**Minutes for 21st February 2024 meeting held at 7:30pm at the Methodist School Rooms**

**Those present:** Cllr Nicola Murch (Vice Chair), Cllr Michael Wheaton, Cllr Gemma Mullinger, Cllr Frank Pawley, Cllr Zoe Nicklin, Cllr Amanda Beauregard, Cllr Paula Alford, Cllr Lucy Seatherton, and Faye Davies (clerk).

**Also present:** District Cllr Sue Whitehead, County Cllr Paul Henderson, four members of the public

**Election of new Chair**

Cllr Wheaton was voted in as Chair, Cllrs Craze and Blyther were not present to vote.

**Apologies and Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Craze sent apologies. No declarations of interest.

**Approval and signing of minutes of the last Parish Council meeting 10/01/24 as a true account.**

All approved

**Clerks report**

The clerk has received a high number of emails requesting potholes be reported, the public and councillors were informed that any person can report a pothole via the Devon County Council website and it does not have to be done through your local Parish Council, if every pothole request was reported it would take up a large number of the clerks working hours. This also included complaints about highways closures and diversions, the clerk has no input in these decisions and these are out of the Parish Councils control. The flooding and blocked drains in Cobbaton was reported.

**Statement of accounts and payments for approval**

£20 Umberleigh Village Hall hire payment for 14/12/23 meeting, methodist school rooms electric charge of £26.75, and Scribe Accounting Software approved.

**Website discussion**

The Parish Council website payment did not go through, and the website was shut down. Correspondence with Easyportal has occurred but with no response.

All councillors agreed they would like a new website; it was agreed the finance committee would further discuss the cost implications.

**County Councillors Report and Highways Updates**

Please see report at the end of this document.

**District Councillors Report**

Nothing to report, Cllr Whitehead informed she would like to meet with Stacey enforcement officer regarding Winson Cross.

**Finance committee update.**

Cllr Pawley recommended the purchase of Scribe Accounting software, which would cost £475 the first year and £275 from year two onwards. The accounting system will input the VAT automatically, there is also an asset register, and it will prepare the AGAR, it will also produce a financial report to show spending, and complete bank reconciliations. Cllr Nicklin requested to check whether the software has a way of being backed up to protect what is input into the system.

Underspent on budget currently, and over 4k on VAT is due.

**Play Area Committee Update**

Inspection rota created. Jumble sale on Saturday 2nd March. Easter egg hunt will be happening, details to follow. £1,208 made from the calendar sales.

**Playing Field Committee update**

Please see report at the end of this document.

**Vehicles and Structures on land near Winson Cross update**

The enforcement officer is of the view that these structures and vehicles are slowly being removed.

There is a large hole that has been dug, which appears to have items discarded in it, this has been reported to the enforcement officer who will be viewing this in person.

**Chittlehampton Village Hall update**

£27,000 still needs to be raised to go towards the match fund. Access will be provided behind the hall to the play area and field once work has commenced on the renovating the village hall on 3rd June 2024. Chittlehampton Parish Council gives its full support.

**Clerk contract hours discussion.**

Clerk requested an increase in working hours from 7 to 10 a week, Chair and Clerk to discuss outside of this meeting and to report back.

**Members of the public open session**

Members of the public informed about the village square looking unkempt, the Chair and Cllr Pawley agreed to meet with Marian and Rose to discuss what needs doing and decide a plan of action.

**Items for consideration**

Cobbaton working party had a meeting. Cllrs Wheaton and Nicklin were present, Cllrs Mullinger and Blyther did not attend. The neighbourhood plan was not discussed during this meeting, the Local Plan was referenced only to the quality of the housing whilst members waited for others to arrive, with reference to the conservation area and character appraisal, Cllr Nicklin informed that the Parish do not have these. However, these were not discussed in great detail. Design code and local plan were discussed, it was suggested that Cllr Nicklin contact Liz Dee for an idea on how to update these.

Bus campaign for a bus to be from South Molton to Umberleigh. Information provided by Gerrard Sables will be printed off and put in the noticeboards.

A thankyou to Matthew Jones for his hard work and dedication to the Parish Council during his work as a Councillor and Chair.

**Date of next meeting**

03/04/24

Faye Davies Chittlehampton Parish Clerk chittlehamptonclerk@gmail.com

**These minutes are a draft copy until they are agreed and signed as a true account.**

**Signed: …………………………………………………….**

**Date: ………………………………………………………..**

**Cllr Henderson’s report - DCC BUDGET 24/25**

Above inflation increases for vulnerable children and adults and more money for potholes

There will be an increase of 10.4 per cent in spending on children’s services.

DCC have agreed a 4.99 per cent increase in council tax for the coming financial year.

It comprises 2.99 per cent for general services with an extra two per cent for adult care.

It means an extra £1.56 a week for the average Band D householder.

There will be increases of 10.4 per cent in spending on children’s services, six per cent on adult services and 4.7 per cent on climate change, environment, and transport.

Councillors also agreed an extra £1.5 million to boost regular road drainage since the target budget was set last month to tackle the increase in potholes caused by this winter’s heavy rainfall.

