

KNOWSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of a meeting of the Council on 28th November 2023 held in Knowstone Parish Hall

Present: Cllr J Pomfret (Chair), Cllr A Parry (Vice Chair), Cllr J Clarke, Cllr D Maidment, Cllr J Stanbury

In attendance: W Vigus (taking minutes), D/Cllr R Milton (part), C/Cllr J Yabsley (part), 2 members of the public (part)

23/48 Apologies for absence - Cllr C Dey

23/49 Confirmation of “Responsible Financial Officer” and “Proper Officer”

Cllr Pomfret (Chair) detailed that in the absence of a Parish Clerk and in accordance with the Standing Orders, a member of the committee should be voted to become the Responsible Financial Officer and Proper Officer.

It was RESOLVED that Cllr Pomfret would assume these roles. Cllr Parry proposed, Cllr Clarke seconded, all agreed.

23/50 Co-option of new Parish Councillor

Cllr Pomfret introduced Mr David McGregor who outlined his accountancy background and reasons for joining the Parish Council.

It was RESOLVED that Mr D McGregor would be co-opted onto the Parish Council. Cllr Pomfret proposed, Cllr Parry seconded, all agreed.

Mr D McGregor proceeded to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and the Candidate’s Consent to Co-Option.

23/51 Declarations of Interest (re. matters appearing on this agenda) – None

23/52 Approve Minutes It was RESOLVED to accept the minutes of the last scheduled meeting held on 26th September 2023. Cllr Pomfret proposed, Cllr Maidment seconded, all agreed. A copy of the minutes was signed by Cllr Pomfret. This will be retained on file.

23/53 Correspondence (not covered elsewhere on the agenda).

Receipt of the following was NOTED:

- 27/09/2023 DALC #41 2023 E-bulletin
- 28/09/2023 North Devon Link Road Traffic Bulletin
- 28/09/2023 RE: SLCC Membership Due to Lapse Shortly
- 29/09/2023 Devon County Council News Update
- 29/09/2023 OPCC Press releases for Op Ragwort and Op Scorpion
- 03/10/2023 Review of Polling Districts & Polling Places/Stations 2023 - North Devon
- 04/10/2023 Devon Climate Emergency October Newsletter
- 04/10/2023 DALC #42 2023 E-bulletin
- 06/10/2023 Traffic Bulletin - North Devon Link Road
- 09/10/2023 North Devon Link Road - A361 - Traffic Bulletin
- 09/10/2023 Latest news from the Royal Devon Hospital: October 2023
- 11/10/2023 DALC #43 2023 E-bulletin
- 13/10/2023 DCC Snow Warden Welcome Message - Winter 2023
- 17/10/2023 Temporary Traffic Notice - Road from Knowstone Mill Bridge to Wadham Cross, Knowstone (TTRO2353470)
- 18/10/2023 DALC #44 2023 E-bulletin
- 18/10/2023 Funding for the North Devon Record Office

Draft to be approved at the next scheduled meeting

- 18/10/2023 Devon Communities Together - Energy Outreach Project
- 21/10/2023 CPRE - Our new report on Local Green Spaces is out!
- 21/10/2023 Email regarding Devon 20's Plenty campaign manager
- 24/10/2023 Parish Online Newsletter #44
- 25/10/2023 Request for consultation on 77828 at West Hill, Knowstone, EX36 4RT
- 25/10/2023 DALC #45 2023 E-bulletin
- 25/10/2023 Email from Cllr Yabsley - RE: Knowstone Parish Council
- 30/10/2023 Email re Police Contact
- 30/10/2023 NDC email Consultation regarding Relocation of Community Hub
- 30/10/2023 North Devon Link Road - A361 - Traffic Bulletin
- 31/10/2023 CPRE October's e-bulletin.
- 01/11/2023 DALC #46 2023 E-bulletin
- 01/11/2023 RE: Zappi EV Charger Installation Quote -lead 1620 - Quote 2969
- 02/11/2023 Storm Ciarán Flooding - 2nd November 2023
- 02/11/2023 DALC #47 2023 E-bulletin
- 03/11/2023 Devon Climate Emergency - November Newsletter
- 03/11/2023 Councillor advocate email address
- 06/11/2023 A361 - North Devon Link Road - Traffic Bulletin - 6th November 2023
- 07/11/2023 DALC Newsletter #48 2023
- 08/11/2023 DALC #49 2023 E-bulletin
- 09/11/2023 Parish Paths Partnership update
- 09/11/2023 Request for consultation on 77905 at Great Wadham Barton
- 11/11/2023 Membership Renewal letter from CPRE
- 15/11/2023 DALC #50 2023 E-bulletin
- 16/11/2023 Email from "Keep Britain Tidy" Buy Nothing New Month 2024 Webinar
- 16/11/2023 Application form for Parish Precepts for Knowstone
- 17/11/2023 DALC #51 2023 E-bulletin
- 18/11/2023 CPRE email - Star Count paused for 2024 and more news
- 20/11/2023 email from OPCC "Make the Vision Zero Road Safety Pledge"
- 20/11/2023 North Devon Link Road - A361 - Traffic Bulletin
- 20/11/2023 Devon Communities Together – Flood Action Week

