

Lopen Parish Council Meeting
7pm Monday, 26th January 2015
Sunday School Room

Present: Cllr. B. Davolls (Chairman)
Cllr. N. Norman
Cllr. T. Sienkiewicz
Cllr. S. Crane
Cllr. Christopher Le Hardy (SCC)

Ms. Kim McDonald (Clerk)

Members of the public: 4

01/15 Apologies

Received from District Cllr. Barry Walker and Cllr. S. Mason

02/15 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

03/15 District Councillors' reports

There was none

04/15 South Petherton Neighbourhood plan-briefing

Graham Gatehouse (Parish Council member) and Paull Robathan (Committee Chair) who are members of the recently formed South Petherton Local Plan Committee gave a short briefing on their plans going forward. Paull explained the trigger for this process was concern within the South Petherton community over the scale of development recently experienced and their wish to gain some control to limit the effects and to establish the community's view on what is acceptable/ preferred development. The first stage would be to update the existing village plan and he hoped this would be completed over the next 4/5 months. After this, if it was considered there was merit in proceeding, SPPC would adopt a more formal and legally binding Neighbourhood Plan. An application has already been submitted to South Somerset District Council to approve and establish a Neighbourhood Plan area. In this case covering the entire administrative area of South Petherton PC (including neighbouring rural settlements of Watergore and Over Stratton). Over the coming weeks their intentions will be advertised followed by extensive community consultation including our PC where/if appropriate. Further details of the outline plans for the project would be made available in TA13 magazine and copies would be forwarded to Lopen PC. The next meeting of the SPPC Local Plan Committee would be February 9th.

LPC Members made clear its views over the impact of SPPC development on Lopen and the sensitivities around Lopen Head site historically being viewed as employment land for South Petherton.

Paull Robathan and Graham Gatehouse were thanked for attending the meeting with their briefing and departed.

05/15 County Councillor's Report

Cllr Le Hardy reminded everyone that this was a local as well as national election year and the importance of voting in both. Cllr Le Hardy told the meeting that some CC services would be relocating to Yeovil (Aspire and Adult services)

The county Health and Wellbeing grants had been confirmed for this year and the Cllr. was working with a number of local projects who were preparing bids – including amongst others Forest school in South Petherton, a Food for Life Programme, and a defibrillator and playground equipment for Merriott.

There were 3 local consultations recently completed: Bus services (closing 28/12), Sexual Health (8/01) and

Mobile Libraries (11/01).

Highways Flood Mitigation grants were now handed out, with the Mulcheley flood works now well underway and some anti-flooding measures in South Petherton included.

Cllr. Le Hardy mentioned that Hinton St George (HSG) PC were now very concerned about taking on the Eggwood site due to contamination risks. Cllr. Davolls explained that it had been agreed that none of the three Parish partners would proceed without an indemnity from SCC regarding contamination and that he would reiterate this again to HSG. The response from SCC on this matter was still awaited. Cllr. Le Hardy asked if there was anything he could do to assist with speeding up the agreement on this with SCC which was welcomed by LPC Members.

LPC asked Cllr. Le Hardy if he could assist in getting the Kitchen Lane drains jetted. This had been promised by Highways over a year ago and now the surface of the road has become rutted and full of potholes as flood water constantly makes its way onto the road, freezes and damages the surface.

The road between Lopen and HSG was also mentioned for its poor condition and Cllr. Le Hardy confirmed that this and in general the state of passing places had been noted for works.

Cllr. Norman mentioned that contractors had been along Broomhill/Lopen Lane and Higgins Grave Lane to clean the surface and had caused a lot of damage to trees, banks and the road surface itself. It was a poorly executed job that had left the lanes in an even worse state.

In addition Members also reminded Cllr. Le Hardy that Mike Fear from Highways had also promised larger weight limit signs for both the Snapant and Higgins Grave Lane ends of the route, which is often used as a rat run for overweight vehicles.

Cllr. Le Hardy was thanked for his update and left the meeting.

06/15 To approve the Minutes of the last meeting 24 October 2014

With an amendment to 78/14 Other matters to note – Breaches of Planning Conditions at Lopen Head: to remove Cllr. Sienkiewicz as the Member completing the action, the minutes were approved.

07/15 Matters Arising from the minutes

There were none.

08/15 Update and Budget review (Precept) for 2015/16

During our December meeting a budget was agreed for 2015/16 but the exact cost to the local taxpayer could not be confirmed as figures beyond our control (the tax base and Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant) had not been published. We had hoped that the figures would remain as for last year, and so would result in an increase of 1.99%. Since then, the outstanding information has been received and, disappointingly, the grant has been reduced and the tax base varied. With these changes applied, the same budget now shows a 3.59% increase resulting in an uplift in the precept charge of £1.66 per band D property per year. This was agreed by all Members and our Precept request would be made to SSDC formally by the deadline of January 31st.

09/15 To agree the Parish Council's response to planning applications:

- **14/05495/FUL Bailiffs Cottage, Church Street- Demolish existing shed and erection of office/studio**

Following a review of the application documents and noting that no near neighbours had expressed any concerns in person to the PC or online, and that the Conservation Officer had made no comments, the Members agreed unanimously that LPC should respond to SSDC Planning Department stating there was no objection to this proposal.

10/15 Any other matters to note

Overweight vehicles: Cllr. Crane expressed concerns about the HGV lorries coming through the village that were unstable at some points where the road cambers were more severe, and causing them to come very close to houses in some instances. Cllr. Davolls reiterated that the police had been asked to crack down on overweight traffic through Wategore and Lopen by Cllr. Le Hardy as this was an increasing problem. This should start to be enforced soon.

A discussion was then had about weight restrictions more generally and whether agricultural traffic was exempt from the restriction as seemed to be the case in some other local towns. It was confirmed that this was not the case for Lopen. Cllr. Davolls reminded the meeting that whereas there could be no exception made to agricultural traffic under the terms of the restriction, he urged that we should show tolerance with legitimate farm traffic using the roads as we are a rural/farming area.

Villagers were reminded to note number plates and branding on any large lorries in breach of the weight restriction and to report these to the Police or to write to the companies concerned. (note: A template letter for this is available on the village website).

Lopen History Group: From the floor Les Farris updated LPC on the present agreement of the History Group to put on hold its activities for the foreseeable future as no new volunteers had been found to take up the role of the officers to manage the group - despite there being a healthy regular attendance and membership. It had been agreed that no one wanted the group to close completely. During this abeyance period, existing officers will be preparing the immense amount of material that the group now owned for future publication either as printed or digital material archives.

The meeting closed at approximately 8.10 pm