**Minutes for the meeting held on 08/05/24**

**Those present:** Faye Davies (Clerk), Cllrs Wheaton, Murch, Craze, Pawley, Seatherton, Beauregard, and Nicklin, County Cllr Henderson and District Cllr Whitehead.

**Also present:** Five members of the public were present.

**1. Apologies:** Cllrs Blyther and Alford. No apologies received from Cllr Mullinger.

**2. Declarations of Interest:** None, although County Cllr Henderson later informed that Cllr Pawley should have declared an interest in item 5e and left the room when he was informed there was a conflict of interest so that it could be discussed, which Cllr Pawley acknowledged.

**3. Minutes:** All signed as a true account

**4. Clerks report:** SLCC membership came in underbudget at £112 (originally quoted £215), VAT reclaim of £4,318.44 came in so no general reserve money was needed, budget precept of £7,350.00 has come in which leaves £11,339.45 in the current account. Easily LTD (old website company) took a payment of £24.22 via direct debit, this has been queried and a refund has been requested. Easily LTD are claiming this is payment for the domain name and are so far refusing to refund the money.

Members of St Hieritha’s Church has informed how some of the Climate and Environment Grant Fund money could be used to benefit them, unfortunately some of the requests come under general maintenance and so the grant would not be accepted for that, however other requests may be successful and can be included on the application when it is submitted. Clerk and Cllrs Beauregard, Seatherton, Craze and Alford to meet and discuss the grant further.

**5. Payments for approval:**

**a. Information Commissioners Office payment of £35.00** – all agreed.

**b. DALC membership renewal of £377.48** – all agreed.

**c. Umberleigh Village Hall charge for 11/04/24 of £20** – all agreed.

**d. Methodist school rooms charge of £75 for five meetings** – all agreed.

**e. Payment of £570 to Cllr Pawley for the Scribe Accounting Software purchase** – all agreed. (Amendment made 29/05/24 – with the exception of Cllr Pawley who abstained).

**f. Clerks Annual Salary to be approved for monthly payment from the start of the tax year, £352.77 a month, £4233.24 annually** – all agreed.

**g. Previous payments made that were not mentioned in previous minutes (attached to the agenda)** – all agreed. (Amendment made 29/05/24 – ‘mentioned’ changed to ‘authorised’).

**6. Finance Update (Cllr Pawley)** – There are some issues with the Scribe Accounting Software regarding all the payments and receipts for all three accounts needing to be done together and cannot be done separately, which is not how this council presents accounts for AGAR. Cllr Pawley is currently trying to work a way around this which does not confuse the accounts. The budget was underspent and so no money was taken from general reserves.

**7. County Councillors update and highways report (Paul Henderson**) – please see attached report at the end of this document.

**8. District Councillors report (Sue Whitehead)** – Cllr grants have opened up again for the year, available for anything that will benefit the community. Plot 44 planning application at Winson Cross has been withdrawn.

**9. Update on the adoption of the BT phone box** – Originally the telephone box was being removed and so the council could apply to adopt the box, the application was submitted however it was then declined and BT informed that due to the lack of signal within Chittlehampton the telephone box would need to remain for its intended purpose. The maintenance of the telephone box is BT’s upkeep and not the Parish Councils. There is an email address that you can contact with any complaints about the telephone box: customer.serv.payphones@bt.com.

**10. Members of the public open session** – the new residents of Rowan cottage would like to place a skip in the square whilst they renovate, they have informed that it would be there for a maximum of a week. The council did not object to this and advised that the owners of Rowan cottage should advise the parishioners of their intention. Cllr Craze suggested that a risk assessment may be required.

Mrs Edwards asked if the maintenance of the BT phone box can be chased up, members of the public were informed that the Parish Council does not necessarily need to do this, and that the public are able to themselves.

Mrs Warren asked about the website and was informed that the website has to be WCAG 2.2 compliant and therefore the Parish Council is currently researching different websites and looking into the potential of an outside company building a website for the Parish Council.

