

LOPEN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING held in the Sunday School Room Monday 12th November 2012 7pm

Present : Cllr. B. Davolls (Chairman)
Cllr. P. Finlayson
Cllr. N. Norman
Cllr. P Maxwell SCC
Cllr. Barry Walker SSDC

Ms. Kim McDonald (Clerk)

Members of the public : 4

88/12 Apologies and welcome

Cllr. Teresa Sienkiewicz, Cllr. Stephen Crane and District Cllr. Paul Thompson all send their apologies.
Welcome to new Clerk Kim McDonald.

89/12 Declaration of Interests

None declared.

90/12 To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10th August 2012

Proposed by Cllr. P. Finlayson, seconded by Cllr. N. Norman and approved by the meeting, the minutes were duly signed by the Chairman as a true record .

91/12 Matters arising from the minutes

None

92/12 Report from County Cllr. Paul Maxwell

As Cllr. Maxwell was due to attend the meetings of neighbouring parishes, the Chairman managed the agenda items to allow Cllr. Maxwell to provide his update and leave the meeting early (7.50pm).
Cllr. Maxwell covered the following items. His comments covering specific agenda items have been provided under the appropriate heading.

Watgore speed limit – The new 40mph limit came into effect on 28 September. It runs between Hayes End and the Seavingtons. Signs are now installed. There has been positive feedback from both the Police and the Highways Department that speeding has decreased.

Moreland Road Development, Merriott – Cllr. Maxwell updated the meeting on this proposed development to include a new Doctor's Surgery and 24 houses. The plans were due to be brought to the Area West Planning Meeting this month, but have been delayed until the December meeting to allow some further negotiations to take place. The Developer's proposed plan now includes more housing than the original scheme and would require building on Greenfield. Thirty percent affordable housing was proposed, but this was below the accepted threshold for similar developments – hence the officer's recommendation to refuse. Cllr. Maxwell informed the meeting that the local community were in favour of the Doctor's Surgery development, which would bring back into use a derelict area, but were not in favour of the 24 houses.

Cllr. Davolls expressed his concern that this was a large development for a rural settlement (even though Merriott was the largest rural settlement locally), and was worried about the precedent this may create for other rural settlements in the area. It was also noted that there would be a highways impact for Lopen with increased traffic through the village as a result of additional housing.

Bus Services – Cllr. Maxwell reported the ongoing problem with Bus services, the general opinion that SCC had gone too far with cuts, and in fact the County Council has been told that this would need to be reviewed.

Waste and Recycling Services – These services are now being reviewed due to perceived unfairness in opening times and charges. Need to be seen in the context of severe budget cuts.

A303 – Cllr. Maxwell was attending a meeting to discuss proposals for A303 improvements with Government Ministers. The proposals (in brief outline only), if adopted would see work on the A303 throughout Wiltshire, Somerset and Devon. The Somerset improvements would take place between Hayes End and the Ilminster roundabout and further down into Devon. Works could also see improvements to the A358 to connect to the M5 if approved.

Eggwood Hill – please refer Minute 96/12

Local Choices Event – please refer Minute 95/12

93/12 Internal Auditor vacancy

Mr. Nick George has stepped down from his role as Internal Auditor. LPC thanked Nick for his efforts as auditor last year, which, in part, led to a clean bill of health from the External Auditor.

LPC is now seeking a new Internal Auditor and anyone interested in the position, or wishing to receive more information, should contact Cllr. Davolls or Kim McDonald.

94/12 Neighbourhood Planning

Cllr. Barry Walker and Cllr. Davolls reported on Neighbourhood Planning. SSDC recently held neighbourhood planning workshops. The recommendation from SSDC was that Lopen doesn't need a plan (in fact, no rural settlement does) as Policy SS2 is fully protective and 95% all decisions made by SSDC support the PC view. Neighbourhood Plans take c.2 years to produce and can cost up to £30,000. There is some funding from SSDC but not enough. Plans must align with local plan and NPPF. Final stage requires planning inspector approval.

95/12 Local Choices Event - 29th November (County Council)

Cllr. Maxwell reported this as an opportunity for Parish Councils to take over the running of some services locally. These are: Youth Provision, Libraries and Warden Scheme. The key one for Lopen to consider would be the Warden scheme, which initially appears to be a replacement scheme for the Lengthsman. A one off grant of £3K is on offer to set up a scheme for training/equipment and then no more funding will be available. Each scheme will include several Parishes and be administered by a host Parish. Cllr. Davolls and Cllr. Finlayson will attend the Local Choice Event on behalf of Lopen and will report back.

96/12 Update on Eggwood Hill site

The site had been secured and tidied and the process of selling the land to the three parishes was underway. £2K was the cost to be met by the three Parishes subject to contract. SCC had amended the terms of the sale to Leasehold (99 years) rather than the earlier stated and documented Freehold.

Peter Little, (charged with seeing through the purchase on behalf of Lopen and as the main contact with SCC on behalf of the three parishes) commented that after further discussions with SCC the Lease had been increased to 125 years, which he recommended LPC to accept. He confirmed that Merriott had accepted the Leasehold but he was still to hear from Hinton St George.

Cllr. Davolls remarked that it was not possible to provide a decision on the purchase at this point or until the terms of the sale contract could be considered by the full Lopen Council and with the full knowledge of the local community. He believed that the County Council should honour the offer of a freehold sale given in writing and agreed by Cllr. David Huxtable. If a leasehold was to be the only way forward then Cllr. Davolls recommended that this should in fact be a 999 year lease. It was agreed that SCC should be asked to clarify and justify why the agreement has been changed.

Cllr. Walker suggested a way forward would be for SCC to start preparing 2 sets of articles, so that at least some progress could be made. Cllr. Maxwell agreed to follow up with officers and Cllrs at SCC and Peter Little undertook to send to him copies of all relevant documents received to date.

