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LOPEN PARISH COUNCIL Minutes of the meeting held in The School Room, Church Street, Lopen 7pm Tuesday 18th October 2016

Present:

Cllr N Jones (Chairman)
Cllr. T. Sienkiewicz
Cllr J Feeney
Cllr E Moore

In attendance : Clerk: Lisa Wilson, Cllr Adam Dance (SSDC), Cllr Crispin Raikes (SSDC), 16 members of the public

It was indicated that the order of the meeting agenda was to be changed, in particular so that the road issues could be addressed at the earliest opportunity.

89/16 County Councillor's report

Written report read by Chairman in Cllr Le Hardy's absence:

- Hinkley Point construction has now been approved and will result in £200 million's worth of contracts with regard to the construction and a likely £4 billion over its lifetime. In addition there will be local employment in the form of contracts from EDF.
- Somerset County Council Budget - Due to large cuts to the County Council's revenue budgets, there is a potential overspend of £24 million; to avoid such an overspend cuts have to be made.
- This year's Student Ticket for transport will cost £675 p.a. and covers any route, any time.
- Highways' site now has an interactive profile and individuals can report via an online form problems found on any road such as potholes, poor surface.etc.

90/16 District Councillors' reports:

Cllr Crispin Raikes :

- There is a new C.O. in post; the first full council meeting was held last week.
- Agreement reached to accept the Government's 4 year settlement to 2019/20, returning £330,000 to Government. There was reluctance to do so, but the District Council were told it would only be deducted/collected in some other way otherwise. Overall, funding from Central Government is disappearing. There were two large appeals resolved and it now looks like payment will not have to be made on those.
- Capping Consultation : a referendum would cost more than the rise for small communities. There are two triggers at the moment and under those criteria only Yeovil and Chard would qualify. A statement from the Officers was only received today.
- There is now a Department Chairman for Area North.

Cllr Adam Dance :

- There is a by-election in Area North with a post available.
- Information on Frogmary Green is due to arrive in Area North in November. Comment from LPC Councillor that there is still no environmental impact report and that it is terrible that the site is up

DRAFT

and running without planning permission. It is clear that South Somerset Council have not taken the strong position Devon have. There is a Secretary of State letter on file. Cllr Dance requests to be copied into the email and agrees to follow it up.

- Dog waste bin : is still an option available to Lopen; the Parish is entitled to one (only), but time is limited, so a decision needs to be made. A member of the public commented that it could be put by the footpath in Kitchen Lane, where it is not outside houses.

91/16 **Apologies** received from District Councillor Christopher Le Hardy, Cllrs Crane & Burrows

92/16 **Declarations of interest**

None

93/16 **The Minutes of the Meeting of Lopen Parish Council** held on Tuesday 16th August 2016 were received and approved.

94/16 **Matters arising from last minutes :**

- The Chairman referred to his lengthy conversation with the District Tree Officer regarding Paul Godfrey's apple orchard, in which the Officer was adamant that he won't accept any alternatives to reinstatement, partly because he does not wish to set a precedent. The farmer has had the same response from the NFU so is not pleased but won't pursue it any further. One Cllr commented that the Council's position was disappointing, particularly in view of the fact that in other similar circumstances in the past, plantings have not been pursued.
- The Church Wall : The chairman has written to the PCC. Crispin Raikes confirmed that no response had yet been received. SALC confirm that if it is proved that the churchyard is closed, and properly adopted by the Council, the grant could be pursued retrospectively. We therefore need to investigate the closure of the churchyard and its adoption by the Council.
- Broken road sign adjacent to entrance of Broomhill Lane ; Cllr Sienkiewicz confirmed she has yet to deal with this but will do so.
- 95/16 **Resignation of Sarah Mason** was confirmed, due to her family commitments; thanks were delivered for her work during her time as Councillor. Mrs Mason will continue to offer the defibrillator technical advice and training. The vacancy has already been the subject of the formal process and is advertised in the Lopen Eye - any interested party is invited to contact either the Chairman or Clerk for further information.
- 96/16 **Road** : The Chairman confirmed his knowledge of the newly formed Residents' Group, which has had a successful first meeting and he welcomed their input on the road scheme. After many year's work from previous councillors including Peter Little and Barry Davolls, we are now at the stage of funding and the design stage under the District Council's Small Improvement Scheme. The Chairman read from Cllr Le Hardy's email of October, which referred to the keys points, as Cllr Le Hardy understood it, in 3 sections - Snap Ant, the upper section and the lower; concerns were adherence to speed and weight restrictions, including agricultural vehicles; use of the road as a cut-through for HGV's; removal of the central white line and that it should not be

