

# KNOWSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

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## Minutes of the meeting of the Council on 23rd November 2021 held in Knowstone Parish Hall

**Present:** Cllr J Clarke, Cllr D Maidment, Cllr A Parry, Cllr J Pomfret (Chairman), Cllr N Vukic

In attendance: D/Cllr E Ley, J Siggs, W Sweet (Clerk)

Before formally opening the meeting the Chairman announced the resignation of Cllr David Barrett with immediate effect and he thanked David for his work whilst on the Council.

**21/104 Apologies for absence** – Cllr Stanbury, C/Cllr Yabsley

### **21/105 Co-option of new member**

(i) Natasha Vukic spoke briefly about her wish to serve the local community. It was RESOLVED to co-opt Natasha Vukic on to the Parish Council, Cllr Parry proposed, Cllr Pomfret seconded, all agreed.

(ii) Consent to co-option and co-option acceptance form were signed by Cllr Vukic.

(iii) It was AGREED that Cllr Vukic will attend an appropriate new councillor training. The Clerk will liaise with Cllr Vukic and arrange this.

**21/106 Declarations of Interest** (re. matters appearing on this agenda) - None

**21/107 Approve Minutes** It was RESOLVED to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 26th October 2021, Cllr Pomfret proposed, Cllr Clarke seconded, all agreed.

### **21/108 Correspondence Receipt of the following correspondence was NOTED:**

- Email from South West Heritage Trust dated 21.10.21 – Funding for the North Devon Record Office;
- CPRE e-bulletin dated 21.1.21;
- DALC Newsletter #62 dated 22.10.21;
- Email from North Devon and Torridge Councils dated 22.10.21 – Free ‘Transition to a Low Carbon Future’ workshop; Cllr Clarke had attended this workshop and will give feedback under his Planning report.
- Email from OPCC dated 27.10.21 – Operation Snap – More ‘really poor’ driving captured on video;
- Email from Maria Bailey, Service Manager, Strategic Development & Planning dated 27.10.21 – Invitation to attend Parish/Town Meetings;
- Email from DCT dated 28.10.21 – Invitation for Devon’s second Local Councillor Climate Emergency Support Network, 30th November;
- Parish Online Newsletter dated 29.10.21;
- DALC Newsletter #63 dated 29.10.21;
- Email from Kennford Tarmacadam Ltd dated 29.10.21 – 01-02 December 2021 – Road Closure – Batsworthy Cross to Beaples Moor, Knowstone;
- DALC Newsletter #64 dated 01.11.21 – Budgeting;
- Email dated 03.11.21 from parishioner re. Lay-by parking;
- Email dated 03.11.21 from DCC Highways re. Temporary Traffic Notice – Batsworthy Cross to Beaples Moor Cross, Knowstone, 1 – 2 December 2021;
- DALC Newsletter #65 dated 03.11.21 – News bulletin;
- Email dated 04.11.21 – NDC’s Parish Forum of 14 October 2021 – Notes and presentations;
- Email dated 04.11.21 – A Public Announcement from Heart of the South West Trading Standard on Avian Influenza;
- DALC Newsletter #66 dated 04.11.21 – Neighbourhood planning webinars;
- Devon Climate Emergency November Newsletter;
- DALC Newsletter #67 dated 09.11.21 – Are you ready for winter;
- DALC Newsletter #68 dated 10.11.21;
- DALC Newsletter #69 dated 11.11.21 – DCC Autumn briefings with Cllr John Hart;
- Email dated 11.11.21 from Mick Harrison, OPCC – New Police and Crime Plan;
- Email dated 15.11.21 from Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue re. Consultation: Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service - draft Community Risk Management;
- Email dated 15.11.21 from Alun Griffiths Public Liaison Officer for the North Devon Link Road work;

*Draft to be approved at the next scheduled meeting*

The following correspondence received after the preparation of the agenda was NOTED.