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

- 20/11/2023 Email from the Batsworthy Fund

In response to an email from Cllr Pomfret requesting information regarding when the Batsworthy Fund would be open again for grant proposals, the response detailed that they were working on reopening the fund but that no specific date could be provided. It was AGREED that Cllr Yabsley would provide a contact number for a member of Meshaw Parish Council who may provide some insight into the matter.

- 23/11/2023 New Landscape Character Assessment for North Devon and Torridge
- 24/11/2023 Email from Keep Britain Tidy re. "Buy Nothing New Month" campaign
- 24/11/2023 Commissioner's Policing Priorities Survey
- 26/11/2023 Email from Cllr Dey giving her apologies for meeting
- 28/11/2023 Email from DCC regarding meeting for councils on November 29th
- 28/11/2023 Email from the South West Recruitment Today re. Parish Clerk advert.

Cllr Pomfret detailed that the recruitment agency had seen the advert placed on the DALC website for a new Parish Clerk (advert placed 27.11.23). Their proposal was to advertise for a Clerk at a cost of £155 per month. Cllr Parry felt greater due diligence was required to understand the return on investment and it was AGREED that Cllr Pomfret would decline the offer.

23/54 Public Questions

A member of the public asked that the Parish Council consider two requests for funding of community events which would encourage continued use of the hall, further socialisation within the Parish and assist those feeling the effects of financial hardship.

Proposal one was to resurrect the Film Nights which the member of the public offered to organise having done so previously. The cost to the Parish Council would be £87 or £91 for film hire (dependent on the numbers attending) and three film nights from January 2024 were proposed. The cost of admission would be waived for those living in the Parish and would be charged to those outside the Parish. The matter of a £150 deposit to Film Bank would need to be resolved but could be an additional cost. Beaford Arts could possibly advertise the event for free.

The second proposal was to support the Exmoor Book and Wine Club which currently uses the hall for its events. Support would be in the form of the Parish Council funding the hall hire at a total cost of £120 per year. Attendee numbers vary and it was felt that some of the attendees were concerned about the differing costs they were required to pay per month.

Cllr Pomfret detailed that the Parish Council is unable to vote on issues which are not on the agenda. Brief discussion ensued between the councillors over which proposal, if any, would be considered. It was AGREED that Cllr Pomfret would bring the proposals to the attention of the Parish Hall committee as it was felt that they must have a role in considering the events. As the first film night was proposed for January (prior to the next scheduled Committee meeting), it was AGREED that the Parish Council would discuss the need for an Extraordinary meeting to resolve the matter.

23/55 Finance

(a) Copies of the accounts to date and bank reconciliation were provided to Cllr Stanbury and Cllr McGregor. Cllr Pomfret outlined that two bank balance dates were shown to allow for two bank statements being provided on different dates. No interest was shown on the accounts for October as the statement had yet to be received. Cllr Pomfret highlighted the money allocated to Civic Pride and East Hill Farm and asked for it to be noted that this could be reallocated if necessary. Cllr Parry asked if Cllr Pomfret would take a salary for his roles of RFO and PO. Cllr Pomfret confirmed that he would not be allowed to do this.

It was RESOLVED to accept the accounts to date for 23-24 and the bank reconciliation. Cllr Parry proposed, Cllr McGregor seconded, all agreed.

