

RACKENFORD AND CREACOMBE PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 17th January 2017

Present: Cllrs G Lamb, P Grugeon, J Cox, R Mathews, F Phillips, S Warne, S Child
Also present: K Ward (clerk), County and District Councillor J Yabsley

1. **Apologies** – Cllr B Morrison

2. **Open Forum** - No comments from public.

3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2017**

2.1 **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record, and signed as correct.

2.2 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda:

- Clerk to contact NDDC re Windsor Farm planning application – noted
- All councillors are requested to speak to local residents about other projects which may be eligible for funding from the Devon Communities Foundation Fund – Cllr Warne reported that there was interest in having a village hall, play area, Common shelter, BMX site.
- Clerk to contact Witheridge Parish Council regarding support for TAP fund application for night landing site. It was noted Witheridge PC have now partnered with East Worlington PC.

4. **Matter arising from Minutes of 29th November 2016: Common Plan**

Cllr Lamb presented a 1 page “Rackenford Common Regeneration” outline proposal setting out that the objectives of the Common are “that it is usable by the whole community for recreational, educational and social activities” and this would include clearance of shrubby woodland and hard landscaping on a phased basis depending on funding. A grant application has been submitted to the Devon Communities Fund in order to progress the first phase of the project which is to commission an ecological / environmental survey. The Council supported the outline proposal and it was **AGREED** that an ecological / environmental survey will be commissioned, subject to funding being awarded.

5. **Declaration of Interests**

Cllr Lamb declared an interest in agenda item 9.1

6. **Finance 2016/17**

6.1. The Clerk reported the bank balance at 31 December 2016 was £22345.76 and this included £3000 recently awarded from the Locality Fund for necessary works to the Common which must be spent by 31 March.

6.2. The following payments were **APPROVED**:

- K Ward, clerks wages £102.25
- K Ward expenses £17.27
- HMRC £25.60

6.3. Accounts to Ratify: **APPROVED**

- Arboricare £480.00 (£400.00 + VAT) for removal of branch and other urgent works

7. **Precept and Budget 2017/18**

7.1. The Clerk reported that North Devon DC had now provided the Council Tax Support Grant and tax base information in order to calculate the Council Tax for the parish. After considering options for the precept and Council Tax, it was **RESOLVED** that the precept for 2017/18 will be £5850.00, the same level as 2016/17.

7.2. The Council **APPROVED** the Budget as presented, subject to amending the precept demand to £5850.

Action: Clerk to circulate donation request from CAB to all members for consideration at the March meeting.

8. **Transparency Code**

The Clerk reported that a grant application has been submitted to assist the Council to become fully compliant with the Code by 31 March 2017.

9. **Planning**

9.1. The following items were **NOTED**:

- East Nutcott Farm formation of new entrance and trackway – “fully supports” response submitted
- 62060 Windsor Farm Bungalow – demolition of existing and erection of new dwelling – approved

9.2. North Devon DC has published consultation on Traveller Site Assessment Methodology and draft Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedules and regulations.

Action: Clerk to circulate the consultation information to all members, noting the consultation

deadline is 24th February 2017.

10. Report from District and County Councillor

Cllr Yabsley reported that North Devon DC is currently finalising their 4 year budget. While a number of new homes has helped increase the tax base, the Council is still looking to address a £0.5m gap for 2017/18.

Devon County Council has a large overspend on adult services, and a smaller overspend on children's services which need to be addressed. While the Government is allowing an increase in Council Tax to cover additional spending on adults, it won't cover the current projected overspend. The County is currently going through the Scrutiny process to set its budget. Cllr Yabsley understands that cuts in the highway maintenance budget are inevitable, but that reporting of potholes appears to be working well. Cllr Child enquired whether the proposal to divert funds from general to higher needs education was still being considered; Cllr Yabsley said he did not know if this was the case.

