

Lopen Parish Council
ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
At 7pm Tuesday 8th July
Sunday School Room

Present: Cllr. B. Davolls (Chairman)
Cllr. N. Norman
Cllr. Teresa Sienkiewicz
Cllr. Sarah Mason
Cllr. Stephen Crane (apologies)
Cllr. Christopher Le Hardy (SCC)
Cllr. Barry Walker (SSDC)

Ms. Kim McDonald (Clerk)

Members of the public: 8

32/14 Welcome

Cllr. Davolls introduced new Councillor Sarah Mason to the meeting.

33/14 Apologies

Cllr. Stephen Crane was on holiday and Cllr. Paul Thompson was also unable to attend. Cllr. Le Hardy would attend later in the evening. The agenda order was varied from that published to take into account these needs.

34/14 Declarations of Interest

Cllr. Sarah Mason declared a personal interest in relation to 14/02492/Ful application: Change of Use and Conversion of the former chapel on Holloway to a one bedroom dwellinghouse.

35/14 District Councillor's report

Cllr. Barry Walker updated the meeting on the SDC's Rural Housing Policy Review Group Consultation, whose guidelines are due in August. The consultation seeks opinions as to what should happen in our area. The questionnaire which can be completed online is available from Jo.lavis64@gmail.com.

A303 Dualling (beyond Ilminster into Devon). There is to be a consultation event on July 15th at the Shrubbery in Ilminster between 3pm and 8pm. There is conflicting information regarding the proposed changes to the Hayes End roundabout stretch to straighten out the A303 where it curves at that point. The latest suggests that the exit for South Petherton could be made closer to Seavingtons. More detail will follow.

Local Plan. Cllr. Walker told the meeting that according to Planning Advisory Service Research only half of Local Planning Authorities had a five year deliverable housing supply and of this number 35% were unsure how to calculate this. A lack of a five year housing supply made it difficult for LPAs to turn down plans for unnecessary development. It was believed that SSDC did not have a demonstrable five year housing supply and this should begin to ease pressure on unwanted development. This coincides with the Planning Inspector requesting to see all applications in the last nine months and the DC reviewing its assessment.

In South Petherton, Persimmon has just put in a pre-planning application to develop more fields adjacent to the Hospital.

In Ilminster the proposed Shudrick Lane development was now to be located at Canal Way.

There was not going to be a Full Council meeting in July, and the dates for August would be advised.

36/14 To approve the Minutes of the last meeting (12 May)

These were approved as a true statement of the meeting and were duly signed.

37/14 Matters Arising from the minutes

None were known

38/14 To review and agree a way forward for the village Lengthsman provision

It was now known that the South Petherton scheme was to close by the end of the month and therefore Lopen would need to make alternative arrangements to continue this much needed work for the village. The Parish Council invited representatives from South Somerset DC's Ranger service to come and describe the service offered to parishes, which could be considered as an alternative. Chris Cooper and Steven Fox attended.

The SSDC Ranger Scheme would work directly with Lopen. The first steps would be to have a scoping meeting to discuss and view areas of work, and then to cost and schedule the work. The work carried out under this scheme would be using hand tools and small machinery, but larger machinery and more specific services could be considered for an agreed fee. As a rule, Lopen would receive the services of the same Ranger, but there would be a back up in place for times when this was not possible. It was recommended that Lopen considers moving to a half day schedule of works as this was considered to be the most cost effective. The hourly cost was £17.00 plus VAT per Ranger. Travel time from Yeovil was charged as part of the hourly rate. Disposal of waste was included in the cost.

The Ranger scheme would need a degree of commitment from the Parish, (one-off and ad-hoc job requests were difficult to manage for the scheme) but the scope of the work, time required and the frequency of services was all subject to review at any time. No formal contracts were required. SSDC operate the Ranger Scheme on a not-for-profit basis. The benefit for SSDC is that the Rangers meet a Council objective to litter-pick as part of the work carried out for the parishes. It keeps operatives paid and on hand.

During winter months, when there is less of a requirement for Lengthsman's type services, the Rangers generally undertake to keep drains cleared, grit roads not covered by County and manage other maintenance tasks like pruning and cutting back and visibility splays.

Services such as hedge trimming on verges requiring a tractor and flail cutter were possible subject to additional costs to be agreed.

Cllr. Davolls thanked Chris Cooper and Steven Fox, who then left the meeting. A scoping meeting would be arranged to progress this further.

39/14 Defibrillator Update

A unit was now available and authorisation to purchase accessories had been given. A formal approval from the PPC was still required and outstanding to mount the unit in the preferred location of the Church porch (although approval in principle has been given). The PPC required further details of how the unit would be fixed within the porch wall. (Detailed

drawings of the size and nature of cabinet to be used had been provided and Cllr. Crane (also a member of the PPC) did have some ideas of how this could be done without requiring to drill, screw or hammer into the fabric of porch. Cllr. Davolls undertook to progress this as time was now moving on and the defibrillator was still not available to use for the village.

Cllr. Mason reported she has yet to hear back from the SW Ambulance service about the possibility of lodging with them the key code for a lockable cabinet. The idea behind this was that on dialing emergency services on 999, callers would receive the key code to unlock the unit. It is now considered this approach was flawed as it could be likely that while one person called 999 a second could be running to access the unit. It was therefore agreed that the better solution was to have an unlocked cabinet that was protected by deterrent siren and strobe alarms.

Cllr. Mason had agreed to undertake Defibrillator training for the village. The Just Women group had kindly agreed to progress the general first-aid training and it had been previously agreed that we would ask Cllr. Walker for funds from his Councillor's grant pot towards this general training.

