

LOPEN PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL ROOM

At 7pm Monday 6th January 2014

MINUTES

Present : Cllr. B. Davolls (Chairman)
Cllr. N. Norman
Cllr. Teresa Sienkiewicz
Cllr. Stephen Crane

Cllr. Christopher Le Hardy (SCC)

Ms. Kim McDonald (Clerk)

Members of the public: 2

1/14 Apologies

Received from: Cllr. Barry Walker and Cllr. Paul Thompson (SSDC)

2/14 Declaration of Interests

As there could be a pecuniary interest in respect of the precept discussions and budget setting, all attending councillors signed a request to the Clerk for a dispensation for setting the Precept. This was granted and is held on file with the Clerk.

3/14 District Councillors' Reports

There were none.

4/14 County Councillor's report

Cllr. Le Hardy came late to the meeting (c.8.40) due to previous engagements. Some of his points to raise were covered under Matters Arising 6/14, but further information and matters not covered are summarised here:

- Lengthsman Scheme, from the SPPC meeting just attended by Cllr. Le Hardy it was noted that Locum Clerk Bruce Paul was undertaking to rebuild the full accounts.
- As a result of recent permissions for housing in SPPC, a full and holistic review of highways issues for SPPC was to be undertaken. Cllr. Davolls commented that this was good news, but that those undertaking the review should be mindful that the impacts of developments in SP may have a detrimental knock-on effect to surrounding settlements. Cllr. Le Hardy responded that once completed this model would be used to assess Highways issues in the surrounding settlements.
- Feasibility Study A303. Cllr. Le Hardy asked Lopen to consider what it would want from a rethinking of the A303 route at South Petherton.
- Cllr. Davolls commented that the major concern for Lopen regarding Highways issues was the matter of increased traffic through the village and the need for traffic-calming measures.
- Watergore traffic-calming. Cllr. Le Hardy was able to respond to the query regarding the blocking of the Bridleway and footpath route across the road travelling north and south. This has been noted and amended on a later version of the plan drawings and the revised detail would be provided to Cllr. Davolls.
- Health and Wellbeing Fund. Cllr. Le Hardy confirmed that there was to be a fund for 2014 for grants to Parishes and encouraged Lopen to apply for a grant between £300 and £500 towards ongoing defibrillator expenses.
- Small Road Improvement Schemes. In November 2013 this was set up to identify and seek funding for small improvement schemes. One recent success was to instigate South Petherton's Lightgate Lane Footpath. Further updates will be provided.
- Storms. Cllr. Le Hardy reported on the hard work of Highways to tackle issues that have arisen due to the nature of the recent and appalling storms in the area. He took the opportunity to thank Highways for their hard work and this was agreed by the meeting.
- Trading Post signage. Cllr. Le Hardy acknowledged correspondence from Cllr. Sienkiewicz over her

concerns relating to road side signage at Lopenhead and would respond directly.

- BT Layby drains. These are now fully silted and overflow during bad weather conditions down the main road (Holloway) and into Frog Street. This has been reported. Cllr. Le Hardy responded that Highways had a policy of 2 yearly maintenance on all but known-problem drains, which were maintained yearly. Identifying the drains that would be liable to silting before extreme weather conditions was the key. Cllr. Davolls reported that due to the nature of the environment along Holloway leading from the roundabout at Lopenhead, this drain and others along the route would always be prone to silting. Cllr. Sienkiewicz highlighted the concern of repeated landslides along the route leading to Snapant as being particularly hazardous and caused by heavy rain. Cllr. Le Hardy reported that there was no further money for further works, even emergency reserve budgets were largely spent.

5/14 To approve the minutes of the meeting held on August 19th 2013

Approved as a true record of the meetings and signed by Cllr. Davolls.

6/14 Matters arising from the Minutes:

- **Parish Council Vacancy.** Cllr Davolls reported that no firm applications had been received, so the PC would continue on with reduced numbers until such time as an interested individual approached the Council. Cllr. Davolls expressed his preference to have an active approach, rather than approach and invite individuals from the village to apply. It was noted that Cllrs and others in the village had been active in encouraging take up of this vacancy.
- **Defibrillator.** An application to the British Heart Foundation for a grant had been completed and submitted on October 2nd 2013, but this has to be vetted by the Ambulance Service before it could be acted upon by the BHF. The AS were responsible for forwarding this to the BHF who state a 10 week process would follow once a response was received. On chasing progress before Christmas we were told that no response had been received from the AS relating to our grant submission and so no progress had been made. This was now being chased up. More details will follow. Questions were accepted from the floor regarding the siting of the unit. These were answered and have been covered in minutes from previous meetings.
- **Eggwood Hill Lease.** The Pro bono legal assistance that was potentially available from a Hinton St George PC contact was not now to be pursued. The anticipated £500.00 legal costs (part pro bono by Battens solicitors) towards agreeing the lease were to be shared between the three villages at the agreed ratios. Cllr. Davolls approved this from the budgets agreed and reserved for Eggwood expenses. Peter Little reported to the Chairman via email, that the Solicitor was still awaiting instructions from some of the Parishes. Cllr. Davolls reiterated that once the details were known a full meeting of LPC with as many villagers present as possible would decide whether or not to proceed.
- **Highways Matters.** Cllr. Davolls projected the List of Highways matters that Cllr. Le Hardy had prepared for all Parishes and talked through the developments. Drains along Water Street that were prone to blocking and flooding due to heavy tractor traffic, had been cleared. Traffic-calming through the village was still to be completed. It was noted that this would be a small scheme of works only and the detail was to follow. A number of suggestions have been put forward by villagers at previous meetings and had been forwarded to Highways via Cllr. Le Hardy. It was noted by all that Lopen needs a Speedwatch programme, but that volunteers had dwindled and it had not been possible to recruit new members. Pot Holes: It was noted and with thanks that the dangerous potholes at the Snapant bend, both north and southbound had been repaired before Christmas. Rydon Lane potholes had also been repaired. Cllr. Davolls told the meeting that a length of Holloway (from Lopenhead down) was due for resurfacing work during 2014/15, but it was as yet unconfirmed that this would actually take place and if so when. Church pavement; Due to the narrow nature of the road at this point the church side pavement was regularly undermined by larger vehicles. The substantive repair work to this was still to be completed. Signage for Frog Street and bollards to prevent heavy vehicles reversing into Frog Street as a shortcut to allow them to turn more quickly when wishing to head south was still be actioned. The Snapant bend safety issue was ongoing. Mirrors had been discussed and rejected as unsafe in themselves. A scheme would be worked up by Highways for Lopen's consideration. Watergore Traffic -calming, although not within the jurisdiction of LPC, was described for Cllrs and the audience's information. There was considerable concern over the blocking of the Bridleway and

