MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF NORTH MOLTON PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10th February, 2016 IN VICTORY HALL

Present: Councillor Bulled (Chairman); Councillor Dunn; Councillor Procter; Councillor Kelland; Councillor O’Brien; Councillor Wallis; Councillor Geen; Councillor Peek; Councillor Palfreyman (left meeting at 8.30 pm); Cllr Edgell and the Parish Clerk, Noel Brooks

016/02/16 1. Apologies: Cllr Yabsley; Cllr Clark (Absent) - accepted unanimously.

017/02/16 2. Declaration of Interests: None

018/02/16 3. Devon and Cornwall Constabulary: In PCSO Beverley Bray’s absence, the Clerk reported on the following crimes, suspicious activity and policing issues in the area within the last month:

A report of bad driving at Sandy Cross; a tree blocking the road; large vehicles causing inconsiderate driving; a diesel theft; concern for the welfare of a child; the theft of a caravan.

019/02/16 4. Representations From The Public:

Cllr Peek had received a report of a collapsed gulley outside the farm at Upcott. From his own observations, the drains were ineffective on the Top Road and required attention.

Cllr Procter had received a representation concerning a blocked pipeline under Heasly Mill Road towards Bampfylde Cross. Cllr Peek reported that this would be attended to by the TAP Fund Project’s contractor who would also be dealing with a similar issue at Rews Cross.

Cllr Geen reported drainage issues at Yarde Cross. Cllr Peek stated that the TAP Fund would not extend to any works at this location.

Action: The Clerk is to write to R. Sables at NDDC with a view to resolving the drainage issues at Upcott and Yarde Down Cross.

020/02/16 5. Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of North Molton Parish Council held on 13th January, 2016

Approved unanimously.

021/02/16 6. Clerk’s Report Re: 13th January, 2016 Minutes

Pot Holes In New Road & Longevity Of The Memorial - Diarised for follow-up in June 2016.

Give Way Painted Signage Required In Fore Street, Higher Poole - The Clerk had chased Highways on this issue again on 26th January and had provided photographs of the signage in question.

Offer From NDCC For Parish Councils To Take Over Responsibility For Safety & Visibility Grass-cutting - Due to NDDC’s null response, this offer was out of time - The Clerk recommended abandoning further pursuit - all agreed.
Damaged Culvert And Road Surface Between Balls Cross And Western Ball Farm - The Clerk would continue to chase Highways.

Legal & Insurance Implications Involved in Controlling Hedge-trimming, Drainage & Grass-cutting Works - The Clerk reported that the Parish Council’s insurer, Zurich Municipal, had informed him that any contractor should hold its own public liability insurance. If work were carried out by volunteers under the instructions of the Parish Council, then they would be covered for public liability provided that appropriate health & safety guidelines were followed. DALC had reported that some parish councils were taking on this type of work themselves or were making a contribution to NDCC’s lengths-man which bought additional time/work. Hedge-trimming was the responsibility of the landowner and only permissible in law at certain times of the year due to nesting birds. If North Molton Parish Council employed a private contractor for grass-cutting and/or drainage work, then they would need to be properly trained (Chapter 8 Training) which was available from the County Council. They would also need to be appropriately insured. A group of parishes in West Devon had organised a lengths-man scheme in this regard and shared costs. Cllr Peek supported the possibility of the Parish Council operating such a scheme and of contemplating a future rise in the Precept in order to accommodate this. The Clerk had written to Gay Hill who had organised the scheme in order to ascertain how the procedural, legal and insurance aspects worked. The Clerk would report back soonest.

Section 106/CIL Open Space Priorities for Planning Applications: 59487 (Old House Barns) & 57625 (Land off Back Lane/Heasley Mill Road) - The Clerk had confirmed the priorities to NDDC on 14th January.

Audit Trail of Section 106 Monies in Respect of Phase II at Lower Poole (Roberts Field) - The Clerk was investigating the matter with NDCC in order to find out whether or not the cash had been paid out and, if so, to whom and when. Cllr Wallis thought that the monies (£28k) may have been paid to the Sports Club in 2009 in respect of its extension works. Cllr Geen enquired about Lower Poole Phase I (the larger Phase involving 23 houses) which Cllr Bulled understood was commencing in the Spring. Action: The Clerk is to investigate the S.106 terms of Lower Poole Phase I and report back to the Parish Council with the details.

