

**LOPEN PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING TO BE HELD IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL ROOM,
CHURCH STREET, LOPEN
7pm Thursday 12th May 2016
Minutes**

Present:

Cllr. T. Sienkiewicz (outgoing Chairwoman)

Cllr. S. Crane

Cllr. S. Mason

Cllr. N. Jones (incoming Chairman)

Cllr. E. Moore

Cllr. J. Feeney

Ms Kim McDonald (Interim Clerk)

Members of the Public: 13

38/16 District Councillors' Reports

Cllr. Adam Dance - Expressed his thanks to Cllr. Sienkiewicz outgoing Chairwomen of Lopen Parish Council and Cllr. Davolls, who had resigned from the Council for their contributions to the Council and hard work on behalf of the village and in the case of Barry Davolls, also for his efforts on behalf South Petherton Parish Council , where he served for a time as Councillor.

Cllr. Dance informed the meeting that SSDC were holding their Annual Council Meeting on Thursday 19th May. Cllr. Dance reported that SSDC did have some grant funding available for small works and requests from Parish Councils and was wondering about a Defibrillator for the village. It was noted that Lopen would not probably require a 2nd unit, but some funding towards a second set of pads would be much welcomed. Cllr. Mason undertook to follow this up.

Cllr. Dance informed the meeting that although SSDC would not provide provide dog litter bins, it would undertake to empty these as part of their normal rounds if bins were required by Lopen. Cllr. Dance encouraged Members to think about what they might need assistance with and come back to him. Cllr. Dance informed the meeting that the Former Westlands Centre was to have a 2million pound refurbishment and would be opened again in the new year.

Cllr. Dance lastly requested that Members copied him into any correspondence with SSDC or SCC, so that he would be in a position to support.

39/16 Election of Chairman and acceptance of office

Cllr Sienkiewicz informed the meeting of her wish to stand down as Chairwoman. Cllr. Sienkiewicz prosed Cllr. Nick Jones as Chairman and this was seconded by Cllr. Stephen Crane and approved by other Members. Cllr. Nick Jones accepted the position and duly signed the Acceptance of Office form from the Clerk. Cllr. Nick Jones then formally thanked Cllr. Sienkiewicz for her work as Chairwoman for LPC and for the village.

40/16 Election of Vice Chairman

Cllr. Stephen Crane was content to continue in this role and this was approved by Members.

42/16 Apologies for absence

SSDC Cllr. Crispin Raikes sent his apologies. Cllr, Crane needed to leave at 9.00pm.

43/16 Declarations of Interest

None

44/16 Agreement of minutes for the meeting held on March 15th 2016

Agreed without amendment and duly signed as a correct and complete record of the meeting.

45/16 Matters arising from the minutes

Churchyard Wall – Cllr. Mason had been in discussion with SSDC and passed to the Clerk a form to request a grant for a proportion of the cost of the repairs.

HRH 90th Celebrations Street Party – Cllr. Crane informed the Council that Carolyn White had requested that LPC cover the event under their Insurance. Even though this was not the formal request ideally required, the Members unanimously agreed that in principle this was acceptable and agreed to ratify the decision to support the event with Insurance cover at the next meeting.

46/16 Review and agree LPC's annual governance statement Section 1

The year end accounts statements had previously been circulated to Members by Cllr. Davolls along with the governance statement completed in draft form for their approval. This was approved unanimously.

47/16 Review and agree 2015/16 Year end financial statement Section 2

These documents and supporting reports were described for the meeting by Cllr. Sienkiewicz and formally approved by the Members. These and the above statements would now be forwarded to our Internal Auditor Ian Benfield for his assessment, prior to being made available for public scrutiny and sent for External Audit.