It was brought up again about the weeds on the square, parishioners previously had requested eco-friendly weed killers be used, which is being looked into as the appropriate tickets and licences are required. It was also discussed who owns the cobbles on the square and whether permission needs to be sought in order to then spray the weed killer there. Cllr Wheaton informed Rose and Marian that he is in correspondence with a person who is willing to discuss the weed killing and the dos and don’ts regarding it, he suggested the four of them meet and decide on a plan of action.

**11. Cobbaton Road project update** – to be conducted by Cllr Nicklin

**a. Revision of Local Plan** – this will be happening this year and Senior Planning Policy Officer Liz Dee is looking for priority status. Parish Councils will be contacted in June or July regarding what priorities they would like to be addressed.

**b. Conservation Appraisal information** – this task will need to be completed by someone who has the appropriate expertise. North Devon District Council currently does not have the resources available to undertake this work, it was also worth noting that Chittlehampton Conservation Area currently does not gave a character appraisal.

**12. Date of the next meeting** – Wednesday 19th June Chittlehampton Methodist School Rooms.

**13. To confirm the date of the next meeting** – Extraordinary meeting Wednesday 29th May at Chittlehampton Methodist School Rooms at 19:30, to discuss the items on the AGR agenda that were deferred.

**These minutes are a draft copy until confirmed as a true account.**

**Devon County Council Report**

**May 2024**

**Highways Patching Work**

**I’m pleased top see that some patching work has been completed on the road leading up from the village towards the B3227 (south Molton) but I have requested that this road should now be surface dressed. Additionally, the B3227 heading towards South Molton from Bray Bridge heading east has been surfaced dressed but again I am asking Highways to consider carrying out repairs to the road leading west from Bray Bridge up to Four White Gates.**

**In regard to the road surface in the vicinity of Greendown Farm, Highways Officers are aware of the deteriorating road surface conditions primarily caused by the increase of HGV’s entering/leaving Greendown Farm itself.**

**One piece of ‘good news’ is that for the forthcoming year an additional £12m has been allocated to the annual Highways budget for Devon to go towards the cost of repairs.**

**Umberleigh**

**Last month I met with the village hall committee to update them on the closure of Umberleigh Bridge for necessary repairs (the week after the N devon Show for a period of one month) and also in regard to the possible reduction in the 40mph speed limit from the village heading towards S Molton to 30mph as well as the potential for double white lining the on the hill. The residents also raised the subject of the poor fencing of the pond area opposite Umberleigh station bordering the B3227. The ownership of this fence is being confirmed by Highways Officers but it is likely that the repair/maintenance of this fence is not the responsibility of DCC.**

**Devolution**

**Last week a special Council meeting was held at County Hall to debate and then vote on whether or not to move forward with the devolution agreement with Torbay. A number of my parishes had raised concerns about the deal being offered and so at the vote, I chose to support an amendment tabled by the opposition to defer the decision until:**

1. **The future funding (past year 3) of this new tier of government was identified. The first 3 years are being covered to the tune of £1m by central govt but there is no indication of who will cover these costs on an ongoing basis and my concern is that our Council Tax bills will be increased to cover the costs.**
2. **All the District Councils across the County have only been given a total of 2 seats whereas Torbay (with a population of 192,000 people) has 3 seats. To me, this means that N devon Council would have no real representation in the devolution deal and this is a bad thing, not just for Devon, but especially for N Devon.**

**Although the tabled amendment failed, at the main vote I abstained as although I’m not against devolution, I just couldn’t balance this particular deal as being good for us here in N Devon. However, the motion to move forward with the devolution deal on offer was voted through and will now move onto its next stage.**

**to have New Leader**

**The current Leader of Devon County Council has announced he is stepping down at the next Annual Meeting of the County Council that will take place later this month.**

**The Conservative group have chosen James McInnes to be the new Leader with effect from this meeting with Cllr Andrea Davis (Combe Martin) becoming Deputy Leader. Joh Hart is likely to become Chair of Devon County Council in his last year before the elections with Braunton County Councillor becoming Deputy Chair.**

**I have to say that it is good that N Devon has this type of representation at the top of DCC.**

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