

BICKLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Meeting of Bickleigh Parish Council which was held on Thursday 23rd July 2020 at 7.30pm via Zoom.

There was an open forum of 15 minutes at the beginning of the meeting to allow members of the public to ask questions or make comment regarding the work of the Council or other items which affect the Parish. No members of the public were in attendance.

Present: Councillors Barrie Spencer (Chair), Haymes, Archer, Tamsett-White, Rundell and Hopwood

Apologies: Councillors Carole Spencer, Taylor and Blight

In Attendance: Helen Nathanson (Parish Clerk)

1. To receive apologies.

Apologies were given and accepted by Councillors C Spencer, Blight and Taylor.

2. To declare any personal or pecuniary interests in items on the agenda and the nature of that interest.

Councillor Haymes declared a pecuniary interest as employees of the Woolwell Community Resource Trust.

Councillor Barrie Spencer declared a personal interest as a member of the Woolwell Community Resource Trust.

Councillor Rundell declared an interest as a service provider to the RM Barracks at Bickleigh.

3. To approve the Minutes of the meeting on 25th June 2020.

It was resolved to approve the Minutes of 25th June 2020.

4. To raise any matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

The following matters arose:

The PC insurance has been renewed but needs to be reviewed. The Parish Clerk will do this and then bring a report to the Assets and Green Spaces WG.

5. Planning

- **To note the confidential enforcement cases.**

These were noted.

6. To receive the notes from the Assets and Green Spaces WG Meeting on 13th July and to discuss the recommendations.

These were received. The following points were made:

The tree on Tavistock Rd in Roborough which is overhanging the pavement and obstructing access has been reported as a particular problem for wheelchair users. We need to check that there is a TPO on that tree and then, if so, we need to apply for authorisation to carry out tree works as a matter of urgency. Councillor B Spencer will confirm with the SHDC Tree Officer and the PC will then ensure that works are carried out as soon as possible.

Councillor B Spencer has been contacted by a resident about a tree on Roborough Green. He met with Arborcure to look at it because the resident has complained that, if the tree falls, it will fall into his garden. The tree was inspected

in Feb 2020 as part of the PC Tree Inspection Report and the tree was considered to be very safe and not in danger of falling. Councillor B Spencer has informed the resident of this and the latter is unhappy with the response. Councillors considered that the Tree Report was up to date and that the tree does not need to be removed.

A quotation had been received for a total of £78 including VAT to spray the Japanese Knotweed at the north-eastern corner of the lane adjoining Carron Green. Councillors accepted this quotation.

7. To receive the notes from the meetings of the Woolwell Centre WG on 1st and 14th July and to discuss the recommendations.

The notes from the meetings on 1st and 14th July were received. The following points were made:

Councillor Haymes read out the following statement, which was based on her experience both as a councillor and as a member of staff at the Centre: 'During the current global pandemic millions of companies small and large are on the verge of collapse. In Britain many household company names have folded and thousands have lost their jobs due to Coronavirus and its devastating effects on our economy. Given this unprecedented global and national crisis I am astounded and quite frankly disgusted that Councillor Hopwood and the Woolwell Centre WG have used this worldwide pandemic as a reprehensible excuse to dissect the Centre's working practices and humiliate the Trustees, Manager and Staff, intimating that the current situation is because of the way the centre is operated. If it were not for the current global crisis, the Council would not have been approached for aid to ensure the WWC kept afloat. It is purely because of the current situation and not a reflection on the Centre's Trustees, Staff or Manager. A brief amendment to the minutes of the WCWG meeting, bearing in mind these minutes were made public on the Council website, amounting to a condescending pat on the head, does not in any way mitigate the feelings these minutes have fostered.

Regarding the minutes of the latest WCWG meeting, I would like to ask a question. When was the survey done of the local community, the answer to which entitled the WCWG to conclude and express the opinion that "There are some concerns that it doesn't have the same community feel as it used to and that this could be improved"? If no survey was done – as I suspect it wasn't - what right has the WCWG got to express this opinion without clarifying it is their personal opinion and not the opinion of the local community?

Councillor Hopwood responded to this and explained that she didn't get to see the minutes before they went out as the Clerk inadvertently published them beforehand. When she did see them, she asked for some points to be taken out and put in a different way. The comment about the Centre not having the same community feel was the opinion of one person and not the whole WG, which was confirmed by the Clerk, and she would like the minutes to be amended to reflect this. She doesn't think there is any doubt of the dedication of the staff or about how hard staff and trustees work and that is why she asked for that to be added. The WG fully understands that the Trust and Centre wouldn't be in this position if it weren't for the pandemic. What did come up was that it's a good time to get the relationship and all the legalities between the PC and the Trust sorted out because there is nothing to show the legal relationship between the two parties. What we do have with the Centre is an obligation between the PC and the trustees to keep the Centre going and there is no way she would ever want to see the Centre taken back from the trustees to the PC. She thinks that if any cllrs are concerned and want to get involved then they should volunteer to become trustees themselves.

