

There was a meeting of Lapford Parish Council on Tuesday 20th June 2023 at 7.30pm held in the Victory Hall, Lapford

Members Present: Cllrs Julie Down (Chairman); Sue Briant-Evans; Roy Andrews; Bill Graham; Steven Fletcher; Ian Mackie; John Burrows; Abigail Whittaker; Alex Shapland.

Also Present: County Cllr. Margaret Squires.

In attendance: Rob Martin (Clerk)

Others: 3 members of the public.

MINUTES

2324-034 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr. Lumsdon.

2324-035 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY)

No declarations were received.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting to allow public participation

2324-036 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION & UPDATES FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

A member of the public questioned whether the parish council allowed them to speak for three minutes, as shown on the agendas or for four minutes as he claimed was 'shown on the website' The clerk would check Standing Orders and see which of these was correct and ensure there was a consistent message for the future.

The caretaker requested that the storage space for her cleaning equipment within the Orchard Centre be freed up. The Clerk and Chairman would endeavour to make this happen and set the date as being 4th July 2023 at 7.30pm.

2324-037 COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

To receive a verbal report for information.

a) Devon County Council

County Cllr. Squires had circulated a statement issued by the Cabinet Member for Highways, as below:-

As you'll be aware, since the start of the year highways teams have been faced with an extremely high level of pothole defects across the network, following the cycle of prolonged cold and wet weather we experienced over the winter. To put this in context, around 26,500 potholes have been identified and passed to our contractor, Milestone, since January – this is around 8,000 or 30% more than for the same period last year. January alone saw almost 7,400 potholes identified, the most of any month in over 3 years. Similarly, our inspection team have assessed almost 35,000 reports of potholes from members of the public since January, compared to just over 14,000 last

year.

To tackle this backlog, teams across the Devon Highways partnership have worked very closely to enable re-prioritisation of resource so that safety critical defects on our highway network could be identified and repaired as effectively as possible. In order to achieve this some of our works programmes required adjusting, with schemes postponed or re-planned to free up available resource. We also had to make the difficult decision to temporarily cease identification and repair of serviceability (i.e. those that don't meet the intervention requirements of our Highway Safety Policy) highway defects, so that the focus could remain on those defects that represented the biggest risk to users of our network. At times, we have had over 40 pothole repair gangs working across the County, along with repairs and inspections taking place during evenings and at weekends.

We're pleased to report that, following concerted efforts, the number of potholes currently with Milestone for repair has now stabilised, sitting at around 800 (down from 3000 at its peak in February) and is much more in-line with the sort of volume we'd typically expect for this time of year. On this basis a number of the additionally resourced gangs have now returned to programmed works and we have very recently re-introduced the identification of non-safety defects, as we fully recognise the benefit of acting proactively and repairing these before they worsen and require attention at a later date.

Aside from traditional pothole repairs, we're also making the most of the longer days to ensure our dragon patchers are double shifting. Indeed, we have an additional 5th vehicle operating in the County this summer. This is coupled with the innovative Elastomac material that was recently demonstrated to Members at County Hall. These measures, along with planned programmes, are pivotal in maintaining our highway asset and without them the volume of potholes we experienced this winter would have undoubtedly been significantly greater.

The chairman asked Cllr. Squires what the current position was with the long-awaited speed limits at the top of the village, to which the answer was that it was being actively pursued.

b) Mid Devon District Council

District Cllr. Keable had circulated a report prior to the meeting which is outlined below:-

My apologies in that I shall be arriving after the start of tonight's PC meeting and hope to be with you by around 8.30pm. Please accept this as my Councillors Report for that item on your Agenda.

District Councillors Report

"Since the new District Council was formed just over one month ago much of the business of the Council has been the transition of the business and agenda set by the previous administrations of the Council. The 2-month administration of the Independent non-politically aligned District Councillors did a good work in stabilising the business of the Council when the Cabinet of former Council Leader Bob Deed and the Conservative Party fell apart in February. This has left the new Council formed by the election on 4th May with a considerable number of financial challenges. The most serious being the Three Rivers Development Company established in 2017 to build

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houses for profit. It would have been of great advantage to all if this wholly Council owned Company had managed to achieve the prospects of profits. Indeed the urgency of this subject is the reason why I cannot be with you at the start of tonight's PC meeting.

