

Lopen Parish Council
ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
At 7pm Monday May 12 2014
Sunday School Room

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

Ms. Kim McDonald (Clerk)

Members of the public: 6

11/14 Election of Chairman and acceptance of office

Cllr. Sienkiewicz proposed Cllr. Davolls for Chair and this was seconded by Cllr. Norman. Cllr. Davolls accepted the office and an acceptance of office form was duly completed.

12/14 Election of Vice Chairman

Cllr. Norman has agreed to continue as Vice Chair.

13/14 County Councillor's report

Cllr. Le Hardy addressed the meeting with an update on flooding and highways matters. He has been compiling a list of tasks to be completed on highways in an attempt to keep a tight control on the work. He pointed out that the County Council is still in austerity measures and as such has had to cut 1/3 overall from the budget. Only the work that needs to be done will be considered – the nice-to-do isn't possible.

Cllr. Le Hardy is trying to have adopted a series of smaller scale highways improvement schemes considered as part of the work stream. It would be useful where possible to bundle schemes together for the adjacent parishes, such as Seavingtons, Lopen and Watergore. For Lopen specifically, this would probably mean traffic calming and concentrate on really problematic areas such as Holloway and Snapant. Cllr. Davolls reported briefly on the feedback from the village on scheme suggestions for Holloway – a disappointingly low response, that included speed reduction and suggestions for road narrowing schemes.

Cllr. Le Hardy mentioned the consultation meeting on Monday 19th May at Over Stratton Town Hall to discuss the Watergore improvements. Cllr. Davolls confirmed he would be attending for Lopen. Cllr. Le Hardy was asked what organization was measuring traffic at Eggwood and whether it would be possible for Lopen to have a copy of the statistics? He didn't know and said he would report back.

As Cllr. Le Hardy was due to leave the meeting before the end, Cllr. Davolls raised the issue of very large vehicles traveling down unsuitable roads in the village to deliver to the Lopen Head Site (agenda item brought forward -28/14). Large cement lorries had been seen traveling down Broomhill Lane/ Higgins Grave Lane and chewing up the verges and with the potential of causing damage to TPO trees and potholes. Mike Fear of Highways had promised Lopen could have larger clearer signage preventing lorries from using these roads, but nothing had materialized.

The signage on Frog Street / Water Street has been knocked over by lorries reversing into the road. This was reported by Cllr. Davolls 2/3 months ago and has yet to be re-erected. Cllr. Le Hardy noted both comments. He said that most of the crews had been diverted to manage flooding issues, but that was now coming to an end and work on highways would begin to resume. Cllr. Le Hardy told the meeting that 25,000 potholes were being filled across the county each year by highways and crews were working extremely hard to deliver services.

Cllr. Walker mentioned that Police patrols were active in Lopen with speed guns at least once a month.

On other matters Cllr. Le Hardy reported briefly on his work with adoption schemes in the county and his work supporting armed forces community liaison.

Cllr. Davolls thanked Cllr. Le Hardy for his efforts on behalf of Lopen. Lopen had 10 issues outstanding on the areas Highways Report which was being managed by Cllr. Le Hardy.

Cllr. Le Hardy left the meeting at this point.

14/14 District Councillor's report

Cllr. Barry Walker updated the meeting on the situation regarding planning and enforcement locally, which is known to be a real concern across the district with development being seen as out of control.

The final review of the Local Plan was due to start 10th June. This public hearing is set to hear the DC's solutions to a number of concerns raised by objectors and the Inspector himself into unsound conclusions. For Lopen the main issue was on the calculation for employment land requirement, which was considered way to high. Cllr. Walker believed that the plan may well be thrown out by the Inspector, which would leave the district without a forward plan, except for the saved plan. The issue of a 5 year housing supply was still confusing and unclear and would leave towns and villages vulnerable to further development – although Lopen had not been targeted for further housing, it was noted that no area was safe. If the Inspector did throw out the plan, it would have cost the rate payer many millions of wasted pounds.

