

LITTLEHAM & LANDCROSS PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT LITTLEHAM VILLAGE
HALL
ON THURSDAY 15 JANUARY 2009

Present: *Cllrs Atkinson, Mrs Galvin (Chairman), Hamilton, Heard, Hassall (Vice-Chairman), Ms Lamb, Poole, G. Smith and M. Smith, plus County Councillor Barton and TDC Councillor Pennington.*

Apologies: *Cllrs Mrs Beer and Cllr Stevens*

Members of the public wishing to address the meeting on a specific agenda item, would have been, in accordance with Standing Order 24 and Paragraph 12(2) of Statutory Instrument 2007/1159, permitted to do so before that Agenda Item, but no members of the public were present.

789 Registration of Members Interests: No additional registrations were required.

790 Minutes 774 – 784 of 20th November & 785 - 788 of 11 December 2008:
RESOLVED, on the motion of Cllr Hamilton, seconded by Cllr Atkinson, that Minutes 774 – 784 of 20th November and 785 – 788 of 11th December 2008 are approved and signed as a correct record.

791 Matters arising from Minutes 774 – 788:

(a) **(Min 776a) Landcross Parish Councillor Co-option Vacancy:** Nothing to report.

(b i) **(Min 776b) Unitary Council for Devon:**

A “Keep the ‘local’ in local government” leaflet sponsored by Torridge, N Devon, E Devon, Mid Devon, South Hams and W Devon district councils was received. The leaflet states that “Unitary proposals for Devon are an imposition on the people” and points out that all Devon councils have already agreed to the concept of “Integrated Devon”, a voluntary collaboration of shared services in three clusters in Devon.

A High Court judgement in response to a judicial review sought by E Devon D C has largely found in favour of the Boundary Commission, who have restricted consideration to either a single Devon Unitary Option or Devon Unitary and Exeter Unitary Options.

The Secretary of State intends to review the Boundary Committee Report on 13 February 2009.

(b ii) **DAPC Cross Devon Working Party on Local Government Reorganisation Issues:**

The Clerk is authorised to attend these working party meetings.

(c) **(Min 769c) Councillors’ Indemnity – Code of Conduct:**

The Parish Council has been asked whether it is interested in indemnifying members from legal costs arising from defending an allegation in respect of breaching the Code of Conduct. Parish Councils may indemnify members (usually by taking out an insurance policy) under Section 101 Local Govt Act 2000. Community First, the Parish Council’s insurers, advise that the Parish Council is not covered at present and that additional cover for Member’s Indemnity regarding the Code of Conduct will cost £750 p.a. This would add 38 pence p.a. per average dwelling to the Parish Precept of Littleham & Landcross. Parish Councillors thought it unlikely that Littleham & Landcross would ever need to make a claim.

RESOLVED, on the motion of Cllr Hassall, seconded by Cllr Heard, that the Parish Council’s insurance cover remains unchanged.

792 Planning Matters:

(a) **Planning Notifications:** TDC has notified that Planning Applications 1/1171/2008/LBC and 1/1172/2008/FUL, in respect of Old Rectory, Littleham, have been approved.

(b) **Planning Applications:** None.

(c) **TDC Planning Obligations: Supplementary Document & Adoption Statement:** Received and noted.

793 Highways & Footpaths:

(a) **(Min 778c) Flooding at Lower Webbs, Littleham:**

A letter and telephone call from Mrs Cooper of Lower Webbs were reported to the meeting. Mrs Cooper remains concerned about flooding on her premises, due to public drains being unable to cope with heavy storm water flows.

Mr Elsworthy of DCC has again been to see if any minor improvements can be made by lowering or adjusting the gully gratings, so that they catch as much water as possible. DCC report that the system seems to be functioning adequately and any water falling onto the highway is entering the drainage system.

DCC have again been called out to attend to flooding at this location, only to find nothing in evidence when they get there. The County Council does not accept responsibility for flooding on private property. DCC officials have been as supportive as is practicable and there is little more DCC can do.

New residents at Higher Shutta have been advised that blocked highway drains near their property can cause excess storm water flows along roadside verges into Littleham. Prompt neighbourly attention to highway drain blockages can ease problems before DCC / S.W. Highways staff are required.

The likelihood of flooding on to Lower Webbs property is minimal, but DCC appreciate that Mrs Cooper lives with the perception that her property will be flooded at some future stage.

