

MILTON ABBOT GROUPED PARISH COUNCIL

(Parishes of Milton Abbot, Chillaton, Dunterton and Bradstone)

To all Members of the Council

You are hereby summoned to attend a Meeting of the Milton Abbot Grouped Parish Council to be held at **7.30pm on Wednesday 2nd March 2016 at Milton Abbot Village Hall** for the purpose of transacting the business set out below.

Members of the public are welcome to attend.

E James

Emma James, Clerk to the Council

Wednesday 24th February 2016

A G E N D A

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th January 2016**
4. **Open Session – Members of the Public may speak regarding parish matters**
5. **Locality Engagement Officer**

Briefing by Dilys Lord on the work of the Locality Teams

6. **Litter**

Cllr Asbridge has received a complaint from a Chillaton resident regarding the amount of litter left on the roadside between the village and the Tavistock/Lydford junction. The complainant had already been in contact with WDBC requesting that they undertake a litter pick, but was informed that whilst they do react to complaints/requests, there is no regular monitoring of the situation.

As it is not clear whether or not WDBC would attend to clear the litter, Dil Lord has been contacted requesting that a litter pick is undertaken.

7. **Planning**

Appeal: Stables, Edgecumbe Road, Milton Abbot (Case Ref 3131024)

The Appeal hearing date of 19th January 2016 was adjourned and a further date of 14th March has been set.

Applications:

The appropriate Planning Appraisal Panels have considered the below listed applications and the recommendations have been submitted by the Clerk using the delegated power as set out in Minute 51: 15/16 of the 1st July 2015 and approved at that meeting.

- a) Milton Abbot Appraisal Panel

0016/15/FUL: 25a Fore Street, Milton Abbot (application for change of use of existing (vacant) shop premises to for 2 no residential dwellings). The application was supported.

3111/15/LBC Tuell, Milton Abbot (listed building application for replacement windows and french windows and installation of window panel). No comment was made.

3110/15/HO Tuell, Milton Abbot (householder application for replacement windows and french windows and installation of window panel). No comment was made

b) Dunterton Appraisal Panel

2072/15/VAR Woodside Retreat, Hardstone House, Dunterton (Removal of condition 3 (holiday use restriction) of planning consent CU/34/1213/1992/40). No comment was made.

c) Bradstone Appraisal Panel

3019/15/FUL Barn Adj Bradstone Mill, Bradstone (Change of use from listed barn to dwelling). The application was supported.

Decisions: For Cllrs to note:

a) 011247/2015 Eastcott Barton, Dunterton - Conditional Approval

b) 0027/16/PHH North Ground Road from Hillside to The Roun Milton Abbot - Ag Determination details not required

c) 00996/2015 - Bradstone Manor Farm - Change of use of gatehouse to use a holiday cottage - Conditional Approval

Planning Issues

WDBC have been updating their planning portal and experiencing problems with the new system. A recent email from them apologises, acknowledges the problems and advises that they are working hard to resolve them. The change in working practices in the office during their merge with South Devon District Council has meant there has been some confusion regarding the parishes within MAGPC and following a discussion the Clerk has held with them it is hoped that this has now been resolved.

8. Progress Reports

To review and consider updates since the last meeting;

Felldownhead Road and Upcoming Roadworks to the B3362 (15th February to 25th May)

Following the last meeting of MAGPC when concerns regarding the inappropriate vehicular use of Felldownhead Road an email was sent to Devon Highways requesting action to improve the current situation, and also to assist in reducing the impact that the upcoming roadworks on the B3362 were likely to have on the road. The resulting response was not satisfactory offering only to repair the damaged sign, see Appendix A (i).

As a result, and as resolved at Minute No 95:15/16 a further letter was sent to Geoffrey Cox, MP outlining the issues and lack of a satisfactory response from Devon Highways. Geoffrey Cox responded on 21st January advising that he has made representation on behalf of MAGPC to David Whitton, Head of Highways at DCC, to which a response was received on 19th February, Appendix A (ii).

On 9th February a communication was received from the Senior Engineer advising that work to stabilise the carriageway of the B3362 would be commencing on 15th February for approximately 4 months by South West Highways. The roadworks will be controlled by traffic lights although there could be short periods of no longer than 15 minutes when the road may be completely closed, timed to avoid rush hour and school and public bus services.

Parish Council's use of IT

The MAGPC new website is now live; minutes and agendas going back to January 2014 have been uploaded as has the information required under the Transparency Code. Photos of Cllrs have been removed and replaced with the name, address and register of interest for each Cllr along with their allocated MAGPC email address as agreed in minute no 97:15/16.

To date very few Cllrs have set up their MAGPC email addresses or approached Cllr Beighton for assistance in doing so. At present if a member of public wished to contact a Cllr and clicked on the website link the email would automatically be sent to the Clerk. However if they were to copy and paste the email address, this would not happen and the email would go unanswered, being detrimental to the reputation of MAGPC.

