

SHEEPWASH
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
Held in the Village Hall
Wednesday 15th May 2024
at 7.00pm
Minutes

Present, Cllr Ansell, Cllr Fairall, Cllr Ritson, Cllr Moys, Cllr Hutching, Cllr Crossley, District Cllr Wheatley, Selina Woollacott (Clerk) 13 members of the public (MOP)

Cllr Ansell asked if anyone would like to Chair the Annual Parish Meeting. No one did. The meeting was Chaired by Cllr Ansell.

District Cllr Wheatley had another meeting to attend, Cllr Ansell offered him the chance to speak first

County & District Councillor reports for the year 2023/2024.

No County Councillors report.

District Councillor report,

Internal Overview and Scrutiny- We heard from public speaker Mike Teare, chair of the charity “Way of the Wharves” who spoke to the committee about the newly bestowed recognition of Bideford and the River Torridge’s Heritage Harbour status- one of only 10 Heritage Harbours in the UK. This extends from Northam all the way up the River Torridge through Bideford up to Rosemoor Gardens in Great Torrington. There is no legal status or pot of money attached to it but brings a sense of identity and pride which can be drawn upon to develop the area and its cultural identity, promoting visitors to Bideford and its surroundings.

We had a call-in to scrutinise a decision made by the community and resources committee. Councillors on the scrutiny committee voted to endorse a climate change adaptation strategy for the region (Devon Cornwall and Isles of Scilly). Some councillors on the main decision-making committee had previously made comments relating to climate denial and conspiracy theories which is in total contradiction with our intentions as a council, having declared a climate emergency in 2019. So, it’s been sent back to the community and resources committee to think again (and maybe do some homework on the realities of climate change!) Cllr Ritson asked who are the once who don’t believe in climate change? Cllr Wheatley replied so of the District Councillors. Climate change is also air and water quality. TDC are trying to work together with different organisations like SWW to address issues. We would like to see more blue flag beaches.

We also had a presentation from Chris Fuller our economic development officer in relation to the Torridge estuary. There are a lot of competing interests which need to be pulled together. We have the Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre under way with the help of nearly £16M in levelling up funds, as well as the re-growth of Harland and Wolff at Appledore shipyard. There’s also the Celtic Sea floating offshore wind in the pipeline, which has a huge ambition of creating 25GW of energy by 2050. Not forgetting our new Heritage Harbour status. The current strategy was adopted in 2014 and is way out of date given the huge number of changes taking place. We made a proposal for the council to develop a new strategy which would take all new changes into consideration. Down the line wave and tidal power will likely become an option.

Grounds Maintenance- Richard Haste operations manager gave us an update. Grounds maintenance went in-house two years ago in April 2022. It was a positive report, he told us complaints have reduced across Torridge and they are able to be more flexible with grass cutting etc. There are 124 sites listed across Torridge with 700 different items. In terms of planting, we now only purchase perennials. We have also purchased a shredder and produce our own compost. We have also purchased a “moss brush” which we were told is particularly good on churchyard paths... 6 biodiversity sites have been identified and link in with wildlife corridors. We have also increased the use of the greenhouses in Victoria Park. We were told that the team are always willing to work with volunteers so don’t be worried to get in touch.

Update on planning enforcement workload: We heard from Helen Smith our senior planning officer. There are currently 332 open cases, down from 446 in December last year with 2 full-time permanent enforcement officers. There was a spike of cases in 2021 and we had temporary provision of an extra officer Oct-March which saw 305 cases closed. Enforcement is not statutory but discretionary, however obviously needs to happen to ensure planning and associated building is done as correctly as possible. Enforcement starts off with a Planning Contravention Notice which is essentially a questionnaire (early stage). Following this there would be a formal enforcement notice. The first

point is to try to negotiate but this doesn't always work. The council has also had 100% success on enforcement appeals over the past 4 years. Grant McGill, Helen Mason, and Kris Evely form the enforcement team.