- Email dated 18.11.21 from DCC Highway Services Team with Neighbourhood Highway Officer contact details;
- Email dated 22.11.21 from NDC – with link to recording of North Devon Council's recent Parish Forum;
- Email dated 23.11.21 from DALC with reminder and encouragement to attend remote DCC Autumn Briefing with DCC Leader, Cllr John Hart (North Devon parishes) on 8.12.21;
- Hard copy of CPRE's Autumn Newsletter.

### 21/109 Public Questions

(i) At the last meeting there had been a discussion about a camper van and car permanently parked in the stone store lay by which had been bought to the attention of the Council by a resident. An email has also been received from another resident about the same issue. The camper van has been reported to DCC and a response received from Highways and circulated to all councillors stating the following:

“Camper vans unlike unhitched caravans are classed as vehicles and it is not illegal to sleep in them. If a vehicle is Taxed and insured it has a legitimate right to be on the road to pass and repass, If it remains in one place the problem then comes down to obstruction. As it is in a layby or chipping landing this maybe hard to prove to the satisfaction of a magistrate and any expenses incurred would certainly be wasted as all the occupant has to do is move the vehicle to another site up the road for the whole process to have to start again.” The Clerk will forward a copy of this response to the residents who raised the issue. It is understood that the occupant plans to be there until March.

### 21/110 Finance

(a) It was RESOLVED to agree the accounts to date and bank reconciliation, previously circulated, Cllr Parry proposed, Cllr Maidment seconded, all agreed. Expenditure to date against budget and projected expenditure to year end, previously circulated, was REVIEWED.

(b) Receipt of VAT reclaim totalling £198.89 was NOTED.

(c) It was RESOLVED to settle the following accounts, Cllr Pomfret proposed, Cllr Clarke seconded, all agreed:

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|---|---------|
| • Wendy Sweet - Clerk's pay (Oct/Nov) & Working from Home Allowance | £136.05 |
| • Wendy Sweet – Clerk's pay (Nov/Dec) & Working from Home Allowance | £123.60 |
| • Website Development (website upgrade)                             | £200.00 |
| • Ridd & Son (Beaples Stone maintenance)                            | £180.00 |
| • CPRE – annual membership  | £36.00  |

**21/111 Budget 2022/2023 preparation** The draft budget for 2022/23, previously circulated, was REVIEWED. It was AGREED that an informal Zoom meeting will be held on 18th January 2022 to discuss the budget in more details and the council's aspirations. It was RESOLVED to submit a provisional Precept figure to NDC of £4076 (the same as this year), Cllr Pomfret proposed, Cllr Parry seconded, all agreed.

### 21/112 Planning

(a) Cllr Clarke reported back on the Low Carbon Future workshop organised by NDC and 361 Energy which he had attended on 9th November. A document with links to resources discussed throughout the day has been circulated to all councillors.

There were three main points Cllr Clarke felt were important.

- 1) Positive biodiversity gain for any development. This means that KPC could consider that type of gain where appropriate when looking at planning applications.
- 2) Setting the baseline for the council's carbon footprint - an assessment can be undertaken which would identify carbon savings over the parish. There may be a charge for the assessment. It was AGREED that Cllr Clarke will find out more information about the assessment. The Clerk will supply him with all the postcodes in the Parish.
- 3) Fuel poverty – it is possible that there are people within the parish who are subjected to this; it is not always obvious. There is information available from 361 Community Energy who provide a free service making assessments of people's fuel usage and how they can make economies. A copy of their leaflets could be put on parish noticeboards and information with a link to be posted on the Knowstone website.

(b) Applications notified since last meeting

(i) **Ref: 74150** – Repair and re-roofing of existing outbuilding at East Hole Farm Knowstone EX36

*Draft to be approved at the next scheduled meeting*

4RY. This is a listed building consent to undertake work. Cllr Clarke had looked at the application and felt it was a sensible and realistic proposal to preserve the building. With regard to a low carbon net gain it was suggested that bird or bat boxes be installed as part of the planning condition. It was RESOLVED to support the application, Cllr Clarke proposed, Cllr Parry seconded, all agreed.