The Parish Council is requested to review the position regarding Councillor emails.

Retaining wall, Milton Abbot

As no responses had been received to letters sent to Devon Highways and the Duke of Bedford regarding the Parish Council's concerns about the stability of the wall, follow-up letters were sent by the Clerk. Resulting responses;

- Highways have replied that this issue is not within their remit and suggested that WDBC be contacted
- The Duke of Bedford's office advise that the query is in the system being dealt with and that MAGPC will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible

Correspondence sent to Chris Brook, South Hams District Council, who is responsible for dangerous structures, has resulted in Dan Field, their lead engineer, being tasked to look into the issues raised.

Snow Warden Scheme

Steve Brockman, the Highways Officer, has been informed that Jamie Rutherford is now the Snow Warden for Chillaton and Cllr Cox for Milton Abbot. No further volunteers have been forthcoming to date.

Chichester Arms, Chillaton

The decision regarding the nomination of the Chichester Arms as an Asset of Community Value should have been made and the Clerk informed by 9th February. This has not been forthcoming and a decision is awaited.

Devon Air Ambulance Trust (DAAT) – Community Helipads

3 potential sites in Chillaton have been forwarded to DAAT for their consideration. Cllr Hough is in liaison with the school in Milton Abbot regarding the possibility of their playing field being a suitable location and land along Endsleigh Road has been suggested by Cllr Tucker. These will be forwarded to DAAT in due course, subject to the school being in agreement.

9. MACKPlan

Cllr Asbridge is meeting with Rebecca Black [WDBC Planning Dept] on 23rd February to review the current position regarding MACKPlan and the scheduling of further work, in the context of WDBC's recent decision to create a Joint Local Plan with neighbouring planning authorities.

Attached at Appendix B is the financial report regarding the grant application that was valid from May to September 2015. A sum of £1630.50 has been unspent and is required to be returned to Groundwork UK, see Item 11.

10. Parish On-Line Mapping Facility

Following registration with the Ordnance Survey PSMA on-line service and obtaining a license number which grants the Parish Council copyright permission to use their maps, investigation of a number of services allowing maps to be viewed on-line was undertaken by the Clerk. The most cost effective,

easy to use system being the Parish On-Line mapping service, and a free 30 day trial has been undertaken by the Clerk.

Within that timescale the system has already been used by Cllr Asbridge to easily identify and mark on a map several areas within Chillaton as possible landing sites for the Devon Air Ambulance Trust. It could also have been used within recent months to mark out the area in Milton Abbot for the grass cutting contract and identify the location of the retaining wall causing concern. It would be a useful tool for the MACKPlan team to use in the future and have other numerous uses.

Other systems require the purchase of software, which will soon become out of date, or the free on line GIS system proved difficult to understand and set up without specific training. Parish On Line is simple, easy to use, will be updated automatically and can be used by more than one person if required. The cost, totalling £57.60, includes a one off set up fee of £20, the annual fee of £28 and VAT of £9.60. 2 additional users can be added at an extra cost of £25.

The Parish Council is requested to consider registering with the Parish On Line mapping facility.

11. Financial Matters

Payments

The Parish Council is requested to authorise the below listed items for payment:

- a) Mrs E James, reimbursement for postage in the sum of £4.09
- b) Groundwork UK for refund of unspent grant funds for the MACKPlan in the sum of £1630.50.
- c) Getmapping Plc, registration fee for Parish On Line mapping facility in the sum of £57.60, including £9.60 VAT

To note Clerk's pay:

- 29th January 2016: Payment of £119.41 and HMRC element £29.80, Chq No's 494 and 495
- 29th February 2016: Payment of £119.41 and HMRC element £29.80, Chq No's 496 and 497

In order to cover the costs above, the Clerks wages for March 2016 and a small sum for any other payments required before the Precept is received at the end of April, a sum of £1500.00 is required to be transferred to the Current Account from the Reserve Account.

Bank Reconciliation

Attached at Appendix C is a bank reconciliation dated 13th February 2016 which is based on bank statements obtained that date. The Parish Council has been successful in its application to the Transparency Grant for funds to cover the purchase of the new website and £108.05 has been paid into the Current Account.

Earmarking of Funds

It is good practice that parish councils' surplus funds are earmarked for specific purposes, and that a general contingency fund of approximately 1/3rd of a council's income is held. The Parish Council will hold £8454.82 in its Reserve Account following the transfer of £1500 to the Current Account, all of which should be earmarked for a purpose.