A303 dualling – the understanding on this was that the dualling was high on the agenda for major infrastructure improvements discussed at central government level, however no real information or updates were filtering down to local people, which was unsatisfactory. Cllr. Davolls reported that he had a long overdue FOI request for the plans for the dualling scheme, which he would chase. He understood that the scheme being discussed would bring the roundabout closer to Lopen with the main access to South Petherton being down South Street. The A303 would be straightened out at Hayes Roundabout.

Within the scheme it was believed that the plans would include improvements to the A358 into Taunton rather than dualling into Devon via the A30. Dualling the railways was a possible solution, but it was believed that this was discounted due to costs.

Cllr. Walker reported that there was some funding available to District Cllrs to allow small community grants and these could cover a number of needs. Lopen had not been a recent beneficiary of these and Cllr. Walker invited an application from the Council.

There was some discussion after which it was agreed that some funds towards first aid courses for villagers to support the defibrillator would be welcomed. Training to include general life saving as well as defibrillator specifically.

15/14 Apologies for absence

Cllr. Paul Thompson

16/14 Declaration of interests

None were declared

17/14 Agreement of minutes for the meeting held on 6th January 2014

Agreed and signed as a true record.

18/14 Matters arising from the minutes

None that would not be raised under the agenda

19/14 Co-option to fill the current Councillor vacancy and resulting acceptance of office

Cllr. Davolls reported that two suitable candidates had applied for the vacancy and in his opinion both were eminently suitable for different reasons and with different skills. However, LPC could only co-opt one. Each Councillor chose to toss a coin to select the new Councillor as they would not wish to actively choose between the two. The result of this was that Sarah Mason was selected for co-option. The other applicant Jed Burrows, would be asked to work with the LPC on a working party to match his main interests with a view to bringing him onboard if and when the DC confirms that LPC can increase its Councillor numbers from 5 to 7. Neither Jed or Sarah were present, so Cllr. Davolls undertook to make contact and inform them of the outcome. It was agreed that Sarah's acceptance of office form would be completed before the next meeting.

20/14 2013/14 Year end financial statement

Cllr. Davolls presented the year end accounts. Accounts are available to view on the Lopen website or by calling Kim McDonald (Clerk) or Barry Davolls. In brief Lopen PC has appx. £7720 cash in bank which includes a number of reserves, which are increased annually.

21/14 Review and agree LPC's annual return documents and governance statement

The final accounts have been prepared for the external audit. The formal paperwork for the end of year accounts was presented, signed and minuted (both accounts and Governance statement).

LPC's internal auditor: Ian Benfield had, on the same day of the meeting, informally confirmed that he had approved the accounts without comment.

22/14 To consider implications and reach agreement on Lopen PC's use of electronic banking

Cllr. Davolls reported that it was now possible for Parish Councils to use electronic banking, but that any process would still need to have sign off by 2 Councillors. He proposed that LPC should look at the process for how the Council could comply with the requirements for this with the view to amending the PC's Financial Regulations to allow the Council to move towards electronic banking. It was agreed by all members to proceed on this basis.

23/14 Update on the Lopen defibrillator, discuss potential installation arrangements and authorise the purchase of various spares and accessories

The defibrillator unit was now received and the meeting was played a video of how it would operate. Sarah Mason had agreed to be the Clinical Adviser and to train villagers in its use. Decisions would need to be taken as to where it should/could be located. The best solution would appear to be the porch of the Church. (in principle this had been approved by the Arch Deacon, but would need to be put to the PPC for formal agreement). There were issues around securing the main church door, which would need a new key to be created. Councillors were asked to approve this location in principle, which they did

unanimously. Councillors were also asked to approve public access to the unit, which they did unanimously. It was confirmed that the unit is portable and could be taken to the picnic and other events although the practicalities of this would have to be considered in more detail in due course.

If the defibrillator was to be kept locked, it may be possible to link the defibrillator unlock code to the 999 system. Users would need to call 999 to request an ambulance and at this point would receive the code to unlock the cabinet to access the machine. This aspect to be considered further once the installation location is agreed.

The councillors were asked to approve the purchase of a number of accessories for the unit including a cabinet (possibly key-code lockable or other types of secure unit), a spare adult pad and a paediatric pad and possibly some training pads. It was agreed that Sarah Mason would be asked for her advice on these before pursuing further. As a guide £500.00 would be needed for this. It was unanimously agreed that expense of approximately £500 was authorised in this respect and may proceed as required.