Devon Air Ambulance (DAA) - Community Helipad - The Clerk had written to the Chairman of the Sports Club regarding discussing the possibility of a site for a Helipad with DAA but had received no response to date. Cllr Wallis explained that the Sports Club’s Treasurer had been unable to include the item in its recent Agenda so the matter had not been discussed. Action: The Clerk suggested that he contact DAA requesting its representative to contact the Sports Club directly on the issue - all agreed.

Future of North Devon Records Office & Local Studies Centre - The Clerk had written to Barnstaple Town Council outlining North Molton Parish Council’s (NMPC) contemplation of a negligible £150.00 Precept increase next year in order to help with funding. The Town Council had replied thanking NMPC for being the first parish to contemplate such a pledge.

022/02/16 7. Matters Arising From These Minutes Not on This Agenda

Cllr Wallis reported that the pothole outside the garages had been repaired.
023/02/16 8. Items For Discussion

a) North Molton Old School’s request to use Laurel’s Playground in connection with a proposed Village Street party on Sunday 12th June, 2016 at 3 pm to celebrate the H.M. Queen’s 90th Birthday - Cllrs discussed various ideas for the way forwards with a Committee formed by Mrs Lucy Perry of North Molton Old School, local artist Mr Ken Hildrew and the Rev. David Baker. Action: It was agreed that the Committee would form a list of ideas for presentation to the Parish Council at its next meeting in March. Action: The Clerk would contact NDDC regarding the possibility of a road closure and seek advice on the recommended extent of that closure in order to protect attendees in the Square. Additionally, he would investigate the cost involved and report back to cllrs as a matter of urgency in view of the timescale involved.

b) Queen’s Birthday Beacons 21st April, 2016 - Cllr Geen was happy for the event to be held on his land at Two Barrows and run by the Young Famers. Action: The Clerk is to register the event formally with Bruno Peek. Action: Cllr Geen is to contact the Young Farmers.

c) TAP Fund 2014/5 - Progress of Works - Cllr Peek reported that there were only sufficient funds to cover one more day’s work which had to be completed before the end of March. Circa £1.1k had been spent to date. Required drainage works at Yarde Down and the top of North Molton Hill would not be covered within the TAP Fund’s budget and would need to be referred to NDCC. Action: The Clerk is to write to NDCC.

d) North Devon Community Fund (NDCF) 2015/6 - Application Progress - Cllr Peek reported that the application form had been e-mailed to Lorna Jones at NDDC but he had not yet received confirmation of receipt. £1.5k had been applied for on the understanding that a further £500.00 would be paid by NMPC as agreed previously for as much hedge-trimming as possible at circa £29.00 per hour. Action: Cllr Peek is to liaise with NDCC in order to agree what works it would be carrying out with a view to avoiding a duplication of work.

e) Parish Councillor Vacancy - The Clerk had informed The Returning Officer in Barnstaple of the vacancy. The appropriate Notice to the electorate and dated 9th February, 2016, had been pinned to the Parish Council’s main Notice Board. If ten or more parishioners registered a request with the Returning Officer, within fourteen days excluding weekends and Bank Holidays, for an election to be held with regard to the vacancy, then an election process would commence under instruction from such Officer with costs bearable by the Parish Council and, thus, local people; otherwise, the vacancy could be filled by co-option. The Clerk would report further on the situation at the next Parish Meeting.