It should also be noted that liability for the retaining wall in Milton Abbot has yet to be ascertained and that both Parish Council noticeboards are in poor condition and will need repair or replacement in due course. Initial enquiries for the cost of recycled plastic lockable noticeboards have been made with 1 supplier, costs are excluding VAT;

2 door (8 sheets A4) wall mounted	£ 1059.97
2 door (8 sheets A4) post mounted	£ 1279.37
1 door (8 sheets A4) wall mounted	£ 832.92
1 door (8 sheets A4) post mounted	£ 1052.32

The Parish Council is requested to consider the below suggested earmarking headings, associated sums allocated, and to further consider any other projects/heading that may be required.

Contingency - Elections	£	1500.00
General Contingency (1/3 rd of 2016/17 income)	£	1470.00
Unallocated Reserves	£	5484.82
TOTAL	£	8454.82

On-Line Banking

The Clerk now has 'view only' on-line access to the Parish Council's bank accounts.

The next stage, as resolved in minute no 77:15/16, is to enable payments to be made by BACS. This requires existing bank signatories to register for on-line access to the accounts. This can either be done by completing an on-line form and posting it, or by going into a branch and speaking to the Registration Team, however the registering Cllrs would have to attend together.

With 'view only' access the Clerk can only view the accounts and is unable to set up payments, this can only be undertaken by someone with full access. The Parish Council has 2 options;

- i) 2 Cllrs sign up – 1 Cllr sets up and approves the payment, the other logs in and authorises it
- ii) 3 Cllrs sign up – 1 Cllr sets up the payment, the other 2 both have to log in and authorise the payment before it will be made

Cheques will still be able to be used in the case that the recipient doesn't provide their bank details or in the absence of one of the Councillors.

The Parish Council is requested to consider which of the 2 options best suits it needs and which of its bank signatories will sign up to on-line banking. **It is also recommended** that the Parish Council considers approving an additional bank signatory who will also have on-line access with the ability to approve payments in a situation where 1 of the other Councillors is unavailable.

12. Frequency and Structure of Meetings

The Parish Council has previously given consideration to the desirability of increasing the frequency of its meetings, but did not decide to change the current system of bi-monthly, or six meetings a year plus an AGM. There are several factors that may make the Parish Council consider that it is appropriate to re-visit this issue, as follows:

The current length of meetings: These usually last for between 2 and 2½ hours and this may not be considered conducive to the proper determination of items placed towards the end of the agenda.

The length of time between meetings: A bi-monthly cycle does not allow for a speedy response to new issues or the prompt follow up of developments in on-going matters.

The determination of the PC's views on planning applications: The Parish Council has already moved on from a situation where its views on applications were generally formulated by informal discussions by the local Cllrs concerned, with no record of their views being set out in Council minutes.

Currently, there are formally constituted advisory panels of local Cllrs. The agreed process is that the Cllrs meet as requested by the Clerk to look at non-contentious small scale applications. The panel then reports to the Clerk, who takes action under urgency procedures to submit those views on behalf of the Parish Council. The Clerk's action is then reported to the next meeting of the Parish Council.

However, individual Cllrs are sending their views to the Clerk, often after follow up emails requesting feedback and it is not always clear whether such views are those of the Panel or the Cllr concerned.

Whilst this process does result in a formal record of the Parish Council's views and avoids an advisory panel acting on behalf of the Parish Council, which it cannot do, it is not entirely satisfactory. Criteria in Standing Orders do help determine what is a contentious application that should therefore be referred to a meeting of the Parish Council and the Clerk can call a special meeting if needed. However,

contentiousness is to some degree a subjective issue and the Parish Council runs the risk that residents may subsequently consider that an application should not have been dealt with by an advisory panel.

It is also the case that although local Cllrs may take steps to make residents aware of local applications coming before advisory panels, there is no formal process of publicity, such as there is with the publication of an agenda for a Council or Planning Committee meeting. There is also no opportunity for residents to speak to the Panel. With local knowledge and the safeguards currently in Standing Orders concerning contentious applications, the system is a little better than before, but it clearly has significant weaknesses. They could be overcome by bringing all applications to the Parish Council, but unless it met far more frequently, the 3 week target for representations to be made to WDBC would not be met for the majority of applications.

Time for reflection and pro-active action: The Parish Council tends to be reactive; it has no programme or set of aims and initiatives of its own. It simply responds to demands made upon it. With more time created by more frequent meetings and a shorter interval between opportunities for decision making, it could be more proactive and set its own policies and priorities more clearly.

Other Parish Council's cycle of meetings: The Clerk is aware of many Parish Councils, including Lifton, Germansweek, and Bratton Clovelly who have meetings on a monthly cycle rather than bi-monthly, including very small Parish Council's, for example Germansweek who have only 5 Councillors and a population of slightly over 100 residents on the electoral register.

Cost: If the Parish Council decided to meet more frequently there would be cost implications to cover the additional hours incurred by the Clerk and hire of the halls. An additional hour per week would allow the Clerk to undertake this additional work, the cost of which for the next financial year would equate to £453.18, and an approximate cost of £50 for the hire of the halls.

