

**Minutes of the meeting of Chittlehampton Parish Council held on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 7.30pm in the Methodist Hall Rooms.**

**Present** – Cllr. Wheaton(chairman); Cllr. Beauregard; Cllr. Nicklin; Cllr. Alford; Cllr. Hoare; Cllr. Seatherton; Cllr. Blyther; County Cllr. Henderson; 5 members of the public; District Cllr. Whitehead; Cllr. Jones. Penny Clapham (Locum Clerk)

**A) Co-option to Council to fill a vacancy** – Sally Brooks proposed by Cllr. Wheaton, all in favour. The declaration of acceptance of office was signed.

**1) PUBLIC DISCUSSION**

An opportunity for members of the public to make representations, answer questions and give evidence in respect of any item of business on the agenda, or any matter of interest to the parish. The period of time designated for public participation shall not exceed 3 minutes per person. (Standing Orders 3e and 3f). Reminder that members of the public are not allowed to raise issues when Council is in committee. Peter Bradshaw to update Council on the village hall refurbishment.

Parishioner regarding an email asked why the response from the Chairman was not on the agenda. Parishioner could not find a copy of the agenda – it was not on the website due to issues in putting documents to the website.

Peter Bradshaw updated Council on the village hall build progress. He had been copied in to an email and was aware of concerns raised. Read out a letter. (attached to these minutes). As planned, on budget and within target the hall will open 2<sup>nd</sup> December for the Christmas bingo. Soft opening. Cllr. Wheaton thanked Peter Bradshaw for coming to Council and updating on the progress.

**2) Apologies For Absence:** None.

**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 District Council within 28 days of the change. None.

**4) Matters raised by the Chairman** (for information only) The planned disco was cancelled due to low numbers. Coffee morning 14th December 10-12 in Methodist Hall  
Speedwatch update, Jim Atherton is the administrator on the Whatsapp group – awaiting replies from the speedwatch manager; training will commence as soon as group members have been accepted. County Cllr. Henderson informed Council that Atherton are desperate to have speedwatch in place - they have a mobile speed camera and could come to Chittlehampton.

**5) District and County Councillor Reports –**

District Cllr. Henderson read from a lengthy report which included mention of the Devon Transport Plan, railways and trails, the Walking Infrastructure Plan, the fact that road repairs are being accelerated with the use of dragon patchers, new buses and the fact that Devolution is going ahead.

The Household Support Fund is now open for applications <https://www.northdevon.gov.uk/benefits-and-grants/household-support-fund>

County councillor elections to be held next May should anyone be interested in standing for this role.

Planning meeting point – there are many class Q applications coming forward. These are redundant agricultural buildings with the use of the footprint to apply for class Q residential. Head of Planning has

offered to do a presentation to parish councils to do with class Q – yes please. Cllr. Henderson will request this. Considers enforcements are improving in the district.

Planning application in progress in the neighbouring parish. This is close to Chittlehampton and could affect the roads in the area. (the full report is available on request to the Locum Clerk)

**6) Minutes** –the Minutes of the meetings held on the 11th September 2024 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

**7) Ardlui** – to receive an update from Cllr. Nicklin. This relates to a house in the square and requests for information. Empty houses have been in the news recently. This property been taken on by the local housing officer. He writes to the owner, listing works to be done with 21 days to make it secure. If this is not done the housing officer for empty homes can enforce action.

#### **8) Open Spaces –**

- i. To create a committee to manage Council’s open spaces. This should consist of 3 councillors and other volunteers who can be co-opted on. Terms of reference will be sourced once the committee is in place. Proposed by Cllr. Wheaton, the committee consisting of Cllr. Beauregard, Cllr. Jones, Cllr. Brooks, Cllr. Nicklin. All agreed by show of hands.
- ii. To receive the news of the grant from the National Lottery Community Fund for £14,998. Phase 2 of the play area.
- iii. Play area update to be received. Not available. The new committee will report at the November meeting.

#### **9) PLANNING**

**Planning Applications** - District Council has asked for observations from the Parish Council on the following planning applications: none received.