DRAFT

replaced. There was some discussion about when the meeting between Cllr Le Hardy and Highways took place, but whilst the exact timing is not known, it appeared it must have been about one month ago - the audit may have already happened, but neither the LPC or Residents' Group were aware. The Chairman made it clear that his view was that it would be too expensive to undertake the changes to Snap Ant as suggested in Cllr Le Hardy's letter in any event, which would surely make it unworkable. Cllr Sienkiewicz commented that the Snap Ant switchbacks acted as a slowing mechanism and that it's lower down the village where the speeding is more apparent. Both agreed that if Snap Ant were adjusted as per Cllr Le Hardy's letter, then it would be to the detriment of the rest of the village. The remainder of Cllr Le Hardy's letter was read which refers to various issues of note including that there are more families in the village; increased volume of traffic; frequent examples of high speed; the dangers for residents walking on the road.

The following items were suggested as realistic and valid by the Chairman:

- Re-locating the 30 mph signs closer to the start of the village at either end
- 20 mph throughout village
- Narrow road signage
- More advisory signs, including indicating children present and that there are no pavements

Action : It was agreed that the Ranger would be asked to clear the overgrown and obscured existing road signs as part of his current remit, as suggested by Cllr Dance.

The Chairman had been told that now it was at design stage, Highways would be providing proposal/s to the LPC. The Chairman felt that Highways could be invited to a meeting in the village, or alternatively for a party to visit them. It was confirmed that no indications of costs had been provided by the County Council or Highways as yet, although the budget was £25,000. Cllr Dance warned that in another village he had been asking for culverts to be cleared and a previous agreement to that effect had now been changed as Highways had indicated there were no longer the funds. Cllr Dance requested and it was agreed that he be copied into the LPC correspondence with Cllr Le Hardy and Highways to assist in speeding matters along. He recommended that Highways come to the village because they can actually show things in situ.

The meeting was opened to the floor :

The Chairman suggested the village compile a list of items considered essential, then a "would like to have" category. The list of items raised at the last meeting was read. Re-cap on items discussed at last meeting.

The Chairman suggested that the village might be able to obtain the speed-sensitive flashing sign as a fixture, at one or both ends of village, as LPC had come quite close in the past to obtaining this. A member of the public indicated that Lopen was going to share one with Seavington some time ago but there was a sticking point with Highways/The County Council over the actual installation and removal involved in sharing. Members of the public made suggestions and provided prices obtained with regard to a permanent flashing speed device. A similar one to that which has been installed in the village from time to time is in the region of £3000. Another at £1795 + VAT + a £30 delivery charge. A solar panel addition is £450 + VAT, (otherwise it has to be connected to electricity) incorporating a 2 year guarantee for the batteries, although the estimated life-span is 6-9 years. A licence in perpetuity to collect data is a further £250 + VAT (as supplied to

DRAFT

Cumbrian and Merseyside Police); the longevity and robustness of the device is acknowledged by those Police Services.

Concerns were raised by members of the public how it seems that a scheme for the road appears to have been drawn up without the full consultation of the village and that Snap Ant appears to be the priority despite the discussion at the last meeting, which, at the least, centred around other areas and issues of safety. Other recent suggestions from Cllr Le Hardy appeared to be illogical in that to put white lines down the West Side of the road, where residents park, does not seem appropriate, and it is the whole length of the East Side which is more important. Cllr Le Hardy had also previously indicated that there would be the opportunity for the village and LPC to be included in a meeting with Highways.

