

LAPFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Notes of the Meeting

The Lapford Annual Parish Meeting was held in the Victory Hall, Lapford, Crediton, EX17 6PZ on Saturday 30 May 2023 at 7.30pm.

Attendees: Cllrs. Jill Down (LPC Chairman), Sue Briant-Evans, Abigail Whittaker, Steven Fletcher, Roy Andrews, John Burrows, Stacey Lumsdon, Alex Shapland, Ian Wilkie, Peter Heal (the former chairman) Rob Martin (Parish Clerk) & 23 members of the public.

Apologies: Cllr. Bill Graham

1. Acceptance of notes of meeting held on 14 May 2022

The minutes of the meeting on 14 May 2022 were agreed as a correct record and were duly signed as such.

2. Chairman's Annual Report 2022/23

Peter Heal, the former chairman welcomed attendees to the 2023 Lapford Annual Parish Meeting. His report was as follows:

The past year has seen a lot of things before in my lifetime or of many residents.

In June 2022 we all had the opportunity to celebrate the platinum jubilee of Queen Elizabeth the Second, our longest serving monarch, and the village came together to mark the occasion in splendid style with much merriment on Lower Town Place, in the Ark and the Church.

Our joy turned to sadness on 8th September last year when we heard the very sad news of the death of our beloved queen.

She had been so much part of our lives and her passing affected us all in many different ways.

Of course, she was succeeded by King Charles the Third, and again the village came together to mark the coronation of our new monarch in much the same way we had marked the jubilee of the late Queen.

As Chairman of the parish council I had the honour of carrying out the proclamation of the new King on the Church Green, attended by many residents and a few children, sadly it was my hope that the whole school would be able to attend and see history in the making but that was not possible. This ceremony was something I and many other villagers had never seen, and for many of us it could be the one and only time we see it.

The parish council has for a long time been trying to draw a line under all the bad feeling that has arisen following the purchase of Lower Town Place, over many months the clerk and the Chairman of the Youth Club have been working on a very comprehensive report to set out all the facts of the transactions and at the same time dispelling many falsehoods that had circulated.

The end result shows that there were no inappropriate actions taken and as the document has been adopted by the parish council the matter should now be finally drawn to a close.

As in all years, the council has worked closely with both our district and county councillors and I thank them for their support.

Our village continues to move forward with a very active youth club, gardening club and various other groups that meet and make use of our village facilities.

I would especially like to thank the whole team who run the Ark and Food Bank. Your regular opening sessions provide great fellowship to many village residents, long may it continue.

Looking forward, thanks to the very hard work by Abi Whittaker, we shall start to see the renovation of the church green fencing to make the village centre more attractive.

The parish council has many more projects to work on and I wish them well in their efforts under the Chairmanship of Julie Down.

I have been part of Lapford Parish Council for almost 30 years, its sad not to be part of it now, but I wish you all well in your future work to administer local government in the parish.

Peter Heal.

3. Reports from the Committees & Groups

Lapford Youth Club

The Youth Club leader, Cathryn Seymour, said that not a lot had changed from her report to last year's meeting. A couple of highlights were the celebrations for the Jubilee and the Coronation where they were able to put together some fantastic displays in the Ark. She then introduced two young people who wanted to explain the things they would like to see in the parish.

Leah Stapleton said: *'I like that I can come down and meet friends, play and have fun. I love being able to do crafts at youth club. I like the helpers and volunteers, they make me feel welcome. I would like more space, inside and out. I would like more clubs to happen, especially arts and crafts, and more community events like Alice in Wonderland. I would like more bins as there are not enough especially in the park.'*

Kenzie Read also said *'I like being outside at the youth club and the things we play with. I like having nice drinks and a tuck shop. I really like having a nice place to meet my friends. When it is winter and we cannot go outside it can feel boring. I would like to see a pump track (bike track). I would like to see more things in the park like better goalposts and more equipment. I like more crafty things to happen in general like the coronation displays.'*

The children both received a round of applause and were thanked for their contributions.

Lapford Youth and Playing Field Trust (LYPFT)

Cllr. Andrews make the following report:

WHO ARE WE?

Lapford playing field is run by a small committee of currently seven members. During the past 12 months the structure of the committee has changed, and a few other changes have been made.

The field now looks very smart, thanks to willing volunteers, who have cut the grass, tidied the boundaries and created a safe environment for children to “let off steam”!!

We have a few more ideas which we would like to fulfil – one being a wildlife area at one end of the field, the other being to plant some indigenous trees/shrubs which flower, to encourage wildlife into the area to educate the children on different species around them.