#### **10) FINANCE**

<b>Expenditure</b>	Umberleigh Village Hall – rental	£20.00	BACs
	Clerk’s overtime September	£296.81	BACs
	Standing orders suspended for parishioner to query overtime		
	Standing orders resumed.		
	PKF Littlejohn – external audit	£252.00	BACs
	Locum Clerk expenses	£475.92	BACs
	Hall hire Sept & October	£30.00	BACs
	North Devon – dog bin empties	£262.08	BACs

**Income** Second half precept £7,350.00 DD

Bank Reconciliation and Statement, for information – currently not available

Council resolved to accept the accounts as presented above. Proposed by Cllr. Wheaton, all agreed by show of hands.

**11) Council emails/phone** – Councillors to consider and agree to change from using personal email addresses for council business to dedicated council email address; suggested is [surname.chittlehamptonpc@gmail.com](mailto:surname.chittlehamptonpc@gmail.com) to be left to individual councillors to set up should they wish. Council phone – there should be a mobile phone specifically for council business. To consider the purchase of a pay as you go phone. Ongoing.

**12) Banking** - to agree a retainer for Faye Davies (Clerk) whilst on maternity leave, in order for the banking to be done in good time as she has full internet access to Council's bank account and has agreed to do this task. Cllr. Jones will manage the payments for the time being.

Mention was made of 'Keeping in Touch' days with regard to maternity leave. Cllr. Nicklin explained to Council the idea behind the 'Keeping in Touch' days.

**13) Remembrance Day** – to agree to purchase a wreath. Clerk to purchase a wreath and send to Cllr. Wheaton.

**14) Grant Policy & Application Form** – to adopt a grant making policy and application form. Next agenda. Resend to all councillors.

### **15) Clerk's report**

- i. Locum clerk is unable to attend the third Wednesday in January as already committed to East Allington Parish Council. 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025.
- ii. Locum clerk is away from her desk 15<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> November inclusive.
- iii. Budget for 2025/2026 4<sup>th</sup> December for discussion. Clerk to raise the first draft and circulate.

### **16) Councillor's reports and External Meetings attended (for information only)**

Cllr. Blyther - Collecting signatures for the bus petition which is a suggestion of a bus route from South Molton to Torrington along the B3227 – agenda December for an update.

Next agenda new member to planning committee and new chair. Staffing committee too.

Cllr. Brooks – under Devon Transport Plan, query on cycle routes Umberleigh to Barnstaple?

**Items for Information** - The next council meeting will be on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at Umberleigh Village Hall.

Meeting closed at 9.31pm

### **Email Circulation**

Devon Climate Emergency October agenda (sent 11/10)      DALC Bulletin 44 (sent 11/10)

DALC Bulletin 45 (sent 14/10)

Letter attachment.

# Chittlehampton Village Hall

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Register Charity Number: 1200197

04/10/2024

FAO Chair of Chittlehampton Parish Council

Dear Michael,

Regarding the recent email that Councillor Jones circulated to members of the Parish Council, the Village Hall Trustees have the following comments.

We are a little confused in the way this has been brought to our attention, ie details of an e-mail sent from a Parish Councillor to the rest of the Parish Council copied to myself. We were uncertain whether or not we should be responding and, if so, to whom.

Perhaps it might have been better for communication to have been sent to me from either yourself or the (acting) Parish Clerk seeking our views either after discussion at a Parish Council meeting, or, preferably, inviting us to join in such discussions. In this way I feel sure any concerns could have been allayed at the outset.

Serious accusations such as these, in some cases unsubstantiated and ill-informed, do nothing to engender trust and cooperation between our two organisations, particularly as the Parish Council unanimously approved the plans with no objections (attached).

Before we address each of the points raised, we hope that Councillors fully recognise and appreciate the considerable time, effort and dedication that the trustees voluntarily commit to supporting the community. In addition to dedicating very considerable amounts of their own time and energy to raise money and undertake management of the renovation work to the village hall, the Trustees have actively engaged with the community by voluntarily organising community events such as the annual show and fete, regular whist and bingo sessions, the Christmas and Easter Fairs, monthly lunch clubs, ceilidh dances, quiz evenings, big breakfasts, skittles evenings, a casino night, a jumble sale and a live concert featuring local bands and artists.

