

DRAFT

Thorverton Parish Council

Minutes of the Thorverton Parish Council meeting held at 7:00pm on Tuesday 8th March 2022, at Thorverton Memorial Hall

Present: Cllrs A Foster (Chairman)
S Crang
N Lane,
T Sanders
B Uglow
County Cllr M Squires

Absent: Cllr A Price
Cllr J Hodge
Cllr C Marshall
Cllr G Sims

In attendance: J P Roberts (Clerk & RFO) and 9 members of the public.

21/174 Public Open Session

The Chairman opened the meeting apologising for the technical difficulties that held up the start. Everybody to the meeting and highlighted the Affordable Housing item for which there was a guest speaker present.

He also addressed three matters -

1. Minutes of our meetings. The Parish Clerk is solely responsible for taking and writing the minutes; these should be "as short as is consistent with clarity and accuracy" (from Charles Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration) and both NALC and DALC say that there's no need for verbatim reports nor specific sections of any address made by a member of the public to be included. I have every confidence in our Clerk keeping to these directives.
2. The recent Freedom of Information (Fol) request and the email sent to the Monitoring Officer and District Cllr Deed on 1 March alleging that a particular email was missing from the Clerk's response. The Fol response from the Clerk on 9 Feb clearly refers to this email having already been sent in November, so within Fol guidelines it doesn't have to be repeated. Note that we have a receipt to confirm it was received the same day as it was sent in November. Nothing, I repeat nothing, has been held back.
3. The final matter I would like to comment on is the last line of the 1 March email and I quote "This Parish Council stinks of corruption." Note it's not "a whiff" or "faint air" but "stinks". Anyone reading this could only reach one conclusion - the writer is saying the Parish Council is corrupt. For the avoidance of any doubt let me say that I am not corrupt; I'm absolutely confident that none of my colleagues seated here are either. I stood for election because I think I am lucky to live in Thorverton and want to try my best to help the village; I believe my colleagues share the same general view. This unwarranted remark has been made without any evidence to support it and it is extremely offensive.

The Chairman then asked speakers to keep their comments to the allotted five minutes as written in the standing orders.

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21/175 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were made.

21/176 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Price who has family commitments, Cllr Hodge who is isolating and Cllr Marshall who has tested positive for Covid. Mr Sims unwell. The Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to accept the reasons given.

21/177 **External Reports**

- i) C/Cllr Squires was thanked for submitting her written report in advance (see appendix A below). Cllr Squires explained that her Airband contact had left that business, but they did help with connection to fast fibre broadband. She also expanded on the apprenticeship scheme. The Council asked if she thought it was worth writing to the MP about the problem with satnavs leading larger vehicles down inappropriate lanes. She confirmed that DCC had little influence with the relevant companies and it was considered a national issue.
- ii) D/Cllr Deed submitted a written report (see appendix B below) but could not attend the meeting due to another engagement. The Council noted the report.
- iii) No Crime report this month .

21/178 **Affordable Housing**

[Standing Orders suspended to allow the public to participate]

Mr Andrew Wiles gave a short presentation on affordable housing asking the Parish Council if they were interested in investigating the issue of affordable housing in Thorverton. This would start with a Housing Needs survey. MDDC Affordable Housing Officer was confident that MDDC would fund the Needs survey.

At this point the meeting discussed the complaints of residents present with the affordable housing part of the Heritage homes development at Broadlands. Three separate households spoke of their difficulties in registering their interest in the shared-equity homes, the limitations on mortgage brokers and mortgage companies, the increase in price of the 80% share and the reduction in available properties.

[Cllr Squires left the meeting at 7:50pm]

- Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to write to Heritage Homes asking to halt them to sale and to MDDC unhappy about the way matters have been handled throughout and the change to the s106 without consultation.
- to set up a Task and Finish group led by Cllr Crang bringing in appropriate expertise to report on the implications of the changes made and anything that the Parish Council can do.
- As Mr Wiles' presentation had been cut short by the necessary discussion of Broadlands he would be invited back to the next meeting.

[SO resumed for the remainder of the meeting – 8 members of the public of left the meeting]

21/179 **Confirmation of minutes**

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 15th February 2022 as a true & correct record. The Chair duly signed them.

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21/180 Items carried forward from previous meetings

- i) **Small Trees in Rec Hedge** Council asked Cllrs Sanders and Uglow to get an opinion from their tree surgeon. This item will be included in the Barliabins project from here.
- ii) **Dinneford St Water Outlet** Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to source a metal sign that says 'not suitable for drinking' or similar (up to £100). The sign should be appropriately reflect the age of the outlet.
- iii) **Bike rack for the Post Office** Council asked the Cllr Sanders to find a 3-position bike rack.

