

LOPEN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting held in
The School Room, Church Street, Lopen
7 pm 5 December 2016

Present :

N Jones (Chairman)
Cllr S Crane
T Sienkiewicz
E Moore
J Burrows

DRAFT

In attendance :

L Wilson, Parish Clerk; Cllr C Le Hardy (SDC); Cllr C Raikes and Cllr A Dance (SSDC);
Members of the Public : 13

107/16 Reports from District Councillors

108/16 Report from Cllr Le Hardy :

The Cllr referred to his written report, items including the forthcoming changes to Waste Collections. Recycling will continue weekly, but additional bags will be supplied so that food packaging can be recycled as well as existing items. Other rubbish collection will be every three weeks.

Broadband is now at the stage where the primary contractor will be identified, followed by an indication of which areas will be connected.

109/16 Apologies : None.

110/16 Interests to Declare : None

111/16 Minutes of the Meeting of the 18.10.16 were approved by all parties and signed.

112/16 Matters Arising :

- The Chairman confirmed that the Councillors and Clerk had received a training evening by SALC, which had been very helpful.
- The Clerk had telephoned the Ranger Service regarding the overhanging branches on the road signs and this led to their rapid response to action the next day.
- Cllr Sienkiewicz had prepared and sent a letter on behalf of LPC with regard to the Capping Consultation.

113/16 Road: Cllr Le Hardy gave a presentation regarding Highways recent proposal for the SIS. In summary, his points included the following : the works take into consideration the needs of South Petherton, Dinnington and Overstratton as well as Lopen. It is to be Phase A of two phases, although it's possible a second phase won't be required. National Statistics are clear in that reducing a speed limit from 30 mph to 20 mph has an effect of reducing the speeds by 1-2 mph only. The change of limit would also require TRO's which have to be sought from the Secretary of State and have Police agreement. The Council and Highway's view is that Lopen is a main traffic route and that the road is not considered dangerous. A safety Audit will take place, the works implemented and

then followed up by a RSA3, another road safety audit but with more accurate equipment than an SID.

Representations were made by Cllr Raikes and Cllr Dance, both of whom support the village & LPC's requests.

Cllr Jones presented a power point incorporating Highway's annotated plans, together with photographs he had taken, and the history of the issues raised by the village and the Parish Council over the last few years, referring to minutes of Parish Council meetings, correspondence and emails. The Chairman then dealt with each item on the Highway's Plan in turn; none of the items on said plan appeared to address any of the concerns of Lopen.

Members of the public and other Councillors made rigorous objections to the various proposals, the fact that they so contradict the wishes put forward by the LPC and the village and that the changes appeared to increase the dangers, especially at points where there are evident hazards and where there had previously been some serious accidents. It was proposed that viable comparisons could be made between Lopen and Hazelbury Plucknett and Creech St Michael and the seemingly successful changes that they have made to reduce speed. A number of parties requested that the village/LPC be provided with evidence by Highways as to why, specifically, similar works were not apparently available to or considered for Lopen. To date, reasons appear to be very vague and couched in general rather than specific terms.

Cllrs Raikes and Dance left the meeting at 8.20 pm to attend South Petherton P C meeting.

Cllr Le Hardy confirmed that the funding was "safe" for Phase A.

Cllr Jones indicated that the preferred way forward would be to install gateways, similar to those proposed in the scheme, albeit the Southern one located further south towards Merriott at the actual village boundary, but replacing the existing 30 mph stretch within the village centre with a 20 mph one, and the other speed limits to remain as they are now. This in itself creates the change in speed limit, and thus a gateway, rather than by making any increases in the speed limit. The cost would appear to be no more than for the changes in Highway's current plan (contrary to Cllr Le Hardy's claim that the negative factor for the issue would be cost related).

It was agreed by SLOW that a map would be provided to Cllr Le Hardy & Highways showing the locations where children wait for buses and travel to/from the stopping points.

Cllr Le Hardy commented that if Highways could not justify the changes then they should come to the village to discuss.

It was agreed and resolved that a robust reply to the Draft Plan would be made by LPC by the deadline of the 19th December.

114/16 Footpath Project : It was agreed that due to the time constraints, this could wait until the next meeting.

115/16 Resignation of Jenny Feeney : this was formally noted. The position has been advertised formally and is posted on the noticeboard. There have been no responses to the note in the Lopen Eye. Cllr Adam Dance has kindly offered to take the post, but it is hoped that a candidate from the village may come forward.

116/16 Church Footpath: the slabs have been levelled and re-bedded. It was agreed and resolved that cleaning can be done to address the slipperiness of the slabs. If that is not effective, bolstering may have to be considered, which would need permission.

117/16 Budget : The budget will be dealt with more fully at the next meeting; no decisions were made. The Chairman raised these points as areas for consideration:

- CTB is down to £90 this year.
- Capping is not very likely at our level.
- Inflation may affect some expenses, but to a minor extent.
- The Clerk's actual hours so far, for the last quarter, are two and a half times the allocated hours. The role has a legal requirement. The increase in hours cannot be made in one year, but suggest half-way, perhaps in the region of £400-500 p.a in financial terms.
- Reserves of £6000 have built up over a period of time; however, many costs can be equivalent to a larger parish, and therefore are disproportionate to the size of the parish - thus it cannot be run too lean. Money can be switched between reserves if agreed by the council.
- It was confirmed there are two bank accounts.

118/16 Dog waste bin : Locations were discussed and it was agreed that three would be put forward to Cllr Dance for approval:

- a) At the bottom of Kitchen Lane/Water Lane on the verge by the footpath gateway,
- b) On Rydon Lane on the outside of the right hand bend close to the "Rydon Lane" sign
- c) At Kitchens Lane end of footpath between School Lane and Kitchens Lane but a few yards up the path to keep the bin away from the driveway and field entrance.

119/16 Planning & Licensing : The retrospective planning approval at Mill Lane Industrial Estate was raised; both Councillors and members of the public were disappointed that it seems no heed is paid to the proper routes for planning at this site. The method would seem to be intentional so that the normal rights to object or respond are not possible. However, the planning has only been granted for self-storage, so there is a condition attached. It was agreed and resolved that LPC would write a formal letter, copied to SDDC, The Planning Inspectorate, MP, Christopher Le Hardy and Merriott PC to register our serious concerns.

120/16 Date for subsequent meetings : Agreed for 16th Jan, March 13th and May 15th.

The public meeting ended at 9.25 pm.

Cllr Sienkiewicz left at 9.33 pm.

Closed meeting, at which Cllr Jones, Crane, Burrows and Moore were present, together with L Wilson, Parish Clerk took place.

121/16 Outstanding invoices were settled and the Clerk's quarterly wages and expenses were agreed.

The closed meeting concluded at 9.50 pm.

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