Full renovation of the hall, as per the approved plans, is a long term project and the trustees will require the ongoing support and commitment of the community, as a whole, for it to succeed. The most critical and expensive section of work is now completed on schedule and within budget.

Our responses to the points raised are as follows.

***\*\*Community Meetings:\*\**** *Why haven't there been any meetings where the general community can attend and ask questions? As the village hall is a community asset, surely the public has the right to such meetings?*

The village hall is a community asset, but it is important to recognise it is owned by the charity not the community and the trustees are responsible for its management on behalf of the community and according to its constitution. The previous constitution was written in 1980 whereby the charity was the committee which meant that committee members were personally accountable for the charity's well-being, financial and otherwise.

At the 2022 AGM, it was agreed to restructure to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to make it a legal entity in its own right with a modern constitution in line with current charity laws. The CIO was registered with the Charity Commission on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2022 with an up-to-date constitution based on an ACRE model for village halls supported by Devon Communities Together and agreed with the Charity Commission and used by village halls throughout the UK.

As directors of the charity, the trustees meet monthly to review progress and make decisions. They are held to account at the AGM where members of the community have the power to nominate and elect trustees according to the constitution. We have a complaints policy in place and a general meeting can be called at any time by the trustees to address matters raised to them by the community.

An independent onsite quality assessment in October 2023, sponsored by DCT, accredited management of the charity as being Hallmark quality compliant.

In terms of community involvement in the project, we organised an Open Day in May 2023 to review the plans before submission. Very positive responses were received in the exit survey we performed – a report is available on the village hall website.

We also carried out a house to house survey and again very positive responses to our plans were received – a report is available on the website.

***\*\*Access for Emergency Services:\*\**** *The access point on the side of the hall, intended for ambulance and air ambulance services, doesn't appear satisfactory. Although we understand confirmation has been given, could we obtain this in writing from both Devon Air Ambulance and North Devon Ambulance Service?*

No comment was made on this matter when the plans were unanimously approved by the Parish Council. The width of access has not changed; it is the correct width for vehicles.

***\*\*Choice of Contractors and Costs:\*\**** *There is concern among parishioners that the cost of the hall is linked to the choice of contractors. Many local contractors feel that the quality of work suggests that overly expensive*

*and possibly unnecessary methods have been used. Additionally, many were not contacted regarding the contracts, and they believe costs could have been reduced with alternative materials and methods. Can we understand the reasoning behind both the contractor selection process and the choice of more expensive materials?*

To be a serious contender for major grants of hundreds of thousands of pounds from funders such as the Government's Department for Levelling-Up, Communities Ownership Fund (COF) we were obliged to manage the project in a professional manner. We

a) used the Royal Institute of British Architects Work Plan which shows the different stages to be followed and the objectives and deliverables from each stage

b) employed professionally qualified specialist skills – architect, structural engineer, quantity surveyor, mechanical and electrical engineers, environmental/ecology consultant.

c) used a JCT (Joint Contract Tribunal) contract to commit the contracted builder to the costs, quality and dates agreed.

Specialist skills were employed to ensure we built a quality product that met all certification, planning and building control requirements for a public building which are more demanding/critical than those for a residential property.

A formal tender process was advertised and followed for a building contractor. The invitation to tender was widely published to meet COF criteria, including to the largest of our local contractors. Three builders applied for the work but no village-based builders/contractors applied.

Each tender was thoroughly reviewed by a team of trustees and the architect based on the applicant's declared quote for the work, previous track record for projects of this size, commitment to meeting our COF deadline, experience of work on public buildings, a clear interest in doing the work and semblance of a professional corporate structure to meet the JCT contract criteria set.

A decision on the most suitable and competitive tender was made by all trustees.

Use of the term 'many' is unsubstantiated and we see no justification for the points allegedly made by 'local contractors' which we regard with caution.