WE also need to replace some of the play equipment and introduce some new items, but to do this we need some vital funding.

All these things cost money, so we have applied for a few grants, one being section 106, and we are still awaiting a result on this.

We are holding a couple of fund-raising events this summer at the field, a Car Boot Sale, a Steam and Vintage Rally, as well as already holding a successful Bingo night. Cllr. Lumsdon pointed out that a good date for another car boot sale would be the end of July, or beginning of August when parents tend to have a clear-out.

We are always looking for new members who can bring fresh ideas to the committee and the field.

Lapford Voluntary Car Aid (LVCA)

Jeanne Whittaker reported on this charity.

During the 1980s, a volunteer group was set up to run a non-profit organisation to provide subsidised medical transport for the residents of Lapford. This was named LAPFORD VOLUNTARY CAR AID.

This service enables residents to attend doctors surgeries within a 10-mile radius of Lapford. We are managed by a small committee of 6 volunteers, and currently have 10 volunteer drivers.

The drivers are paid fuel allowances only, and topped up by LVCA. The LVCA money comes from donations, legacies, grants and fundraising events, one of which was the visit by the Exeter Male Voice Praise in December 2022, which was very well attended and enjoyed by all.

We serve surgeries at Chulmleigh, Bow, North Tawton, Winkleigh, Morchard Bishop, Crediton (Redlands) and Witheridge. WE also go to Crediton Community Hospital and the Breast-Screening Unit at Tesco Car Park, in Crediton. We also provided essential transport during the Covid 19 pandemic for vaccination appointments

During the 2021-22 we covered 4,800 miles over 277 journeys, proving that we are a very busy service – vital to the village of Lapford.

Lapford Celebrations Committee

Cllr. Briant-Evans reported that:

At the end of 2021, it was announced nationally the Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee would be celebrated in June 2022. Accordingly, the parish council agreed to set up a group to organise celebrations in Lapford.

After a public meeting at the beginning of January 2022, which 11 people attended, a committee of six under the chairmanship of Peter Heal was formed to take the matter

forward. Over the next six months this group worked to deliver a programme of activities for the weekend of 2nd to 5th June 2022.

These included

- a youth club family disco,
- an entertainer,
- lighting of the Jubilee beacon on Lower Town Place,
- a Barbecue,
- Children's games,
- Cream Teas at the Ark,
- A community picnic,
- Village Treasure Hunt,
- Competitions,
- Commemorative Mugs for sale,
- A Community Service at the parish church, and
- An Art Exhibition at the Ark worked on by the children of the youth club.

The parish council kindly guaranteed funding of £500 and insurance, but in the end, the event hugely supported and enjoyed by the community, made a slight surplus of just over £100. A permanent reminder of the Jubilee is the commemorative bench donated by the parish council and situated on the green area at the back of the Orchard Centre.

By the time September 2022 came when the group met once more the Queen had sadly died, so it was decided to rename the group the Celebrations Committee and to reconvene in January 2023 to plan celebrations around an expected Coronation event in Summer 2023. Another six months of planning and preparation has delivered the events of a month ago, plus the planting of an Oak Tree in the playing field as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative.

Huge thank-yous not only to the small committee, but to the much larger band of helpers and volunteers who came forward to make both events happen – from electrical installations, sorting out tents, catering, publicity and much more.

The committee has stayed in place in the hopes of organising a Spring/early Summer community event for next year and will meet again in January 2024.

All ideas on this would be welcomed. Coronation mugs are still for sale in the Ark.

Football Club

Following the demise of the club, largely due to it being too successful, it was reported that it had applied to re-join the league at a lower level and this would hopefully be agreed at a meeting on 16th June 2023. Anyone of any age interested in playing football should make contact with the club.

Regeneration Committee

Steve Keable wanted to pick up some points which would have been covered under the auspices of the former Regeneration Committee and in particular the work of Steve Munday who had been successful in getting changes Lapford Station. He was now looking to get all trains to stop at the station, rather than a select few so that access to Exeter by train was available to all.

Heart of Lapford Development (HOLD)

Peter Norman reported that HOLD looked forward to helping with the next phase of the Lower Town Place project. As a Community Benefit Society HOLD had done its job in acquiring Lower Town Place for the community. It was now up to others to finish the job and the merger with the Village Hall Committee was one way of making this happen. The intention was to come up with one constitution which covered the hall and the adjoining land.

Lapford Project 2000 (LP2K)

Steve Keable reported on the work of this group.

