

KENTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held in Kenton Victory Hall on Wednesday 11 October 2023 at 7.30pm

Present

Councillor D Blount (Chair), H Bright, J Hare (from item 2) and K Savill

Also present

Suzanna Hughes (Clerk), District Cllr Taylor and 22 members of the public

The meeting was opened by Cllr Blount at 7.30pm.

231011.01 Apologies for Absence

- Cllr Smith
- County Cllr Connett
- Peter White (Village Tidyman)

231011.02 Casual Vacancy

Members received an application from Jon Hare to join the Parish Council as a co-opted member. Having confirmed his eligibility, Jon was co-opted. He signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and immediately joined the meeting.

231011.03 Open Forum

The Chair thanked all the people who made such exceptional effort during the recent floods, in particular County Cllr Connett and District Cllr Taylor, Emma from DCC Highways who was off-duty and visiting the village on the day of the flooding but who organised the cordoning off the village and called the fire brigade until Helen Frankpitt (Highways engineer for Kenton) was able to join her. Also, the clerk for her assistance organising things behind the scenes and members of the Council who tried to assist those most affected.

A resident expressed concern about the lack of mobile phone signal in the village. The Chair advised that this would be discussed later in the meeting at item 7.

A resident mentioned that funding may be available through the Devon Community Resilience Grant to clear the culverts through the village. Landowners are ultimately responsible but they may be unaware of this and she suggested that a letter is sent reminding them of their responsibilities to keep their culverts clear. The Chair advised that the brook/stream is officially classed as a watercourse and has been advised that this is low down on the priority list. This will be raised with the relevant authorities as it is significant in respect of the amount of maintenance required to prevent further incidents.

A resident believed that the culverts should be made wider as they currently can't cope. He suggested that the community might put pressure on the relevant authorities to widen or build new drains. It was suggested that the village might find a way of generating the funds so that a positive scheme for improvement can be designed.

Run-off from the fields and rubbish entering the culverts also exacerbated the problem.

Residents wished to discuss the Local Plan addendum which has now included a development site on Mamhead Road (previously withdrawn) and sought the support of the Parish Council to

vigorously object to this on the grounds that the current drainage system can't cope and that further development would exacerbate the problem. Comments were also made about the insensitivity of including this site given the trauma many residents have experienced recently as a result of the recent floods. The Chairman advised that Cllr Connett has written to members of the Executive asking for this site to be withdrawn when it is discussed at Full Council on Tuesday 17 October and it was agreed that the Parish Council will also make its own objection and request that this site is withdrawn before it goes out for consultation. Individual residents were also encouraged to object.

District Cllr Taylor commented on the inclusion of the Mamhead Road site and suggested that flood mitigation measures could be added as a condition of the development. Such measures might also be funded by CIL/s106 agreements.

The meeting returned to the issue of flooding. A resident, Robert Neill, asked whether the Parish Council had plans to produce an overall report of the incident. It was thought that DCC will be producing a report. The resident advised that he was in the process of investigating and producing a report on what happened in the area of Mamhead Road. He proposed that he sets up a working party and visits everyone who was effected to seek their views. Reports can then be sent to DCC to try and get something done. He sought the support of the Parish Council to undertake this work which was gratefully accepted. He also suggested that in the meantime, a Flood Warden/someone to patrol the brook should be appointed. It was agreed that this is a good idea but it was a matter of finding someone prepared to do it. Robert advised that he would be prepared to find someone when he is visiting those directly affected by the floods. Cllr Savill offered to assist Robert.

It was suggested that the Parish Council writes to the school/Trust about the solid wall between the school and the adjacent cottages which prevented water from escaping; perhaps a more porous material would be appropriate.

231011.04 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest or requests for dispensation.

231011.05 Ratification of Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 13 September 2023. It was agreed unanimously that those minutes are signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record of the meeting.

231011.06 Reports

6.1 Police Report and Community Speedwatch

It was noted that PC Orchard has changed his role and is no longer the Neighbourhood Beat Manager for this parish. Whilst the position is being filled, any issues are to be directed to PCSO Saul Bunce.