48/16 To note and consider a request to improve visibility splay from Nick Wakely's field at Lopen Head

Mr Nick Wakely who farms the field in between Lopen Raj and the Lift West Building, expressed concerns over the reducing visibility splay resulting from the young Silver Birch trees whose foliage was now bushing outwards. The trees has been planted by LPC on the verge in front of the field a few years earlier. They were an attempt at screening the buildings at the Industrial Park. He described the problems and showed pictures to Members of what he considered to be a very unsafe situation. The safety issue was recognised by the Council. It was decided that either a meeting would be held on site between Mr Wakely, LPC (Cllr. Crane) and Highways to review what measures could be taken to rectify the problem, or alternatively, the Parish Range would be asked to take some action. This was an urgent matter due to the soon be increased traffic levels in and out of the field for farming. From the floor it was suggested that Members needed to understand the speed limit, plus braking distance to see how many trees would need to be removed to ensure safety. LPC had a legal right to both plant trees on Highways verges and also to prune or remove them.

49/16 To receive update on the recruitment of LPC Clerk

Following the resignation of Mr Gurner from the role of Clerk, previous Clerk Kim McDonald had agreed to stand in as Interim Clerk. An advert had been posted in Lopen Eye and through SSDC Democratic Services communications, but to date no applications had been received. It was agreed to reissue both adverts and to make a personal contact the neighbouring Parishes to see if a job share may be possible.

The Interim Clerk had previously circulated to Members the final payment details for Mr Gurner and these were approved by all. The Interim Clerk would now issue final payment and formally close Mr Gurner's employment with the Council.

50/16 To agree to Co-opt a new Member (acceptance of office)

LPC had received an expression of interest from a parishioner to take on the vacant role of Member following Cllr. Davolls' resignation. This was accepted by the Members (Post Meeting Note: It was advised by SSDC Democratic Services that a further process including a public notice period needed to be undertaken before Co-option could take place. This was now in process.)

51/16 To review Member responsibilities

The following was agreed but could be revisited at any time with agreement:

Cllr. Nick Jones: Chairman and Planning Lead

Cllr. Stephen Crane: Vice Chair, Highways, PCC Liaison

Cllr: Sarah Mason: Community, Health and Welfare

Cllr: Jenny Feeney: Planning and Licensing, Footpaths

Cllr: Ed Moore: Footpaths Lead

Cllr: Teresa Sienkiewicz: Policies, Traffic Movements, Planning

For now the role of overseeing the Parish Ranger Services resided with the Clerk, but it was anticipated this would be taken up by the new Member yet to be appointed.

52/16 To ratify Transparency Fund Grant receipts and purchases

There was a need to ratify some of the decisions that had been taken regarding Transparency Fund receipts and expenditure. Papers had been circulated to all Members and were unanimously approved to the meeting.

53/16 To review and agree action relating to renewal of LPC Insurance

LPC had purchased Insurance cover from AON for many years and the decision needed to be taken as to whether we continue with this cover, or to shop around. If we decided to continue to receive cover with AON, there was a further decision to be taken about whether to sign up for a longer term and achieve a small discount.

Newer Members reviewed the documents and a discussion was had. Members unanimously voted to continue with the AON cover but not to take up the longer term with a discount. The Interim Clerk would now progress the renewal that was due by June 1st.

54/16 To ratify LPC's withdrawal from Egwood and review final costs incurred and consider use of the reserve fund

Circumstances had arisen since the last meeting that meant the three Parishes were unable to get adequate Public Liability Insurance to satisfy the three Parishes and meet the terms of the lease. SCC was not prepared to vary the lease and/or indemnify the Parishes, so it was no longer possible for the lease to proceed. In addition to this Merriott PC at a previous meeting had also decided to withdraw. Final accounts for Egwood had been circulated to Members to show the amounts paid and owed. Merriott still had an amount that was outstanding to be paid to Battens Solicitors, but Lopen PC and Hinton St George had small amounts to be reimbursed. These final accounts matters were being worked through.