Aon Insurance had been contacted to see what implications and impact the unit would have on the Council's cover. All risks-theft and damage etc, at £1500 for the machine plus £500 for accessories has been actioned. There are no implications for the PC making a defibrillator available for general use. Our standard public liability cover will apply in general terms. We have been advised that there is no case law supporting a person who uses the unit that we have made available that leads to a personal injury (or any other) claim; insurance companies do not consider this a risk to consider. Regarding the security of the unit (from theft/vandalism etc.) we have been told it would be unreasonable for the defibrillator not to have some protection against theft/abuse (hence secure cabinet). The premium will increase from the £344.16 quoted to £373.42 and all will be effective from the renewal date of 1st June 2014. As this is roughly in-line with the agreed budget, no further action was required.

24/14 To consider offering PC funded basic life support training sessions to Lopen residents

Please also see 14/14. This was proposed and agreed. To be discussed with Sarah Mason and/or others as required.

25/14 Discuss and agree potential changes to the Speed Indicating Device (SID) arrangements

SCC outlining the new basis for the delivery of SID devices had contacted LPC. In essence the CC are looking for locals to take on the work of managing the device (install/uninstall the device and working with neighbouring parishes). It is believed that if we do not agree to this additional work, then we risk losing the SIDs altogether. It was proposed that LPC agrees to these new arrangements and this was unanimously approved. This new scheme still requires parishes to share the unit.

It was also agreed to try to resurrect a speed watch for Lopen and there were indications of villagers who may support this work.

26/14 Lengthsman scheme update and financial report

We have been advised that the scheme has a surplus of £18,300, at the time of the last Lengthsman meeting (with a possible adjustment of £1000 to be made to the accounts, which was at that time unspecified). South Petherton as scheme managers believe this surplus would be sufficient to allow participating parishes to have a payment holiday for the year 2014-15. LPC do not believe this is quite the case, and so will monitor the progress of

the scheme for next year, to avoid unforeseen bills. The Lengthsman, David Oglivie has resigned and will be leaving August 1st. It is likely that this could lead to a collapse of the scheme and that Lopen will need to make other arrangements for the work to be completed for the village. It is noted how highly the village values the scheme and the work that David has done on behalf of the village to date.

27/14 To reach agreement on whether or not to increase the Council size to seven (or other)members in time for the 2015 elections

The proposal to increase the size of the council from 5 to 7 members with a quorum of 3 was proposed and agreed unanimously. A case for this would be put to the DC, who will conduct an independent consultation with locals. The reasons for requesting an increase are given below:-

- The Council has maintained a full quota of members since 2007
- At the 2007 elections, a local election was held as there were more candidates than vacancies
- Whilst the 2011 elections did not trigger an election, the single remaining vacancy was filled through co-option near immediately after the election
- Applications to fill a recent casual vacancy (as a result of a Councillor house move) was oversubscribed
- The National Association of Local Councils promotes a minimum Council size of 7 irrespective of the local population size
- A larger pool of Councillors is more likely to represent a more accurate local view
- With only 5 members and a quorum of three, it can be difficult to arrange a quorate meeting especially during the holiday seasons
- Quite often members live close to each other and this can cause difficulties maintaining a quorum when common interests are involved. Increasing the council size will reduce such occurrences
- More workload is being passed on to Parish Councils and “many hands make light work”.

28/14 To discuss the issue of large vehicles using unsuitable roads and ignoring restrictions-what can we do to stop them?

Please refer 13/14

29/14 To ratify the PC CPRE membership

Membership of the Campaign for the Protection of the Rural Environment has cost the LPC £29.00 to join for the year. This membership comes with a level of planning advice and guidance as well as lobbying all levels of government over areas of common concern. The meeting agreed to ratify the decision to spend on this membership, which had been actioned outside of a formal meeting to obtain a discounted rate.

30/14 Future meeting dates and times

To be advised. Please see Lopen Eye and the Lopen Parish website www.lopen.btck.co.uk

31/14 Any other business

There was no other business and so the meeting closed at 9.20pm.