

Sheepwash Parish Council

Parish Council Meeting

Held in the Village Hall

Wednesday 13th March 2024 at 7pm

Minutes

Present: Cllr Ansell (Chairperson) Cllr Ritson, Cllr Moys, Cllr Fairall, Cllr Crossley, Cllr Hutching, County Cllr Morrish, District Cllr Wheatley, Selina Woollacott (Clerk), 28 members of the public.

1) **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Cottle-Hunkin.

2) **Co-opt Parish Councillor.**

Clerk informed the Council that no one had contacted her prior to the meeting. The vacancy still stands and a new poster will be displayed to advertise the vacancy. If anyone is interested in being a Parish Councillor, please email the Clerk. Training is provided via DALC. To be eligible: over 18 years of age, have for the last 12 months occupied as an owner or tenant any land or other premises in the Parish or within 3 miles of the Parish, or owned property in the parish for the last 12 months, or during the last 12 month had your principal or only place of work in the Parish or within 3 miles. You cannot stand if you are the subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or if you have been convicted and had a sentence of imprisonment in the last 5 years.

3) **Declarations of Interest:**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, members are required to declare any personal or disclosable pecuniary interests, including the nature and extent of such interests they may have, in items to be considered at this meeting. Members are also reminded that any change to their Declaration of Interests must be notified to the Monitoring Officer at Torridge District Council within 28 days of the change. **None.**

4) **Public Discussion**, to allow any questions, reports by members of the public on any matters relating to the agenda of this meeting, or any matters the public would like the Council to consider on a future agenda. The period of time designated for public participation shall not exceed 15 minutes.

Member of the Public (MOP) updated the meeting on the Community shop questionnaire which was handed out to see how the Community would use the shop. The Half Moon Pub is opening a shop for the parish. The findings from the questionnaires have been shared with Haydn and Kim. 210 questionnaires were handed out, 38 were received back. As a percentage this is good as was advised that will likely only receive 10% back. The Plunkett Foundation provided the questionnaire. A couple of points from the results, 21 of the 38 said they would likely use the shop 2-3 times a week. The most popular times of day the shop would be used is 8am – 6pm. Other members of the public thanked the MOP for all the work she is doing towards the community shop. The owner of the Half Moon said that the shop needs to be profitable and needs to be supported. Money has already been invested into the shop to get it up and running. MOP explained that if this shop is not profitable and the village still want a shop there are other ways. MOP2 asked why the questionnaires were not collected as he was told it would be collected from him? There was a change of plan, and a post was put on the Village Facebook page to say will not be collected. Councillors thanked the MOP for the update on the Community Shop.

MOP3 there is an issue with a car being permanently park outside the Village Hall, this is causing access issues and unloading issues for hall users. Cllr Crossley: the Parish Council does not have any powers to stop parking. We could make a request for a loading only area outside the Hall. Cllr Ritson: has a note been put on the windscreen or talk to the owner explaining why the car is causing issues. Has the Hall Committee thought about putting up a poster asking for people to not block access to the Hall. Clerk will ask Highways what the process is for getting a loading bay.

A reminder that members of the public can speak when invited to when council is in committee.

5) **Minutes – the Minutes of the meetings held on 22nd November 2023, have been amended and circulated, the minutes of the meeting held on the 17th January 2024 have been circulated by email both sets of minutes to be approved for accuracy and signed by the Chairperson.** All Councillors agreed that both sets of minutes are an accurate record of the meetings and Cllr Ansell signed the minutes.

6) **County & District Councillors' reports.**

County Cllr Morrish gave the following report.

Cllr Morrish introduced himself and explained the area he is County Councillor for. He is proud of his area and when at County Hall will say what he thinks as he was voted in to be the representative for the area. There will be a 4.99% increase in Council Tax, I did vote against this. DCC hold £90 million in reserves for a rainy day well is this not a rainy day. £60 million of the reserves is reserved for Adult Care and Children Social Care. Very likely to see redundancies. All areas have been asked to find savings. I have received 11 communications from this Parish over the last month on Buses, Doctors, Hospitals. Over the 34 Parishes I receive 200 -250 communications a month. My Locality Budgets from April is a total of £10,000. It is good to see a large number of the public at meetings and here taking an interest in the future of the community shop and community hall plans. I don't make it to all Parish Council meetings however when your Clerk asks, I will try and come. I am very proud of the Sheepwash community.

