

Councillor Briefing notes for Tuesday 26th October 2021 Meeting

1. Apologies – none received so far
2. Declarations of Interest - Check with Councillors
3. Acceptance of September minutes
4. Developments re: Sitka Plantation adjacent to Bellever Close – AG has spoken to and emailed Tom Stratton who is willing to have a meeting and suggested December.
5. Recruitment of new Parish Clerk – no action as yet in this regard as computer was collected from Western Web last week and emails only now available. Please see App 1 (p4) for **proposed advert**:
 - a. we need to decide who potential applicants can speak to
 - b. what timeline we can work with
 - c. Decide on potential advertising budget (DALC/SLCC adverts free, Tavi Times cost £200 per advert)
6. Recruitment of new Councillor – This will be Stephen’s last meeting, many thanks for his work on the play park and in meetings. Best of luck to him and his wife for the future in their new home. The post has to be officially advertised and if nobody offers themselves for election we can ask for a volunteer and co-opt onto the Council.
7. Reply to DNPA Bylaw consultation – this was emailed out by Nigel on 13th October and is also attached to this email. If you haven’t already done so please read prior to meeting. Any additions/changes you want to suggest should be emailed out to Councillors before the meeting.
8. Delegation of powers to Councillors in the absence of Parish Clerk - to ensure DFPC remains in legal compliance during the period where no Clerk or locum Clerk has been appointed, the following resolution is needed:

During the period when no Clerk is employed or contracted by the Council 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 and minutes of the Council.

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

Expenses and Allowances will be paid as follows:

- a. *Expenses. Cllrs Geen, Tigwell and Worth will purchase paper, envelopes and stamps as required and periodically reclaim expenses, as does the Clerk.*
- b. *Allowances: They will each receive the same home office allowance as the Clerk at £2.50pm.*

Printing costs are recovered as an allowance: Cllr Geen will incorporate the costs within her business expenses, while Cllrs Tigwell and Worth will receive £3.50 per month.

To minimise cheques, allowances are paid quarterly or when the role ends: Cllr Geen: £7.50; Cllr Tigwell £18.00; Cllr Worth £18.00.

This resolution will be formally reviewed quarterly if a new Clerk has not been appointed or immediately if any of the above named officers becomes medically unfit or resigns from their position.

9. Creation of an Employment Committee - The issues surrounding the new Clerk (to be covered in Section 2 of the meeting) have highlighted deficiencies the Council's arrangements. Although a focal point for the Council, the Chair does not have the authority to deal with Parish Clerk employment matters and a full council meeting would be required for any decisions to be taken. This is unwieldy when circumstances are changing rapidly. It is proposed an Employment Committee be established with standing delegations to ensure we are better able to manage any such situations in the future.

The following two resolutions are proposed and the Council should then appoint Councillors to the Employment Committee:

(1) To create an Employment Committee to comprise the Chair plus a minimum of two and maximum of three other Councillors appointed by the Council.

(2) To amend Standing Orders by insertion of the following text in Section 17 Delegations to Committees:

The Employment Committee is authorised to:

17.10 To convene Committee face-to-face and virtual meetings.

17.11 To be quorate with the Chair plus one Councillor, or in the absence of the Chair all other Councillors in which case a chair for the meeting will be appointed by majority vote of the Committee.

17.12 To select and convene job interview panels.

17.13 To negotiate the detailed terms and conditions of service for prospective Council employees based on the NALC model employment contract and the Green Book.

17.14 To authorise the Chair to sign a contract of employment with a prospective Council employee.

17.15 To convene and conduct performance appraisal and probation interviews with any Council employee.

17.16 To give notice of termination of employment to any Council employee subject to the extant contract of employment and employment law.

17.17 To consult with the Devon Association of Local Councils, solicitors and other organisations and professional advisors as appropriate on employment matters.

17.18 To commit the Council to expenditure necessary to achieve Council approved objectives subject to a limit of £500.

17.19 To maintain strict confidentiality of all employment matters that are not legitimately in the public domain.

17.20 To maintain full records of all employment matters and to report all activities to the Council at the next appropriate meeting and in closed session if matters are confidential.

17.21 To be bound by the Standing Orders of the Parish Council.

10. Council cheque signatories' addition - No action taken to date. This will be progressed as an action under financial management.
11. Road Safety measures including Two Bridges Road speeding actions
 - a. GM has reported that the Police do not consider this to be a problem following speed recording on this stretch of road and at present will not sanction a speedwatch site there.
 - b. Andrew Watson of DNPA has in hand replacing the "No Parking" sign on Station Road heading toward car park (it was not Devon Highways sign); part of it is not a ready-made sign so DNPA graphics lady is designing it.
 - c. Damaged VAS at Leeden Tor car park - AG has spoken to Andrew Watson. He reports that both VAS signs have been damaged, one can be mended and one can't, He is waiting for photocell for mended sign and will then contact Speedwatch to discuss options on the other
12. Princetown Parking problems update – No action taken as yet. Actions needed
 - a. Invite CEO to attend Princetown more regularly
 - b. Ask if railings can be installed outside the Old Station Café
 - c. Consider use of land near Bellever Close for short stay parking
13. Snow Tourism progress update – no update as this is something I haven't got to
14. Lengthsman training – this urgently needs arranging otherwise we won't be covered by insurance if Dave is working on or beside the roads. Stephen King was going with Dave Cole but obviously won't be available now. We need a volunteer.
15. Purchase of Uninterruptible Power Supply for CCTV system – DW has suggested this so that we don't experience more problems with CCTV when there may be a power outage in the Visitor's Centre out of hours. NG to obtain idea of cost.
16. St. Michael's Churchyard Upkeep – AG had a Zoom meeting with Secretary and Treasurer of Walkhampton PCC about this matter. They have offered a £500 donation for this year. However they cannot guarantee donations in future years. The Treasurer did agree they would look at what happens to any fees received for burials/marriages. They seemed to think these had been going to the Methodist

