

**Lopen Parish Council Meeting**  
**7pm Monday, 8th December, 2014**  
**Sunday School Room**

**Present:** Cllr. B. Davolls (Chairman)  
Cllr. N. Norman  
Cllr. T. Sienkiewicz  
Cllr. S. Mason  
Cllr. S. Crane

Ms. Kim McDonald (Clerk)

**Members of the public: 2**

**68/14 Apologies**

Received from District Cllr. Paul Thompson

**69/14 Declarations of Interest**

Cllr. Davolls (Pecuniary) and Cllrs. Sienkiewicz and Norman, all in respect of planning application 14/04831/FUL Sunnyside Farm, Broomhill Lane - Demolition of open sided agricultural building and the erection of a replacement agricultural building.

**70/14 District Councillor's Report (Cllr. Barry Walker)**

SSDC formally submitted local plan to the Planning Inspector and there is good reason to believe it will be accepted as all final amends were considered minor in nature. Although there were still aspects of the proposed plan that were not well received, Cllr. Walker was of the opinion, and this was widely shared, that it was better to have a plan than no plan, as having a plan could be used to help prevent developers coming forward with schemes for housing that were not required. A plan in place and a demonstrated 5 year housing supply could help to limit the development in South Petherton and Martock. In addition a recent appeal to the Inspector for a development in Crewkerne decided against adding additional housing, citing lack of sustainability, so Cllr. Walker felt that it may now be possible for a greater challenge to take place on housing numbers more locally, which were felt by many to be too high. It was noted that South Petherton and Martock were the equally targeted for increased housing, being treated as same-type of villages (which they are not – Martock is a higher tier settlement). The meeting queried who all the new houses were for as they outstripped local growth demands. But developments built did however all sell, so incomers were clearly the target. There was real concern and clear indications that local infrastructure and school places were not keeping pace with development.

The proposed closure of the Nat West Bank in South Petherton was the subject of a local campaign including support from David Laws MP. The Nat West proposal was to keep the cash machine and move counter services to the Post Office. This closure was at odds with the numbers of new homes being developed and the earlier closure of the Martock branch.

**71/14 County Councillor Report (Cllr. Le Hardy)**

It was confirmed that signage and other works at Watgore to calm traffic were underway. Cllr. Le Hardy confirmed that the A303/A358 improvements and the Ilminster bypass were thought to be the first section of A303 works to be undertaken but details were awaited. Sparkford to Podimore would be a 2<sup>nd</sup> phase. There is a lack of local consultation.

Looking at local roads: South Petherton and the local area had identified 12 projects for traffic calming measures. Raised platforms were considered to be the way forward more generally and not all required lighting. There was also some discussion about the pitted and rutted passing places on local roads. Highways would be encouraged to fill passing places with tarmac.

Schools: local schools were improving, with most areas achieving an outstanding ofsted (South Petherton achieved an outstanding). Primary schools were out performing secondary schools in this. Although it was noted that childrens' services still has some way to go in making improvements to its services, child safety was thought not to be an issue locally. Although, everyone needed to be alert to child sexual exploitation.

There were 3 local consultations ongoing: Bus services (closing 28/12), Sexual Health (8/01) and Mobile Libraries (11/01).

Lopen had not seen information on any of these and so Cllr. Le Hardy was requested to check again that Lopen's details were correct on the system.

Weight limit: The signage was requested to be larger: Lopen currently has smaller versions. Better signage was on request via Cllr. Le Hardy's Highways exercise and previously better signage has been promised for Higgins Grave Lane and Broomhill/Lopen Lane by Mike Fear of Highways, but had not materialised. Cllr. Sienkiewicz was monitoring and writing to businesses (specifically the Co-op) and farmers who it could be identified were breaking the weight limit. Cllr. Le Hardy confirmed that local Police had been asked to have a blitz on those breaking both Watgore and Lopen's weight and speed restrictions in the new year.

At this point both Cllrs left the meeting.

#### **72/14 To approve the Minutes of the last meeting 24 October 2014**

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

#### **73/14 Matters Arising from the minutes**

There were none.

#### **74/14 Review and Agree the Budget (Precept) for 2015/16**

At the time of the meeting SSDC's Council Tax Base (CTB) and Government Grant were not published for the following year. However, the budget was set out to show expenditure forecast to the close of the year, anticipated costs for 2015/16 and a forecast of the precept.

CTB and grants were expected mid December and Precept requests were required to be returned by all Parishes for the end of January 2015.

It was noted that Lopen had a healthy programme of reserve accounts to deal with a number of identified ongoing costs such as Eggwood, reduction in CTB and grant, and ongoing defibrillator costs among others.

For the new year's budget, we have added an extra line for Eggwood Insurance. This is in addition to the Eggwood reserve account.

It was noted that the Lengthsman scheme as managed under SPPC was showing a variance due to surplus in the account to meet early year work and a rebate amount that was returned to LPC.