The spokesperson for the Lopen Road Safety Action Group then summarised their meeting of the 15 October 2016 when 25 members were present. The notes that the spokesperson read are annexed to these minutes, where the detail can be seen. However, priorities were considered to be:

- 20 mph limit throughout village immediately
- Better road signs
- White lines down both sides of the road
- Soft pavements

Discussion ensued concerning HGV traffic; LRSAG indicated they were intending to write to the Industrial Estate and made a request that LPC do likewise. Unfortunately it is believed that there are no restrictions on the times the vehicles can access the site.

The Chairman commented that it was important to make sure Highways don't merely do what they want to do, and that the village wish list *is* addressed. He acknowledged the residents' views about the County Council's proposals for Snap Ant and stated The Parish Council would ensure Highways knew so that they didn't waste any further time pursuing that. He acknowledged there was a degree of overlap on some matters.

Cllr Sienkiewicz commented that making the suggested to changes to Snap Ant could cause more accidents rather than less as vehicles could obtain more speed. Other members of the public noted concerns about extreme high speed, lorries using Satnavs being directed through the village yet ignoring the weight restrictions, and school buses exceeding speed limits. Cllr Sienkiewicz referred to her point at the last meeting that Hazelbury Plucknett already had a 20 mph limit and Cllr Raikes commented that South Petherton had been talking about getting a 20 mph speed limit for a year and thus it was not extraordinary that TRO's have to be addressed.

Further discussion took place about the resurrection of a Speed Watch team now that more people are interested. Felicity Thomas and Judith Payne agreed to organise Speedwatch and liaise with PCSO Ceara Sturt.

Cllr Dance recommended that the new Action Group have one Parish Councillor involved and Cllr Feeny volunteered to do that.

Cllr Raikes left the meeting at 8.15 pm.

DRAFT

The Chairman confirmed that the two priorities were that pressure should be increased on Cllr Le Hardy so that he did likewise to Highways. The Chairman undertook to email and speak to Cllr Le Hardy. It was agreed that a copy of the Action Group's notes would be sent to Cllr Le Hardy. The Chairman stated that the Action Group have the full support of the Parish Council; Cllr Moore and Cllr Feeney agreed. It was agreed that Cllr Feeney would act as liaison.

Cllr Dance indicated he will try to help with funding of Speed Watch.

97/16 Dog Waste Bin

Cllr Dance indicated he continued to support a bin for the village at no cost; there is no fee for collection, which is usually one to two times per week. There must be easy access for the collection truck. He referred to the fact that Shepton Beauchamp pay for a supply of dog bags attached to the bin. He warned that the longer time goes on, the less likely it will happen as funds diminish and services are cut.

One resident and one Councillor felt that dog mess was on the increase. One resident suggested that specific locations were named in the Lopen Eye for residents to respond to. No replies or input had been received as a result of the article in the Lopen Eye last month requesting responses.

Some potential locations were suggested and discussed, including the top of Rydon Lane, near the footpath at Church Street, the East side of the main road and where Kitchen Lane meets Water Street.

The Chairman proposed and all Councillors agreed and resolved that one bin should be obtained for the village, subject to it being free and three to four locations would be proposed so that Cllr Dance could put those options forward.

Cllr Dance left at 8.43 pm.

98/16 Review & agree signatory for Bank Mandate

It was agreed and resolved unanimously that Ed Moores was the most practical choice for the additional signatory on the account now that Sarah Mason had resigned.

99/16 Assigning Councillors to be in charge of Rangers and Health & Wellbeing

It was agreed that with two councillors absent, this decision will have to be deferred to the next meeting.