There will also be £716,000 extra to bring the homelessness budget back up to £1.45 million to support the work of district councils and homeless organisations for another year.

Devon’s revenue spending on services will increase from just under £700 million to £743 million in 2024/25. That’s an overall rise of 6.3 per cent in spending.

In addition, councillors approved a capital budget of over £155 million for investment in infrastructure such as schools and roads.

The council tax for an average Band D home will rise by £81.54 to £1,715.67 – an extra £1.56 a week.

The budget includes savings, alternative funding, and additional income of £49.6 million. The budget was approved by 34 votes to 14.

**PUBLIC ASKED TO HAVE THEIR SAY ON DEVON AND TORBAY DEVOLUTION DEAL**

A six-week public consultation was launched on Monday 12 February on the draft proposal to create a Combined County Authority (CCA) for Devon and Torbay to oversee new powers and funding transferred from Government. The ground-breaking devolution deal announced by Levelling Up Minister Jacob Young last month, proposes to create the CCA, which would be a formal partnership of elected members drawn from the councils of Devon and Torbay, including district councils, together with representatives from business and education.

People are being invited to have their say on how the CCA would work, the powers that it would have and the functions it would be responsible for. These include investment in local economic growth, delivering affordable housing, improving public transport, and meeting net zero ambitions.

Further information about our joint consultation with Torbay Council and details of how to respond are available at www.devontorbaydeal.org.uk

Establishing the CCA would not mean removing or merging local councils and does not require a Mayor for Devon and Torbay. All councils would continue to exist and would still be responsible for public services in their area.

**Among the Devon and Torbay devolution deal proposals are:**

• The new body would have direct control of adult education to create up to 50,000 new training and retraining opportunities by 2030. Through Local Skills Improvement Plans, the proposed CCA will work with business and education leaders to create a stronger, joined-up relationship between employers and schools, colleges, and universities to provide the skilled workforce the local economy needs for the future.

• Over £16 million of new funding would be invested in new green jobs, homes, skills, and business growth to accelerate Devon and Torbay’s transition to a net-zero economy, capitalising on the area’s world-leading expertise in green science and technology.

• There would also be a stronger partnership with Homes England, working closely with district councils in Devon to create a joint action plan for affordable housing schemes for local people as well as reducing homelessness. The proposal includes additional land assembly and compulsory purchase powers and would facilitate greater Community Land Trust-led delivery.

• The joined up local transport planning by Devon County Council and Torbay Council will be strengthened to improve the efficiency and co-ordination of public transport. There is also an ambition to introduce a single ticketing system for public transport passengers.

• From 2025 the Government is also offering to transfer responsibility for planning and delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to Devon and Torbay, engaging with Devon’s district councils, to support high growth business sectors as well as funding town centre enhancements.

The results of the consultation will be considered by both Councils in April. Devon County Council and Torbay Council will consider whether they want to submit the proposal to Government, either with or without amendments, or not at all.

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities would examine any submission and make regulations setting up the CCA.

A summary leaflet about the consultation will be available in all Devon and Torbay libraries as well as district council offices. You can take part in the consultation, which closes at 11:59pm on 24 March 2024

**Cllr Craze’s Playing Field Report 20/02/2024.**

**Play Area**

Personnel Trained to carry out the defined inspections 11/02/24 – Mark Craze / Rachael Williams / Kevin Hussell & Nicola Murch.

Two weekly and Monthly Inspection Forms written and circulated to team above alongside a rota to year end. Reports will be fed back to M. Craze initially to collate any findings and then routed to parish Clerk for storage.

Investigating how to set up a QR Code to capture these inspections and any reports or feedback from the public.

Play Area Risk Management Policy written - one query remaining ref do the Inspectors above need a DBS check? I think not but will seek further advice on this.

Risk Assessment for Play Area completed and will be circulated for comment to the Play Area Committee before release to Council.

Have some Volunteers for Mowing and Strimming of the immediate Play area around equipment however need to engage more help.

**Playing Field Committee.**

Have not met again since initial meeting in December – Mark to schedule a meeting in the next two weeks.

**Some thoughts on Football Pitch Grass Cutting following offers and discussions:**

Contractors Mower – Potential use of M. Berry's at start of Cutting season and cut down to size.

Continued cutting in growing season x 1 per week – potentially use Franks Mower if available - need to agree if we can get a group of say 4 persons trusted to use so each would do once per month.

Strimming bank and other areas around the Playing Field - need group to do - need once per month in growing season.

**Play Area**

Ride on Mower to cut area at Play area end but not around the equipment and matting.

Hand Mower or Flymo to cut the Play area matting etc.

Strimmer to cut grass around bank and fence.

Longer Term – have received quotes for a Mower thanks to Michael – we need to investigate what grants we can get to support any acquisition.

Lots to do – will need to re-invigorate the Playing Field Committee asap.

**Village Hall Project**

Have met with Zoe and she has outlined the work tender outline and what impact this may have. This will need further discussion and review at the next Playing Field Committee meeting.