6.2 County Councillor's Report

Cllr Connett was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report:

Floods in Kenton:

My very great thanks to everyone who helped in dealing with the floods - both at the time and in the aftermath - at Kenton and nearby properties.

While many residents have household insurance and the process is beginning, we know others did not.

There is help available from Teignbridge District Council through the Household Support Fund and also Council Tax relief for affected properties.

I would encourage anyone who is affected to contact the council to see what support is available, or to contact my colleague Cllr Gary Taylor (gary.taylor@teignbridge.gov.uk) or me (alan.connett@devon.gov.uk)

An event was held at the Victory Hall, Kenton, arranged by the county council's flood and coastal team, and attended by Teignbridge and the Environment Agency. It was a well attended event and I hope from that we will be able to progress actions to help the community in future.

Mobile Libraries:

The decision made by the Cabinet at Devon County Council to axe the entire mobile library service was 'called in' for further examination by scrutiny councillors.

The outcome is that the decision has been sent back to the Cabinet.

It is on the agenda for the Cabinet meeting on 11th October. However, I understand this will be a simple reference and a further, more detailed, report will come back to a later Cabinet meeting.

Across the Exminster and Haldon division, the mobile library service is shown on the county council website to visit Dunchideock, Exminster, Ide, Kenn, Kennford, Kenton and Starcross. I would encourage all residents who can, to use the mobile libraries.

There is also a petition, both paper and online, calling for the mobile libraries to be saved. I believe, it's now around 10,000 signatures and is supported by many authors including Michael Morpurgo.

Link to the petition: <https://www.change.org/p/save-our-mobile-library-service>

Deficit on Special Educational Needs (SEND):

The projected deficit this year is forecast at £36.6million - taking the total cumulative deficit for Devon County Council to £162 millions by the end of March.

Devon County Council says that "in line with the Department for Education guidance this deficit will not be dealt with this financial year but carried to future years".

To give some context to that figure, the deficit on special educational needs just about exceeds the county council's entire reserves.

Devon isn't the only council with a SEND deficit... it just has one of the biggest and again reflects the lack of adequate Government funding for schools and special services in Devon.

Number of Staff rising at Devon County Council:

In a report to council on September 7, it was confirmed that the number of staff employed by the council has increased by 1,432 in the past five years.

In 2017/18 the number of employees was 3,845 and for 2023/24 is 5,277.

The council also says the number of interims, agency staff and consultants will need to be substantially reduced - something I have been calling for over the past many years in order to get help get a grip on the council's spending.

Selling Assets:

Post COVID, Devon says that occupancy stats in its offices are low with an average of 20% to 30% occupancy across its estate.

The county's 'estate' is quite considerable and includes over 1,000 assets including 364 schools, 500 land assets, 64 farms and around 300 operational buildings (including offices, children's centres, libraries, youth centres, industrial estate, recycling centres, day centres, respite centres, contact centres and children's homes.

The county council is now looking at disposing of a number of assets in Exeter and Barnstaple and believes its plan, if fully achieved, will save around £300,000 a year in

revenue costs and £3-£5million in backlog maintenance. To implement the programme will cost in the region of £160,000.

Properties on the disposal list include: Larkbeare House in Exeter, Compass House and Ivybank in Exeter, some land at County Hall (site of the former Matford offices), St Georges Road Youth Centre in Barnstaple, and an industrial unit at Pottington, Barnstaple.

Highways matters:

Small local schemes for double yellow lines in Exminster, Ide and Starcross have been submitted as part of the annual programme. These are now being considered and prepared by the relevant highways team and will eventually come forward and be advertised as part of the formal public consultation. If there are objections, they will be reported to the Devon highways and traffic orders committee for the Teignbridge area and a final decision made by councillors.

Call to fix Devon's roads with HS2 funding

I have written to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak highlighting the plight of Devon's highways from potholes, damaged surfaces and faded white lines and calling for £250 million urgently for the county's roads.