11. Batsworthy Cross Wind Farm

Cllr Child updated the Council on correspondence with the Devon Communities Foundation regarding their proposal for financial support to BT for providing broadband. While it is not currently clear exactly what their proposals are, and further information is awaited, it was noted that the Government has again announced rollout of superfast broadband to rural communities. BT have now installed a new fibre-optic cabinet within Rackenford village, although it was noted that connections from the cabinet to individual properties are copper so that broadband speed drops when the property is more than a mile from the cabinet. The Council remains concerned about broadband speed for those outside of the main village.

12. Highways & Footpaths

12.1 Devon County Council Community Enhancement Fund – the Clerk gave an overview of grant proposal from the County Council, noting functions the council has statutory powers to carry out and those where delegated authority would be needed, and also outlined the requirements of the grant application. There was a general discussion on the merits of the scheme including the training requirements or contracting out options, and it was concluded that the pothole and highway repairs should remain the responsibility of highways but that ensuring drains and gullies are kept clear maybe worth future consideration. Cllr Yabsley confirmed that this scheme will run into 2017/18. It was **AGREED** to defer considering a grant application, but to reconsider as and when a need arises.

12.2 Members report: Cllr Lamb reported that he, Cllr Grugeon and Cllr Phillips have toured the parish looking at potential issues with hedges and copses abutting the highway. Cllr Grugeon stated there were a number of sites where there is an unkempt or overgrown strip of land between a fence/hedge and the road and ownership of strip needs to be ascertained. If they are deemed to be highway responsibility and DCC are not prioritising their maintenance, then the Council may consider putting in a bid to the Community Enhancement Fund for this work in areas of greatest concern. Councillors felt the exercise was extremely useful in identifying potential issues within the parish.

A query was raised about the costs of salting the roads adjoining other parishes and whether the council should continue to do so if there is a long period of icy weather.

Actions:

- Clerk to prepare letters to Witheridge and Knowstone Parish Councils to request they remind their landowners of responsibilities regarding overgrown hedges. Clerk to write to Devon Wildlife Trust regarding Hares Down.
- Cllr Phillips to estimate costs of salting roads adjoin neighbouring parishes, then Clerk to write to Witheridge and Knowstone Parish Councils to request joint funding or joint working if there is a long period of icy conditions.

12.3 Common/Children's Play Area: Cllr Warne has surveyed the footpath and there is nothing of concern to report. The need for repairs or replacement of play equipment is being monitored.

13. Correspondence - none

14. Shop/Post Office/School

Cllr Child reported the new classroom is completed allowing the school to have 4 classes and there will be an official opening soon. The cost of the new classroom and toilet refurbishment was £200,000.

Governors needed to fund £20,000 of the total cost and £6,000 still needs to be raised.

Cllr Child reported that while the shop turnover was reducing, the profit margin seems stable so it is able so far to fund some community activities, e.g. the annual fireworks. The shop is considering extending so as to provide a small coffee / community room.

15. Trinity Well

Cllr Lamb reported repairs to the pump were underway.

16. Matters of Urgency for noting only

Cllr Warne noted there had been vehicle damage to the posts on the war memorial site. Cllr Phillips agreed to look into the issue.

A large pothole has been reported near Big River.

Cllr Lamb expressed thanks to Richard Smaldon for information on the annual clean out of the egg farm. No concerns had been raised either with him or the Council about smell. It was noted the farm intends to build up the embankments around the property and this was welcomed by the Council.

Councillors have received reports from residents that windows had been replaced on The Stag. The Council was not aware that planning permission had been granted for the replacements. Councillors have also received reports that children have been asked not to shelter in the porch of the Stag when waiting for the school bus, but do not have further information at this stage.

17. Meeting dates 2017/18: APPROVED

Tues 2 May 2017 - Annual Meeting of the Council followed by the annual Parish Meeting

Tues 4 July 2017

Tues 5 September 2017

Tues 7 November 2017

Tues 16 January 2018

Tues 6 March 2018

Meeting closed 9.10pm.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 7th March 2017, 7.30pm at Rackenford School

Signed as a true record:

Date:

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