bin, so it's visible for our crews when the bin is presented for collection. For more information, visit: www.southhams.gov.uk/service-update. Residents can also contact us by 'Contact the waste team'.

Raising Awareness around the Cost of Living - as part of our Cost of Living action plan, our Communications team has been supplying our local newspapers with articles on the cost of living, for both South Hams and West Devon. We will continue to raise awareness around these issues, and the support available.

County Councillor's Report - March 2023

New Chief Executive

Last week was Donna Manson's first full week as Devon County Council's new Chief Executive. Donna has set out her first impressions of the county and the council, and her focus on engagement in a message to our staff and Members:

"I firmly believe that the people in our Council and our communities are our greatest asset."

Budget

Councillors recently agreed a budget that will see increases in spending on services that support vulnerable children, young people and adults, in response to rising demand for those services.

DCC will be spending 18.5 per cent more on children's services, and 8.8 per cent more on adult social care services. Overall, the Council is budgeting to spend 10.5 per cent more on services than last year.

But, to help pay for it, the average Band D householder will see the County's proportion of their council tax bill increase by £1.49 a week.

The fact is though, the council tax rise, plus funding received from the Government, will not balance the budget book. Spending this much on priority services to meet growing demand without national support means having to make savings in the region of £47.5 million from elsewhere in order to balance the books.

Sadly, there appears to be no rush from County to support communities with 20mph limits, nor indeed is general support of communities a priority as locality budgets are slashed again, **now down to £5000 per councillor**. Likewise the spending allocated on highways will mean that capital projects will be few and pot hole repairs will be a constant challenge. Opposition amendments to the budget to spend a modest amount of reserves to rectify these important issues were defeated by the ruling Conservative majority.

Parents voice frustration with Children's Services

Parents delivered DCC a strong message last month in protest over failings within services that support children who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Members of the Devon SEND Parents and Carers for Change (DSPCC) group shared their experiences, and delivered a letter.

"We feel increasingly frustrated by the continual and relentless institutional failings evident within Devon County Council's Children's Services," they wrote. "We all have individually raised our concerns, whether that was to a professional, a SEND caseworker, or by making a formal complaint to Devon County Council."

Julian Wooster, DCC Interim Director of Children's Services, and Donna Manson, Chief Executive, took time to meet, listen and talk to many of the parents.

"We accept that there have been significant problems across the whole system in Devon and that the experience of many parents has not been good," said Julian.

Extra resources have been identified in our budget to strengthen our SEND casework team and to help us compete with other local authorities to recruit and retain experienced staff.

"But," said Councillor Andrew Leadbetter, Portfolio Holder, "We know that this won't be easy and there are no quick fixes."