The Prime Minister promised over £41 billion for the Midlands and the North on special projects in those regions but just £6.5billion for the rest of the country including some rail improvement in the south west. Here in Devon, the County Council estimates the spending required to bring the most deteriorated road surfaces into good condition is £167 million along with £55 million a year to prevent further deterioration to the structure of Devon's highway network.

Devon County Council figures show 34,199 holes were recorded in the 11 months of 2022/23, compared to 44,263 the previous year. Almost 7,400 were recorded in January. In a freedom of information response in March this year, the council said that on 13th February there were 1,883 pothole defects with the council contractor waiting for repair and between April 2021 and December last year £147,776 had been paid out for 263 pothole damage claims.

The Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) report shows the backlog of carriageway repairs nationally has increased by almost a quarter (23%) on the previous year to £12.6billion - or £61,700 for every mile of local road in England and Wales.

In a report to councillors in April this year, Devon said that since 2012/13 the annual revenue funding given to highways for maintenance of Devon roads has gradually fallen from around £35 million to approximately £25 million last year. Coupled with inflationary change, in particular the rapid increase in inflation seen last year, this has meant that the budget for highway maintenance has halved in real terms compared to a decade ago.

The effect of the cut in funding, councillors heard, is "the knock-on impact of forcing change in priorities with safety taking higher consideration and proactive works being stopped, contributing to a more rapid deterioration of roads."

In my view, about £250million now could begin to make a real difference to the county's roads. I hope we get a positive reply here in Devon from the Prime Minister.

6.3 District Councillor's Report

Cllr Taylor advised that he had used some of his community budget to pay for two skips so that residents' flood damaged goods could be disposed of. He was pleased with the response of all agencies involved with the flooding and was also pleased that TDC was able to help with housing for those who needed it.

He has been looking at the wall adjacent to the almshouses to try and work out who is responsible for it. The clerk advised that the Parish Council had still not received a

response from TDC to its request for evidence proving that it was not part of the transfer when the churchyard was closed. Cllr Taylor would follow this up again with TDC officers.

6.4 **Village Tidyman's Report**

Peter White sent the following update:

- The pavement outside the school and outside the pedestrian entrance to the car park needs resurfacing
- The broken metal railings around the war memorial have been repaired and will be painted in time for the Remembrance Service (Nov 12th)

An offer has been made by a resident who holds the relevant licences to spray the weeds in the village. Members were reminded of the Council's Climate and Emergency policy and whether the use of weedkiller conflicted with this. The Chairman offered to speak to the resident to find out more about what the chemicals he intended to use and whether these are harmful to the environment.

6.5 **Action Report – update on outstanding matters**

6.5.1 Wall adjacent to the almshouses

See item 6.3.

231011.07 Flooding

7.1 Members agreed the following actions:

- To leave the sandbag store open for the time being.
It was noted that the sandbag store had been under water and thought should be given to a secondary sandbag store. Members discussed possible locations such as the churchyard and the parish garden. It was agreed that an approach should be made to the church. The Chairman also asked that sandbags could now be returned to the store. Cllr Bright offered to put something on Facebook.
- Provide useful Flood and Emergency information to residents through the parish magazine and/or via an insert. This would include information about accessing the sandbag store, reporting blocked drains, forming a Flood Volunteer group and useful contact information.
- To review the Council's Emergency Plan
- Following a discussion about the poor mobile phone signal in the parish, Cllr Savill offered to approach the Church to see if it would agree to having a mast on the top of the church. Cllr Taylor also offered to find out if TDC are working with any providers/ Home Office to ensure that all rural areas are adequately served.