The training budget was queried but it was agreed that there were reserve fund in for an additional expense and to increase this line would push the precept upwards.

The Budget for the 2015/16 year was approved unanimously and it was agreed that the precept would be requested to meet these costs or a minimum of 1%. At this time a precept request of 1.99% was anticipated but it was noted that it was possible that this could be higher if the Gov't grant element was reduced.

#### **75/14 Review and take a final decision on the proposed Eggwood Hill site lease**

Cllr. Davolls provided an update of the progress towards securing the Eggwood Hill site lease, including matters relating to:

- Liability for any future unauthorised occupation (lease wording limiting Parish responsibilities)

- grazing rights
- Insurance (public liability and limits to legal assistance cover for unauthorised occupation)
- Searches (outstanding)
- Ongoing management and costs
- Percentage share of cost/responsibility for each PC (see below)
- Current site condition (all fences, pond, boundary markers and vegetation)
- Site contamination (SCC indemnity required)
- Resolution required to commit to or refuse the lease (subject to?)-Deadline 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014

Clarification of the risks and benefits to Lopen:

Risks:

- Contamination is very high on site . SCC were requested to indemnify the 3 parishes against problems resulting from existing contamination but it appears this has not been formally accepted by SCC in writing, nor is it added to the lease. Now being formally sought by solicitor under instruction from Cllr. Davolls.
- Contamination / use of site as landfill including commercial waste will limit some of the envisaged uses for the site
- Insurance cover may not be adequate to deal with illegal occupations (clarification and insurance schedule from quote sought from HSG)
- Cost of maintenance may be higher than anticipated
- Low stakeholding may limit Lopen's influence: Tenants in common with HSG and Merriott unequal shares
- Risk it could be seen as a village green and so attract development
- Risk that non completion by 31<sup>st</sup> December could see SCC withdraw offer

Benefits:

- Secured a 999 year lease, so probably would be able to purchase outright at some point – significant future investment for village
- Virtually no outlay to secure the site for the 3 parishes: £2000 shared legal costs and peppercorn rent if charged
- If not secured by the 3 parishes, who could purchase the site and what uses would they put it to?
- Share of costs brings share of influence over the site's future that sits right at the edges of Lopen.

After further discussion LPC agreed to the request from Merriott to increase Lopen's share of costs and liability for the site from 17.5%. It was agreed that this was sensible to avoid stalemate situation as currently the share ratio was Merriott 50%, HSG 32.5% and Lopen 17.5%. The reason for this ratio was historically to accurately reflect the households in each village (and in fact since then, Lopen's share should decrease).

Councillors agreed to proposal to increase Lopen's share to 20% and that 2% should come from Merriott and 0.5% from Hinton St George and this proposal would be put to the other Parishes.

Final vote: LPC Councillors voted to approve and progress the site lease .The vote was passed 4 to 1 in favour subject to: a satisfactory pollution indemnity from SCC; the CC bringing the site back to a maintained and secure condition, including reinstating boundary fences and pond maintenance; and finally assuming final searches did not throw up any additional problems.

**76/14 To agree the Parish Council's response to planning applications:**

- **14/04831/FUL Sunnyside Farm, Broomhill Lane - Demolition of open sided agricultural building and the erection of a replacement agricultural building.**

It was noted that LPC Council was inquorate in respect of the above application and so the decision was delegated to the Clerk in consultation with the Members.

Cllr. Davolls left the room for a discussion on the application.

The Barn was to be located as per plan as this was thought by owners and SSDC to be the preferable location to reduce landscape impact, but this could not be confirmed 100% until preparations were underway as it was known that a gas main runs along the field and there was an outside chance this might cause issues for that location.

Following this discussion the Members decided to recommend approval of the application and directed the clerk to respond accordingly.

#### **77/14 Defibrillator – update and discuss future training**

Cllr. Mason and Kim McDonald were tasked with organising training in the new year. It was thought that the first session should include Cllrs. and those closest to the Church where the device is now installed and then run for 2 or 3 dates for training for the rest of the village.

Sessions would be for about an hour and would cater ideally for 10 people, but more could be accommodated. Sessions to be held in the Sunday School Room, which the PPC had offered free of charge for this purpose.

Training would be advertised in Lopen EYE, at Coffee mornings, on the website and on notice boards.

Training would be specifically in the use of the defibrillator and Cllr. Mason would at these sessions make clear why Paediatric pads were not available. Cllr. Mason would undertake to secure training pads, but it was agreed that a spare set of adult pads should now be ordered.

The Just Women Group had undertaken to run general First Aid Training for the village but were struggling to get support from St John's Ambulance.

#### **78/14 Other matters to note**

Breaches of Planning Conditions at Lopenhead. LPC undertook to write to SSDC regarding the numerous breaches known to have taken place on the site.

The meeting closed at approximately 9.00 pm