

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
OF BUCKLAND BREWER PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 14th JANUARY 2015 AT 7:30PM AT
BUCKLAND BREWER SCHOOL**

Members Present: Mr Andrew Hewitt, Mr George Heywood, Mr Jim Lowe, Mr Trevor Mills, Miss Sally Nicholls, Mrs Shirley Tilley and Mr David Watson.

Also in attendance 3 members of the public, Jane Low (Village Hall Project Leader), and Catherine Pearce (Project Manager) and Martin Watts (West Devon Development Manager) of Aster Homes Ltd.

Parish Clerk: Patrick Blossie

KEY: Actions are shown in bold blue type Decisions are shown in bold red type
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1377 Apologies for Absence Cllr Alison Boyle and Barbara Babb.

1378 Minutes of the Meetings of the Parish Council on 10th and 16th December 2014: The minutes of the meetings held on 10th and 16th December 2014 were confirmed and signed.

1379 Declarations of Interest: Sally Nicholls re item 1397 (i) Planning application re one dwelling at Gorwood Road, and Sally Nicholls and Kate Slocombe re Item 1393, Fields and Allotments.

1380 Public Participation: None.

1381 New Village Hall Update: Jane Lowe, the Project Leader for the new Village Hall development, gave an update about the new village hall development. Her last update had been in May 2014 when she was about to start negotiations with Pearce Construction for providing the S106 agreement monies 'in kind' and had talked about the hall finances and plans to seek Hallmark status. Following the review of finances the hall cleaner had been made redundant. Cleaning is now done by the Trustees voluntarily. There had been a public meeting in June at which 94% of the attendees voted in favour of selling the old hall to generate some of the finance necessary for the new one. Its auction price is estimated at about £50,000 or up to £80,000 with outline planning permission. The Trustees had initially rejected Pearce's offer to be the preferred builder but negotiations restarted in the Autumn and progress is now being made for this to happen with an 'in kind' contribution of S106 monies. Hallmark status levels 1 & 2 were achieved opening up a few more funding opportunities. Jane thanked the Parish Council for agreeing to an annual contribution towards village hall running expenses. The Trustees will not be submitting any Big Lottery grant applications in the future as the Lottery criteria are considered to be unachievable. An application for a grant from TDC had not reached the appropriate committee, despite it having been received in time at TDC, due to an administrative error at the TDC offices at the time when the Communities Officer left Torridge, resulting in a potential grant of £10,000 not being considered. Although the District Councillor had been asked to intervene he had not responded to their requests for help or to provide any monies from the Locality Budget. Grant opportunities were now very minimal and there is currently a shortfall of at least £35,000 in the monies required for the new build budget allocated by the Village Hall Trustees. Jane said that more volunteers were desperately needed to help with hall management and the project, and hoped to be able to give a more positive report in the future. The full transcript of Jane's report is at appendix 1.

1382 Social Housing:

Catherine Pearce and Martin Watts of Aster Homes Ltd. gave a presentation about their company and the 8 social housing properties that they had won the contract to manage on the Hillpark development. Aster comprises 6 former Housing Associations with a combined stock of 26,000 properties mainly in the Dorset/Wiltshire area but is now expanding further into the West Country. Their management services are provided through Tamar Housing in the South West. They are currently working with a range of developers including Bovis and Redrow. They haven't signed the contracts with Pearce Construction yet but this is imminent. The 8 social housing properties out of the total of 40 at Hillpark will comprise 6 3-beds and 2 2-beds and should be completed in March 2015. They are also talking to Pearce about further development on Lower Abbots which could be a development of about 30 properties, 9 of which could be social housing. Tenants for the new properties will be identified through Devon Home Choice. Catherine said that 2-bed semis had proved very popular. Andrew Hewitt said that single-bed properties were also becoming more necessary for older people and those living alone. Photographs of some of Aster's other developments were distributed and their design features were discussed including a 'passive house' scheme and the development at Oak Meadow in South Molton. There was a discussion about possible future developments, such as a Social Housing scheme for Lower Turnaway. Martin advised the use of Community Land Trust Schemes which enable parish council's to retain control of the site. It was agreed that a more in-depth discussion would be useful and that Aster Homes would be invited back at a later date, when the contract for the Hillpark development had been signed.