Footpath travelling north to south, which the Chairman undertook to relay to SPPC and Highways. It was noted to the meeting that these drawings had been made available for inspection on the village website as an information alert and emailed to Cllrs. on the same day they were received (29th November). The Clerk asked people to be more aware of the website and emails.

7/14 To agree the Council's reponse to planning applications:

13/04565/FUL The Bakery Lopen: Renovation of outbuilding including extension and alterations to roof profile and creation of dormer on rear elevation.

After a presentation of the drawings and information relating to this application, including the representation from the DC's Conservation Officer, it was agreed unanimously that it was a good thing to encourage the development of this run down outbuilding. Cllrs considered the front face of the scheme to be more sensitive than the rear, but were mindful of the near neighbours, and agreed that any such scheme should comply with the Conservation Officer's comments that it should be done so in keeping with its location, which was closely adjacent to the Conservation Area. Therefore, it was agreed that this application would be rejected on the basis of the conservation Officer's report, but the PC was nonetheless supportive of a revised scheme to come forward.

13/05159/LBC Bailiffs Cottage Church Street: The carrying out of internal and external alterations.

After a presentation of the drawings and information relating to this application and following some questions from the floor, it was unanimously agreed to approve the application.

8/14 To review and agree the Lengthsman Scheme arrangements for 2014-15

Cllr. Davolls presented the latest accounts for the scheme as prepared by the scheme administrators, South Petherton Parish Council. There were an number of serious anomalies in both the figures presented and structure of the accounts, for which the Chairman had as yet received no satisfactory explanation. He reported that amongst the partnering parishes there was unease and lack of confidence in the scheme administration and asked the PC to consider the best way forward to provide a Lengthsman service to the Village. It was not a question of whether or not to have a Lengthsman for the village, but how that service should be delivered - through continuing to be part of the current scheme, or to withdraw and go-it-alone.

After some debate about how unprofessional the accounts for the scheme were, what the implications and costs of going it alone were (including the requirements to tender, provide contracts and consider the tax implications re employment status), and how much the village valued the Legthsman's services, it was decided that the Chairman would write to SPPC and give them until the end of January 2014 to respond to the questions and concerns already raised relating to the accounts. At this point, when this detail was received, the Council would take the decision on whether to leave or stay as a partner in the scheme. It was noted that this decision would be required by the time the scheme began its new year of accounting - 1st April 2014. Cllr Davolls informed the meeting that he had offered to rebuild the full accounts himself for the scheme participants, but had had no response on this. See also 4/14 above.

9/14 To agree the budget and precept for 2014-15

Cllr. Davolls presented the accounts for the current year to date, together with a projection of where these would be at the end of the financial year and his recommendations for the budget for the coming year. After some debate over where savings had been made in expenditure, how we had had a small benefit to income from a previously empty property coming back into use, and where increases in reserves had been possible (for Churchyard maintenance), it was agreed to increase the precept for the coming year to £5350 an increase of 1.04%. This represented a cash reserve of 8.5 months of operating costs, which although falling within the lower range of working surpluses recommendations, was accepted as there was also a contingency of £245.00 within operating costs.

Any villagers wishing to see the budget and precept setting documents may do so by contacting the Clerk: Kim McDonald. mcdonald.lopenpc@ntinternet.com. These are also available on the Lopen village website on the Lopen Parish Council page.

10/14 Other matters to note

SDDC Local Plan Consultation. Cllr. Davolls explained to the meeting the stage of consultations now taking place were for the main modifications to the emerging Local Plan that had been required by the Planning Inspector. Also included was the approach to the provision and siting of Gypsy and Traveller Sites. The main interest for Lopen was the revised allocations of commercial land. Cllr. Davolls asked to Council to approve him providing a response to the consultations on behalf of the Council with a view to correctly accounting for existing provisions and to protect against further commercial land allocations within Lopen. This was unanimously approved. Private representations were also possible for individuals by close of day January 10th 2014.

Church Street Magnolia Tree. There was some discussion over whether the tree in Church Street was still alive and if so who was responsible for its maintenance. Cllr. Davolls informed the meeting that a previous inspection of the tree by the Tree Officer had concluded that the tree was alive., however Cllr. Davolls would ask for a visit again to confirm the health of the tree.

Lopenhead Judicial Review Decision. LPC congratulated Cllr. Sienkiewicz on her successful JR, quashing the permission for Building E at Lopenhead. Cllr. Sienkiewicz was awarded the maximum amount under this limited costs case.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm