

LOPEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held in The School Room, Church Street, Lopen 22 January 2018, 7 pm

Present : N Jones (Chairman), S Crane, E Moore, V Canton

In attendance : L Wilson - Parish Clerk, Cllr Adam Dance & Cllr Crispin Raikes (part of the meeting) Members of the Public : 5

The meeting commenced at 7.04 pm.

County Councillor's Report :

- Taunton Park & Ride now closed on Saturdays (despite use by 600+ people).
- Somerset Libraries under review - public consultation open.
- Result of District Council Boundary Review - Draft review recommends that Lopen will remain in South Petherton.

District Councillor's Report :

- Angela Watson is now the permanent Monitoring Officer.

263/18 Apologies : none received, but neither Councillor Frackiewicz nor Burrows were present.

264/18 Declaration of Interests & Dispensations : None.

265/18 Approval of Minutes : The minutes of the meeting of the 14 December were agreed and signed.

266/18 Planning :

Planning application 17/04604 - Proposed warehouse building for Probiotics

International Ltd, Lopen Head Business Park. Cllr Dance had spoken to Andrew Gunn regarding the "trees" used in landscaping the existing site; actually shrubs. Discussion re previous failures of Council to pursue enforcement of landscaping conditions, even where Council had agreed the condition requirements had not been fulfilled. Cllr Raikes indicated that Enforcement Officers could not physically force compliance; confusion/ concern from those present that therefore that if conditions are unenforceable, they are worthless.

- The Chairman presented a power point incorporating the plans. Points to consider - building will tidy up now derelict site (albeit allowed to become derelict). Very reasonable and detailed grounds for refusals have been put forward in the past in relation to previous development of site but ignored, with planning granted in every case.
- The new application for Building F r@ 3240m2, represents a 45% increase in size of the whole Lopen Head development and a 65% increase in size of the Probiotics site. This was felt to be excessively large, especially in conjunction with the current construction of building E.
- It is on the highest part of the site (with building E) and applicant is clearly aware that it would be very prominent as elaborate screening is proposed. Difficult to take screening promises seriously given site history.

- B8 use provides only lower quality jobs and generates more vehicle movements. The application indicates the site will create only 8 new jobs.
- Projected noise and transport movements have not considered HGV traffic impacting upon the Watergore Road and thus the local road network. The claims of sustainability are thought to be illogical and cannot be valid.

8 pm - Cllrs Dance & Raikes left the meeting.

- The only objections lodged to date were from Watergore residents via email and at a meeting with Councillors Dance and Raikes. However none of those residents attended the meeting at South Petherton, nor the Lopen Parish Council meeting. Concern was expressed that the local community area is seeing increased development of the rural sites at Branstons, Frogmary and Lopenhead, yet derelict brownfield sites at Ilminster are not being utilised. Discussed the possibility of whether attachment of financial penalties on failure to fulfil S106 agreements would be the only manner in which to enforce observance of any conditions attached to planning.

It was agreed that LPC should strongly object to the application; NJ would draft a response to SSDC encompassing the points discussed, and circulate to Councillors before submitting.

267/18 Planning application for Land & Buildings off Holloway, Merriot Road, Lopen

- application under permitted development: the details of the plan were outlined. It was pointed out that a speculator had obtained a 30 year option on Ben Norton's land and made the application. The viability of the foundations and basic structure, which cannot be altered under permitted development, were discussed. All agreed that it was likely the speculator was aiming to create a precedent for C3 use/development of the site, with a longer term intent of further development together with the two adjoining fields. Concerns were raised about the position of the site relative to the conservation area and the line of other houses along Holloway and the fact that it is adjacent to flood Zone 2 land.

It was agreed and resolved to write to SSDC expressing concern regarding the suitability of the structure and potential likelihood of future larger-scale development if planning is granted.

268/18 Matters Arising from Minutes :

- NJ had made a fresh set of signs for the defibrillator and installed on the main noticeboard, at the church gate and by the machine itself; there are additional signs if required.
- SSDC District Plan Consultation - confirmation that The Parish Council had responded to the relevant parts of this consultation.

269/18 Update on SID -

- Costs for one unit range between £1300 and £3500. Merriot are interested in discussing shared expenditure & use of a device, which will be pursued, but there are also advantages to owning one outright.
- Estimates based on a three year working life:
The most expensive machine - for 36 weeks p.a. over three years - £43 p.w.
The cheapest unit, in collaboration with Merriot (same period) - £18 p.w.
SSDC's proposed unit rental - max 8 weeks p.a. - £55 p.w.
Training of two people at £175 per person.

- Most units have a two year warranty.

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It was agreed and resolved that The Chairman, Cllr Crane, Roger Gurner of SLOW, and Jenny Feeney would narrow down options and possibly meet Merriot Parish Council.

The period for the trial of the device from Traffic Technology (currently in situ) can be extended to two weeks and the resultant data will be analysed, with details brought to next meeting.

Finance

270/18 Payments made to the following suppliers :

190118	SALC Membership fees	67.39
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271/18 External Auditor : Reference to correspondence received from the Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments regarding appointment of external auditor for the year commencing 2017/18 and onward. Lopen should be an exempt authority as turnover is less than £25,000 per annum, but can choose to have a professional external audit at an initial set fee of £200, with hourly rates chargeable for any additional work incurred on queries. Given the previous decision to have an independent audit undertaken by Phil Smith, it was resolved to exercise request for exemption at the appropriate time.

272/18 Budget : From the figures shown at the previous Parish Council meeting, the precept would show a 3.8% increase, with a surplus of £400 for the year 2017/18. Options discussed: use the surplus to hold the precept down, rather putting it into reserves as before. Alternatively, the surplus could be put towards necessary funds for a new mower and an SID. If the SID was purchased solely by Lopen rather than in partnership, there would be a VAT reclaim, the insurance position would be clear-cut and fundraising could possibly partially support running costs. Discussed future budgeting for SID funding in long term. If matched funding were obtained from village, a better quality unit could be purchased. The subject of purchases deferred to a later date.

Resolved, by unanimous vote, that precept would be raised by 3.8% to £6016.00, giving a Band D household a cost of approximately £52.65.

273/18 Any other matters to note :

- **Annual Village(Parish) Meeting** - suggestion to hold at a weekend in April or May and possibly join with another village event, such as the plant sale. Leaflet drops were carried out last year, but there was still a very sparse turn out. Agreed to discuss further at next meeting.

The meeting concluded at 9.40 pm

For the purposes of minute taking the meeting was recorded.