Many years had been spent by previous Chairs Peter Little, Barry Davolls to secure this land for the village, and it was viewed as very disappointing that the lease could not proceed. It was unknown what use the site would be put to, but it was recognised that if the lease had been progressed as it was originally intended, as a freehold, then the Insurance cover issues would not have arisen and the site could have been secured for the Parish. In the early days of negotiations the freehold had been amended to leasehold by SCC to make the transfer process easier. Although it was not technically possible to proceed with the Egwood lease, Members formally noted LPC's withdrawal.

It was agreed that no immediate decision needed to be taken regarding what to do with the Egwood Reserves.

55/16 Planning and Licensing:

1. To consider and respond to the latest consultation relating to Frogmary Green Farm Anaerobic Digester

This was discussed and matters were summarised for the meeting by Cllr. Nick Jones. Concerns included Highway matters, lack of adequate signage and large vehicles getting stuck on the small lanes leading to the Farm. There was a TRO order, applied some time ago, but Members had not seen this. Also large lorries with liquid Digestate were known to be travelling to site from as far away as Devon and some were seen travelling through Lopen, possibly illegally. In terms of the Ecology reports, LPC had no comments to make. Cllr. Nick Jones undertook to send in LPC's representations by May 13th.

2. To consider and agree a response to Lopen Mill application to vary the S106 Order

After a briefing on the history of this site and its development by Cllr. Nick Jones and Members comments, it was unanimously agreed that LPC could not support the application to vary the S106 Order. Cllr. Jones undertook to make the response on behalf of the Council.

3. To note Lopen Parish Council's response to the Lift West Licensing Application

LPC had returned a No Comment response for the above Licensing Application.

4. To note Lopen Parish Council's response to Lopen Raj Licensing Application

Cllr. Sienkiewicz had previously made a response on this on behalf of the Council and further clarification had been requested by the Licensing Team, which Cllr. Sienkiewicz agreed to respond to.

56/16 Any Other Matters to Note

No decisions can be taken by Members to items raised in this section.

Frog Street Flooding – this was noted and considered to be the result of a lack of drains maintenance by the County Council, or a sewer overflow, which would be a Wessex Water issue. Highways had been seen in Holloway clearing drains in April, but the standard maintenance is on a 4 year cycle. Peter Little had written to Cllr. Le Hardy. Cllr. Crane would assist Peter Little to pursue this and Cllr. Dance requested that he also be copied into any correspondence, so that he might lend his support. It was also noted that the pathway outside of Shores Farm was covered with Silt and it was requested that the Parish Ranger would be asked to clear this.

Broadband – Although Cllr. Le Hardy was working through Broadband issues, it was still not clear to the meeting what the definitive situation was for the delivery of high-speed services. Was Lopen considered to be Phase 1 of the roll-out? It was thought by some of the audience that as Lopen wasn't served by the South Petherton BT Cabinet, it was not possible to be included in Phase 1, yet there could be a danger that Lopen was missed out of the planning for Phase 2. BT has not yet been awarded the Phase 2 contract. Cllr. Nick Jones undertook to do further research on this and make contact again with Cllr. Le Hardy. Roger Gurner agreed to pass to him the names of the contacts in SCC and in the Connecting Devon and Somerset organisation to assist with this. Contact with our MP was another avenue to pursue. It was noted that an option to have satellite services for Broadband was overly costly and not likely to be taken up.

Lopen Footpaths – Nicola Norman requested that an up to date Footpaths map be added to the Noticeboard so that walkers followed the correct paths. It would also be added to the website.

War Memorial Fund – Steve Chapman informed the meeting that £130.00 had been raised to date by the community to support the War Memorial Fund. The LPC acknowledged this with thanks.

Sunday School Room Hearing Loop – Cllr. Sienkiewicz thanked the PCC for the loop box and sound amplification in the Church.

Church Service – Angela Naunton Davies confirmed for the meeting that there would be a short service for the Jutland Fallen to be held on May 31st.

Meeting closed 9.15