Some 26 years ago a spin-out group from the parish council and the community got together to prepare Lapford for the millennium celebrations. It was given the name Lapford project 2000 which today is shortened to LP2K. That group was responsible for a load of millennium events of which probably the longest lasting, apart from LP2K itself, is the stitchwork on the wall here at the Victory Hall.

The cornerstones of LP2K's work continues to be the Lapford Lookout, Lapford Archive, Armistice Celebrations, with events at the ARK and Lower Town Place.

Hats off to the volunteer delivery team who are out at the end of each month, no matter what the weather, to distribute the upcoming months issue of the Lookout. Thanks to the Editors Beccy Fletcher and Caroline Noon who are supported by and Editorial Board.

Funded with advertising revenue the Lookout continues to pay its way without subsidy.

LP2K have other aspirations:

- Taking on the village website that is funded by the Parish Council, and is currently dormant;
- Welcoming and promoting the Lands-End to John O'Groats cycle route that passes through Lapford – there is so much that we could do to celebrate these journeys, and make these long-distance riders feel they have received a special welcome in Lapford.
- Open access to the Lapford archive. Audrey McCormack has done a fantastic job in cataloguing to improve the access to this wealth of local information. This links in with local historian David Garton's work.

Finally, open-air theatre, which has been led by LP2K in the last couple of years returns on the 18th of June with an appropriately named Shakespeare play on Lower Town Place entitled "Much Ado About Nothing".

Lapford Emergency Action Plan (LEAP)

Cllr. Mackie gave an enthusiastic presentation on the subject of highways a matter usually dealt with by the LEAP group. He explained the need to appoint a qualified **Road Warden** from within the parish council and to gather a number of **Road Warden Volunteers**. The subject of **Potholes** is constantly being referred to Devon County Highways but nothing is going to be done to repair them, whether they meet the criteria or not.

Road wardens, once trained, can actually repair potholes but they can also clear the highways of weeds and clean road signs. He wants residents to get in touch with the parish council and he will ensure it gets done, one way or another.

Cllr. Andrews was waiting for Steve Tucker to give him training on being a **Snow Warden**.

It was important to know what was contained within the Orchard Centre for emergency work and to make sure this was the only place it would be housed.

4. Financial Report 2022/23

The Clerk summarised the financial position as it stood at 31st March 2023

The final accounts for the parish council are attached to these minutes, below is a brief explanation of the main points for the year.

The receipts in the 2022/23 financial year amounted to £25,744, of which £22,216 was precept. Included in this was VAT of £1,311 refunded by HMRC with the remainder being grants and donations of various sorts.

The payments made during the year resulted from a number of long-standing matters being finalised and paid for during the year. The total amount paid out was £36,472, which was £10,728 more than the receipts, which resulted in the overall Reserves reducing from £40,933 to £30,205 some details of which are given below.

The extraordinary items of expenditure during the year were:-

- It was revealed that the **Orchard Centre** had not been paying the energy costs it should have been, which resulted in an extra £2,000+ being paid for back-dated charges.
- The **Village Clock** was refurbished during the year at a cost of £6,590 and the decision was made to use the General Reserve to fund this.
- The final **Lower Town Place** loan-funded support grant of £2,668 was paid.
- The **VAT** expenditure was about £1,500 higher than normal because of the Clock Refurbishment. This has now been reclaimed and paid fully by HMRC.

Reserves

The effect of this on the reserves was that the Earmarked Reserves were reduced by £3,824, the majority of which was the Lower Town Place payment, and the General Reserve reduced by £6,904, from £29,989 to £23,085. This level of General Reserve is within the guidance given of maintaining up to 100% of the precept level.

There are a number of uncertainties in the coming year(s) including the level of inflation for which having a healthy General Reserve balance is prudent. This will be particularly evident if the parish wishes to assist with community projects, or undertake a Neighbourhood Plan.

5. 'Have Your Say'

Orchard Centre

The first question was what people thought about the Orchard Centre and its uses. The general consensus was that it was a useful community building and should remain the venue for the Village Archive, the Post Office and Small meetings. There was a feeling that its use by small groups could be extended, possibly with a small charge.

Volunteering

The Clerk expressed his surprise at the level of volunteering that occurs in Lapford with plenty of people willing to make things happen, which was in his experience at an unprecedented level. If that enthusiasm could be harnessed with the majority pulling in the same direction, great things could happen.

Youth Club

Cathryn emphasised the importance of the Youth Club and suggested that councillors would be welcome to come to sessions where they could see the shortage of space

Shipping Containers

She also wondered whether the necessary shipping containers, which were a bit of an eyesore, could be improved by letting youngsters graffiti the outside in a controlled way.