*\*\*Roofing Materials:\*\* The roofing materials used seem different from what was originally planned, and many parishioners in direct view of the hall have expressed concern about glare. Could we receive clarification on why this change occurred and whether any consideration has been given to its impact on nearby residents?*

Use of the term 'many' is unsubstantiated and we believe is an overstatement. We have had a letter from one person, which we have answered.

The glare is caused by the new roof's external finishing material, namely ppc steel roof sheeting, specified as a condition in the planning approval for the development and with which we have complied. (ppc, polyester powder coating, is a type of dry coating rather than a conventional liquid paint).

The roofing material and finish is as planned but its colour is lighter due to contractor error which was not realised until after it had been delivered.

After a formal review of the issue by the trustees, they very reluctantly decided to accept the change rather than incur the unknown cost of a delay, which would put our COF completion commitment at risk, and repeated disruption to the village caused by heavy transport pickup and another delivery. A formal issue was raised with the contractor and we have received compensation. Please note that glare from the roof is caused by its external finishing material, not the colour and its colour is not a condition of 'the approved plans'.

*\*\*Architectural Drawings:\*\* There appears to be confusion surrounding the contract awarded for the architectural drawings of the village hall. Could we get a breakdown of how much was paid for these drawings and how that cost compared to other quotes? Was there a public consultation or a competitive bidding process for this aspect of the project?*

No contract was awarded for the architectural drawings in isolation because this was a key part of the architect's overall responsibility and not something to be assigned to someone else.

Appointment of the architect followed a formal interview of each of three applicants covering qualifications, experience, interest, cost and availability. A review of each candidate and the final decision on who to hire was carried out by three trustees and excluded any interested parties. The final appointment was made based

on qualifications, experience, interest in the project, knowledge of the building's specification and willingness to be flexible; costs were competitive.

*\*\*Disabled Access:\*\* Are there any plans to ensure disabled access to the proposed decking area on the playing field side of the building? When a member of the community inquired about this, they were informed that no such considerations were planned. Surely, this is essential for making the building fully accessible.*

The proposed decking area does have disabled access. The community member must have misunderstood.

*\*\*Budget and Phasing:\*\* There is speculation that the project is over budget and that the current work is only part of a phased project, whereas many believed this was a one-off project with funding secured for the entire build. Could we clarify the situation regarding the project budget and phases?*

The project is on schedule and within budget. COF is satisfied with our progress and for meeting the strict conditions on our grant.

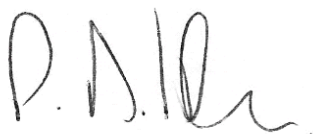
It was always going to be a phased project. The COF grant of £264,510 was conditional on us raising £62.5K match funding and a commitment to complete the first section of work in 12 months (by Dec 2024). To meet these conditions, and based on QS project costing of £330K incl VAT, the COF funded project was scoped to include the highest priority work to renovate the building's external envelope (i.e replace the roof, clad the walls, install multi-glazed windows and doors, rebuild a small extension including a ref's room and create a bat loft). Renovation of the internal facilities such as electrics, heating and fire alarm system was to follow as separately funded projects. Renovations of the old school kitchen and changing rooms and installation of external decking and solar panel were always intended to be separately funded follow-on work.

Tendered costs submitted by the contractors ranged from £400K - £500K incl VAT and the preferred supplier was negotiated down from £447K to £425K incl VAT. The increased cost was met by successful applications to The Platinum Jubilee Fund, Garfield Weston Foundation, Bernard Sunley Foundation and smaller trusts. The budget for the building renovation work, including professional skills, is £441,460 incl VAT.

To reopen the hall, cabling and electrics will need to be in place for the main hall, lobby and tea-kitchen and acceptable toilet facilities, heating and fire alarm systems in place. Funding for majority of the electrics work has been received and planned for October 2024. Applications to fund the remaining internal facilities have been submitted and we are awaiting outcomes. As always intended, we are employing local tradesmen to do this work.

We trust that this letter answers the issues that have been raised.

Regards



Peter Bradshaw, Chair, Chittlehampton Village Hall