Councillor Haymes thanked her for the apology about the way the notes came across. She said that she has observed so much commitment and dedication from the staff and management to keep it up and running as a community venue and for the good of the residents. She explained that the Centre applied for help back in June when the finances were very different and that, as bookings have now come in, they may not need the money: the Centre lost every single booking on the 23rd March so, in June when it was written, the money was really needed. She was unhappy that this help was asked for during unprecedented times and that this has been used as a reason to look into how the Centre was run and to suggest that if it had been run better they would not have needed the money.

Councillor Hopwood agreed that it was unfortunate how the notes came across and reiterated that the Parish Clerk was struggling to find any information. She thought the PC should start again with the Centre and file the information properly so that it can be accessed. The information had been sent through and she thanked the Trust for that.

Councillor Haymes said that the two things were separate: she agreed that improvements can always be made and she agreed that the Trust should be on a proper footing in its relationship with the PC but that the fact that all of this had come out of the request for help had blurred things.

Councillor Tamsett-White said she could understand that when you read the notes in black and white it sounded cold but the WG meeting came across as positive about how the PC can help the Centre. There were some questions from councillors but never a feeling that the PC did not want to help or that the PC thought they could run it better. She agreed with Councillor Hopwood that there was information missing to do with the PC's knowledge of the Centre and the Trust.

Councillor Haymes reiterated that the two things needed to be separated. Councillor Hopwood agreed and explained that she understood and that the information was requested because the PC has to be seen by residents not to just be handing out money without asking questions. She thought that the meeting reflected personal opinions and that it is for those people to defend their own opinions: we don't all like everyone's opinions all the time but it's their right to have one and to explain it.

Councillor B Spencer said that he had seen the notes and that the fact that they were on the website meant that Centre staff had seen them and this had destroyed their enthusiasm. Lots of staff volunteer at the Centre because of the way they feel about it and the notes do not convey this. Whilst the Centre has received funding from the PC and has always been an important part of the PC grant funding, there are other organisations which have been given grants from the PC and it is not preventing other organisations from benefitting. He said that he can't understand why the PC thought they could take the Trust back in house because it is not theirs to do so. He considered that, if the PC wanted a demonstration of the Trust's professionalism, then asking for this money shows how well the Centre is being run. He thought that the Trust Memorandum and Articles were not relevant to this request and that the PC should bear in mind that the notes have destroyed the enthusiasm of staff and trustees.

Councillor Hopwood reiterated that she was very concerned that the staff thought that this was the view of the whole WG and she was upset that this had affected morale because she knows that the staff often give their time for free. She added that, on the comment about the professionalism of trustees, one of the trustees' comments and the way he conveyed them was unprofessional at the meeting on the 1st, which Councillor B Spencer agreed with and reminded her that he had responded at the time.

The next step is that the WG will have another meeting and will then invite trustees to talk to them. Councillor Hopwood asked if the Centre was still in need of the grant, given what Councillor Haymes said about the new financial position. Councillor B Spencer replied that they were not asking for a grant but were asking for money in case it is needed because the situation keeps changing and they don't know what to expect from one week to the next. He described it as a 'facility'. Councillor Haymes explained that the financial figures were specific to that time in June and gave the staffing costs that the Centre is committed to in order to keep abreast of legislation so to look at those figures without discussion would be to misread them. She felt that questions were being asked about things that the Centre does not have a choice over and said that maybe it was her fault for not continually updating the PC. She said that they were not asking for a grant because that is not where they are now – they just wanted to know that the PC would not let them fail.

Councillor Archer asked why the information requested by the WG, ie 3 years of accounts was not in line with the PC Grants Policy and whether the Grants Policy needed to be revised. Councillor Hopwood explained that this was about collecting the correct information so as to build a proper file for the PC. Councillor Archer also asked why the Centre should be expected to make a profit if it is a charity. Councillor Tamsett-White explained that the Trust had presented the PC with a request for money and that cllrs wanted to know if there was going to be sufficient income in the future to support the Centre.

Councillor Archer asked if the Trust had made a grant application and was told that they have done so.

Councillor B Spencer said that the priority was trying to build up the staff who had been knocked back. The Trust can't put together the rest of the information requested but will do their best. He said that he wanted to get the relationship sorted out between the Trust and the PC and he would like to get this on to a sound footing and sort it out. He was happy to discuss with the other trustees. Councillor Hopwood asked about the lines of communication between the two parties. She said that the Trust used to give a monthly report and that perhaps the PC could ask for a quarterly report, which could be put in place as part of a package of better communication which would also include drawing up a lease.

8. To receive an update from the Staffing Committee about the employment of a new Parish Clerk.

This was received.

Councillor Haymes explained that formal advertisements had been placed on the DALC, CALC and PC websites and the PC Facebook page. 22 applications had been received and interviews were conducted by herself and Councillors Tamsett-White and C Spencer. Councillor Archer declared a personal interest and did not take part as she knew one of the applicants.