(b) It was NOTED that a request had been received from the CPRE to increase Annual Membership from £36 to £60 (or a figure in between). As this is a voluntary payment and not enough was known about the value of membership, it was AGREED that the Cllr Pomfret would respond to state no increase in payment would be made and that the matter of continued payment would be added to a future agenda.

D/Cllr Milton joined the meeting.

(c) It was NOTED that Wendy Vigus was being paid below the minimum wage for updating the website. It was RESOLVED to increase the rate of pay for Wendy Vigus to £10.50 per hour to mirror minimum wage and to backdate this payment to the start of the year. Cllr Parry proposed, Cllr Pomfret seconded, all agreed. It was AGREED to add the matter of matching the payment to the Living Wage to the next meeting's agenda.

(d) It was RESOLVED to agree to settle the following accounts, Cllr Pomfret proposed, Cllr Maidment seconded, all agreed:

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|--|--------|
| • Wendy Vigus – minute taking and producing for September’s meeting | £37.35 |
| • Wendy Vigus – Website updating July – September 2023. 6 hrs @ £9.50 per hr | £57.00 |
| • Wendy Vigus – Backdated payment re minimum wage increase | £26.00 |
| • John Morgan for grassing cutting at Beaples Stone October 2023 | £35.00 |

(e) Cllr Pomfret detailed that he had been to Lloyds Bank in Tiverton to initiate digital banking. A form had been provided but did not appear to be the correct one. Cllr Pomfret will continue to progress the matter.

23/56 Budget 2024 / 2025 preparation

Cllr Pomfret circulated the revised budget for 2024 / 2025 and highlighted the following points;

- Includes cheques agreed to be paid (as agreed at pt 22/55 (d) in these minutes);
- No change in Parish Clerk salary;
- Increase in website admin services (as agreed at pt 22/55 (c) in these minutes);
- Audit cost increase;
- Inclusion of cybersecurity in insurance policy;
- Moors Management payment based on one annual payment (no interim payment).

It was NOTED that the Parish Council were budgeting for a loss. It was AGREED that all Councillors would review the budget for it to be ratified at the next meeting. It was RESOLVED to retain the Precept at its current level. Cllr Stanbury proposed, Cllr Parry seconded, all agreed. It was RESOLVED to ask Alison Marshall to carry out the audit at the end of the financial year and to accept her increase in payment from £100 to £175. Cllr Pomfret proposed. Cllr Clarke seconded, all agreed.

23/57 Internal Audit Report recommendations

Cllr Pomfret provided an update on the following actions;

- Cyber security can be added to the insurance policy and would involve an increase to the annual cost of £58.80. Cllr Clarke asked if this addition covered online banking. It was AGREED that Cllr Pomfret would check with the insurance company. It was RESOLVED to accept the increase in insurance cost to include cybersecurity. Cllr Pomfret proposed, Cllr Stanbury seconded, all agreed.
- It was AGREED that Cllr Pomfret would ascertain how clearer explanation regarding difference in budget and precept could be achieved.
- Now have separate Freedom of Information policy / publication scheme as indicated in the Council’s S/O’s;
- Privacy Policy has been renamed Privacy and GDPR policy;
- Standalone Complaints Policy has been created.

It was AGREED that all revised documents would be posted to the website.

23/58 Electric Vehicle Charging Point

Cllr Clarke detailed that a request had been made by the Parish Hall for the Parish Council to pay the installers £60 as the service had not been used enough commercially between 1st May and 1st November. It was NOTED that the Parish Council were unaware of this clause in the contract. Ways to publicise the service further were discussed. It was AGREED that its location would be highlighted on the website with the inclusion of What3Words.

It was RESOLVED to pay up to £120 for the first year to satisfy the clause in the contract, and then to review the matter. Cllr Parry proposed, Cllr Pomfret seconded, all agreed.

23/59 Planning

(a) Applications notified since last meeting;

- i. **Ref: 77828** – Erection of new Agricultural Storage building at West Hill, Knowstone
- ii. **Ref: 77905** – Request for consultation at Great Wadham Barton. Class Q application, permitted development.