100/16 Church Path Repair

The Chairman summarised the current position; Cllr Le Hardy would like pictures and a single point of contact. Previously this had been Stephen Crane. The County Council had proposed the pavement to be replaced with tarmac; the Chairman did not find this acceptable, nor did residents and it was unlikely that the Conservation Officer would approve as the site falls within the Conservation Area. The Parish Council thought that the slabs could be lifted, levelled and re-laid, the surface being either sandblasted or a grid cut into them to reduce the slip hazard. The

DRAFT

Chairman proposed and it was resolved that he would speak to Cllr Steven Crane and then email Cllr Le Hardy. Thereafter quotes could be obtained; it was considered it could be labour-intensive.

101/16 **War Memorial**

No further public donations had been received. The Church Warden confirmed that a request had been put into Link magazine. It was suggested that anyone wanting to donate should contact either the Parish Clerk or Cllr Crane.

The Chairman confirmed that he had spoken to the Memorial Trust and no grants were available retrospectively. He confirmed the total cost was £650, contributions amounted to £145 to date and £100 had been set aside in this year's budget. However the Chairman resolved to speak to the Heritage Grant Scheme, albeit it was also unlikely to grant any funding retrospectively. It was resolved that it must be referred back to the PCC to decide and then revisit the topic next meeting.

102/16 **Financial : Audit**

The Chair confirmed that the External Audit had been completed satisfactorily. There was a comment from Grant Thornton on the file, but it was not an issue for concern.

103/16 **New Meeting Dates**

The next meeting date was agreed as Friday 2 December, with two alternatives for January; either the 16th or 23rd. Angela Naunton-Davies agreed to check the PCC meetings for that month to establish availability of the school room.

104/16 **Capping Consultation**

The Chairman referred to the need to respond to the Government's Capping Consultation within the *Local government finance settlement 2017 to 2018: technical consultation* and the proposals to extend council tax referendum principles to both Town and Parish Councils. Whilst the threat to Parish Council's is not immediate, in the long term the ambit could be expanded and it would mean rises in precepts were capped to 2%, over which barrier any Council would have to hold a referendum; for a parish as small as Lopen, the cost of a referendum would be as much as the rise itself. It was resolved to respond to the proposals, with copies to MOP, National and District Council. Cllr Sienkiewicz volunteered to draft the letter for approval by the other councillors, which was agreed unanimously by councillors present.

Cllr Jones confirmed that any individual can respond to the consultation; the deadline being the 28 October.

105/16 **Planning & Licensing**

Westdown Orchard Touring Park : application for re-siting of the warden's caravan. This is in the Lopen Head region, not within the curtilage of Lopen village. It was unanimously agreed that there were no comments or objections.

DRAFT

Lift West/Lopenhead Sites : Cllr Sienkiewicz informed the Council that she had waited 5 months for a response to a request with regard to the restrictions on the use of the site but the response received had been evasive and had indicated that Building D was only temporarily used as storage when in reality it seemed to be in constant use. Apparently the Company had put in an application to reduce their rates because they are using it as storage, which contradicts the Council accepting it was only used as *temporary* storage. Cllr Sienkiewicz indicated she would continue to investigate the matter on an individual basis rather than on behalf of the Council.

Mast at Frogmary Green Schoolroom : New application for a mast there. There has been a notice to quit the mast site at Lopenhead, which seems like it might be a pre-requisite to putting up another building. This explains why there were two applications for Vodafone masts within half a mile of each other. It is something to keep an eye on.

106/16 **Any Other Matters** :

Cllr Jones invited anyone present to contact him or the Clerk if there were any items they would like placed on the Agenda for future meetings.

SSDC Councillor Training Dates : Having checked the school room calendar with all parties available dates, it was agreed on the 21 November.

Planning : An application for a greenhouse at Bailiff's Cottage was received the day after the Agenda was posted. As a response is required before the next LPC meeting in December, Cllr Jones proposed it was dealt with by the system of delegation via the Clerk. The Councillors examined the plans provided and heard information from the applicant. It was agreed that the matter would be dealt with via delegation.

The meeting was closed at 9.28 pm.

Note: For the purpose of minute-taking, this meeting was recorded. This was announced by the Chairman prior to the meeting commencing.