21/181 Recreation Ground

- i) **Finance** No money has been spent.
- ii) The Chairman will ask the rec group for a progress report on the s106 spend and the play equipment. Cllr Uglow will speak to Cllr Price about joining the group to help due to the impending birth in his family.

21/182 Projects

- i) **Parish Communications** After discussing the leaflet design Council **RESOLVED** to spend up to £100 when the wording is finalised. The Chairman will invite the Cllrs and clerk to join the Nextdoor app.
- ii) **New Cemetery** Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to pay the vendor's reasonable legal fees (as is usual practice in these circumstances) and to instruct Veitch Penney solicitors to act on the Council's behalf in this purchase.
- iii) **Jubilee Green and Barliabins** Storm damage has slowed the progress with the quotes but still being got. Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to spend up to **£150** on the village noticeboards.

21/183 Planning

i) Applications

Council **RESOLVED** to make no comment on the following three applications:

- a) **22/00420/MARM Variation Broadlands** Additional double garage.
- b) **22/00408/HOUSE** 31 Silver St - Side and rear extension.
- c) **21/02134/HOUSE** Lodge Farm EX5 5JL - Erection of replacement garage with room above

ii) **Decisions** Council noted there were no decisions to report this month.

iii) **Consultations - Plan Mid-Devon Issues Paper** Council had no comment to make.

21/184 Handyman

Work for this month: In Cllr Marshall's absence there is no work for this month.

At the next meeting there will be an agenda item for grass cutting.

21/185 Councillor Vacancy

Council **RESOLVED** to hold any vote from the current advert as a ballot rather than a show of hands. The Chairman would advertise the vacancy in Focus.

[The final member of the public left the meeting at 9:10pm]

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21/186 Finance

i) Council noted that as at 3rd March 2022 the bank balance stood at £ 57,777.20

ii) Council noted the receipts since January's meeting as £40 allotment rents and £0.28 interest.

iii) Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to make the following payments:

a) MDDC	Garage rental (monthly DD)	£ 55.72 (inc VAT)
b) Ben Fitch	Invoice no. BF20220030 work in Feb (1 hour + materials)	£ 67.00
c) Vision ICT	Website hosting & support May 22 – Apr 23 invoice 14356)	£ 161.26 (inc VAT)
d) Thorverton Memorial Hall	Meetings April 22 – Mch 23 invoice 0121	£ 286.00
e) AT Wyer	Final payment for employment as clerk	£ 654.11
f) JP Roberts	Pay for Dec, Jan & Feb + expenses & reimbursements	£ 992.51
g) HMRC	PAYE & National Insurance	£ 506.95

iv) Grant Giving. The Council received the recommendations of the Grant Giving Working Group –

'Thorverton through time' (TTT) does have connections to the Thorverton History Society (THS - KM is the secretary) but the request would appear to be autonomous and THS has donated £50.00 towards this request. TTT has requested a £500 grant for the development of a website and a 'walking tour' booklet. (£300 for the website and £200 for the booklet)'

Our recommendation:

We would propose we offer £150 for the development of a website and would like to see a quotation or some form of progress on the website before payment. Our thoughts are that this is a 'nice to have' and should be supported by the council but is also classified as 'not essential' and therefore we feel the offer of 50% funding makes sense, with opportunities for TTT to raise monies elsewhere.

We would also propose that we offer a 'potential' 50% funding for the booklet on receipt of an invoice or the booklet itself.

Council **RESOLVED** to implement the recommendations in full (Cllr Crang abstained due to his involvement in the same application for a different organisation).

21/187 Correspondence

i) **Litter Bin for Silver St/Hulk Lane** Council **RESOLVED** to ask MDDC to move a litter bin, Cllr Uglow would supply the clerk with a map showing the exact positions of the bins involved.

ii) **Public Session at January's meeting**

Council considers this item addressed by the Chairman's continued interaction with the member of the public concerned.

iii) **Public address to December, January & February's meeting**

After a lengthy discussion the Council unanimously **RESOLVED** that the clerk should send the following reply to the member of the public involved -

Thorverton Parish Council is sorry that this issue has caused you so much angst and reiterates the Chairman's apology already expressed to you at December's meeting. Council would like you to know that Cllr Lane was not at fault in any way in raising the planning status of your business on behalf of parishioners. Council furthermore reaffirms that the clerk is authorised to research any matter on behalf of the Council.

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For your information you should be aware that the Chairman has no jurisdiction over any Cllr outside the meeting.