Sheepwash Specific- Contacted Kris Evely in Planning regarding DoV update recently and am awaiting feedback. Cllr Ansell asked what is classed as successful when it comes to enforcement? Are a large number of buildings without permission knocked down? Cllr Wheatley replied Knocking down rarely happens its more going for retrospective planning and working with the owners and negotiating changes.

Parish Council Chairperson Report for the year 2023/2024.

King's Coronation: we agreed to make up to £350 available for parish events associated with the Coronation. Some of this was used to fund the free Bacon Butty event in the Village Hall on Coronation Day, Saturday 6 May 2023.

Asset report: a list of Parish Council assets can be found under Documents on the Parish Council website. The assets are wide ranging: metal rubbish bins, the Jubilee Park, the 'telephone' kiosk, the War Memorial and the Square, the Air Ambulance lighting columns, switch gear and cables, a lawn mower, the street furniture, two parcels of land by the river, and so on. The assets are checked each year by the Clerk and any maintenance requirements are noted and acted upon. We are looking into a new finger sign in the Square and painting the lower parts of 4 black lamp posts. New 'no dogs' signs have been installed in the Jubilee Park

Play equipment inspection: the items in Jubilee Park are checked each year by a play equipment inspection company and they have reported that it's all in good shape. We agreed to replace the gazebo roof at a cost of up to £500. The roof was replaced in late September and this project was overseen by Councillor Ritson, who was helped by a number of volunteers, thank Cllr Ritson and the volunteers. The cost of the roof was within budget.

Thanks to the person who cleaned the bridge. Thanks to the person who cleaned the cobbles, benches, and War Memorial.

A set of goal posts have been bought for the football players in the Jubilee Park. These were funded by the Quiz profit and the Bridgeland Trust.

Temporary chalk parking bays: the Parish Council agreed that TDC would mark temporary (chalk) standard sized parking bays in the Square and at the back of the pub, to encourage drivers to park more carefully. This took place in October 2022. The markings are wearing away now. A recent survey found as follows: 85% of respondents found them helpful and would like them refreshed, 2% markings helped, but don't want them redone, 11% the chalk markings didn't make any difference. MOP asked who is responsible for Dog Waste bins as the one in East Street needs work doing to it.

Poppy Wreath and Poppies for around the Village: following a request from a parishioner the Parish Council agreed to purchase 8 large poppies which we put on the lamp posts and around the Square for Remembrance in November. We also purchased a wreath, as usual.

Fallen Trees near the bridge and bridge hit again: Highways have cut down a couple of unstable pine trees that were overhanging the bridge. These were on Parish Council land. The clerk reported that the bridge has been hit again, but to no avail so far. Given the number of large agricultural vehicles and construction lorries we asked the Devon County Council Bridges and Structures team to check the weight limit for Sheepwash Bridge. They confirmed that the bridge should be fine to carry 44 tonnes.

Village Shop: not Parish Council business, but just to report as it's of interest to parishioners. The Community Shop and Post Office in Mermaid House closed in early December 2023. We now have a mobile Post Office service – Dave and his van visit the Square from 11.30am to 12.30pm every Wednesday. At the end of April 2023, Kim Beynon opened a new shop 'Bay and Bloom' operating from what was the rod room at the back of the pub. We wish her every success.

Finances: the precept is just over £7,500 per annum now – no increase per household, but more households in the parish. We can reclaim VAT, which gives another £1,000 and we received two locality grants totalling £730 from our Devon County Councillor and £150 from the Bridgeland Trust. Interest on our savings account was £500, so total income for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 was just short of £10,000. For the same period expenditure has been just short of £7,300 – the biggest items being insurance, clerk's salary, gazebo roof and Luke's Farm s106. (Luke's Farm s106 costs have been £6,900 since the project started on 1 September 2022). Predicted expenditure for 2023-24 is £2,000 plus Luke's Farm s106 costs.