1383 Clerk's Report

- (i) **Correspondence:** A summary of 14 items of general correspondence was supplied to each member. The following item was specifically drawn to the Council's attention:
1. Draft TDC Housing Renewal Policy 2014-17 (Response requested by 30th January 2015) **It was agreed that this item would be added to the agenda for 28th January 2015 to give members time to prepare a response.**
 2. Devon Countryside Access Forum: Request for nominations to join the board.
 3. Temporary traffic order, anticipated road closure 7th – 9th April between 'Brownswell' and the junction of Gorwood Road. **The Clerk was awaiting a response from Western Power to confirm the precise location and details of this closure, which he will distribute as soon as it becomes available.**
- (ii) In preparation for the elections due to take place on 7th May 2015, the Clerk suggested that he could post some useful information on the website about the role of the councillors, the purpose and responsibilities of the Parish Council and details of how to apply to become a Parish Councillor. **This was agreed unanimously.**
- (iii) Following Sally Nicholls suggestion at the last meeting, the Clerk had set up a Facebook page. 2 'events' had been added (for this meeting and the one on 16th December 2015) and feedback had been requested about the suggestion that the Parish Council should not take responsibility for salting the roads after the current salt stocks have run out. There have been no responses about this so far but the page has attracted 32 'likes'. It was suggested that a 'group' page might encourage more people to contribute their opinions. **The Clerk will make the necessary changes.**
- (iv) The Clerk gave a report of a meeting that he and the Chairman had attended yesterday with the Council's solicitor, who had received the transfer documents relating to the three pieces of land which will shortly be transferred to the Parish Council. The developer's solicitor had included certain requirements for the parish council to accept responsibility for some of the fencing between properties in Hillside and the field behind the school. This was not agreed to. A request for access across to land to lay new media at any time in the future was amended to allow this for only as long as the school remained a county run educational

establishment to ensure that any future development of the land could not be complicated by such as clause. It had been agreed with the solicitor that papers for the land to be transferred to the Village Hall Trustees and agreement to the developer providing the S106 financial contribution 'in kind' would be completed and signed on the same day. This could be as soon as 6 weeks depending on the solicitors negotiations. The Clerk had already confirmed these details with the Village Hall Project Leader.

1384 Consultation on Parish Poll Legislation: This item is to be added to the agenda for the meeting on 28th January to give members more time to consider a response, which is required by 30th January 2015.

1385 Thornhillhead Moor: Information had been received from Kay Bromhead about more fly-tipping on the moor (plasterboard). This had been referred to the police and Torrington Council. **The Clerk will ask Claire McIntosh whether the white goods previously reported to have been dumped on the moor had been removed.**

1386 TAP Fund 2014/15: The application is awaiting detailed figures from Langtree Parish Council but should be submitted within the next few weeks. **It was agreed that the shortfall of about £100 between the cost of the works and the TAP Fund grant would be met from the 2015/16 budget.**

1387 Hopper Saturday Bus: Jim Lowe had distributed details of the Fare-Car scheme which is operated by local taxi operators by formal agreement with DCC. Services that covered Bradworthy and Holsworthy were recently withdrawn. Further cuts of £1.763 million from transportation budgets had recently been announced and these would result in severe reductions in service. Buckland's 5 days-a-week service should go down to 2-3 days-a-week. **It was agreed to take no further action on bus schemes or any potential alternatives until the future provision was established.**

1388 Babeleigh Barton Road: Traffic Monitoring: . Jim Lowe had submitted a complaint to the Ombudsman but had received a reply to say that the Parish Council, as an elected body, was not eligible to make a complaint and that therefore no further action would be taken. Members confirmed that parishioners in Parkham, including the owners of The Bell Inn were also complaining. ***Jim Lowe will investigate whether the complaint can be taken up by individuals based on the complaints that the Parish Council had already made or whether it would be necessary for individuals to start the complaints process all over again.***

1389 Hillpark: Openreach Complaint: Jim Lowe had sent a formal complaint to Openreach but had received no reply. It was understood that connections would start to be installed in the near future but **it was agreed that the Chair would write to Geoffrey Cox, MP to complain about the service.**

1390 Blocked Drain in Northwood Lane: A blocked drain in Northwood Lane was reported – mainly chippings. **The Clerk to report to DCCs Footpaths Officer.**

1391 Eckworthy- Devon Bank/Gate Problem: The local PCSO had reported seeing a part of a Devon Bank removed at Eckworthy. Trevor Mills had investigated and found that it was an existing gateway that had been cleared. No further action necessary.