MOP stated how bad the roads are and the number of potholes. Cllr Morrish, yes, a bane of my life and yours. I met with Cllr Hart leader of the Council and Cllr Hughes who is cabinet member for Highways last week. There has been talk of roads being abandoned which no one wants to see happen. DCC spend millions on the roads, but this still hasn't been enough over the last few years, all my parishes have issues with roads. Last week DCC had over 1000 complaints about roads. £6.2 million to Highways from government will fund the top 10 Highways projects. None of the top 10 projects are in Torridge but some top 30 ones are. I see a split on the Council, South Devon and North Devon/Torridge. The South has more Councillors so has a louder voice. I do shout for us up this end. I have a lot of respect for your District Councillors who I know are working hard for you.

Devolution, Government money and powers made at Exeter. The board is made up of representatives from all District Councils it is not a unity, and no mayor is needed.

MOP asked are the Council getting good value for money with pothole filling? Cllr Morrish, No. I have seen potholes filled and washed out within a week, not good value for money and it needs looking into.

Pensions, £50 billion a year invested plus £90 million reserves to invest. We listened to the people who didn't want the Council investing in companies like Shell. We de-invested 10% from these companies, the companies just get investment from elsewhere so doesn't make an impact. The 10% which was moved would have made more in Shell than the investment it was put in. We need to get the most for our pensions.

Another MOP stated that pothole begin as ditches not being cleaned out and water running on the roads. Cllr Morrish yes in some places. There are three teams a day out in Devon working on ditches. It is a time-consuming job.

Question from MOP on Devolution, Plymouth is not in the deal? So not included? Torbay are, as they were needed for the numbers to get the deal. Will we in Torridge and North Devon get more money for projects? Yes.

MOP, Devon has the longest road network, so should we not get more money? This year we will be getting an extra £6.2 million from funds that were allocated for the HS2 project.

Cllr Morrish left the meeting.

District Cllr Wheatley gave the following report.

Full Council:

Roads: The following notice of motion was proposed and voted through unanimously regarding the state of our roads here in Torridge, and the council also invited the leader and chief executive of Devon County Council to come and visit us to see how comfortable they feel driving along some of our roads in their own cars. We are yet to hear back.

This council raises concerns with Devon County Council over the level of maintenance of the highways, especially our 'A' routes and footpaths, across Torridge District. This goes beyond potholes, but into wider issues such as surface water drains, road markings, cats' eyes and general pathway maintenance. We have concerns over the apparent lack of response to issues reported via DCC reporting systems, and the lack of clarity on maintenance levels across both our urban and rural areas. Here in Torridge the poor state of our roads and footpaths is resulting in considerable worry from residents over safety, even in regular weather conditions. This is leaving people feeling isolated and disconnected from vital services. At our budget meeting, we heard that 72% of our council tax goes to DCC and we are concerned that we are not getting the highways we need and pay for.

I proposed that we send a letter to DCC Highways raising our concerns and invite them to come to our External Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explain the policies and organisation they have in place for the maintenance of roads and footpaths in Torridge and explore options to overcome admitted service shortfall.

Council tax: Torridge Full Council voted to increase council tax in line with recommendations, but it's important to note that the bulk of council tax (72%) goes to Devon County Council with only 8% retained by Torridge. The remainder is for the Police and Fire service.

Devolution proposal- Devon and Torbay Combined Authority:

There were huge concerns raised that the districts are not being given fair representation and there's a bias in favour of Torbay. We highlighted the fact that Torridge already feels forgotten by Devon County and we don't believe this will change going forward, especially given our lack of voting rights within the County Combined Authority. There were comments made by district councillors last meeting that it was a "talking shop" and a "farce".