[Homeowners have] a duty of care towards [their] property and for her own peace of mind, it may now be prudent for her to install the kerbs provided by DCC.

Torrage has told Mrs Cooper that they do not carry out the sort of work required at Lower Webbs. Even so, Torrage are “looking into” her enquiry. Mrs Cooper is thought to be arranging for Mr Tony Brend to install the kerbs.

RESOLVED, that Mrs Cooper is advised that the Parish Council have again discussed the matters raised with DCC and that after further site visits by DCC, she is recommended to make prompt arrangements to install the kerbs provided.

(b) (Minutes 778d & 787a) Upadown Lane, Littleham

The Parish Council has recommended re-opening the green-road, from the north of Hoops Cottage to Combe Cottage, Littleham, to provide a safer route for walkers and horse-riders. Until recently, the track was overgrown and inaccessible, but local householders have now cleared the route. The householders do not wish to do all the maintenance work; only to those hedges adjoining their properties.

A letter from the Mrs A. Smith, Definitive Map Officer, DCC advises that she looked at this route during the review of rights of way in Littleham, but she received insufficient user evidence forms from walkers/riders, even though she had placed a notice on the Public Notice Board. Mrs Smith had approached the main landowner at that time, to see if he would be willing to dedicate a right of way, but he did not respond.

The process to add rights of way to the Definitive Map is evidence based and Mrs Smith suggests that the Parish Council should consider making a dedication agreement with the landowners concerned, to add this route to the Definitive Map. Mrs Smith suggests that the Parish Council may wish to try to find out who owns Upadown Track and then pursue making a dedication agreement with the landowners.

The Parish Plan Action Group recommends that the Parish Council acts as advised by Mrs Smith.

RESOLVED, that now that access along Upadown Track is been achievable, no further action is taken, other than to encourage riders and residents to use the track to ensure that it stays open and that local owners and user neighbours co-operate to arrange for verges to be cut back as and when required.

(c) Additional Footpaths:

Cllr Atkinson called for more off-road public footpaths / cycle-paths in the parish. These facilities are needed to encourage healthy life styles, improve road safety and improve facilities for visitors. A new public right of way from Littleham Reservoir to Apps Lane and other circular routes were suggested. Cllr Poole pointed out that Devon is being promoted as “the cycling county of England” and if the Parish was enthusiastic, then DCC should be invited to join in discussions with the Parish Council. Cllr M Smith referred to a “*Walks in N Devon*” book that includes a walk in and around Littleham.

RESOLVED that a Littleham & Landcross Footpaths Working Party, consisting of Parish Cllrs Atkinson, Poole, Hassall, G Smith and TDC Cllr Pennington, should meet informally to consider these proposals and report back.

(d) Road Safety; Speeding:

The Parish Plan Action Group has considered a report on speeding problems on village lanes and the need for greater awareness and consideration. The Group recommends: -

- that a Littleham Road Safety Working Party is established;
- that a campaign to raise awareness through leafleting Littleham households is organised;
- that DCC mark SLOW at either side of the approaches to Rose Cottage;
- that DCC erects “PLEASE DRIVE CAREFULLY THROUGH THE VILLAGE” signs at the approaches to Littleham;
- that consideration is given to “*Driving down speeds in Devon*” posters being displayed around the village and on local vehicles and
- better traffic calming facilities are provided on the A386 at Landcross, especially permanent “flashing 30 mph limit” electronic signs. Other villages on the A386 and A388 now have these signs and Landcross should receive similar protection.

Creating awareness should include encouraging cyclists and riders to wear highly visible clothing. The Parish Council are requested to raise these matters with DCC and the Police once more.

RESOLVED, that DCC is requested to: -

- **paint SLOW markings on either side of the approaches to Rose Cottage Bend and**
- **to permanently install flashing 30 signs on the A386 in Landcross, similar to those in Saltrens, Merton, Meeth, Horns Cross and other villages.**

A DAPC E-Group message advised that the Department of Transport, in London, has drafted a consultation paper regarding Road Safety Compliance. It does not specifically relate to parish councils. Consultation paper topics include both Speed and Careless Driving. The response deadline is 27 February.

RESOLVED, that the a letter is sent to Department of Transport, London, to make them more aware of the hazards and difficulties faced by road users in rural village situated on narrow minor roads.