For all Councillors much of the last month has been consumed with training and preparation for the new roles. Council Chair is Frank Letch from Crediton. Largely this is a technical and ceremonial role. The leadership, Council Leader, is with Luke Taylor from Bradninch. While a family man in his early 40's Luke has 12-years of experience as a District Councillor. For myself I have been appointed the Portfolio Holder from Planning and Economic Regeneration which is a senior Cabinet position. This role is concerned with setting policy and the strategic planning for the future. Strengthening Carbon Zero, Climatic and Environment impacts of new developments will be central. Through this role pressure will be put upon South West Water to clean up their act to reduce discharge into our rivers. Improvements to public transport infrastructure is key to our futures. While the condition of our roads is not a responsibility or function of Mid Devon you will soon see how Mid Devon District Council will seek to exert pressure upon the County Council and the estimated 34,000 holes in Devon. This is too late for the couple who 'lost' their car and a considerable financial asset last week, as a result of the road conditions between Lapford bridges and Mill Hill. No doubt the risk impact the poor condition of the highway will be raised at some point this evening".

A further early item on your agenda that I shall miss and as Chair to Lapford Youth Club Management Committee have a contribution.

Youth Council

The Youth Club Management Committee would welcome this opportunity and Youth Leader Cat Seymour would be most willing to assist the PC with this development. In your considerations please do not make this too ambitious as a youth forum that meets 3 or 4 times a year and as needed to follow through on points is likely to be sufficient. The concern is not to over promise and lead to raised expectations especially an implementing projects takes time and young people grow up so quickly. We are aware of the male young persons letter currently in circulation pointing out the disparity between the Female and Male Toilets at the Victory Hall. Fostering the opportunity where young people can engage and be heard by a listening community is what is needed.

It would be good to see Parish Councillors at Thursday or Friday session. Prior notification would assist in session planning. Cllr Wilkie has attended a Thursday Hi Five and would be most welcome to this Friday's Drop-in for the older age group.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting in line with Standing Orders

2324-038 CLERK'S REPORT & CORRESPONDENCE

The clerk reported that:

1. General

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I am attempting to take on board the many requests for improvement being suggested by new councillors who are showing themselves to be willing to make an impact. I appreciate that there are a number of matters than can be done better and will cooperate fully in any suggested changes which are approved by the council.

2. **Standing Orders & Financial Regulations**

I had originally intended to present a revised version of these at this meeting, but was conscious that there was already a long agenda. The Internal Auditor commented that these should be based on the current NALC versions, although I am aware of where there are flaws in both. My intention is to produce fairly standard versions but perhaps adjust those areas I am aware of by addenda outlining procedures for online payments etc. This will now be done at a future meeting.

3. **Code of Conduct**

In the same way as the Standing Orders, the adoption of the current Mid Devon Code of Conduct would be advisable, which means very little change but shows that the parish council is aware of the need to focus on important matters such as this.

4. **Committees & Working Parties**

There are items on the agenda to deal with the personnel for each grouping, but I have concerns that the current terminologies cause some confusion, to me, in particular, let alone the general public.

It is important to get this right, because the rules for operating parish council groups differ dependent on whether it is a committee of the council or not. An example is the Church Green Committee, which includes councillors, but is not a committee of the parish council.

My view is that those groupings should be called a 'Trust' not a committee so that it is clear what is a charity as opposed to a true PC committee. Similarly, we need to distinguish between a committee and a working group, because all committees (and sub-committees) have to be held in public and their agendas minutes published in the same way that the council does.

We need to be sure that we conduct as much business in the public domain as we can, to be seen as open and transparent.

2324-039 **MINUTES**

On a proposal by the chairman, seconded by Cllr. Fletcher it was **Resolved** to adopt the draft minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting held on 16th May 2023.