The public consultation is open to everyone to respond (including parish councils collectively) and the deadline is 24th March.

Southwest Water: TDC and North Devon District Council had a meeting with Southwest Water and we were horrified to find out that they do not measure the volume of sewage going into our rivers and seas at all, all they measure is a start/stop time which doesn't really tell us a lot as it could be a trickle or it could be blasting sewage into them.

We also raised concerns over bathing water quality. Current policies are to only monitor at a certain time of year (so-called bathing season). But we know in reality that people are swimming in the sea all year round because of the health benefits it brings (but not if the water is full of sewage!).

SWW talked about their management plans and investment. This included desalination plants in Cornwall, pumping from rivers to storage reservoirs, and a potential new reservoir near Bristol.

MOP when you have a meeting with DCC about roads ask them to consult with local businesses before granting road closures.

7) **PCSO report.** No Report.

8) **Clerk Report. Update on bridge being hit and the use of CCTV, Air Ambulance landing light.**

Bridge being hit and the use of CCTV. Information from DCC Highways Officer, our network operations control centre has been in contact with me about the CCTV proposal, and they have advised that there are quite a few complications and challenges with this request.

CCTV is permitted on private property, providing that it only covers private property and also fulfils all relevant data protection requirements. If a private CCTV camera is capturing data in public spaces, the owner of the camera may be held liable for certain contraventions of General Data Protection Regulations. (GDPR)

-If a CCTV camera is intended for monitoring a public space, then there are many regulations regarding GDPR which would need to be adhered to, involving the data captured and how that data is handled

and who it is handled by etc. Its presence would need valid justification if a dispute were to be raised on privacy grounds.

-The costs incurred installing and maintaining a camera are significant, and we would have concerns that it would not achieve the desired outcome. It is unlikely that it would prevent vehicles hitting the bridge and does not ensure any guarantee of payment of costs associated with any damage caused. Our bridges team should have no issue carrying out safety repairs to the bridge if it is ever in a dangerous condition following an incident.

Devon County Council would not approve a private CCTV camera monitoring a public space for risk of contravention of GDPR regulations. We should not install our own camera in this location, as the processes for installing a CCTV camera and meeting all legal requirements are complex, and the associated costs would likely not be outweighed by any potential benefits from making claims for bridge damage, as previously this bridge has not received a high number of significant incidents when compared to other bridges.

Air Ambulance landing light. All the lights are now working again. The Parish Council has received £280 towards the cost from County Cllr Morrish's locality grant. I am waiting for an invoice from the electrician.

9) **Chair's Report.** No Report.

10) **Community Hall, Section 106. Report from Cllr Ansell.**

We have received full planning permission on the site for a community hall. Still no real use as the site is still currently landlocked. We are waiting for the Deed of Variation (DOV) to give us vehicular and pedestrian access. The landowners' solicitor had until the 1st March to draw up the DOV she was ill and didn't draw it up. TDC have now instructed their solicitors to draw up the DOV. I spoke to the TDC Planning Officer today and their solicitor is away, he hopes to have the DOV before Easter. Cllr Ritson asked is there any reason it won't be unlocked, and access given? Cllr Ansell and Cllr Crossley: no guarantees and we do not know what the requirements will be. Cllr Ritson: the landowners say they want to give the land to the Parish. Cllr Ansell: the leader of TDC, Head of TDC Legal, Head of Communities and Place, the case officer and District Councillors told us to accept what the landowners want or we would be negotiating with them far into the future. It is very challenging to get anywhere with this and we have been waiting for a DOV since December 2023. MOP1 asked: so, anything could be in the DOV? Cllr Crossley: yes, we have an idea what will be in the DOV from letters from the landowner's solicitor which are all on the Planning website. There is also an issue with the landowner saying they will not pay transfer costs. Cllr Ansell went on to say that the sub planning committee had met with Sir Geoffrey Cox MP and his chief of staff to see if he can do anything to bring this to completion. Sir Geoffrey also met with the landowner before seeing us. He will talk to TDC and he will look at the DOV when it has been drawn up.