f) Hedge-trimming Review - Cllr Geen reported that hedge-trimming was still under way within parts of the Parish. Northland Cross heading towards Yarde Down was identified as being in need of particular attention. Cllrs agreed to hold the matter in abeyance for one further month during which time they would identify precise locations for discussion and action.
g) **Report on Meeting with MP Mr P. Heaton-Jones on Planning Issues** - Cllrs discussed the meeting which was attended by cllrs Bulled, Procter & Palfreyman and the Clerk. Cllr Bulled informed cllrs that the MP had been sympathetic to the Parish Council’s concern in respect of a 40% rise in the size of the village due to circumstances beyond its control. He had expressed an interest in pursuing a fuller explanation from the District Council, on how and why it had arrived at its decision in late 2014 not to consider/endorse the Parish Council’s request for a reversion of the Parish Council’s development boundary back to its 2006 extents, when the *Local Plan* had not been finalised at that point and was still not finalised. Whilst the related planning approvals could not be changed, it was important to understand how the planning process may have failed North Molton. It was important to ensure that any shortcomings on the procedural side were addressed for the future. Cllr Bulled proposed a motion for the Clerk to write to MP Mr P. Heaton-Jones with a brief summary of the meeting with him on 5th February and a request for him to:

- Seek clarification from the Head of Planning as to how North Molton’s housing development allocation of 141 dwellings to the Year 2030 had been arrived at for the proposed but not finalised *Local Plan* within the context of much lighter densities proposed for neighbouring local centres;

- Seek clarification as to how and why in 2014/5 NDDC had refused NMPC’s request to change the *North Molton Development Boundary* back to its 2006 extents when the *Local Plan* had not been finalised and was thus open to being changed in line with local people’s majority wishes and in the interest of upholding the sanctity of local democracy.

All agreed - **Action:** The Clerk

h) **Exmoor National Park - Grants For Renewable Energy Projects** - The Clerk reported that he had been unable to date to ascertain whether or not the grants would be applicable to North Molton which was considered to be outside of the National Park, ordinarily. Cllr Bulled had made investigations to the extent that the National Park might consider applications from North Molton if the number of interested parties from within the Park remained sufficiently low. **Action:** Cllr Bulled is to contact Mr Archie McIntyre (Fund Manager & Vice Chairman of Exmoor Trust) in order to discuss the matter further and revert.

i) **Rural Services Network’s (RSN) Request to complete a Survey Monkey Questionnaire** - The Clerk explained that RSN was an organisation seeking to get in touch with rural and town councils all around the country to act as a lobby on rural issues to government. The intention was to grow a national rural community. Involvement, by NMPC, initially, involved completion of the questionnaire. Cllrs agreed that communication with RSN could only be a good thing and that completion of the questionnaire by the Clerk could only prove beneficial. The Clerk informed cllrs that apart from standard questions, such as general contact details which the Clerk could answer without referral, there were other questions requiring their decisions:
• Would clrs agree to a link to RSN’s website being placed on NMPC’s website if this were technically possible? - all agreed.

• Would one of the parish councillors be prepared to serve on RSN’s Rural Parish Sounding Board?
  This would involve completion of short on-line questionnaires once every four months - 400 parishes were doing this already and the target was 1,000 - Cllr Wallis agreed to represent NMPC - all agreed.

• Would any councillor running a rural business be prepared to join a Rural Small Business Sounding Board on an even basis? - Cllr Geen agreed to represent NMPC - all agreed.

024/02/16 9. Chairman’s Report/Urgent Matters Brought Forward by The Chairman
Cllr Bulled reported that the Local Plan consultation period was opening up yet again between 11th February and 24th March - this was due to changes in National Planning Policy involving wind energy development and starter homes exception sites which required accommodation in order for the Local Plan to conform.

Cllr Bulled had received a phone call from a project manager from Volunteer Befriending which encouraged people to get in touch with older people in isolated lonely conditions, with a view to finding out what the Parish Council might be able to do. Cllrs agreed that this was not a primary function of the council but that it would be helpful for Cllr Bulled to involve the organisers of the North Molton Old School coffee mornings, Victory Hall lunches and the vicars from the local churches.

Cllr Bulled informed clrs that the consultation period in respect of the proposed diversion of Footpath 3 at South Leigh had commenced. The Clerk informed clrs that he had obtained an extension on the time period for submission of the Parish Council’s response in order to allow clrs to discuss the proposal at its March meeting.