It was NOTED that the consultation period for 77828 had ended. It was RESOLVED to provide the following comment on 77905: "We wish to state that it is our understanding that all the required elements of a Class Q application are satisfied". Cllr Pomfret proposed, Cllr Parry seconded, all agreed.

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

(c) Other planning matters – None

23/60 Third Party Reports (if present):

- b) **County Councillor** – Jeremy Yabsley provided his report first. He gave details of a meeting he had attended that day with other County Councillors which looked at various operations of the County Council (e.g. staffing / finances). An update on devolution (creation of a Devon and Torbay unitary authority) was given. A presentation by the Deputy Vice Principal of Exeter university had been received which was a more positive view of climate change than expected. Cllr Yabsley confirmed that DCC will be letting five council farms this year. He highlighted that a useful email had been received from the DCC re. Flood Prevention Week and he stressed that it was important that all members of the public are aware of how to help prevent flooding. An update on the A361 improvements was given in which it was detailed that it was on target for completion within the timeframe and that DCC had imposed a £13m cutback which meant that certain elements had been removed. Cllr Stanbury detailed that he felt the project had been mismanaged but Cllr Yabsley countered that much had happened which could not be seen (such as flood prevention) and that DCC would not be giving any further money to the project. In the absence of Cllr Dey, Cllr Parry asked for advice on how to advance the 20 is Plenty scheme in Roachill. Cllr Yabsley stated that any signage could not be legally binding and care had to be taken over location of signage (needing planning permission). Cllr Yabsley recommended applying for a reduction in speed limit in the Roachill area or a voluntary scheme with the police (Community Speed Watch).
- a) **District Councillor** – Robin Milton apologised for not attending previous meetings. He detailed that he had also attended a meeting of District Councillors to discuss budgets. Within this meeting were discussions over a three-week black bin collection and stoppage of the green bins as the latter operates at a loss. Noted that most Parish Councils are increasing their Precept and that there should be awareness that the District and County councils may well be passing more costs to the Parish Councils in the future. Recommended that any comment on planning includes material considerations. Noted that NDDC is moving office to Green Lanes and that the current site is likely to be sold. Recommended that the new Local Plan, which is currently being developed, is reviewed by the Parish Council once its draft is released.

C/Cllr Yabsley, D/Cllr Milton and the remaining member of the public left the meeting at this point.

23/61 Members Reports

(a) **Highways** - Cllr Dey was not present to provide a Highways report

(b) **Footpaths & Beaples Stone** – Cllr Parry had nothing to report

(c) **Moors Management Association** – Cllr Maidment confirmed that the AGM would be 19th December

(d) **Welcome Pack** – It was AGREED that Cllr Maidment would check if welcome packs were required at three locations as outlined by Cllr Pomfret. It was AGREED that Cllr Parry would provide the emergency plan to Cllr Maidment and that she would update the welcome plan with Cllr McGregor's details.

Draft to be approved at the next scheduled meeting

(e) **Emergency Plan** – Cllr Pomfret confirmed that the generator had been purchased and added to the asset register. It was AGREED that Cllr Pomfret would look at who could create a house for the generator (taking advice from the insurance company on their required standards) and would add it to the insurance as a named item. Cllr Pomfret would also look into Smartwater / DNA.

(f) **Parish Hall** – Cllr Pomfret read out a report from the Chair of the Parish Hall committee detailing that fire security had been improved, the hall windows had been cleaned inside and out, external doors had been checked, badminton lines refreshed and Pickleball equipment purchased. It was noted that the Parish Hall section of the website needs updating.

(g) **Police Liaison** – no-one is currently allocated this role on the Council so no report was able to be given.

(h) **Snow Warden** – Cllr Stanbury stated that a tonne of salt had arrived and would be distributed. A request had been received from Mr M Verney for the Parish Council to ask A&B to salt the road running from Knowstone to Rose Ash. It was AGREED that this request would be declined.

23/62 Business at the Chairman’s discretion

(i) Cllr Pomfret detailed that there would be a Parish road closure on 14th December. This information will be added to the website.

(ii) Cllr Pomfret requested that all Councillors consider how to recruit a new Clerk.

23/63 The date, time & venue of next meeting were confirmed as Tuesday 23rd January 2024 at 7.30 p.m. in the Parish Hall

The meeting closed at 21.55.

Signed as a true record

Date