MOP2 asked: my understanding on completing of planning and marking out the site then the land is transferred from TDC to the Parish Council, how straightforward is the marking out of the site? Cllr Crossley: TDC have said they will make it as easy as they can for us. The DOV is between the landowner and TDC and DCC, but TDC have said that we, the Parish Council, will see it before it is agreed. MOP3: was there a time limit? Cllr Ansell: yes, 10 years from the granting of full planning permission for the Luke's Farm development, but this has now been extended by TDC. TDC have also said that the 'material start' will be staking out the site, no more than that. Cllr Crossley: we are no further forward apart from the planning; we the Parish Council have upheld our side of the Section 106.

11) **Planning Subcommittee.**

Cllr Ansell explained that the Planning Subcommittee was set up as planning takes a lot of time and some of the Councillors have more time than others. It was decided that three councillors would read all the planning documents relevant to the Parish and report back to all Councillors. It was the Planning Subcommittee which took on the task of applying for planning for a community hall on the Section 106 site. The subcommittee currently consists of Cllr Crossley, Cllr Fairall and me. Mr Wheeler gave a lot of time to the Sub Committee when he was a councillor. MOP: lots of work has been put in by all of the

Sub Committee. Cllr Ansell: it was suggested at the last meeting that the Sub Committee should be dissolved. Cllr Fairall was voted on to the committee until this meeting. Cllr Ritson said he had made the suggestion at the last meeting and wants to withdraw it, if all other councillors agree. We thought that the S106 agreement was almost completed at the last meeting. Cllr Hutching, I thought the same and that it would be completed by now. I am of no help as I can not give the time. Cllr Moyes, lots of whispers and wrong information by other parties involved. Cllr Hutching proposed that the Planning Subcommittee continues and Cllr Moyes seconded the proposal. All Councillors agreed. Thank you for all the work, lots of work and time has been spent on this and it is still not completed.

12) Clerk Appraisal.

Need to appoint a Councillor/s to complete the Clerk appraisal. The Clerk completes a form beforehand, and the other Councillors can raise issues with the appointed Councillor. Cllr Fairall agreed to complete the Appraisal. Clerk and Cllr Fairall to set a date.

13) 20MPH campaign update. Cllr Crossley gave the following report.

20mph Update. Black Torrington was in the news last May for its successful application for a 20mph speed limit through the village. Just 6 communities out of 57 were selected. However, there were 105 Expressions of Interest of which we were one. This shows the high level of support for introducing 20mph zones within Devon. Unfortunately, applications were only open to those communities which met certain criteria (proof of previous accidents, an active Speedwatch group etc). These were then graded and the top 6 took priority.

Whilst there have certainly been incidents, not to mention near-misses, in the village over the years, I discovered that, at that time, none had been recorded. Eligibility meant demonstrating that there had been damage to property and casualties.

At the same time, some will remember I began the process of setting up a Speedwatch scheme in the village. Unfortunately, Covid came along, and my own circumstances changed and no-one else came forward to pick up the reins. However, in the meantime, I have been following the '20's Plenty' campaign. It convinced me that 20mph is what the village really needs and not simply a campaign which reinforces the existing speed limit. With narrow roads, parked cars and not much pavement, I think 30mph is too fast for our village. Plus, all the volunteer time and effort involved in running a Speedwatch group would *still* not have guaranteed us getting onto the scheme. So, last year the Parish Council agreed to pass a motion supporting 20mph.

But really, Devon County Council needs to adopt this policy for *all* villages and not just those prepared to jump through all the application hoops. It's completely irrational to wait for accidents to happen, and casualties to occur, before taking steps to stop them - especially when many other county councils have already adopted this policy and begun a phased delivery to all communities. Indeed, both Scotland and Wales have adopted it across the entire country.