(e) (Min 778e) Parking on roadside verges, Mount Pleasant, Littleham and (Min 778a) Church Lane:

DCC have reinstated the grass verges, but further damage has been caused. Cllr Poole also reported that TDC had been unable to collect refuse from Church Lane after Christmas / New Year, due to inconsiderate parking. The white line on Church Lane still needs shortening.

RESOLVED, that DCC is thanked for attending to the verges at Mt Pleasant; that Mike Newcombe, DCC Road Safety Officer (North), is requested to make urgent arrangements to remedy problems in Church Lane and that P C Tony Ellis is advised of the traffic problems in Church Lane and Mt Pleasant areas.

(f) Road Closures:

DCC advise of the following road closures: -

- Near High Park, Littleham, between Abbotsham Cross and junction with lane to Knotty Corner, between 2nd to 4th March 2009
- A39 Hoops Inn to East Holwell Farm; 2nd to 6th February 2009 between 09.30 & 15.30 Hrs
- Road Closure Old Forge to Chapel Cottage, Littleham; 23rd to 25th February 2009

There will be diversion routes.

(g) DCC: Bus Stop Data Update, Area-North: The Chairman, Cllr Mrs Beer and the Clerk will respond to DCC.

794 Littleham Village Hall & Playing Field

(a) Parish Council Meetings 2009/10:

The Clerk reminded members that the 1st May 2008 Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Parish Council Meeting were more manageable, because an Urgent Parish Council Meeting had been held on 21st April 2008. This had enabled a lot of Parish Council business to be cleared ahead of the Annual Meetings. The Annual Parish Meeting can be held between 1st March and 1st June, but the Annual Parish Council Meeting must be held in May.

RESOLVED that the Village Hall is booked for Parish Council Meetings on 30 April, 07 May (Annual Meeting); 18 June; 06 August; 01 October; 19 November 2009 and 14 January, 04 March 2010, 29 April and (Annual Meeting) 06 May 2010.

(b) Littleham Playing Field: The Chairman reported that the new play-equipment has been installed.

795 Parish Plan:

(A) Parish Plan Action Plan Group Meeting:

The Chairman reported on remaining matters outstanding from the Group the meeting held 12 January.

(i) DCC Biodiversity Audit:

The Chairman reported that DCC have invited Littleham and Landcross to participate in a free Biodiversity Audit. Local volunteers have offered to participate. The Chairman has consulted Parish Councillors and she has arranged with Craig Dixon, DCC Biodiversity Officer, for a study to commence April / May 2009.

RESOLVED, that the Parish Council supports the arrangements made by the Chairman and thanks her for her prompt action in securing this study for Littleham & Landcross

(ii) TDC Housing Needs Survey:

Torrige District Council is considering a scheme for Affordable Dwellings at Fairy Cross, to meet housing need in both Littleham and Alwington parishes. TDC wish to carry out a Housing Needs Survey in Littleham as part of this exercise and the Parish Council has been asked to comment.

Concern had been expressed to the Parish Plan Action Group that the Littleham & Landcross Parish Plan was probably the only Parish Plan not to call for Affordable Housing in the Parish and the Parish Plan Action Group had discussed sending out a further "Affordable Housing Questionnaire". Several Group members expressed concern over new housing development in the parish, but no one objected to the TDC proposals. The Group had decided not to carry out a further Parish Plan survey, but to recommend the Parish Council to ask TDC to proceed with their proposed survey.

Mr Paul Bowser of Abbotsham has advised that the TDC survey would be carried at no cost to the Parish Council and that a Community Land Trust ensures that further selling is always within affordable dwelling constraints.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council welcomes this project and supports TDC's housing needs survey.

(iii) **Littleham Newcomers' Welcome Booklet:**

The Action Group had agreed that a Welcome Pack should be produced and issued to new residents to Littleham. Cllr Poole has produced a *WELCOME BOOKLET*. It consists of 2 pages of A4, stapled to become an 8 page A5 booklet. A Welcome Booklet Working Party of volunteers will be organised to produce 250 booklets and arrange for volunteers to distribute them to relevant local homes in February. Cllr Hamilton will co-ordinate printing and publication with Cllr Poole and Mrs Haddrell and the Chairman have also offered to help.

