

**Minutes of the Meeting of Lydford Parish Council held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019, 7.00pm in the WI Room of the Nicholls Hall, Lydford.**

**Present:** Cllr. Squires (Chair); Cllr. MacIntyre; Cllr. Skeaping; Cllr Blackmore; Cllr Tainsh; John Bright (Clerk); Cllr Southcott (Borough Councillor); Diana Moyse (DNP); 2 representatives of National Trust Lydford Gorge; 2 members of the parish.

**Public Discussion:**

The Chairman thanked parishioners and visitors from National Trust for attending the meeting in such inclement weather. It was resolved that the presentation from the National Trust would be heard as part of the meeting, and that parishioners would be allowed to ask questions and make their points at that time. There being no other issues that parishioners wanted to raise.

**Meeting commenced 7:05pm**

**1) Apologies for absence:**

Cllr Grigg; Cllr Cook; Cllr Mott. Accepted.

**2) Declarations of interest:**

None declared.

**3) Minutes of previous meeting:**

The published draft minutes of the meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> November 2019 were approved by all and signed by the Chair as a true record. Proposed – Cllr MacIntyre, Seconded – Cllr Skeaping. All in favour – duly signed by the Chairman.

**4) Matters arising from previous meeting:**

*Standing Orders suspended at 7:13pm to allow a presentation from staff of National Trust, Lydford Gorge and for questions to follow.*

Demelza Hyde and Heather Kay gave a presentation updating parishioners and the Council on the work at the Lydford Gorge site, and on the issue of off-site parking on days of excessively high visitor numbers.

Councillors were assured that whilst visitor numbers fluctuated year on year the average over the past 15 years was 79,000 visitors per year, and there was no intention on the part of the National Trust (NT) to raise numbers in the future. The high demand periods are well known and tend to be the bank holidays and half term periods. At these times staff are deployed to the 2 car parks to facilitate efficient parking; subsequent visitors are turned away once the two car parks are filled. They are asked not to park on the highway. Last year some staff were tasked to try and stop visitors parking outside the car parks on the highway but were verbally abused. Management at the Gorge site are keen to work with the Community to try and resolve this problem, specifically they are keen to talk to any land owner nearby who may be able to accommodate parking on their land at these busy times.

Staff at the Gorge were surprised by the response of members of the Community to their proposals to update and open up the area known as Tucker's Pool. It was explained that the work was funded

by a bequest from someone who volunteered at the Gorge and that the NT are keen to honour that legacy. The intention is to open up more of the Gorge site to local visitors: The very great majority of travelling visitors do not go further than the Gorge itself and the usual sites. Staff insisted that the present pathway (now long overgrown) is serviceable and that there was no need for further work to open up the area to the public other than to replace the footbridge. Cllr Skeaping and parishioners disagreed, citing areas where the path or footings for a bridge had been lost to erosion and would need replacing. Assurances were given that no work has been undertaken to date on this project and that, when asked by Diana Moyses, they would not proceed without consent from Dartmoor National Park and Natural England.

At the end of the presentation and question / answer session the Chairman thanked Demelza and Heather for their time and effort. It was roundly agreed to continue with the dialogue which has now been established as it was felt to be a benefit to all concerned.

*Standing Orders resumed at 7:38pm.*

DCC Highways operate a Highways Maintenance Community Enhancement fund which parish councils can apply to for grants to improve the highways in their area, including repair small potholes, clear weeds & drains. The fund can be used to pay 50% of contractors' costs. It may be a way to fund a replacement for the Lengthsman when he leaves the village, although all works need to be identified and agreed in advance before grants can be awarded. This funding would not allow the parish to react quickly to issues.

Conversations have taken place with DCC Highways Community Officer.

- i. On the matter of traffic speeding through the village there was no evidence of accidents or injury caused by speeding traffic. The Council could install a VAS at their own expense or carry out a survey of traffic speeds, although there was no confidence that anything would happen as a result.
- ii. On the matter of the issues caused by parking, Councillors are advised to contact the Police if the road becomes obstructed. There followed a discussion on designating Gorge Hill a Clearway or a No Parking zone, neither of which was felt by some to be appropriate because of the visual impact and problems of enforcement. Cllr Blackmore disagreed, and felt that the matter needed further discussion.

WDBC have been informed that Lydford PC resolved to lease the toilets directly from DNP. Despite follow up emails there has been no reply. Cllr Southcott explained that the topic of handing over public conveniences to parish and town councils has seen much argument between Borough Councillors but could not explain why WDBC have not responded. Given the delay from WDBC it was agreed that the decision over choice of solicitors to advise on wording of the lease could be left until something more positive is heard from WDBC.

