

Dartmoor Forest Parish Council



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Minutes for the Parish Council Meeting at 1930 on 24 September 2019 in Princetown Community Centre

Present:

Hexworthy/Huccaby Ward:

Cllr. Alison Geen*

Postbridge Ward:

Cllr. Julian Greatrex

Cllr Wendy Watson

Princetown Ward:

Cllr. David Worth**

Cllr. Mark Renders

Cllr. John Druett

Cllr. Nigel Tigwell

Cllr. Wendy Stones

Cllr. Ian Bishop

* Chair, **Vice-Chair

6 members of the public were present.

1. **Apologies.** The Clerk. In the Clerk's absence, Cllr Worth took the minutes.
2. **Declarations of Interest.** None.
3. **Minutes of the Last Meeting.** Due to a printing error the minutes of the last meeting were not available to be signed in hard copy. This item was deferred to the next meeting.
4. **Presentation from new Princetown Primary School Head.** The Council listened to a presentation from Emma Byrom, the new head of Princetown Primary School. After introducing herself as the new permanent head of the school, Ms. Byrom went on to describe the future plans for the school. The school had recently received a 'good' OFSTED report and in the near future the school would become academised. It is the intention to get the school more involved in village activities and vice versa. Local musicians were being sought to contribute to a number of school activities including the writing of a new School Song and the Harvest Festival. The difficult task of increasing the number of children attending the school was being addressed. There was discussion about how local groups such as the Rotarians were becoming involved with the School.
5. **Princetown Fire Appliance – Loss of 4 X 4 fire coverage.** The Council was made aware of the disposal of the 4 X 4 Fire Appliance formerly stationed at Princetown by Devon and Somerset Fire Service. The Council noted that it had received quite explicit guarantees from D&SFS that this vehicle was to be retained and made available to Princetown Fire Station at the expected onset of winter weather conditions. A member of the public who is a retained fire fighter at Princetown Station was able to confirm a number of details: That the vehicle had been disposed of using Government Vehicle Disposal rules without any consultation with the Station crew; That the vehicles now available to the station for immediate use are not suitable for the weather conditions likely to be encountered during a typical Dartmoor winter; and that the nearest stationed vehicle that could be considered a

24 September 2019

Signature of Chair



one for one replacement was stationed 45 minutes away at Exmouth. Concerns were also raised that use of the current RIU in adverse weather conditions could put firefighters lives at risk. Cllr Manning wanted to know why such an explicit guarantee to the Parish had been broken by D&SFS. The Council was in full agreement that this disposal action was intolerable and betrayed a deeply cynical and uncaring attitude on the part of D&SFS.

Action: Cllr Geen to draft a formal letter of objection to D&SFS concerning the loss of 4 X 4 fire coverage throughout the Parish and beyond. This letter to be also circulated to the Press and other stakeholders such as the Duchy of Cornwall and HMP Dartmoor.

6. **Bellever Forest Camping and Public Toilet situation.** The Council received updates on correspondence received on this matter. Cllr Geen reported that she had had some correspondence with Ali Kohler of Dartmoor National Park. There seems to be a lack of clarity concerning the legal definition of certain activities such as 'back pack camping'. Also it is queried whether the bye-laws are the same for each National Park. Cllr Tigwell was of the opinion that this matter should be explored with DNP monthly to remind them of their responsibility in resolving this issue.

Action: The Council will return to this question as soon as there are any further developments.

7. **Princetown CCTV Project.** Another quotation had been received for this project as was being circulated. There was some concern raised that the price of the most recent quotation seemed quite high. The quotation being for over £9000 for a ten camera system equated to nearly £1000 per camera. A public meeting had been held for Parishioners to present their point of view and the overwhelming public stance seemed to be that of support for the project. A third quotation is expected soon and a member of the public was able to provide a suggested fourth company to approach.

8. **Local Planning Consultation.** The Council is to review their response for the October meeting of DFPC.

9. **Station Cottages Road condition.** The Council resolved to hold over this matter to the October meeting of DFPC.

10. **Anti-social behaviour in Princetown Playpark.** Discussion was combined with item 11 below.

11. **Lack of Police presence in Parish.** The Council noted the lack of PCSO activity during the summer months and noted that the season where nuisance anti-social driving during snowy conditions was approaching. It was observed that there seemed to be a circular pattern of anti-social behaviour. DPC to write a letter to Devon and Cornwall Constabulary to encourage greater visibility of Police presence in the Parish.