However, most councils in England are strapped for cash right now and this is likely one reason for that resistance. A clue to this is the decision made last December for a trial whereby communities pay for their own small highways improvements. Whatever your thoughts on that, this could give us the opportunity to adopt a 20mph speed limit ourselves. It would obviously need someone to drive this forward so, if anyone feels strongly about this, please step forward. Contact Cllr Crossley or the Clerk. Clearly, it's foolish to think that, even if we did achieve a 20mph limit, that would stop people speeding through the village - but there is growing evidence that it does help reduce average speed. And it's a lot cheaper and easier to install than physical traffic calming. And let's not forget, a 20mph limit is not just about preventing casualties and damage to property, it's also about improving everyone's quality of life in the village.

If anyone would like to promote the 20mph message, there are stickers available for windows, bumpers and bikes, which I am happy to order for them. They are not expensive and there are discounts on bulk orders.

MOP told the meeting that people are using the small road in front of the smithy as a cut through. The road is for horses and pedestrians and is not Council owned. Looking into putting up signs.

14) Play Equipment Inspection report.

The report was sent to all Councillors. Cllr Ansell asked if Cllr Ritson can work through the report and do the work that he can do. Cllr Riston said he can, and he will contact the inspector to get advice on a few of the points raised. Most issues are low risk, one was moderate risk which is the gazebo which is ongoing and the Council are aware of the rot.

15) Village Hall and Shop Sign.

Cllr Fairall has been asked if a sign for the Village Hall and Shop can be put on the finger signpost in the Square next to the bus shelter. Clerk will ask Highways if signs can be added to the post as long as no cost to Highways. Pub Landlord has started getting a swing sign for the shop. He has already invested £5,000 in the shop and it is not open yet.

16) Sheepwash Sign. West Road.

Highways Officer has asked the Contractor who will be doing the 30MPH signs for a quote. Providing the sign does have the backing channels we discussed previously, then yes, our contractor would be able to complete the work for that price estimation (£269.84. +VAT) and we would just need to arrange handover or collection of the sign at some point.

Alternatively, it would be possible to instruct our own street works accredited contractor, providing they would do it to the relevant specification, which would include a requirement for a concrete base of volume of at least 0.25m³ per pole, and the poles would need to be 76mm diameter galvanised steel. Clerk to check it has backing channels.

Councillors agreed if it does then yes Highways Contractor can do the work. If it doesn't ask if the Contractor can do the concrete and poles and the Parish Council will fix the sign on.

17) PLANNING:

17a) Planning Applications. None.

17b) Planning Decisions.

1/0137/2023/FUL Erection of new village hall to include parking and outdoor spaces (amended red edge) Land Adjacent to Lukes Farm, Sheepwash. The application was granted permission.

Cllr Ansell informed the meeting of the planning being granted permission earlier in the meeting.

18) FINANCE:

18a) as at 5th March 2024:

Main Account £3,720.57

Saving Account £18,116.42

Expenditure:

Date	£	Detail	Transfer
19.01.2024	71.94	H Crossley, Defibrillator Pads.	Bacs
19.01.2024	18.80	HMRC	Bacs
30.01.2024	390.00	GW Architects Ltd	Bacs
30.01.2024	500.00	Grant and Hall Hire to Sheepwash Hall.	Bacs
30.01.2024	168.00	The Play Inspection	Bacs
30.01.2024	150.00	Grant to Citizens Advice	Bacs
30.01.2024	246.00	Defibrillator battery	Bacs

Total	1,544.74		

Citizen's Advice have emailed thanking the Parish Council for the Grant.

Income:

Date	£	Detail
07.02.2024	280.00	Locality Grant from Cllr Morrish for Landing Light
Total	280.00	

Cllr Ansell read out the above information, no questions from the Councillors.

19) Items for Information. Items emailed out to Councillors.

Tuesday 26th March, road closed from Swardicott Cross to North Street for patching.

Cllr Ansell read out the above.

20) Items to be included in the agenda for the next meeting.

The next meeting will be held in May 2024 unless a meeting is needed before. The May meeting will be the Parish Meeting followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

Date of next meeting 15th May 2024

Meeting Closed 8.42pm

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