2324-040 **PETER HEAL GIFT**

The chairman proposed that a gift be made to former councillor Peter Heal as recognition of the many years he spent working for the community. The chairman proposed that a garden centre gift voucher for £75 be purchased which was seconded by Cllr. Wilkie and unanimously agreed. The parish council would make this gift using the General Power of Competence. The chairman would purchase the vouchers and be reimbursed by the clerk.

2324-041 **ORCHARD CENTRE WORK**

Work had started on cleaning-up two walls on the outside of the building, which had been undertaken by Cllr. Wilkie. This work would be completed by painting the walls for which some cream paint was already in hand but some black was now required. Cllr. Wilkie said that he was confident that he could complete this work by the time of the Revel. It was believed

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that an 'Orchard Centre' sign should be erected and Cllr. Wilkie would get a price to make that.

Cllr. Fletcher had circulated a quotation for urgent remedial work from Sean Cooke, Electrical Contractor, to rectify the flaws found by the Fire Risk Assessment and the Building Survey both of which were done recently. It was believed that the Fuse Box would need to be placed in a position that would be permanent in the event of any future reconfiguration of the facility and making that change, on a proposal by Cllr. Whittaker, seconded by Cllr. Burrows it was **Resolved** that the complete list of tasks should be carried out for the total cost of £1,489 (excluding VAT), with potential increases subject to the relocation of the Fuse Box. In order to enable the work to be carried out urgently, the requirements of Financial Regulation 11.4 would be set aside to allow the work to be ordered based on just one quotation.

The hand-dryer in the toilet had been removed and was nowhere to be seen. The chairman thought that she had a paper-towel dispenser which could be installed as a temporary measure until thoughts on potential reconfiguration had been concluded.

2324-042 PLANTERS

The chairman thanked those who had filled the planters outside of the hall, which looked very nice. A number of planters had appeared around the village and these were being looked after by residents.

The idea of setting aside a budget towards the cost of planters around the village was discussed but it was concluded that, if asked, the parish council would decide on a case by case basis what support it could offer.

The clerk suggested that the concept of paying a 'Chairman's Allowance' to the postholder each year could be used to provide finance for such support if that were a better way forward. This is a power under the Member's Allowances Regulations 2003 (paragraph 25, 1, (a)). This would be considered at a future meeting.

2324-043 SIGNPOSTS

The report put together by Cllr. Briant-Evans more than a year ago had not yet been worked on and contained signs of all types and ownerships. The list would be updated and if it was just washing the signs then this could be done straight away. In particular, finger-posts were a parish council responsibility so they would need careful consideration. Otherwise, it might be a case of writing to the responsible organisations to get something done.

2324-044 COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATION ON COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS, OUTSIDE BODIES

The clerk had circulated a chart upon which to allocate various responsibilities to individual councillors. The following conclusions were drawn relating to each of the activities on the chart.

- Financial Oversight – Cllrs. Down and Graham
- Regeneration – Cllrs. Graham and Briant-Evans
- Events – Cllrs. Graham and Briant-Evans
- Planning – Cllrs. Shapland, Graham and Down
- HOLD Director – Cllr. Burrows
- Youth Club Management Committee – Cllrs. Briant-Evans, Wilkie and Andrews

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- Lapford Youth and Playing Field Trust – Cllrs. Wilkie and Andrews
- Village Hall Management Committee – Cllr. Andrews
- Asset Management – Cllrs. Briant-Evans and Graham
- Highways – Cllr. Wilkie + Cllr. Graham
- Orchard Centre – Cllrs. Fletcher, Wilkie and Andrews
- Police Liaison – Cllrs. Down and Wilkie
- Public Rights of Way – Cllrs. Shapland and Burrows

2324-045 FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES

Parish Council representatives on other bodies to feed-back important information from the meetings held. If any, since the last council meeting.