12. **Council Tax Support Grant Consultation.** The Council discussed the withdrawal of the Council Tax support Grant and the effect it will have on future DFPC budgets. The Council agreed to write a letter of objection to the removal of this grant.

Action. Cllr Tigwell to write letter of objection.

13. **Planning Applications.** The Council determined the following Planning Applications:

Ref.	Address	Ward	DFPC decision
0379/19	Pump House	Postbridge	Support
0374/19	Pump House	Postbridge	Support
0374/19	Brimpts Farm	Postbridge	Support

Cllr Worth will inform DNPA of the decision in the Clerk's absence.

14. Financial Management. In the Clerk's absence, Cllr Tigwell has assumed responsibility as the Council's Financial Officer. Ref. Item 18b.

Cllr Tigwell has taken over management of finances from the Clerk but does not yet have all the documentation.

The Clerk has done a full bank reconciliation and reports all is correct. He also calculated the payments for this month (see below), updated the monthly report (see below), and in addition he has resubmitted the rejected cheque to WDBC with the new paying-in slip, and has raised invoices for DNPA and the Duchy for grass cutting.

David Cole has confirmed that the DCC grass cutting is complete and we will now invoice them.

a. Cheques to be signed this month:

Ref	Cheque No.	Date	Payee	Amount
1255	1514	24/09/19	Steve Cox (Clerk's Pay - Includes back pay from rate increase of 30p per hour due from 1 Apr 19)	£ 458.95
1256	1515	24/09/19	David Cole (Lengthsman's Pay)	£ 559.80
1257	1516	24/09/19	Harry Hooper-Noulton (Litter picker fee)	£ 66.73
1257	1517	24/09/19	'HM Revenue & Customs Only 475PD00203347' (PAYE)	£ 432.80
1259	1518	24/09/19	Dartmoor Garden Machinery (Repair to mower)	£ 104.16
1260	1519	24/09/19	PKF Littlejohn (External audit fees)	£ 240.00
1261	1520	24/09/19	Postbridge Village Hall (Replacement for lost cheque)	£ 15.00
1263	1521	24/09/19	Princetown Community Centre (Hall hire for CCTV consultation meeting)	£ 15.00

b. Report of Accounts. The report of accounts is shown below. There are some problems with the spreadsheet that the Clerk is aware of and has not yet been resolved.

Consequently, please disregard the section that implies DFPC will be £13k overspent by the end of the year.

c. External Audit. The External Audit Report has been received stating:

“On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.”

The Council reviewed and accepted the Auditors report.

We will display a notice that electors may inspect the Annual Governance & Accountability Return on the Princetown Notice Board using Cllr Tigwell's address. Although not legally required, we will also print and display a copy of the audit certificate to reduce the chance we need to bother the Clerk with requests to inspect the report.

d. New bank mandate. We do not have the new bank mandate forms for signature from the Clerk yet, so Cllr Stones and Manning will remain the only signatories for the present. I will progress the new mandates with Cllr Renders once I have them.

Action. Cllr Worth to post audit information on Parish Notice Board. Further signatories need to be brought forward for cheque signing.