1392 Parking Meters (Shirley Tilley): Shirley reported concerns about the introduction of parking charges and restriction at Bideford Hospital and Medical Centre and the potential impact on parishioners using the service. Jim Lowe had been in touch with the Medical Centre, who had assured him that the measures were aimed principally at local residents using the centre as a car park and that patients and visitors should not be adversely affected. He is awaiting written confirmation from the Bideford Medical Practice.

1393 Fields and Allotments: An application for an allotment had been received from a resident in Hillpark. There are none available at present but, anticipating more enquiries from some of the new residents, the Clerk has started a waiting list. Plots 8 and 5b are not available yet. Members would still prefer the plots not to be let until they have been completely cleared but, bearing in mind, the time taken to complete the work, **the Clerk was given permission to offer the plots as they are on the understanding that no discount can be offered and the sites must still be handed back in a clean state.** Trevor Mills had not yet replaced the fence post at the football pitch. He said this would be done when it was not so wet. Jim Lowe reminded members that there was a small fall in field rents since the football club had gone and suggested that alternative uses for that field should be investigated to go alongside the archery and grass cutting.

1394 Snow Warden's Report: No salting has been needed yet. Jim Lowe had determined that there are 35 bags of salt at the old factory site. He suggested that this could be stored in a shed at a more convenient site for parishioners to use when required. Trevor Mills suggested that parishioners should be asked to pay for the salt. No decisions were reached.

1395 2015/16 Budget and Precept: i) Dispensation Motion: A form signing off the dispensation requested at the meeting of 10th December 2014 was signed by the councillors present and the clerk.
ii) 2015/16 Budget and Precept: The clerk had distributed by email a potential budget for the current year, which was approved without amendment. He also provided a summary of the impact of a range of possible precept levels and explained how each of these impacted on the budget and levels of reserve. It was proposed by Jim Lowe, seconded by Kate Slocombe and **agreed unanimously to levy a precept of £6,750 (inclusive of the Support Grant element) for 2015/16.**

1396 Members' Reports

Andrew Hewitt said that he would get a quote for signage at Thornhillhead Moor from a company at Pottington. Jim Lowe is to check whether the original signs are still there. Sally Nicholls pointed out that there is no 'Give Way' sign on the road from Coles up to the main road. The Clerk will report this to Claire McIntosh.

Jim Lowe thanked Andrew Hewitt for clearing the drains in Orleigh Hill. He wondered whether he ought to take the Chapter 8 course before doing any further work. **The Clerk will check this with DCC Highways and also confirm the position with the Council's insurers.** Jim also reported that a light that used to be by Tor Cottage is no longer there. **Jim Lowe will report to DCC.**

Trevor Mills reported that the leaves The Glen had been removed by DCC within 24 hours of them having been reported last month.

Katherine Slocombe reported that a grit bin at Eckworthy had been tipped over. **Jim Lowe will investigate.**

David Watson asked whether members had looked at the path behind the chapel. He felt that is needed to be cleared but others believed that it was not unwalkable. **It was agreed that it would benefit from having some chippings laid down which Andrew Hewitt offered to do.** David also mentioned that he had hoped that Chris Turner of Lemon Jelly (Organisers of the Youth drop in centre) was going to attend the meeting. The Clerk apologised that he had forgotten to invite him but he will be in attendance at the February meeting. A cheque for the previously approved grant of £300 was prepared for the group.

1397 Planning

i) Application: 1/1329/2014/REM – Gorwood Road, Reserved matters for one dwelling, pursuant to 1/0981/2013/OUT - **Supported.** The Clerk and Andrew Hewitt both reported problems in downloading the information about this application from the Torridge Planning website. **The Clerk will write to the District Councillor, Robert Hicks.**

- ii) Decisions: a. 1/109782014/FUL, 1/0979/2014/FUL & 1/0989/2014/UL, Silkland Farm Poultry Sheds – refused – Noted. Members were concerned that this had been refused by Torrridge and that it was a delegated decision, as the application appeared to be a legitimate attempt to make good use of an agricultural site and could offer additional local employment. The potential impact on similar applications in a rural/farming community were discussed. **Jim Lowe is to discuss the application with Torrridge Planning.**

A late application having been received for 6 new properties at Tower Hill having been received, it was agreed that an extra meeting would be required on 28th January 2015.