The total funds that the Parish Council has (in its current and savings accounts):

@ 1 April 2023	£18,920
@ 31 March 2024	£21,560

Luke's Farm s106: it was agreed by the Parish Council to allocate £10,000 to the project of securing the Community Hall site for the Parish. We applied for a grant, but our application was not successful as most grant providers will only grant funds when building starts. To date £6,900 has been spent on the project. The Parish Council are in the process of trying to claim £475 of this amount from DCC for an unnecessary survey requested by Highways. We have received full planning permission for a Community Hall on the Luke's Farm s106 site (see TDC website reference 1/0137/2023/FUL). This is progress, but not completion, as the site is landlocked (the landowners declared ransom strips along the east and south of the site). A draft Deed of Variation, drawn up by Ashfords solicitors on behalf of TDC, is now, May 2024, with the landowners' solicitor. The purpose of this document is to give the parish acceptable vehicular and pedestrian access to the site. The agreement of the document is between the landowners and TDC, but TDC Planners have said that we will be able to comment on the document before it is finalised. Eventually, the idea is that ownership of the land will transfer from the Trace's to TDC, and then from TDC to Sheepwash Parish.

The Deed of Variation was first discussed in December 2023. We met with our MP, Sir Geoffrey Cox, on 23 February 2024 to see if he could do anything to move this along. At this meeting he said that he would be happy to check through the Deed of Variation for us. We are in regular contact with his office. As at 13 May 2024 we are still waiting to see the document.

Once the land is transferred to our ownership the next step will be to form a Project Group – consisting of four or five members, I would think. This group will report to the Parish Council.

The purpose of the Project Group will be to assess whether or not the new Community Hall Project should go ahead straightaway.

To this end, the activities that the group will undertake will include the following:

- Public consultation with all parishioners.
- Consultations with existing VH Committee members.
- Consultations with members of current user groups (skittles, snooker, art, knit and natter etc).
- Consultations with advisor groups (eg: Devon Communities) and groups in other villages who have been through this process.
- Business plan to ensure the new hall can pay its way when it is operational.
- Funding sources and strategy.
- Fundraising plans.

As you'll realise from the list above, the Project Group members will need to have a range of skills and expertise and be prepared to commit to a considerable amount of work.

We'll have to decide how the members of the Project Group are chosen. Are they self-selecting or are they identified by some group as to who would be good and useful?

A MOP asked now that the planning permission has been granted can the Hall site be pegged/staked out? Cllr Ansell yes, if we have access to the site, which we currently don't have. We should have access once the DoV is agreed. The plans are online. We tried to take full advantage of the view for events like weddings. Cllr Hutching the plan doesn't show a bar area in the Hall. Cllr Ansell those details can be worked through in the future. The Planning Officer has said that all we will need to do is stake out the area of the hall, however, it will be useful to create an entrance as this would make accessing and using the land easier. At some point we will look into what the site can be used for until building work starts.

Open Forum for parishioners. A MOP asked if the landowner of the Community Hall site, who was due to come to the last meeting but did not, has she said she will come to a meeting or been asked to come to a meeting? Cllr Ansell replied that the Parish Council has not asked her to come to a meeting, all parishioners are welcome at Parish Council meetings.

MOP2 Could the 30mph sign on North Street be moved beyond the farm and the footpath as there are no pavements on that stretch of the road. Clerk will ask Highways and check the Planning Permission as we do not think it was a requirement to move the speed limit at the time of building the properties on North Street.

MOP3 What is happening with the barriers on North Street they have been there a long time. Cllr Hutching replied I think it is water meters being installed.

Closing remarks from the Chairperson. Thank You all for attending.
Meeting Closed 7.39pm

Sheepwash Parish Clerk, Selina Woollacott,

Tel: 01409 281280 email: clerk@sheepwashparishcouncil.co.uk