Following comments from members of the parish at last month's meeting emails have been sent to Dartline Coaches who operate the 118 bus about picking up passengers from the new bus shelter. Although Dartline referred the Council to DCC as they operate the route on behalf of Devon County, it would appear that drivers have started to collect and drop off at the bus shelter.

### **5) Reports from other bodies:**

Cllr Squires reported on the recent Super Link meeting, which he felt was very positive. There was a theme from borough and county councillors that town and parish councils could be assuming responsibility for many more aspects of the work in their communities. Councillors were reminded that parish councils are not bound by the same 1.9% cap on increases in precept.

Numbers of reported potholes are down, but the number of blocked drains is increasing.

The idea of a Parish Advocate was introduced at the meeting. This would involve an appointed representative from the Parish Council attending meetings of the Police Authority.

West Devon BC have appointed Chris Brook as their advocate on dealing with Climate Change. Mr Brook presented a number of ideas that parishes could adopt in order to improve their green credentials and guide residents into reducing their carbon footprint. The idea of installing an electric charging point was discussed, and proposed for the next meeting (**AP1**)

Cllr Tainsh reported on the latest meeting of the Devon Resilience Forum. Lydford needs develop its own Community Emergency Plan. Cllr Tainsh proposed that she and Cllr Skeaping begin looking at potential sources of hazard within the parish that would need to be covered in any future plan. Cllr Tainsh to circulate a template for a parish emergency plan, together with guidance notes (**AP2**). To January agenda for further discussion (**AP3**).

Cllrs Squires and Tainsh reported the Nicholls Hall committee of trustees felt that the flagpole outside the Hall belonged to the Parish Council. This needs to be confirmed by the Clerk. (**AP4**)

### **6) Report from Borough Councillor:**

Cllr Southcott asked that parishioners be reminded that Plymouth City Council, South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council are currently consulting on a draft Plymouth and South West Devon Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The deadline for comments is 5pm on 6 January 2020.

Cllr Mott is still looking for volunteers to help with the SpeedWatch initiative. Volunteers should provide their contact details together with a digital signature, indicating that they are willing to allow their data to be used for the purposes of the SpeedWatch campaign.

### **7) Public toilets (standing item):**

It was agreed that no decision needs taking until such time as clarification arrives from WDBC on the status of any future lease for the toilets.

### **8) Finance:**

The Clerk explained that whilst the family of William Sowden were happy to pay the invoice from Morwellham Garden Furniture who are constructing the new memorial bench to replace the near derelict Home Guard bench, it seemed more appropriate for the Council to purchase the bench and to look to the family for a donation to help offset the cost.

Payments:

The following payments were approved –

|                                     |          |                |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------------|
| J Bright (Pay November              | £ 249.28 | Payment online |
| HMRC (PAYE November                 | £ 57.80  | Cheque 300003  |
| DALC (Conference)                   | £ 25.00  | Payment online |
| DHF Products (Toilet signs)         | £ 78.72  | Payment online |
| Morwellham GF (Public Bench)        | £ 312.00 | Payment online |
| WDBC (Service of Wallgate)          | £ 84.00  | Payment online |
| WDBC (Utilities & Wallgate service) | £265.53  | Payment online |

Proposed – Cllr Squires, seconded – Cllr Skeaping, all in favour by show of hands.

**9) Budget 2020**

Councillors agreed the budget total for the coming year to be the same as for the present year (£9,541.00). It was further proposed that the precept be increased from £9263 to £9541 to avoid running a deficit budget again in 2020.

Proposed – Cllr MacIntyre, seconded – Cllr Blackmore, all in favour by show of hands.

10) Planning Applications  
None received.

**11) Correspondence:**  
Previously circulated.

**14) Other Business by permission of the Chair**  
None

**Meeting closed 20:35**

**Next meeting Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

Signed.....Position.....Date.....

| Point | Action   | Completed  |
|-------|--|--|
| AP1   | Clerk to add electric charging point to the Climate Emergency item on the January agenda | Added to agenda 13.12.19   |
| AP2   | Cllr Tainsh to circulate parish Emergency Plan template and guidance.                    | Email circulated 11.12.19  |
| AP3   | Clerk to add Lydford Emergency Plan to January agenda.                                   | Added to agenda 13.12.19   |
| AP4   | Clerk to ascertain the ownership of the flagpole outside the Nicholls Hall               | Flagpole not listed on the asset register, but minutes from 2010 indicate that at that time the PC considered it owned the flagpole. Further enquiries required. |