

LOPEN PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Parish Council meeting held in the Sunday School Room At 7.30pm Monday 12th December 2011

Present: Mr. B. Davolls (Chairman) Ms. K. McDonald (acting Clerk)
Miss N. Norman (Vice Chairman) Mr. P. Thompson (District Councillor)
Mrs. P. Finlayson Mr P Maxwell (County Councillor)
Mrs. T. Sienkiewicz
Mr. S. Crane

Members of the public: 6

Apologies: Mrs. C. Mansfield (Clerk)
Mr. B. Walker (District Councillor)

72/11 Declaration of Interests

Mr. S. Crane declared a personal and prejudicial interest in planning application 11/04442/FUL for Cabscott, Merriott Road.

73/11 To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2011

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2011 were read and signed and approved as a true record.

74/11 Matters arising not covered below

None.

75/11 Discuss the Somerset Waste Core Strategy Consultation

The Chairman gave a brief outline of the Somerset Waste Core Strategy initial proposal with particular emphasis on the locations identified for potential development of new waste handling sites. The Chairman stated that, in his own view, the current proposal may lead to increased stress on the already inadequate road infrastructure across our region and proposed that Lopen PC makes a representation to discourage the road transportation of waste and encourage development to take place to make better use of the rail network. Also adding, that sufficient multi process, smaller plants, close to the centres of greatest waste creation, should be provided to minimize the need for transport in the first place. This was agreed without dissent.

76/11 County Councillor's report

Cllr. Maxwell reported as follows:

The future of Crewkerne recycling centre is under review for a further 12 months.

The library at South Petherton is to remain open as SCC's decision to close libraries was found to be unlawful following a judicial review in November. It is business as usual for now, however, the long term future operation of the library remains under review.

The revised 40mph speed limit proposed from Hayes End roundabout to the Seavingtons on the old A303 has now gained support from the Police and Highways and will be altered in due course. Further traffic calming measures are under discussion particularly in relation to the Watergore and Over Stratton junction.

The illegal occupation at Eggwood Hill remains unresolved but continued efforts to reach agreement for relocation of the occupants are ongoing. A local alternative site is being considered for which a planning application has been made. Highways have some concerns regarding the proposed new site although efforts are ongoing to resolve these. SCC remain committed to the sale of this land to the three Parishes and will, if all else fails, put the matter back into court.

77/11 District Councillors' report

Cllr. Thompson explained that due to a significant absence from duty, he was not fully versed with the current issues for Lopen and agreed to meet with the Chairman after the festive season for a full briefing. He also stated that he would look into and report back in due course on any issues that arose from this meeting.

Several members of the public and some parish councillors expressed their long standing concerns over the lack of communication from the District Council at all levels.

78/11 To review the bank mandate and vote on new signatories

The Chairman stated that all the current members are bank signatories but, the Clerk, Carole Mansfield is not. The Chairman highlighted the administrative advantages of having Carole added to the mandate which would allow the Clerk (who is also the RFO) to communicate with, or request information from the bank on behalf of the Council. He went on to say, it is not the intention to have Carole sign any cheques and pointed out that Lopen PC's Standing Orders state that only members can.

The Chairman proposed that Carole Mansfield be added to the bank mandate as an authorised signatory. This was carried unanimously.

79/11 Clerk/RFO's Financial update

The Chairman, on behalf of the absent Clerk/RFO, presented a brief financial update that included the details of all payments, receipts and bank balances since the last public meeting. The Chairman also explained it was the intention of the Clerk to review the Council's deposit account in the near future with a view to maximising returns.

80/11 To review the Lopen Speedwatch initiative and decide on its future

The Chairman explained that the Lopen Speedwatch scheme has failed to deploy on any regular basis for some time and that he was not aware of any deployments at all for this year to date. A final plea in Lopen Eye for volunteers to join the scheme resulted in one additional potential volunteer.