7.2 Members discussed Brook Path and the collapsed wall near The Old Bakehouse. DCC has offered to carry out an initial survey and the results are awaited. The Parish Council also discussed commissioning its own survey from The Old Bakehouse down to the bridge over the River Kenn. It was also suggested that the Council writes to Anne Marie Morris MP to find out what financial support is available from government. Bricks from the collapsed wall and other debris needs to be removed from the brook. DCC would be responsible for this. Concerns were raised about rebuilding this wall which potentially prevents water from escaping. Porous bricks or fencing were mentioned as an alternative. Cllr Taylor also suggested that the Parish Council also looks into ownership of the access points from the Parish Council's path to the houses to see where ownership starts and finishes so that parties can work together.

231011.08 Finance and Governance

8.1 **Payments**

Members received the invoices for payment and it was agreed unanimously that the payments as listed are approved (attached).

231011.09 Planning

9.1 New planning applications/appeals

9.1.1 23/01604/FUL – 7 Castle Gate, Kenton

Retrospective change of use of annex to a mixed annex and holiday use

Members had no objections to this application.

9.1.2 23/01734/LBC – Merravay, South Town, Kenton

Repair and reinstatement of chimney stack and adjacent building features

Members had no objections to this application.

9.2 Decisions

9.2.1 23/01620/AGR – Deer Park Farm, Kenton

Agricultural storage building

Members noted that Prior Approval is not required.

9.2.2 23/01471/TPO - 9 & 11 Staffick Close, Kenton

T001 - Lime: Mature Lime tree on the boundary between 11 and 9 Staffick Close.

Reduction in height by approximately 4m (existing height 18m – finished height

14m). Reduction of southern crown (over highways) by approximately 2.5m

(existing southern crown 8m – finished width 5.5m). Removal of epicormic growth.

Members noted that these works have been approved by TDC.

231011.10 Car Park and Triangle

10.1 Tree work

This is being carried out 16/17 October. Notices will be put on cars advising them of this and some of the bays coned off.

10.2 Car park wall repairs

These are well-advanced. The section affected by overhanging trees will be completed when the branches have been trimmed.

10.3 'Abandoned' vehicles

There is still a vehicle being stored in the car park.

A vehicle has been parked on Orchard Way for some weeks with no MOT. It was agreed that this should be reported.

10.4 War memorial railings

See item 6.4

Cllr Savill agreed to lay the poppy wreath at the Service of Remembrance.

231011.11 Playing Field & Hard Court

No further update.

231011.12 Climate Change Mitigation

No report.

231011.13 Highways and Footpaths

All highways defects should be reported on:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem>

The hedge on the corner of East Town Lane and Orchard Way is still overhanging the footpath.

It was believed that DCC are writing to the landowner. The Chairman would follow this up with Cllr Connett.

231011.14 Members' items for information or general discussion, for inclusion on future agendas and/or items requiring urgent attention

[Members were reminded that they have not received the statutory notice of this business to be transacted and should therefore recognise that any decision made may be taken to be unlawful if challenged in the future]

None

231011.15 Correspondence

The Chairman advised that there has been interest in raising funds for the victims of the floods. The Parish Council has been asked if funds can be deposited in its account before they are distributed. It was agreed that the Chairman would speak to the Chair of Kenton Victory Hall to find out how the money will be distributed and if any eligibility criteria have been agreed. The Parish Council could hold the money, if required.

231011.15 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Wednesday 8 November 2023 at 7.30pm.

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Chairman

11 October 2023**Item 8:****Expenditure**

Payment type	Payee	Details	Amount
Standing Order	Salaries	September	£781.32
Online	HMRC	PAYE	£223.00
Online	Clerk	Stamps and travel	£44.40
Online	Mr R A White (Exeter Stone)	Repairs to car park wall – 1 st instalment	£1819.00
Online	Mr R A White (Exeter Stone)	Repairs to car park wall – 2 nd instalment	£9439.38
Online	Community Heartbeat Trust	Defibrillator pads	£68.34
Online	P White	Mower fuel, paint and brushes for war memorial railings	£79.34

Income (9 September – 6 October 2023)

Date received	Received from	Details	Amount
September	TDC	2 nd instalment of precept	£10,023.50

Bank Balance at 6 October 2023

Current account		£57,696.79
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