RESOLVED that Cllr Poole is thanked for publishing the Welcome Booklet and that other volunteers are also thanked for offering to assist with the distribution of the booklets to relevant local households.

(B) **Gt Torrington MCTA LCP Meetings of 23 Sept and 27 November:** Documents received and noted.

796 Finance & Insurance:

(a) **Authorisation of Payments and Report on Bank Balance:**

The Chairman endorsed Bank Statements showing a cleared Bank Balance of £2,855.00 at 20 January 2009.

(b) **District Audit: Completion of 2007/08 Audit:**

Notice of satisfactory Completion of Audit has been received and displayed for the required period.

797 Consideration of correspondence & communications requiring attention:

Members **noted receipt** of the following correspondence: -

(a) **TDC: Register of Electors 2009 (Full Register):** Receipt of the confidential Full Register of Electors was noted. There were 304 electors in Littleham and 80 in Landcross on 15th October 2008.

(b) **TDC Town / Parish Councillors Allowances:**

The TDC Independent Parish Remuneration Panel has reviewed allowances paid to Torrington Councillors. A number of Parish Councils have enquired about a scheme of Basic Allowances for Town / Parish Councillors. The TDC Panel emphasises that it is not suggesting that it is appropriate for all town / parish councils to pay allowances. Their guidance figures are maximum figures, within which each council should determine its own scheme, if this is felt justified. Parishes with electorates under 2,500, who wish to determine a Basic Allowance are restricted to £222 per Parish Councillor per annum, in aggregate. There is also discretion to determine a Chairman's Basic Allowance from within this aggregate amount. (12 Parish Councillors x £222 = £2,664 p.a).

RESOLVED, that the Parish Council do not adopt a policy to pay Parish Councillor Basic Allowances and that this matter is reviewed annually.

(c) **DCC: Level of Internet Access at Parish Councils E-Mail Questionnaire:**

The Questionnaire was completed and returned to Devon C.C. before the meeting.

(d) **Environment Agency: N Devon & Somerset Coastal Advisory Group Meeting at Bideford:**

Cllr Hassall will attend the Shoreline Management Event at Bideford Town Hall on 19 January.

(e) **Dept of Communities & L Govt: Communities in Control; Code of Practice on publicity – A consultation:**

The Consultation Booklet was considered by the Chairman, received by the meeting and noted.

(f) **The Information Commissioner's Office: Fulfilling your obligation to disclose information:** Noted,

(g) **DAPC E- Mail Correspondence: Commons Act 2006; Power of Well Being legislation; DAPC Newsletter Jan/Feb 09; NALC Direct Information services Issues 697 – 699 and DAPC Training Courses 2009; CCD Parish Planning & S W Planning Aid Drop in Surgery, Hatherleigh:**

Receipt of these DAPC items of correspondence were noted.

(h) **Police: Appointment of Independent Members to Police Authority:** Information received and noted.

(i) **Police: Appointment of Independent Custody Visitors:** Information received and noted.

(j) **Police: Have your say Meetings: Torrington 3rd Feb, also Barnstaple & Braunton:** Information noted.

(k) **TDC Torrington Area Advisory Group Meeting 20 January 2009:** Cllr Hassall, or Cllr M Smith will attend.

798 Consideration of other correspondence received since the last meeting:

A file was made available to Parish Councillors containing correspondence about S.West Employers Annual Affiliate & Associate Conference; Clerks & Councils Direct magazine, DCC Devon Talk magazine; DCC

Helping You to Help Yourselves Newsletter No 8 and Promotional and other items. On-line Parish Councillors have also received DCC In Touch magazine.

799 Speaker for 2009 Annual Meeting: Mr Craig Dixon, Biodiversity Officer, DCC is to be invited to be Guest Speaker at the Annual Parish Meeting on 7th May 2009.

800 Littleham Parish Church: The Registrar at Notham refuses to accept “*St Swithun’s*” on Marriage Registers and insists on “*St Swithins*”. The Parish Council has been asked for guidance.
RESOLVED, that Littleham Parochial Church Council is asked to speedily resolve this matter.

801 Community Funds: Both County Councillor Barton and TDC Councillor Pennington invite prompt modest applications for grants from their Community Funds.

802 Date of Next Meeting: - Thursday 5th March 2009: 7.30 pm.

The meeting began at 7.30 pm and ended at 9.30 pm