End of Month Report of Accounts		24-Sep 2019	FOO
Report of Accounts			
Income to Date		Expenditure to Date	
Balance Brought Forward 1/4/19	£23,590.73	Litter Picking	£400.38 £800.00
Precept	£8,987.50	Grass Cutting Lengthsman	£4,210.80 £8,000.00
Council Tax Support Grant	£475.50	Dog Bins	£59.80 £162.00
VAT Rebate	£3,366.15	Toilets	£3,948.23 £3,547.00
Other	£1,500.00	Play Area	£0.00 £420.00
		Running Costs	£0.00 £300.00
		Improve & Repair	£211.80 £1,500.00
		Tools & equipment	£106.70 £2,000.00
		Donations with Powers	£0.00 £1,289.00
		Section 137	£0.00 £0.00
		Fees	£1,032.18 £1,033.00
		Admin Costs	£122.79 £1,005.00
Income	£37,919.88	Clerk's Pay	£2,489.30 £4,750.00
Expenditure	£10,146.97	Training	£0.00 £100.00
Allocated Reserves	£7,811.00	VAT	£2,435.01 £2,435.01
Carried Forward	£19,961.91	Total	£10,146.97 £27,341.01
Bank Statement Reconciliation			
Cash in Bank	£32,604.45	Reserves Transfer Adjustment	£3,366.15
Plus outstanding income			£13,513.12 £27,341.01
Less Outstanding Cheques	£8,197.69	Income	£14,329.15 £14,329.15
Less Allocated Reserves	£7,811.00	Potential surplus at end of year	-£13,011.86
Balance Carried Forward	£16,595.76		
Notes:		Variance:	£ 0.00
Reconciliation correct.			
VAT refund received.			
DNPA grass cutting payment for 2018-19 received. 2019-2020 invoices for DNPA and DoC issued.			
WDDB have returned cheques as no longer accepted. Now have paying in book and have sent cheques in.			
Reserves Held by the Parish Council			
Allocated:	Start of Year	Transfers in	Balance
Princetown Toilets	£2,000.00	£0.00	£2,000.00
Website	£920.00	£0.00	£920.00
Contested Election	£3,000.00	£0.00	£3,000.00
Grass cutting equipment	£1,891.00	£0.00	£1,891.00
	£7,811.00	£0.00	£7,811.00
Unallocated:			
General Reserve at start of year	£19,145.88		
Assets Held by the Parish Council			
Playground Equipment	£63,485.63	Tools and Other Equipment	£3,854.46
Community Assets	£17,512.71	Miscellaneous	£601.71
Information Technology Equipment	£844.56	Long Term Investments	£0.00

15. Project Progress Reports

Princetown Skate Park. Action: Cllr Manning gave a report on the progress of this project. It was agreed that it should remain a high priority for the Council. The most pressing concern was identified as attracting suitable funding sources. Cllrs Stones and Druett to investigate further potential sources of funding.

16. Committees, Sub-Groups & Special Interests:

None submitted for discussion.

17. Reports from Other Meetings:

a. **Southern Parish Link Committee.** Cllr Manning reported upon the most recent meeting he had attended:

Inspector Slowman reported that crime in Devon and Cornwall was decreasing with the exceptions of Vehicle Offences, Possession of Weapons, Public Order, and Domestic Abuse. Devon and Cornwall Police are recruiting 450 extra officers. Drew Powell from WDBC gave a report on problems facing the Council, including the likelihood of a 'No Deal' Brexit. He also touched upon how the Council is looking to mitigate Climate Change and highlighted the availability of Disabled Facilities Grants to Parish Councils. Car Parking in Tavistock is under consultation and he urged Councils to provide feedback via the survey on the WDBC website.

The funding of further Parish Link meetings was also discussed.

Cllr Renders had attended a meeting of WDBC where a trial of three-weekly domestic waste collection was discussed.

Cllr Stones reported that Royal Court was now under the control of South Devon Rural Housing Association Ltd.

Cllr Tigwell reported that he had attended a Standards meeting and provided the following notes:

Standards Training

I attended a seminar of Governance and Standards, including a presentation on social media pitfalls, run by WDBC for Town and Parish Councils on 24 September. The notes below are key points I took from the session. For more information, I have electronic copies of their FAQ and both presentations. There is also the Code of Contact, Standing Orders etc on DFPC's website.

Code of Conduct

Different model options are available, but all are based on the Nolan principles. DFPC's Code of Conduct follows that of WDBC, which is on the Local Government Association model and is still acceptable but will be reviewed next year

Possible Changes

In January 2019 the Committee on Standards in Public Life made recommendations to enhance systems of governance. This will take time to implement as many will need primary legislation.

Selected Recommendations for change that may affect DFPC:

Rules on declaring pecuniary and personal interests will be tightened.

Parish Councils should operate unambiguously under the code of their principal authority. (*This suggests it would be best to stay with the WDBC/LGA model.*)

Complaints about a Parish Councillor towards a Clerk should be made by the Chair or by the Parish Council as a whole, rather than the Clerk.

WDBC will decide on sanctions imposed on Parish Councillors in breach of the code.

Sanctions will be extended to include suspension and banning from council premises.

Councillors should be required to attend formal induction training.

Parish Council Clerks should hold an appropriate qualification, such as those provided by the Society of Local Council Clerks.