After a brief discussion, the majority of members agreed that there were insufficient volunteers to operate a successful Speedwatch scheme. The Chairman proposed to formally abandon the Lopen Speedwatch scheme, inform all necessary bodies accordingly and return any on-loan equipment. The proposal was carried by majority vote.

81/11 Update on the South Somerset Core Strategy

The Chairman explained that the final draft of the South Somerset Core Strategy-The Local Development Framework, was originally due to be available for comment during October this year but was recently postponed and will now be available early next year.

The Chairman stated that all the comments made to the initial draft proposal are published online. He went on to say that for our area, the relevant comments fall under South Petherton and with no major objections to the proposals, he would expect the final draft will remain largely unchanged.

82/11 Update on various outstanding planning and enforcement issues

The Chairman gave a brief report as follows:

The breach of planning permission in the form of unlawful permanent residency at West Down Caravan Park, despite repeated requests for up to date information on enforcement, remains in abeyance with nothing new to report.

Issues at Lopenhead Industrial site are also in abeyance. There has, apparently, been some superficial tidying of the nursery site including the removal of lorry trailers but there has been no progress in getting the landscaping resolved and/or planted. Mr Whitehouse has apparently stated that building A will commence in the new year and the landscaping relevant to this building will be implemented once construction is completed.

Lopen Mill and the outstanding implementation of the section 106 agreement, remains in abeyance. Robert Archer (the landscape officer at SSDC) has apparently agreed a revised planting scheme that should be planted during this season. The public footpath element is yet to be resolved although SSDC confirm they are looking into this aspect too.

A new concern relates to Frogmary Green Farm. It is apparent that office space is being let at the Farm premises and appears to have been so for some time. SSDC state that they are allowed to let a small portion of their office space without specific permission. Recently, Frogmary Green Farm have been promoting the hire of three separate meeting rooms on a casual basis with the supply of refreshments and conference facilities all on offer. In addition, they appear to be marketing office space on a more formal letting basis. SSDC have stated they believe specific permission is required in this case and are currently looking into the matter.

83/11 To consider planning applications and agree Lopen Parish Council's response:

11/04442/FUL for Cabscott, Merriott Road

The Chairman gave a brief summary of the planning application pointing out the key elements. Following a brief discussion, the members (as eligible) agreed that the Council support the application without comment.

11/04374/LBC Applehay House, Frog Street

The Chairman gave a brief summary of this Listed Building Consent application and pointed out that, having visited site, in his opinion, replacement windows are justified and necessary. This was accepted by all members with only the issue of the proposed alterations in style being considered important.

The meeting was suspended at approximately 20.52 for around 15 minutes following a fall that required medical assistance for the applicant.

Following further brief discussion, the members agreed to support the application in respect of the change of windows but stating a preference to maintain the existing 3 light design. Also agreeing, if safety considerations cannot be met by any other means, then the revised 2 light design proposed should be accepted.

84/11 To provisionally agree the Precept for 2012-13

The Chairman presented some historical, current and forward looking figures as a starting point towards provisionally agreeing the 2012-13 budget. He also stated that, due to uncertainties over future external funding for the Lengthsman scheme, these figures were a worst case scenario which will have to be revised before any final agreement can be reached.

After some discussion, and given that the meeting had overrun, the Chairman proposed that members simply aimed to agree two aspects. Firstly, whether or not to stay in the Lengthsman Scheme, and secondly, to agree whether there should be any increase in the Precept, and if so, to what extent.

After further discussion, and by a majority vote, it was agreed that the Council should continue to take part in the Lengthsman Scheme even though the final costs were yet to be established. Also agreeing that cost savings may be possible by varying the extent to which the Lengthsman is used.

The members agreed an increase in the Precept was required to allow for the various inflated fixed costs already established. It was agreed this should not exceed the rate of inflation. The Chairman proposed a 5% increase to the Precept which was unanimously supported.

85/11 Future meeting dates and times

Yet to be agreed.

86/11 Any other business

None.