Church. Are we happy to accept that donation? We need to allocate installation of donation box or similar (in Post Office) to a councillor.

17. Climate Change declaration further actions –AG has not got to this this month but it is on the official TO DO list.
18. Warmer Healthier Homes next steps – AG contacted Kate Royston and she responded suggesting a Nov/Dec start for this initiative in Princetown and suggests Wendy/Stephen contact them about an event to start or people needing help. We need a replacement for Stephen here too. Suggestions welcome about how we might help this initiative progress.
19. Planning - None received at date of agenda issue. However on Friday (too late for this meeting) we received an application for “Installation of 30m lattice tower on concrete base upon which will be attached 3 no. antennas and 2 no. 0.6m transmission dishes along with associated ancillary units and cabling” at land at Lakeland Hill, Bellever, AG has asked for an extension so we can discuss at November’s meeting. Application no: 0572/21
20. PUBLIC SESSION
21. Financial management. Payments to be approved; Bank reconciliation; FOO PLEASE SEE APP 2 (pages 6-8) FOR FINANCIAL REPORT – thank you to Nigel for taking this on.
22. Reports from Committees, Sub Groups and Special Interests:
 - a. Princetown Skate Park update
23. Urgent decisions since last meeting - Acceptance of Clerk’s resignation
24. Exchange of information:
 - a. Website update and completion
 - b. Surface water drainage improvements update
 - c. Local businesses registering on the DFPC website
 - d. Additional defibrillator signs and replacement pads for Postbridge – Pads on order
 - e. Charlie Vinnecombe of Postbridge has passed away and we have received a request for a plot at Postbridge Cemetery, Steve Cox has offered to assist us in organising this on a voluntary basis (he won’t accept a fee) and we are very grateful to him for this.
25. PUBLIC SESSION
26. Date of next meeting
27. CLOSED SESSION – Employment matters

Appendix 1

Parish Clerk

Dartmoor Forest Parish Council is a forward-looking active council seeking a Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. Experience in organising meetings, taking minutes and administration. Further training will be provided. Must be proficient in MS Office. Working from home for 25-35 hours per month. Hourly rate based on national pay levels. Salary from £10.86/hour.

Please see www.dartmoorforestparishcouncil.gov.uk for full job description and further details of the parish (News section for job description). For an informal discussion please contact the **Chair on 01364 631276**. To apply, email a CV with a covering letter outlining your suitability and experience to clerk@dartmoorforestparishcouncil.gov.uk by **TBA**.

Appendix 2

Cllr Tigwell has taken over financial management until a new Clerk is employed.

Financial management has been neglected for some time in the recent hiatus, some actions have been missed and payments not made. These are covered below. It is not certain all liabilities have been identified at this time.

Cheques to be signed this month:

<u>Ref</u>	<u>ChqNo</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Payee & Details</u>	<u>Amount</u>
1445	1686	26/10/21	Alison Geen - expenses - Payroll & Defib pads & dongle	£ 676.13
1446	1687	26/10/21	Steve Cox - expenses - Tindle newspapers	£ 201.60
1447	1688	26/10/21	Steve Cox - Holiday Pay	£ 190.95
1448	1689	26/10/21	David Cole - Pay and expenses	£ 688.02
1449	1690	26/10/21	Josh Cook - Litter Picker fee	£ 40.00
1450	1691	26/10/21	Andrew Wyer - Pay	£ 618.29
1451	1692	26/10/21	Wendy Stones - expenses - Poppy Wreath	£ 18.50
1452	1693	26/10/21	Duchy of Cornwall - Play Area and Village Green	£ 42.00
1453	1694	26/10/21	PFK Littlejohn LLP - External audit fee	£ 240.00
1454	1695	26/10/21	Western Web Limited - Domain Renewal & PC clean-up	£ 252.00
1456	1696	26/10/21	WDBC - Dog Bins Emptying	£ 190.94
1457	1697	26/10/21	Dartmoor Garden Machinery - repairs to mower	£ 655.87
1458	1698	26/10/21	HMRC - PAYE & NI	£ 159.10
1460	1699	26/10/21	Nigel Tigwell - expenses - paper and surge protector	£ 30.13

Bank Reconciliation: Outstanding bank reconciliations have been completed and are correct.