1398 Accounts:

- i) Bank balances:
- Parish Council Current Account was £8,544.25 as at 23rd December 2014
 - Thornhillhead Moor Account was £17,259.00 as at 19th December 2014
- ii) Payments due (£6,209.61)
- Parish Clerk’s salary, expenses and associated PAYE: £284.31 (includes £14.97 lump sum re pay award 1/12/14)
 - Coles – 2 year’s HR1 payments re maintenance of Thornhillhead Moor - £2,501.80
 - Various graziers – 2 year’s graziers’ rights payments - £3,022.50
 - SLCC: Annual subscription - £101.00
 - Lemon Jelly – 2nd Year of approved grant - £300.00
- iii) Receipts since last meeting (£4,733.49):
- E Tucker Football Field Rent - £80.00 (net of £20.00 deducted for hedge trimming)
 - Rural Payments Agency re Thornhillhead Moor - £4,653.49

Date of Next Meetings:

Parish Council: (Planning & Urgent Consultations) 28th January 2015 (Buckland Brewer Village Hall) (7:30pm)
This meeting will be the first test of dealing with a planning consultation ‘electronically’.
Parish Council: 11th February 2015 (Buckland Brewer School) (7:30pm)

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9:35 pm.

Chairman: Date:

Parish Council update from Buckland Brewer Village Hall – Jan 2015

Delivered by Jane Lowe, Vice Chair & New Hall Project Liaison Officer, Buckland Brewer Village Hall
Developments since May 2014

Parish Council will recollect at the time of the last update, I was about to enter into negotiations with Pearce regards delivery in kind, that we had identified serious shortcomings in our finances, and we intended to try and meet a nationally recognised standard in community hall management. The latter two remained essential to be able to present to any funder, regardless of amount, with confidence.

May-August

May - we identified that the only solution in the short terms to plug some of the financial gap was to make our cleaner redundant – this was done under ACAS rules and with redundancy pay awarded, effective July and we have been cleaning the hall ourselves since then.

You will recollect an approach from Pearce to deliver value for money on the S106 in kind at this time.

Public meeting held in June accordance with Trust Deed terms to obtain parish consent to sell on existing premises (subject to certain conditions). At the count, 94% were in favour (well in excess of the required 75%). This was needed to use the existing premises as a) a bargaining chip in any possible deal & b) unless we can dispose of the hall we cannot consider progressing to another premises (we have not got the capability of managing 2 sets of premises on limited volunteers). On the back of this I was authorised to obtain a professional valuation of the premises fulfilling Charities Commission requirements – result was it should be sold at auction, estimated values £50k without Outline Planning Permission for Change of use, £80-£90k with. The difference between the two is a potential increase in value of up to a further 80%. There are risks attached to both options we shall seek to minimise risk at all times.

Initial talks with Pearce in late June were unproductive – I was accompanied by another trustee who agreed with me that the spirit of the approach was not reflected in behaviours enacted at that meeting, and we rejected Pearce's extremely pressurised offer which effectively removed us from the driving seat of our own piece of work, although we left the door open as we strongly believed they still had a number of reasons to be the preferred builder, not least of which was a requirement to hand over £325k.

During this time and throughout summer further works were carried out by village hall teams (still the same group of trustees) both on the hall and in terms of documenting policy and procedure to make us "match fit" for a Hallmark exam on 21st August which would officially recognise that we managed our premises to a nationally accepted standard – essential to show to funders. Just prior to the exam a "premises officer" was also appointed from within our current trustees.

We revised prices for hall hire, ensuring that we followed the principle of everyone pays (at least to cover costs) - we realised we should not have been permitting this, and any funder, all of whom regardless of amount ask for accounting, would query our financial competence on this basis. We now have a finance team, accountable to full committee, who will continue for the duration of the charity. Access to the hall is now controlled by a PINpad with the number disclosed on a "need to know" basis.

After a 3 hour exam (4 trustees undertaking this) on 21st August we were advised that we had been successful in convincing external examiners that we were sufficiently competent to be awarded Hallmarks 1 & 2. There are 3 levels – we cannot expect to undertake the 3rd which deals with green and superior premises issues – Woosery has only just been awarded theirs, so we regard ours as a significant achievement. The certification matters greatly as it has helped us understand how to do what we do correctly, to a higher standard, and it will continue to play a part in our operations and applications for grants. Also your own generous support in helping with insurance for a community building sends out all the right messages.

We shall not however in the foreseeable future apply to Big Lottery for Reaching Communities Funding – since our last update I have been informed that Big Lottery has further raised the bar in terms of what they expect from applicants – our advisory body Community Council of Devon (now called Devon Communities) have not yet been instrumental in helping any applicant start their very long journey along this new route. As we could never comply with the old requirements (giving documented assurances of succession & development lasting 20 years into the

future is simply one example of what is now “mission impossible”) I feel it grossly irresponsible to further encourage our committee into hoping for success in this area.