The LPC Cllrs. unanimously agreed that although there was an agreement in principle to proceed, a final decision to proceed (or not) would be taken by this Council once all the facts are established.

97/12 SSDC's lack of 5 year deliverable housing supply. What does this mean?

Cllr. Walker updated the meeting on the current situation following a decision by a Planning Inspector that SSDC did not have a 5 year supply of deliverable housing, after delivering a judgement on a development in Wincanton. The opinion of the Inspector concluded that the only reliable housing figures that could be used should be taken from the (now-shelved) Regional Spatial Strategy. This decision (which was not

contested by SSDC) means that the District Council is vulnerable to an increase in housing in locations not specified in the draft Core Strategy and has, in effect, lost strategic control. Developers now have a window of opportunity to build in any location that can be considered sustainable. SSDC's local Plan will be fast tracked which will be considered in detail at the December Full Council meeting. The Core Strategy adoption may now be delayed until the end of 2013.

Cllr. Davolls added there was to be a presumption in favour of sustainable development (as per NPPF); that no phasing of development was applicable (no prematurity); that rural settlements shouldn't be affected; design style and quality are the only likely influence that parish councils may have on sustainable development.

98/12 Update on Lopenhead building E application

We understand that the Planning Officer is recommending approval of this application, which is due to go before Area North Committee on the 28th November.

Meeting was suspended to allow public debate at 8.05pm

Cllr. Davolls, having previously reported that the EA had confirmed an illegal discharge to ground was taking place on site at Lopenhead, now told the meeting that the EA had subsequently revised their findings and the discharge is now considered legal. The water consumption (and therefore discharge) has been quantified as around 1 cu mtr per day which is the equivalent of a 5-6 person household, rather than the much higher level previously calculated and expected in relation to the scale of commercial use. At 1 cu mtr per day, a permit is not required as this represents a domestic level only.

99/12 SID Programme

Cllr. Davolls informed the meeting that Lopen again qualifies for the scheme and Lopen's existing deployment locations have been approved. He also reported on South Petherton's application to have a SID location on Harp Road, which to some extent, will have a knock on benefit for Lopen too.

Some members of the public attending the meeting (previous speed watch volunteers) urged the PC to look into what further traffic calming measures could be employed along Holloway, as the houses along this stretch are family homes and children are at risk, potentially. Their suggestions included:

- Pavement built to the east side of the street
- Hatched area on the east side of the street with reflective bollards
- Reducing the width of the pavement on the west side, to create paving on the east.
- Rumble strips
- Larger, clearer signage

In discussions with Highways it appeared that not all traffic calming measures required street lighting, which was not present on Holloway – or desired by many in the village.

Cllr. Maxwell agreed to pursue the matter with highways to see what options are available with and without street lighting.

100/12 Delegation of dispensations (for declared interests) to the Clerk

An unforeseen consequence of the new code of conduct is that Council members who pay Council Tax on any property within the parish will have a pecuniary interest in discussing and setting the precept. (Potentially a criminal offence). Dispensations can be given by the Council as a whole to allow members to participate and vote in cases where there is a declared interest. In order to simplify and speed up the process for gaining any dispensation, Cllr. Davolls proposed that LPC modify the code of conduct and standing orders (if/as necessary) to delegate the granting of dispensations to the Clerk.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to delegate the granting of dispensations to the Clerk.

101/12 Old Parish Council documents. What to do?

LPC has records going back many years to include accounts/planning/Highways etc. As the PC is looking to de-clutter, should these be thrown out or should we look for off-site storage?

Statutory requirement is for Minutes and some recent Accounts to be retained and these will be managed according to regulations, but, there may be items of historical interest for the village. Who would want them?

The decision was taken to filter out any statutory documents and any that contain personal information likely to cause embarrassment and then offer files to the Lopen History Group. (Joan and Angela)

102/12 Parish Council laser printer - options

The LPC HP Laser printer is quite new but requires very expensive cartridges at around £75/go. Do we keep it and buy new cartridges or sell it and get a machine with cheaper consumables? The decision was taken to retain it and measure more accurately how well it performs against costs.

103/12 Donation requests - establish future policy

We get regular requests for donations. Recently CAB and Victim support. Should we consider setting aside a small sum for ad-hoc donations in the future? The decision was taken not to allocate a sum in the precept for donations beyond those existing

104/12 Future meeting dates and times

Confirmed date for next meeting: 21st January 7pm 2013 the Precept meeting.
Meetings throughout 2013: March 18th, May 20th, August 19th and November 18th.

105/12 Any other business

- **Church Street Magnolia Tree**

New (replacement) tree to be planted w/c 12th November. Flowers are purple with 2 petals, The variety was approved by SSDC's Tree Officer and the new position has been agreed by residents on Church Street. The new tree has protected status, and if the old tree re-grows, that too will have protected status.

- **Trees at Lopenhead** need new stakes and ties (x25). This has been priced up by David Ogilvy at £55.00/lot. The Cllrs. agreed this expense.

- **Churchyard Costs.** The PCC has met some costs associated with the graveyard and headstones repairs, without approaching LPC. LPC expresses thanks to the PCC for this.

- **Dog Fouling Problem.** The footpath between Broomhill and the village at Church Street is littered with dog fouling and is causing problems. Cllr. Walker will investigate if there is any grant money that can be allocated towards dog bins and signage. Cllrs. are to provide photographic evidence to assist in getting this money. Villagers are asked to report other footpaths similarly affected to the council. Irresponsible dog owners (who we know are in the minority) are reminded that it is an offence to allow dogs to foul public areas and can result in a £1000 fine. It was agreed that an article would be again prepared for Lopen Eye as a first step

Meeting closed at 9.00pm.