(ii) **Ref: 74327** – Removal of condition 3 (occupancy restriction) attached to planning permission 7448 (outline application for proposed agricultural workers dwelling) at Great Wadham Farmhouse, Knowstone EX36 4RS. It was apparent from the supporting statement that the applicant had been submitted to NDC previously. The application is now being submitted on the basis that a marketing strategy has taken place as advised by the Planning Department of NDC and the property had not sold. It was felt that there was very little chance of the property being sold and repaired with an agricultural tie on it, so it is falling into disrepair and becoming unusable. It needs to be marketed more commercially without the tie. The price of a tied property is usually 30% less than market value. As a Parish Council it was important to support the retention of heritage assets within the parish like this property. It was RESOLVED to support application, Cllr Clarke proposed, Cllr Pomfret seconded, all agreed.

(c) Applications notified since the preparation of the agenda – None

(d) Other planning matters – Still no decision has been made regarding the application for a temporary agricultural dwelling at Crosside, ref 73623. This application is taking a long time to be determined. It may be that NDC has gone for advice or is seeking more information from the applicant.

#### **21/113 Third Party Reports** (if present):

a) **District Councillor** – With regard to the application to lift the agricultural tie, D/Cllr Ley said that about 7 or 8 years ago there had been a rush of this type of application. A survey had been commissioned by NDC and undertaken by local estate agent Geoffrey Clapp and he would see if he could get hold of a copy for KPC. It caused NDC to take a whole different approach to tied properties and was used for a few years. As a general rule all these properties would not be there if not for the agricultural tie.

Things in Knowstone are very quiet at the moment but there are major issues elsewhere where there is a constant growing list of people in housing need. On average when four open market houses are built near the coast or in an attractive area – one will be residential, one a second home, one used for Airbnb and one will change its use to a business premise and be used for holiday or short term let. In towns like South Molton and Tiverton there are substantial developments going on which are supposed to provide 30% of the build for registered social housing but almost without exception developers are pleading poverty and trying to get out of building them.

East Hill – no news; there is nothing currently happening on site. The Clerk asked D/Cllr Ley if he had received any feedback from the housing needs survey that had been undertaken in August 2020. He had not and suggested that the Clerk at East Anstey is contacted to see if she has received anything.

b) **County Councillor** – not present

#### **21/114 Members Reports**

a) **Highways** – The Chairman flagged up a problem on the road to Ash Mill where logging has taken place and logs are stacked up by the side of the road. When the logging lorries stop there to load up they completely block the road. It was understood that they are allowed to do that for a maximum of 15 minutes but if it is longer is there any recourse? The road gets covered in debris from the logs during loading. There are also concerns if an emergency vehicle needs to get through. D/Cllr Ley suggested that the mess which is supposed to be cleared up by the haulage company is reported to Highways.

Information about the missing East Knowstone pointer sign at Holy Moor Cross and the request for Horse rider warning signs have been passed on to C/Cllr Yabsley

b) **Footpaths & Beaples Stone** – Cllr Pomfret had nothing specific to report. He has now got details for the new Devon Wildlife Trust person who he will contact to get ball rolling on the potential new bridleway across the moor and under the link road.

c) **Moors Management Association** – Cllr Maidment – nothing to report.

(i) Talk by James Siggs, Treasurer of MMA, on RPA payments. Mr Siggs, who comes from a farming background, briefly explained the RPA payment system and how that affects commons and commoners. His notes are attached to these minutes. MMA is currently in the Higher Level Scheme which comes to an end in 2023. The government has said that an environmental land management scheme will replace it but there are no details yet. KPC will receive the same payment from MAA this year as previously but not next year until costs and details of future schemes are determined.