Pump Track

Cathryn also said that another thing that youngsters had requested was a bicycle **Pump Track**, which would only involve pile of earth with a surface over it to let children race their cycles to their own delight.

Youth Council

There was general consensus that a **Lapford Youth Council** could be introduced to enable young people to have a forum at which they could make formal requests of the parish council. Meetings would not have to be frequent and the agendas restricted to some extent, but it would be good to give the children a voice.

Children Litter Picking

Cllr. Lumsdon had received a number of letters from children of the school about when children had gone out of their own volition and carried out litter picking. She would be bringing the idea on its next agenda to encourage the parish council to fund the cost of some equipment so that they could do this again.

Telephone Box

A perennial subject is what to do with the Box. The conclusion was that the first thing would be to find a clear purpose for it and then decide what to do with it and where it should be located. One suggestion was that mental health information could be placed in it to identify resources to help people that were struggling.

Neighbourhood Plan (NP)

The clerk, who was experienced in the production of more than one Neighbourhood Plan outlined some of the benefits of producing one for the future of Lapford.

Because consultation is the bedrock of a NP it would encourage those with the visions for the future of the parish to come together to share aspirations in a logical way.

Producing a NP does work at bringing communities together, if the preparation work is done together. It encourages DCC and MDDC to look more carefully at what community wants.

The Development Plan for Lapford incorporates the NPPF, the district Local Plan and the adopted NP. It would allow the community to allocate land for housing in the right place, including brownfield sites already occupied by closing businesses rather than let developers deciding where the best profit can be made.

There are direct financial incentives to the community in that the share of potential Community Infrastructure Levy available to the parish council rises from 15% to 25% of the total collected.

Producing a Neighbourhood Plan is not easy but can be extremely worthwhile.

There is financial support for the production of a plan with an upfront grant of £10,000 available plus a further £8,000 available later, plus technical support plus Housing Needs Survey finance. The grants and Technical Support are provided through 'Locality' which is tasked with the distribution of Government money for this.

The first task, which has to be done before funding can be applied for, is to get the Neighbourhood Plan Development Area adopted, which can be all or just part of the parish boundary.

The parish council usually starts the formation of a NP group and acts as the projects sponsor. It does not however have to do all of the work, which can be carried out by a Working Group working together with the council.

Further Highways Matters

A complaint was raised about the amount of weed that was growing on the highway and footpaths in the parish. It was pointed out that this could be reduced significantly if people cleared weeds from outside of their own houses. The clerk remarked that once the community was doing some of this work for itself, more notice would be taken of more serious defects that need to be resolved. He would ask Steve Tucker for a map showing the adopted roads in the parish, as a starting point to identifying privately owned highways.

Meeting ended 9.25

LAPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

FINAL ACCOUNTS 2023/2024

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

31-Mar-24

2022/2023 Outturn		2023/2024 To Date
£		£
RECEIPTS		
22,216	Precept	25,000
2,217	Other Receipts	1,358
1,311	VAT Receipts	2,174
25,744	TOTAL RECEIPTS	28,532
PAYMENTS		
1,556	Administration	4,427
7,724	Staffing	8,173
263	Councillors	542
280	Subscriptions	326
-	Car Park	-
5,087	Orchard Centre	4,345
-	Telephone Kiosk	-
50	Defibrillator	344
161	Community Website	193
8,001	Maintenance - General	924
595	Public Rights of Way	-
-	Emergency Planning	75
1,317	Village Maintenance Grants	1,634
-	COVID Emergency	-
1,568	Grants to Local Organisations	1,402
2,668	Lower Town Place	-
4,499	Loan Repayments	4,499
2,703	VAT Expenditure	858
36,472	TOTAL PAYMENTS	27,742
General Reserve		
29,989	b/f	23,085
25,744	Receipts	28,532
(36,472)	Payments	(27,742)
3,824	Transfers	2,062
23,085	c/f	25,937

LAPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

FINAL ACCOUNTS 2023/2024

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

31-Mar-24

2022/2023 Outturn		2023/2024 To Date
£		£
RESERVES		
20,919	General Reserve	25,937
Earmarked Reserves		
200	Car Park Refurbishment	-
1,305	Calor Gas Rural	1,305
755	PROW	755
4,744	PWLB	-
116	Village Event Reserve	831
2,166	Emergency Committee Fund	2,166
30,205	Total Balance in Hand	30,995

RJ Mark Rfo 16/4/24

h chao