40/14 To agree the Parish Council's response to Planning Applications:

14/02492/FUL: Change of use and conversion of former chapel to one dwellinghouse – Holloway Road, Lopen

Cllr. Davolls described the application showing external elevations and internal floor plans projected onto a screen. Mr and Mrs Norton were at the meeting to respond to any questions and provide further detail as required.

There were no major external changes planned to the building and it was not listed. It does sit in the conservation area of the village. There was general support for this scheme that would bring back into use a central and iconic building in the heart of the village..

After some discussion around two main aspects of the plans which caused some concern: car parking and privacy, it was proposed and agreed to support the development with 2 conditions:

1. That the off road car parking provision (internal garage) was conditioned so that it could never be used for any other purpose other than parking of a car for the use of the property. This was to limit the on road parking along an already congested stretch through the village and in recognition that this application in general, did not meet the normal requirements of the district wide parking strategy 2012 for new dwellings.
2. It was noted that due to the height of the chapel, the position of the lounge to the front on the first floor of the dwelling, and the proximity of the bedroom windows of a cottage to the South (which was less than the 20 meters – a key consideration to avoid overlooking), that the plans should include obscure glass to the large South facing window at least to above head height if not in total.

14/01923/FUL: Construction of a 1MW on-farm anaerobic digester at Frogmary Green Farm, South Petherton

It should be noted that Frogmary Green Farm sits within the boundary for South Petherton and as such SPPC are the lead parish for this application. That said, LPC is a consultee as a

near neighbour, and the comments below were given in that vein. SPPC had voted unanimously to approve (without condition) the application at their meeting 7th July, this was known but not announced at the LPC meeting.

The meeting welcomed Mr Voss representing Greener for Life Energy Ltd, the developer and installer of the proposed unit at Frogmary Green Farm. He described the development, the science behind AD units, their prevalence and safety record in Europe, and the development's planned mitigation for environmental impact considerations. Cllr. Davolls was able to support this with slides of the plans for the development and Mr and Mrs Bragg, owners of Frogmary Green Farm were also on hand to answer any queries that arose.

Lopen residents and Councillors did have concerns relating to four aspects of the development: the sheer size of the installation being one of the largest of its kind available (4 times larger than the typical on farm installation of 250KW); that there should be a transport plan put in place that respected the weight restrictions of lorries travelling through Lopen. (Lopen restricts lorry movements to access only for vehicles above 7.5 tonne); and environmental concerns : the planting scheme was unclear and it was felt should include a majority of evergreen trees to mitigate sight, sound and smells emanating from the site; and overall the need for exemplary environmental assessment and control by all relevant authorities both before and after the installation.

Debate around the detail of the plans followed. This included some questions from the floor.

In summary the members wished to highlight that whereas they recognised the Frogmary Green site did offer an opportunity for an on-farm AD unit, the success of this very large plant would revolve around the correct assessment of all the environmental considerations, applying the correct measures for mitigation, thorough regulatory control and, whilst hoping it would not be necessary, enforcement when/if required.

Cllr. Davolls proposed approval but based firmly upon comments to SSDC highlighting the above concerns. This was approved, but with one abstention.

Mr Nick Bragg extended an invitation to anyone from the village to come to Frogmary Farm to view the installation and farm workings.

41/14 County Councillor's report

Cllr. Le Hardy informed the meeting about the recent consultations to move all stroke services to Musgrove Hospital as a central resource for the county and closing the services at Yeovil. This has been met with objections and so it was agreed to retain services in Yeovil., despite the fact that there were not enough consultants to go around. More are now being recruited.

Cllr Le Hardy explained the Care Act 2014 which represents the most significant reform of care and support in more than 60 years, putting people and their carers in control of their care and support. For the first time, the Act will put a limit on the amount anyone will have to pay towards the costs of their care to £72,000 this is regardless of how much money people have in savings or assets.

A Stay Safe initiative caring for children in Somerset is working with a number of partners to safeguard children across the county. For more information please contact Cllr. Le Hardy.

Somerset fostering - Cllr. Le Hardy informed the meeting that there were still 500+ children needing foster care in Somerset.

A303 Dualling into Devon. As well as the evening event in Ilminster on July 15th mentioned by Cllr. Walker, a further event in Chard's Guild Hall was taking place on July 17th between 3pm and 8pm.

Highways – Cllr. Le Hardy reiterated and supported the call to reinforce both speeding restrictions and weight limit restrictions in the area. There were ongoing complaints and concerns locally.

Cllr Le Hardy's report had not been received by LPC, so he undertook to resend this.

42/14 Village traffic-calming – review comments received

Cllr. Davolls presented to the meeting the 10 responses received to the call for suggestions to manage traffic through the village. These would be forwarded to Cllr. Le Hardy and made available on the Lopen Village website www.lopenbtck.co.uk In brief, as low cost solutions were required, the comments focused around reduction of speed limits, improving signage and the use of visual methods to suggest a narrowing of the road to slow traffic. Cllr. Le Hardy will now discuss these with Highways and work up a scheme for the whole area to make the best use of the limited resources available.

43/14 Speeding and heavy lorries – review and agree action to be taken

This is an issue within many of the local villages and will form part of Cllr. Le Hardy's ground up review (see above).

In the meantime, anyone from Lopen who wishes to report a lorry breaking the weight limit through the village can download a template letter prepared by Cllr. Sienkiewicz, from the Parish Council page on the Lopen website www.lopenbtck.co.uk.

44/14 Any Other Business

It was noted that the Local Plan Inspection response from the Plan Inspector was due near the end of July.

There was no further matters to discuss and the meeting conclude at 9.05pm.