Outstanding Income:

- 1442 - Princetown Football Club - pitch cutting - £125.85 - 25/06/21.
- Football pitch cutting since June has not been invoiced. This will be progressed.
- £1642.88 VAT for the previous financial year has not been reclaimed. This will be progressed.
- £500 contribution towards Princetown churchyard maintenance by the Walkhampton PCC.

Outstanding Payments/Liabilities:

- To be determined by search for missed invoices.
- The council's printer is defective, beyond economic repair and has been written off. A broad order cost for replacement is £300. It is planned to defer purchase until the new Clerk is in post, in case they already have one and would prefer to receive a monthly printing allowance.

Outstanding Actions:

- Change of signatories on bank account.
- Direct debit mandate for Information Commissioner.
- Direct debit mandate for WDBC.
- Grant application to Vision Zero South West Road Safety Partnership by 1 November (see below).

Clerk's Pay: Steve Cox was owed £190.95 holiday pay. Andrew Wyer's pay has been calculated on the basis that his first day of work was on 27 July for the monthly meeting and his last day was 8 October. Between these dates he had two weeks of annual leave (partially paid, partially unpaid) and two weeks sick absence. His rate of pay was £10.86

per hour for 7.5 hours per week. This was checked with DALC and calculated by Diane Malley Payroll Services.

Grass Cutting: David Cole's hours have been collated and we are on target to come in within budget. However, by agreement with the former Clerk, David has been recording 10 hours per full churchyard cut whereas the actual figure is 26 hours. The Walkhampton PCC £500 contribution will enable us to pay David for about half of the extra 16 hours. We should be able to pay him the other half with the underspend on public toilets, but this will be dependent on the final financial outturn subject to any further unforeseen expenditure. A final decision will be made in March 2022.

Councillors are requested to approve the use of the £500 Walkhampton PCC contribution as back pay for David Cole.

Vision Zero South West Road Safety Partnership Grant Application: Following the debate via email the following single item is shortlisted:

Road Safety enhancements on the B3212 between Princetown and Dousland to reduce road traffic accidents involving animals grazing the commons, comprising:

Reflective animal collars for cattle and ponies as proven in the New Forest National Park.

Two additional road signs "Give Way to Animals" at the cattle grids at either end of the road.

Replacement VAS sign at Leather Tor car park.

The detailed grant application must be worked up and submitted by the closing date of 1 November. Inputs on costing, justification and background are required from multiple councillors.

Councillors are requested to approve the development and submission of this grant application.

Reserves: The reserves for CCTV and IT have been removed because both were empty and no longer served a useful purpose.

Audit: The external audit has been returned. We have been admonished for not making our post-audit 2019-20 accounts available for inspection within the prescribed timescales; and for ticking the box that said we had. This is a procedural and not an accounting error, but it does mean we failed in a statutory duty. There is no further action required.

Precept 2022/23: Normal procedure is that the first draft of next year's budget and precept demand is presented to the council at the November meeting. However, this may need to be deferred until the December meeting, depended on the other financial management workload.

Councillors are requested to approve this deferment.

Parishscapes Grant Fund and Other Similar Funds: Typically, any DCC/WDBC/DNPA underspend may result in the short notice offer of grants in January for fully costed minor projects that will complete before the end of the financial year. The Council was unable to take advantage in 2019-20 because we did not have any worked-up and costed small

projects ready to go. We ought to be better prepared this year. Options the Council may wish to consider developing are (from the list circulated in February 2020):

- a. Bench seats and a 'chat bench' in Princetown village centre.
- b. The same but on a smaller scale at Postbridge.
- c. A chat bench in the Play Area (new bench or new sign on existing bench).
- d. Footpath restoration work – e.g. from Community Centre to Devonport Leat.
- e. Better footpath signposting before Station Cottages.
- f. Provision of seating in the bus shelters.
- g. Princetown/Parish Christmas lights.
- h. Any other good idea.

Inputs on costing, justification and background will be required from multiple councillors.

Councillors are requested to select which potential grant applications are to be developed for possible submission in January.

Risks: The main financial risks identified are listed below.

- a. Undetected liabilities and responsibilities missed during the hiatus. Mitigation: conduct a careful review of the 400+ unread emails.
- b. WDBC challenge to the council's adopted position on public toilet funding. Mitigation: find/create records of discussions and agreements reached; do not reallocate budget until certain risk will not materialise; maintain allocated and unallocated reserves to cover potentials costs not covered by budget.

Report of Accounts:

The report of Accounts is shown on the page below. Items to note are:

As predicted, the cost of emptying dog waste bins has risen from £59.80 per 6 months to £159.12. This was covered in the budget.

There has been no expenditure for Play Area repairs. Is this correct or is there a missing invoice?

Forecast:

The current end-of-year forecast is estimated to be an underspend of about £1,500-£2,000, driven by the public toilet situation, offset by the unbudgeted mower repairs and the full cost of churchyard maintenance. This may change if unknown liabilities are discovered. The underspend will increase by about £380 per month without a Clerk, but may reduce if a locum is contracted in for a period.

Councillors are requested to note the information in this financial briefing and specifically the uncertainty pertaining to potential unknown liabilities.