Interviews were held on 16th July in a socially distanced manner in the Woolwell Centre and the job was offered to Helen Nathanson, the locum clerk. She will take over as an employee of BPC on 17th August and Councillor Haymes gave the required month's notice to the SLCC on 17th July for the locum role, which will cease on 16th August. The service has cost a higher rate than the usual pay scale but councillors were grateful to the SLCC for providing the new service and introducing the new clerk.

The Clerk will continue to monitor emails and carry on important business the 17th. The Staffing Committee will now discuss how and when they would like the Clerk to be available and will meet before 17th August, with the Clerk and Chair included, to work this out.

9. To discuss the following request, which has been submitted by the Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS) Platoon Commander at 42 Cdo RM, Bickleigh Barracks to DCC:

Councillors supported the request in principle. There were some concerns about the fact that, when the cones are put out by the entrance, it tends to push the parking into the village, which is not ideal and would not be desirable as a long term solution. It was assumed that the yellow lines would be in the same place as the cones but, without knowing exactly, everyone felt that they would like to see it drawn on a map before giving full support. A map will be requested.

10. To receive reports from County and District Councillors.

Councillor Hopwood gave the following updates:

SHDC is working on a Covid Recovery Plan for the South Hams, with member workshops taking place over the last couple of weeks to draw up proposals for Council in September. The work will focus specifically on unemployment in the area, and particularly youth unemployment, which is very high and presents serious implications.

There will be a Government White Paper in September to show how the planning system is going to change, such as allowing the conversion of offices into residential without planning permission because they think that people are going to want less office space.

There will also be another paper on Devolution which has serious implications for the South Hams. SHDC councillors met last week with Anthony Magnall MP, who supports the creation of a unitary authority in Devon. She was furious with him and challenged him, saying that he had no right to tell South Hams residents what they want without asking them. For example, one of the outcomes of this could be that Bickleigh would end up in Plymouth. There will be a telecon with Gary Streeter MP tomorrow to see if he supports this too and she will be lobbying at every opportunity.

11. Finance

Councillor Tamsett-White took over the Chair for this item.

- To note the current bank balance of £94,354.38 to date 17th July 2020.
This was noted.
- To approve the following payments:

Payee	Activity	VAT	Total
SHDC	May 2019 PC Election Expenses		£1,913.14
SLCC	Regional Training Seminar for Parish Clerk	£15.00	£90.00
Chubb	Woolwell Centre Fire Alarm Service Agreement	£51.23	£307.36
Cleanwise	Bus Shelter Cleaning – Woolwell, Bickleigh, Pick Pie		£54.00
ICO	Date Protection Act annual registration fee		£40.00
Arborcure	Grass Cutting May, June, July	£468.00	£2,808
Total		£534.23	£5,212.50

The above payments were approved to a total of £5,212.50.

The Arborcure invoice was discussed. Councillor B Spencer considered that the grass cutting is much better now. It seems that we may be cutting some areas which belong to Plymouth and that some we are not cutting actually belong to Plymouth, so more work needs to be done to iron this out.

Councillor B Spencer took over as Chair.

12. To receive updates from representatives on outside bodies.

- BPC/Woolwell Centre representative – to receive notes from the Woolwell Community Resource Trust meeting on 8th July 2020.
These were received. Councillor B Spencer expressed his concern that the notes contained details of bookings which is sensitive information and should not be on the website. In future, this will not be recorded in such notes.
- BPC/Roborough Recreation Hall representative
The group has its first meeting next week.

13. To receive an update about the Covid 19 BPC Community Aid programme and to decide whether it should continue.

Councillor B Spencer explained that the programme had been set up to help people with medication requests and shopping and that it is still being used. He wondered whether it should be continued, expanded, or made a permanent feature in the parish. The following points were made:

A couple of councillors are still helping out locally but this now works on more of a personal basis, rather than going through the organisation.

All agreed that there were likely to be people living on their own within the parish who would continue to need help and that they did not feel ready to shut it down yet. Councillors wanted to be there for people who needed help and thought it was a really nice service to offer the community. It was decided not to expand it at this time but to re-advertise it and contact those people who initially volunteered to see if they would still like to be involved.

It was agreed that things are changing at the moment and unemployment and other, new factors mean that the programme could change to a community volunteer group and become a much bigger thing. Councillor Haymes suggested that a Community Help Group could be set up to coordinate the way the PC can help the community and to advertise the service. She would like to be involved, as would Councillor Archer. She and Councillor Archer will discuss this and report back to Council.

A grant had been received from SHDC at the beginning of lockdown – the Parish Clerk was asked to check the amount as it could go towards this new group.

14. To note the date of the next meeting on Thursday 27th August 2020 at 7.30pm.

Councillors decided not to meet in August but to have the customary summer break. An arrangement will be put in place to enable payments and planning decisions as required.

The meeting ended at 9.28pm.

Councillor Barrie Spencer

Chair