**d) Welcome Pack** - Cllr Maidment – nothing to report

e) **Emergency Plan** – Cllr Parry reported that he had received a couple more responses. He is in the process of collating information about defib training. It was suggested that councillors remind parishioners that they see to send in their completed EP forms.

f) **Parish Hall** – the committee is currently discussing heating systems because of a problem with the gas pipework. It has been suggested, given the current thoughts re. climate change that consideration is given to changing to electrical heating. There will be Christmas Afternoon Tea on Saturday 4th December, 2.00 – 4.00 p.m.

g) **PCC Report** – A Remembrance Day service in the churchyard had been attended by 13 people. The churchyard was awarded a certificate of merit in the Devon's Best Churchyard competition. St Peter's also was the subject of another award - The King of Prussia Gold Medal for repair and conservation architecture. It was awarded to architect Alison Bunning and those involved with the restoration of wall paintings during routine repairs to an area of plasterwork, after the walled-up steps to the former rood loft were exposed. The Chairman suggested that for future meetings the PCC emails KPC each month if there is anything relevant to report.

The Chairman said that councillors' roles would not be re-distributed at this meeting but asked councillors to think about what they would like to cover in the future.

**21/115 Business at the Chairman's discretion** – none

**21/116 The date, time and venue of the next meeting** was confirmed as Tuesday 25th January 2022 at 7.30 p.m. in the Parish Hall

Meeting closed at 21.10.

## Notes from James Siggs for address to Knowstone Parish Council – 23/11/2021

Essentially the RPA (Rural Payments Agency) implements the UK Governments Agricultural Policy.

When we were in the EU the policy was to support farmers (and thus the rural areas economies) by:

1. Paying a subsidy for every acre of land being farmed - currently over 40% of farms are not viable without this payment. This subsidy will be removed progressively by 2027. Supposedly the Environmental Land Management Scheme will replace this, paying farmers for public goods such as water quality, air quality and environmental improvements.
2. Encouraging the management of environmentally important land, such as the Haresdown and Knowstone Moors, by reducing the intensity of farming and compensating the farmers for this reduction in intensity and this reduction in earnings.

All these payments are fully taxable, and the recipients of payments from the Haresdown and Knowstone Moors Management Association should declare these payments on their annual income tax return.

Environmental Land Management will consist of three components:

- a. the Sustainable Farming Incentive, which will support approaches to farm husbandry that deliver for the environment, such as actions to improve soil health, hedgerows and integrated pest management,
- b. Local Nature Recovery, which will pay for actions such as creating, managing or restoring habitats, natural flood management and species management,
- c. Landscape Recovery, which will focus on landscape and ecosystem recovery through projects looking to achieve large-scale forest and woodland creation, peatland restoration, or the creation and restoration of coastal habitats, such as wetlands and salt marsh.

Common Land is privately owned land with 'Rights of Common' over that land, most commonly to graze animals.

First enshrined in law in the Magna Carta in 1215, Common Land traditionally sustained the poorest people in rural communities who owned no land of their own, providing them with a source of wood, bracken for bedding and pasture for livestock. Over one-third of England's moorland is common land.

It involves a group of farmers – from one or two to over 100 – having “commoners rights” to graze their animals (mostly sheep but also cattle, pigs, horses...and even ducks) on a shared piece of land – the common – without fences or boundaries between them.

Today Commoners are economically dependent on government support payments though their value to history and landscape is not rewarded in livestock prices.

In order to deliver environmental goals Commoners often need to graze fewer animals. Beyond Brexit, current funding will be withdrawn and by 2024 they face the loss of half their support. Defra do not expect public payments for public benefits to be available to all farmers until 2028.

If Commoners leave the land, ancient knowledge will be lost, and the intricate equilibrium of these landscapes, ecosystems and breeds will break down irretrievably. In turn, a way of life, and a living part of our history, will be lost.