September onwards

A large let down arose in September - after several full days work, I submitted (within specified timescales) a funding application for up to £10k from a “one-off fund” to Torrridge District Council. It was acknowledged as received by the soon to be redundant communities officer. When I had heard no result after 2 weeks after the funding board meeting I spent an afternoon chasing the outcome (the communities officer had gone by then), ultimately to be advised by the Council Leader that the application never reached the board room and the funds, which had been expected to last for 4 more meetings, had been oversubscribed and spent with no more in the pipeline. I was advised by the Leader of the Council, who eventually contacted me, that for some reason our own district councillor had chosen to intervene and had instructed that its review in funding board context was not needed. Despite 3 e-mails to our councillor, first chasing the application and then asking for clarification of his actions (one mail included an invitation as in previous years to our AGM, at which where he has never appeared during my 5 years service on Village Hall) and finally asking whether, this application having been unsuccessful there was the chance of funding out if the district councillors “pot” I have not had the courtesy of any response or proactive contact. It may be that prior to elections in May 2015 some cash may suddenly appear out of the district councillors (I am advised anecdotally by a TDC officer this is as yet virtually unused) fund but this will not have been by recognised business channels of consultation and information shared. This still rankles – having then tried to follow a formal complaint route, I was informed by TDC compliance dept that I cannot pursue this as a complaint as it is not the actions (or lack of them) of a paid employee that is the subject of the complaint.

On a more positive note, during late autumn I had a further informal one2one meeting with Pearce who assure me that they still want to build our hall (there will be benefits to them but we must bear in mind to us also). This meeting resulted in an offer to transfer the land ahead of due time and also some self help actions on me.

It is important for parish council to bear in mind that throughout the year Village Hall continued (and this still goes on) in a self help programme of fund-raising e.g. Country & Western evening, Xmas Market, Big Breakfast, which is placing significant physical demands upon the same volunteers all the time, thus I hope we are demonstrating that we are being proactive in moving our programme along but we must be realistic about how long the same people can carry on.

Funding - I have discovered (and this is common sense) that many of the national benefactors are limiting applications or have withdrawn from the field altogether, simply because the recession has caused interest income from capital and shares to dry up, thus for many philanthropic organisations the cupboard is currently bare. Where I am identifying even a remote chance of a grant I am applying but this is piecemeal, very time consuming and not that productive. Out of 8 requests submitted since October to potential benefactors, only one has invited me to apply in full, with the caveat that only one in ten applications is successful, with the award averaging £1000.

Having decided (after external consultation with those who have experience) on a build of appx £400k being one we felt we would just manage, with a percentage for contingencies and some more for professional fees, we remain a good £35k short of what we need to enter into a contract to build, assuming that agreement with Pearce can be reached regards what they and we deem value for money. This ball is currently in Pearce’s court – early days, I await feedback from them on a revised and much reduced but acceptable design.

It would not be in accordance with protocols to disclose too much more before I report to Village Hall with work I have ongoing, but I must inform you that it has been evident for some time that we may need to rely on proceeds of an auction of the current hall to contribute to the new one – on this basis we must hope to negotiate a deferred settlement in preference to a loan which would place a personal financial burden all trustees. We are legally bound by our Charitable Trust responsibilities also to ensure best value is obtained for these premises. As a basic courtesy, as you are our acknowledged partners in the new hall project, I will just advise you that we in the process of considering applying for outline planning permission for change of use – we have mixed advice from professionals on this and are weighing up pros and cons, inclusive of timescales. We are awaiting the outcome of various pieces of professional advice sought and therefore dependent upon this advice and further consultation with Charity Commission rules, you may very soon be presented with this application at the Parish Council. This may be critical in terms of getting best

value for money in accordance with our legal responsibilities, and possibly meeting a building budget(especially considering the disappointing developments of last September), even though I shall continue to try and locate and apply to benefactors. Obviously I and the rest of the committee look to Parish Council for your support, simply because this is merely another step in the very long road to getting a new community hall. As soon as this has developed to its conclusion, and Village Hall Trustees have made final decisions, I shall write to the Parish Clerk and advise you so that there are no surprises.

We remain short of help and volunteers despite a request at our last AGM. We are very aware that parish council is suffering the same issues in terms of people coming forward to help within the community and at this time feel we must continue our united front to develop and support our community.

I hope that within the next few weeks I shall have more positive developments that I look forward to sharing with you.