The Council utterly rejects your characterisation of the meetings, at which you addressed the Council at great length, and refutes your unfounded and aggressive accusations of lack of professionalism and propriety directed at our clerk, our Chairman and Cllr Lane, all of whom have acted in the public interest at all times. However, the Council recognises that our correspondence policy does not cover verbal communication and it will be reviewed and published on the website in the usual way. Please note, Council will not take your completely unsubstantiated allegations of corruption any further unless they are repeated.

The Council now considers this issue closed.

21/188 **Clerk's Probation**

Council **RESOLVED** to confirm the clerk's appointment.

21/189 **Business at the Chairman's Discretion**

- i) The Chairman said he intended to acknowledge the Monitoring Officer's letter.
- ii) The disrepair of the benches at the sheep dip would need to be raised with the Church Commissioners. There may well be an agreement in place about the benches.
- vi) **Allotment 1** This allotment could not be let as there is a utilities pipeline that has recently been installed underground to service the new housing development.

21/173 **Date of Next Meeting**

This was confirmed as 7pm on Tuesday 12th April 2022 at the Memorial Hall.
The Annual Parish Meeting date will be set at the next meeting.
The Chairman closed the meeting at 10:43pm.

Signed Date

Cllr A Foster, Chairman

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APPENDIX A

Report from County Cllr Margaret Squires

Airband and Openreach contracts in Devon

- CDS Mobile Boost Scheme
- Vouchers

Summary

- CDS delivered superfast connections to over 315,000 homes & businesses in Devon & Somerset.
- Airband and Openreach teams are working in dozens of communities across Devon under contract to CDS to connect thousands of additional homes and businesses.
- Hundreds of homes and businesses in Devon and Somerset have benefited from the CDS Mobile Boost Scheme funded by the Heart of the South West LEP.
- Over 2,000 additional homes and businesses in Devon now have gigabit-capable connections or are in the process of being connected through the Gigabit Voucher scheme.

Vouchers

In parallel with our broadband contracts and other initiatives, CDS works closely with Building Digital UK (BDUK) to expand take-up of the Government's Rural Gigabit Voucher programme. CDS offers support to communities who wish to contract with telecoms providers to design and shape broadband solutions for their areas. CDS can provide additional financial support where appropriate through its Community Challenge Programme to help bridge any local funding gaps.

To date, vouchers worth £4.5 million have been issued in Devon and 2,458 additional homes and businesses have gigabit-capable broadband or are in the process of being connected.

Any help I can offer with facilitating speakers for parish councils please let me know

Margaret

National Apprenticeship Week 7th-13th February

DCC has been celebrating National Apprenticeship Week this week, I hope you will have seen on DCC's social media channels the work some of our apprentices have done for the organisation.

Over 80 apprentices have completed their apprenticeship ranging from Level 2 standards such as the Customer Service Practitioner all the way up to Level 7 standards such as the Senior Leader Master Degree apprenticeship.

Since the apprenticeship programme started in 2006, Devon County Council has delivered over 850 opportunities for new and existing staff and utilised more than 70 different apprenticeship standards.

We have a retention rate of 76% of our apprentices securing permanent employment at the Council, while the remaining 24% either go onto university or gain employed outside of the Council.

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APPENDIX B

Report from District Cllr Bob Deed

"Report from Cllr Bob Deed to Silverton, Bickleigh and Thorverton Parish Councils for March 2022.

On February 23rd, MDDC's Full Council met and approved the Council's Budget, in its entirety, for 2022/2023.

The Council also approved the Council Tax charge for 2022/2023.

Additionally, a Motion was passed acknowledging the Council's current and future approach to its energy efficiency and support for the Local Electricity Bill and the encouragement by the Council to the community in assisting business and the community in the event that the Bill is passed.

Council noted the changes of allegiance of some District Councillors between political groups.

Following other committee business, the Cabinet will be noting, among other routine business, progress on the re-opening of Cullompton Station (in 2025).

I am engaged in planning matters, as ever, within the Ward.

In response to a question about reduced services due to the minimising of the increase in Council Tax by MDDC –

We have to achieve, by law, a balanced budget. We achieved that by temporarily using £145,000 of reserves (we started the budget process with a £2 million deficit).

However, there will be no diminution in services.

Regarding changes in the waste service, we will, from the autumn, collect residual waste on a three-weekly basis. This change is as a result of Government targets which are directed towards ensuring increased recycling and which the Council must meet. Food (weekly), Green (two weekly) and recycling (two weekly) collections will remain, as now.

Do not assume that the change in waste collection will reduce the Council's costs, in the short term. In order to facilitate the change we will need to invest some £600,000 in new black bins. Savings in the collection regime will make the change cost neutral, over a number of years.