Revision Points:

The aim of a standards system is ultimately to maintain an ethical culture and ethical practice. the tone of engagement should be civil and constructive. Expected standards of behaviour should be embedded through effective induction and ongoing training.

The 7 Principles of Public Life are: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership

It is not enough to avoid actual impropriety, you should at all times avoid any occasion for suspicion or appearance of improper conduct.

Individual points for Councillors:

Complying with the General Obligations in the Code of Conduct:

Treating others with respect

Have regard to relevant advice from council officers

Not to confer an advantage or disadvantage

Not to cause the council to breach equality acts

Not to bully or intimidate

Not to prevent others from gaining access to information

Not to disclose confidential information

Not to bring the office of councillor or council in to disrepute

Not to fail to disclose an interest

Councillors' Interests

Register: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Personal Interests

Employment; Sponsorship; Contracts; Land & Licenses; Tenancies with the Council; Securities; Membership of other bodies; Gifts and hospitality; and

Matters which affect your wellbeing or financial interests more than it would affect the majority of people living within the ward.

For self and spouse/partner. (Specific dispensations can be requested.)

Actions if an interest applies:

Pecuniary Interest: must leave the room for that item – not speak, debate or vote

Affects well-being: can speak, but must then leave the room – not debate or vote

Personal Interests: declare the interest but can stay, debate and vote

Social Media

Social media is a very powerful rapid means of communication but many pitfalls:

- Be very clear whether you are acting as a councillor or as an individual
- If in doubt assume everyone will believe you are posting as a councillor
- Do not have a row; do not be abusive; do not reveal privileged information
- If you create a social media 'storm', react to it – do not walk away – it makes it worse
- The law of defamation applies to social media in the same way as traditional media
- Accept new case work raised on social media but then take it offline for one-to-one discussions

Laws to consider when posting on social media:

- Recommended code of practice for local government publicity
- Copyright Designs and Patents Act
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Freedom of Information Act
- Laws of defamation and slander

Action. Councillors to note and acquaint themselves with the provisions of the new Standards code.

Councillors to review the suggested changes to parking arrangements in Tavistock and leave feedback via the WDBC website.

18. **Other issues requiring decisions.**

a. **Bellever Parish Noticeboard.** The Council agreed to have this asset repaired.

Action. Cllr Geen to investigate sourcing of replacement legs for the board. Key to board to be collected from the Clerk.

b. **Appointment of councillors to roles during the Clerk's absence.**

The following resolution was passed:

“During the Clerk's absence due to ill health and only during this period, delegations to the Clerk under Standing Order 16 are suspended and the Council appoints the following unpaid officers to conduct the business of the Council:

Cllr Alison Geen to manage the correspondence of the Council.

Cllr David Worth to issue summonses, set agendas, issue briefing notes, minutes of the Council, and manage Planning Applications.

Cllr Nigel Tigwell to manage the financial affairs of the Council as Responsible Financial Officer and to act as the line manager for Council employees.

Cllr Greatrex to act as Burials Clerk for Postbridge Cemetary. (Cllr Tigwell to provide support.)”

19. **Urgent decision since last meeting.** None.

20. **Exchange of Information.** Limited to the exchange of information and items for next meeting:

- a. Repair of rear gate to Princetown graveyard – Ongoing, further meeting to be arranged with member of Walkhampton Churchwardens.
- b. Livewest reported to be carrying out refurbishment to railings at Hessary Terrace.
- c. An update was requested as to the status of Princetown Combined Church. **Action.** Cllr Manning to investigate.
- d. Discussion of dog bin provision at Postbridge was put back to the October meeting.
- e. Discussion of a requested donation to the Citizens Advice Bureau was put back to the October meeting.
- f. Discussion on whether to declare a Climate Emergency was put back to the October meeting.
- g. A question was raised as to the current status of the Distillery construction.
- h. A Portaloo was reported to have been placed on public land at Burrator Avenue.
- i. No change was reported to the Good Councillor guidelines.
- j. Cllr Worth reported that he was using considerably more ink and paper in carrying out Council duties. It was agreed that a decision would be made at the October meeting on office expenditures.
- k. A fire meeting point notice had been observed on the Playpark gate.

SECOND PUBLIC SESSION

No questions raised.

17. The next meeting of the Parish Council is 1930 Tuesday 28th October 2019 at Princetown Community Centre.

The Chair closed the meeting at 2150.