025/02/16 10. Planning

Planning Applications For Consideration Received Since Last Parish Council Meeting

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<thead>
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<th>Case Ref</th>
<th>Address</th>
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Planning Applications Advised Since Last Parish Council Meeting

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<th>Case Ref</th>
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<th>Decision</th>
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<tr>
<td>59850</td>
<td>Lower Poole Barns, Fore Street, North Molton</td>
<td>Discharge of Condition</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Approval of Details in Respect of Discharge of Condition 4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Facing, Roof &amp; Paving Materials) Attached to Planning Permission 50080</td>
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</table>
**Case Ref** | **Address** | **Decision**
---|---|---
62/49/15/005 | Bentwitchen Cottage, Bentwitchen, North Molton EX36 3HA Lawful Development Certificate For Existing Occupation Of The Dwelling In Breach Of Agricultural Occupancy Condition Of Approved Application NM 3697 | Exmoor - No Observations

60426 | Barn Adj. Oakford House Road From Stonybridge Cross To Oakford Cross, North Molton Improvements to Existing Agricultural Access | Approved

**Planning Appeals Advised Since The Last Parish Council Meeting**

**Case Ref** | **Address** | **Decision**
---|---|---
58797 | Pullens, East Street, North Molton | Refused
App/X1118/ W/15/ | Retrospective Application For Erection of Stables With Yard And Change Of Use Of Land From Agriculture To Equine | Approved
3137433

**026/02/16 11. Finance**

The balance of the Community Account was £2,167.31 as at 31st January, 2016.

The balance of the Business Saver Account was £5,500.58 as at 31st January, 2016.

i) Receipts – Awaiting payment from North Molton History Society of £35.00 in respect of shared website facilities.

ii) Payments:

   a) Clerk’s net salary £275.62 plus contribution to telephone costs of £10 and expenses of £17.55 all totalling **£303.17**.

iii) Accounts received after preparation of the Agenda: None

Motion passed to pay this sum - All agreed.

**Action:** The Clerk agreed to arrange an appointment with Barclays Bank in Barnstaple with a view to adding the Chairman and Clerk as signatories as previously agreed.

**027/02/16 12. Correspondence** - None
028/02/16 13. Reports

Laurel’s Playground - Cllr Procter had no adverse aspects to report other than the build-up of leaves which would be attended to by Cllr Peek once the weather had improved, sufficiently. Cllr Procter had made investigations regarding the No Climbing signage in the Clerk’s possession and had ascertained from historical Minutes that it should be placed within the close vicinity of the goal posts where practicable.

Action: The Clerk agreed to investigate and would endeavour, in the first instance, to complete this work.

Sports Club - Cllr Wallis reported that a Devon Young Farmers event at the end of January had attracted less than 160 people. The football pitches continued to be unplayable due to the inclement weather. North Devon District Council had contacted the Sports Club in order to ascertain what elements it could accommodate in the light of the decision to close the Leisure Centre in Barnstaple in 2020.

Boots in Bloom - The Clerk reported that the Landlord of the Poltimore Inn had informed him that the meeting in this connection would be taking place on 27th February.

029/02/16 14. Matters Brought Forward by District or County Councillor - District Councillor Edgell reported that Barnstaple’s Leisure Centre which had incurred capital expenditure of £2m two years previously was considered to be failing - it was estimated that it would not be fit for purpose by the Year 2020. NDDC had appointed consultants to report on the possibility of building a new Leisure Centre either on land adjacent to the Tarka Tennis Centre or on the existing Seven Bretheren site - there would be a full financial analysis on this complicated and potentially controversial project.

In County Councillor Yabsley’s absence, and with his permission, Cllr Edgell reported on County matters. NDCC and Central Government had set aside £2.5m in total to work out potential improvement schemes for the Link Road - areas under consideration were the stretches between South Molton and Barnstaple and in particular, Portmore to Roundswell.

Both NDDC and NDCC were in the process of preparing budgets for the forthcoming financial year - it was likely that Council Tax would increase by 1.9% with an additional 2% increase for the County Council to assist with accommodating the Government’s new Living Wage legislation in view of the County’s social care commitments. The County Council represented 70% of the total Council Tax bill.

Date and Time of Next meeting: Wednesday 9th March, 2016 at 7.30pm in the Victory Hall, North Molton

The Meeting closed at 9.38 pm.