These include:

Charitable Trusts

- a) Church Green Committee (Trust)
Cllr. Whittaker reported on the meeting of the trust held the previous week. The next meeting would be on 13th July 2023
- b) Lapford Youth and Playing Field Trust
No report
- c) Youth Club Management Committee (Trust)
No report

Parish Council Committees & Working Parties

- d) Regeneration and/or Neighbourhood Plan Committee
Not yet reformed
- e) LEAP
*Cllr. Briant-Evans reported that the notes of the last meeting had been circulated and the recommendations had been: **to include that the LEAP Committee continue to meet re emergency planning and other safety matters, the setting up of the meeting with Steve Tucker, the joining of the Road Warden scheme, and the continuation of the Snow Warden scheme in the parish.***
- f) Finance Working Group
Not yet reformed

Other Bodies

- g) HOLD
No report

2324-046 ACTION LIST

It was agreed that the chairman and vice-chairman would discuss the format of the action list for the future with the and how it could be used to ensure thing on it got done.

2324-047 SECTION 106

The clerk circulated a report on the current position, as follows:

The officer in charge of developer contributions at Mid Devon DC is Jo Williams. I have spoken at length with Jo about the current Lapford Section 106 position and discussed how the two projects that have been considered as prime candidates for obtaining this funding, the Football Club Facilities and the refurbishment of the play area on the playing field, can progress.

A summary of the current position for Lapford PC was that there were three separate sums held by MDDC from previous developments and the values for these are:

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Fund	Amount Available	What can be funded
Legacy Funds (pre 2015)	£4,509	Any Infrastructure, possibly the Football Club
Teen Facilities	£7,147	Could be combined with the play equipment if the right scheme is drawn up.
Open Spaces	£15,085	Play Equipment
TOTAL	£26,741	

The matter that has held the use of this finance up is that the Football Club needed to demonstrate more of a community benefit and that the play equipment was being considered directly by the District Council in conjunction with the Lapford Youth and Playing Field Trust, whilst using all of this money.

The aim was to get an application for the football team needs first and see what would then be available for the play equipment. I have spoken to Jo's boss about this and he agrees that they should be working with the parish council and the LYPFT to achieve the required outcomes. I submitted an application for the football club, but that was not pursued by MDDC for a number of reasons:-

- a) There was apparently no formal arrangement with the landowner relating to the use of the field. The normal expectation would be for a lease to be in place, giving the football team the right to use the field for a given number of years.
- b) It was questioned whether the improvements would benefit residents of Lapford with just a restricted clientele using the field. There would need to be statements from the football club about what it was doing to encourage the children, boys and girls, to join the club and be able to play organised matches. The money is made available for the community to benefit from, not just adult men some of which did not live in Lapford.
- c) The plan of what was going to be done with the money was not clearly laid out, with the quotation shown being a little sketchy on information. This needed to be more transparent.

The application was not turned down, more information was needed to be able to progress it.

The amount available for the football club work is the £4,509 shown above as 'Legacy Funds' and once I have the information detailed above, I will be able to claim this sum with a good chance of success. This assuming, of course, that the parish council still wishes to support the football club with whatever changes it wants to do now. As far as the play equipment is concerned, there might be more than £22,000 available if a joint project is devised providing something that older children could make use of. I would suggest this is the first project for a Youth Council to consider and consult on.

It was unanimously agreed that support for the football club was still a priority and that the clerk would write to the club chairman to explain exactly what was needed to access the funds.

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More widely, the way the section 106 funds will be collected in the future is to change and there will be a need to have drawn up a list of potential future projects and these are to be included in a district-wide Infrastructure Project Plan (IPP) which will be used to identify what the money could be used for. If it is not on the IPP, there will be no funds available.

2324-048 YOUTH COUNCIL

It was unanimously agreed that the parish council would look to set up a Youth Council. The clerk would write to Cathryn Seymour for her advice on how this could operate.

2324-049 COUNCILLOR PROFILES

It was agreed that all councillors would provide a profile and a picture to be published in the Lookout and on the website. The clerk would produce a format for this to be circulated.

2324-050 PLANNING MATTERS

a) APPLICATIONS NOTIFIED

Cllr. Down declared a personal interest in application number 23/00859/FULL, on the basis of its proximity to her land. She did not take any part in the decision for this application.

