

Northlew Parish Council

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held in the Victory Hall, Northlew at 7:30 pm on Monday 16th March 2020

Present:

Councillors: Joanna Wilson (JW) - Chair
Celia Rundle (CR) – Vice Chair
Bryan Dufty (BD)
Judy Jones (JJ)
Mark Rundle (MR)
Steve Smith (SSm)
Holly Dancer (HD)
Sue Main (SM) - Clerk

County Councillor: James McInnes (JMcl) - Devon County Council

Borough Councillors: Patrick Kimber (PK) – West Devon Borough Council

Apologies: Terry Hatt (TH)
Clare Kemp (CK) – West Devon Borough Council

7 parishioners attended the Parish Assembly.

1. **Apologies for Absence** were received from Terry Hatt and Clare Kemp.
2. **Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 18th March 2019** were approved and signed by the Chair.
3. **Matters Arising** – none arising from the minutes from last year’s Assembly.
4. **Chairman’s Report**
The Chair opened by introducing the Council members and thanking those parishioners who were present. Any questions raised by parishioners would be covered under the Question and Answer (Q&A) section of each item. The Chair proceeded to present the report on behalf of the Council (also displayed as an overhead projection and now available to download from the website), the contents of which are summarised as follows:-
 - (a) **Changes to Parish Council** which entailed the retirement of previous clerk and the recruitment of the new clerk who through a transition period had now implemented new operating procedures in collaboration with the Council including amongst others, the collection and cataloguing of old Council materials to be archived with Devon Archives. Previous minute books

were being reviewed by JJ so that historical extracts can be featured in the Memory Page of the website before being also archived. It had also seen 4 new councillors being appointed, subsequently one stepping down and a new Councillor being co-opted on at the March meeting. The Council comprises a good demographic mix of local knowledge and organisational experience. The Chair commented that it is important to note that all councillors are volunteers and thanked them for the significant time and commitment they make to being on the Parish Council.

- (b) Launch of Parish Website** – this went live in July and is a useful source of information relating to the Parish and the Parish Council, including accessing accounts, agendas, minutes, newsletter and noticeboard which provides a monthly update for the Parish. Parishioners were encouraged to use this dynamic source of information and to feedback with comments and suggestions as much as possible. Plans are in place to create a business page where local businesses can advertise for £25 p.a. (as well as in the newsletter). This should not only help local businesses but also boost the Council’s income. Statistics over the 7 months show a steady increase of visitors to the site.
- (c) Operating Procedures** – all governance and operating procedures are being reviewed and updated where necessary as part of the Council’s commitment to the transparency code and will be reviewed on a regular basis going forward. A new internal auditor is being appointed to review our end of year finances and advise on how to improve our financial operating procedures. Thanks to JJ for her ongoing input and experience in this area. Councillors have also been encouraged to continue keeping up to date with their CPD with several key DALC run training courses being attended this year.
- (d) Community Projects**

 - (i) Playing Field** - a working party has been set up to routinely check the playground facility and parishioners are actively encouraged to join this group to ensure good standards are met. This is in addition to the Annual ROSPA report. The play bark has been replaced this year and quotes -are being sought to replace the fencing at the entrance and far end of the playing fields. The tendering process is also taking place for this year’s grass cutting contract.
 - (ii) Public Lavatories** – a new cleaner had been appointed this year and urgent repairs are required to fix the roof leak. More substantial repairs to the roof and replacing the wallgate sanitary ware (c. £4k) need to be reviewed as part of wider review of the future plans for the lavatories and surrounding area (currently costing c£2,625 to maintain in the current state) and parishioners were encouraged to feedback their views on alternative solutions to take this forward as a co-ordinated community led initiative. **Q&A:** one suggestion from a parishioner was to explore whether the toilet facilities in the Church Room could be a possible alternative solution and then the current public lavatories could be dispensed with and the site used for some other purposes.
 - (iii) Speeding in the Village** – as had been the case historically, parishioners were reporting that speeding through the village was still an issue. Highways had previously been informed with signs installed by the playing fields but it was unlikely that the full SCARF assessment could be fulfilled and the installation of more sophisticated electronic equipment (c£2k) would have to be funded by the village. The Chair agreed to poll more widely for parishioner views via Northlew News. **Q&A:** A parishioner reported that a courier van had been seen regularly spotted speeding through the village and showing aggressive behaviour and enquired whether the Council would be able to do anything. It was agreed that it is very difficult to make a complaint to a company about a courier without clear evidence including dates and time. Parishioners were encouraged to collect

evidence so that some representation to the relevant company could be made. However, another parishioner pointed out that many courier drivers are self-employed so it may be hard to address this issue. But it was agreed that this type of driving and behaviour is unacceptable and should be noted and acted upon where possible.

- (iv) **State of the Roads** - the poor state of the roads coming in and out of the village continue to be an issue (and have been since parishioners were worried about the horses slipping on cobbled roads) The Parish Council has been proactive in this area with two councillors having met with the West Devon Borough Council Highways department (Doing What Matters Team) and have identified three main problem areas around the village and had been reassured that these would be attended to in the near future. Everyone was reminded, however, to keep up the pressure and follow the formal process of logging all complaints with WDBC Highways.
- (v) **Environment Issues** – the Chair and Clerk have also met up with the WDBC Environmental Protection team to understand actions that could be taken over abandoned vehicles, fly tipping, fly posting, litter offences, graffiti, and dog control issues.
- (vi) **Parking in Square** – as a result of several parishioners reporting the increased volume and type of large vehicles being parked in the Square, the Council had sought clarification from WDBC on what (if anything) could be done. The Chair reported that the Square is Highways Maintainable at Public Expense (HMPE) and is therefore treated as part of the public highway and not the responsibility of the Council. Any motor vehicle as long as its taxed, insured and MOT'd is able to park in the Square and they may do so for an unlimited time (this would include commercial vehicles such as a van). The only way to restrict vehicle parking at this location would be to introduce a parking restriction such as time limited parking but given its rural setting and not being particularly close to any other areas with parking restrictions, this was neither easy to enforce nor offered a practical solution.

5. Finance

The Chair outlined the forecast expenditure of £14,275.00 for 2020/21 financial year which was broken down into 9 main cost centres. Based on last year's actual expenditure and the budgeted amount for this coming year and the desire to maintain a recommended reserve, the precept had also been set at £10,631.75. Each household's contribution was based on their individual council tax band and illustrated in the presentation.

6. Future Activities Planned

Parishioners were encouraged to feedback on what projects they wanted the Council to support and ways to keep fundraising.

7. Any Other Matters

Coronavirus – with news of the pandemic taking hold, there had been various community led offers of support in addition to the guidance notes being circulated by the Government and at Council level. A parishioner is in the process of collating and maintaining a list of volunteers and those potentially requiring help available at The Square Shop. The Council thanked them for initiating this (flagging up that they needed to be mindful of GDPR guidelines) and offered to support the initiative in any way they could. It was agreed that the initiative would be communicated to the Parish through the Northlew News and on the Parish Council website. Another parishioner also offered to help provide and deliver food and non-food products through his company J & R Foodservice Ltd in Exeter. It was agreed that this information would also be communicated to parishioners in the Northlew News and on the website. (Post the meeting a

Whatsapp Community Support Group had also been set up with further information on the website, newsletter and the Northlew and Ashbury Life Facebook page).

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 20.20.