The following applications were considered

Reference	Location	Proposal
23/00859/FULL	Land at NGR 272906 108921 West Lane Lapford	Erection of an agricultural storage building Decision: Support
23/00610/FULL	Eastmere Farm Lapford Crediton Devon EX17 6QU	Erection of an agricultural utility building Decision: Neutral, with the following comment: Although Lapford Parish Council sees no planning reason for refusal on this site, it would like to see conditions to any approval that ensure that the site is tidied up, in line with previous requests, and to ensure that it is kept tidy when the new building is installed. It will also want to see that any such conditions are enforced and continue to be monitored.

b) APPLICATIONS AFTER THE AGENDA WAS ISSUED

To consider responses to applications notified after the agenda had been set.

c) MDDC DECISIONS

Reference	Location	Proposal	MDDC Decision
23/00548/FULL	Land and Buildings at	Erection of building to	

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	NGR 275818 111138 Deneridge Cross Lapford Devon	provide cover for existing slurry pit	Full Permission Granted
23/00277/FULL	Land and Building at NGR 273983 110608 (Tall Trees) Lapford Devon	Conversion of agricultural building to holiday let	Refusal

2324-051 RECONCILIATION & BUDGET MONITOR STATEMENT

The Bank Reconciliation and Receipts and Payments statement, as at 14th June 2023 was **Adopted**.

2324-052 RING-FENCING BUDGETS

Cllr. Fletcher requested information on the elements within the current year's budget that were ring-fenced for known commitments compared with the parts that had to be subject to a decision to be spent. The attached analysis shows a draft of the 2023/24 split of the budget. This was **Noted**.

2324-053 RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS SCHEDULE

On a proposal by Cllr. Graham, it was **Resolved** to approve the payment of the invoices on the schedule below for the period since the last meeting, as below:

PAYMENTS

Payment to	Services	Amount £	Payment No.
2023/2024			
S Hemsworth	Salary June 2023	57.37	SO
RJ Martin	Salary June 2023	505.70	2324-08
HMRC	Tax Deducted June 2023	140.40	2324-08
EDF Energy	Orchard Centre Electricity	56.57	DD
Everflow	Orchard Centre Sewage & Water	3.01	DD
BT Group Ltd	Orchard Centre Broadband	45.12	DD
IONOS	Village Website Hosting	16.84	DD
Victory Hall	Room Hire	23.80	2324-09
Ian Mackie – Homebase	Paint Rollers OC	15.00	2324-09
Julie Down	Garden Centre Vouchers	75.00	2324-12

RECEIPTS

Receipt from	Services	Amount £	Method
2023/2024			
Bill Graham	Coronation Event Income	86.98	FPS

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Cash	Coronation Event Income	523.00	BGC
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2324-054 MATTERS RAISED BY THE CHAIR

The chairman was pleased with the constructive meeting but wished to make sure that councillors had prepared before they attended. She wanted councillors unable to attend meetings to notify both the clerk and her beforehand.

Councillors should read the paperwork before the meeting and to reply if the clerk asks a question wanting a response.

She also raised the question of whether a parish council facebook page should be set up with the intention of disseminating information but not allowing comment or responses. She would talk to Cllr. Lumsdon to see whether this would be possible and would try to arrange it.

2324-055 COUNCILLORS' REPORTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS (FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

Cllr. Briant-Evans brought up the subject of footpaths and keeping them clear, which would be something for Cllr. Shapland to report on. Further discussions on footpaths in the village were discussed without proposing any action.

2324-056 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Parish Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 18th July 2023 at 7.30pm in the small room at the Victory Hall.

2324-057 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **Resolved** that under section 1(2) of The Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during consideration of items of business if publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted as it involves the likely disclosure of personnel, commercially sensitive or legal matters.

2324-058 APPOINTMENT OF PARISH CLERK

On a proposal by the Chairman it was unanimously **Resolved** to reappoint Rob Martin as Parish Clerk and RFO on a permanent contract.

2324-059 CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 9.55pm

Signed: Chairman Date: 18/7/23