The views of the Parish Council are requested.

Meeting Dates: Cllr Brewer has brought to the Clerk's attention that the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May 2017 should be held at Marystowe rather than Milton Abbot. The venue change will be actioned and a revised list of meeting dates circulated following this meeting by the Clerk.

13. Premises License Applications (Alcohol)

Parish Council's will now receive notification of new premises licence (alcohol) applications within West Devon and will be invited to make representation should they feel it is necessary. It is understood that the timescale for representations will be 28 days and therefore possible that any such applications will not always be able to be discussed at a regular meeting of the Parish Council, unless it agrees to meet more regularly.

14. Traffic in Chillaton

Attached at Appendix D is a report from Cllr Asbridge which sets out the traffic issues within Chillaton, the impact the new VAS speed signs has had, and options for continued improvement which the **Parish Council is requested to consider.**

15. Missing Parish Council Documentation

Parish Council records are incomplete with minutes held by the Clerk only going back to 1998 and only partial financial records. Enquiries with Devon Records Office to ascertain what/if any records are held by them have been negative.

Councillors are requested to advise the Clerk of any likely locations or persons who may be in possession of any documentation. **It is also recommended** that consideration is given to an article requesting that '*anyone in possession of Parish Council documentation contact the Clerk*', be placed on the Parish Council website, noticeboards and in any local newsletters.

16. Policies/Documents:

MAGPC have adopted some new policies but there are still some outstanding, including;

- Internal Control
- Health and Safety
- Employment Policies
- Equality and Diversity
- Recording of Meetings
- Freedom of Information

It is recommended that the Parish Council adopts the documents and policies listed below, the remaining documents will be brought to the Parish Council over the next few meetings for consideration.

Recording of Meetings

The Transparency Act 2014 decreed that parish council meetings could be filmed or recorded by the press or members of public. NALC have advised that parish councils should have a policy which sets out the requirement. Attached at Appendix E is an adapted version of NALC's model policy for consideration of the Parish Council.

Freedom of Information

NALC's Legal Topic Note 37 sets out the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The requirements are linked to both the Publication Scheme and Data Protection Act policies that the Parish Council adopted at the last meeting. A draft policy is attached at Appendix F for consideration.

17. Electoral Review of Devon: Final recommendations

The final recommendations are anticipated to come into force in May 2017 once the bill has been passed in parliament. A copy of the report can be reviewed on-line at www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-west/devon/devon-county-council. In essence it means that;

- Devon County Council will have 60 Councillors instead of the existing 62, with West Devon Borough Council being allocated 4 of those.
- There will be a total of 58 electoral divisions; 56 single member divisions (the number of LA Councillors allocated to it) and 2 two member divisions. Milton Abbot will remain within the Okehampton Rural, a single member division.
- The existing division boundaries between Okehampton Rural and Yelverton Rural will change, bringing the Yelverton boarder in line with that of the Milton Abbot parish boundary. Milton Abbot and Chillaton will continue to form part of Milton Ford Ward, Dunterton and Bradstone will remain part of Tamarside.

18. Clerk's Request for Leave

The Parish Council is requested to consider the Clerk's request for holiday the weeks beginning 4th April and 15th August, neither of which will affect planned meetings of the Parish Council, unless it has agreed to meet more regularly.

19. Clerks Employment Request

Germansweek Parish Council have been without a clerk for approximately 12 months, having been unsuccessful in attracting a potential new recruit. Cllr's Mott and Hockridge, Ward Cllr's to both Bratton Clovelly (BCPC) and Germansweek (GPC) Parish Council's suggested they approach BCPC's Clerk, who is also Clerk to MAGPC.

Planned meetings of the 3 PC's wont clash as Germansweek PC meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, even if MAGPC decide to meet more frequently. Whilst this will create more work for the Clerk, the normal everyday issues will be the same for all of the PC's; research carried out for 1 of the PC's will often be relevant to all 3.

The Clerk has not yet formally raised the issue with BCPC, whose next meeting is on 9th March, but an informal conversation with Cllrs after the last PC meeting indicated that they are not likely to object and would welcome the link with the parish.

The Clerk has been invited to attend an interview/chat about the position on 7th March and the **Parish Council is requested** to consider permitting the Clerk to take up this position if offered.

20. Patrons Lunch

To celebrate the Queens 90th Birthday (Appendix G) there will be various celebrations which communities are being encouraged to join in by taking part in either or both of the below events;

Birthday Beacons – 21st April

Beacons will be lit throughout the United Kingdom. There are 3 types of beacons; Gas fuelled which can be purchased at a cost of £299 plus postage, regular bonfires or a beacon brazier on top of a tall wooden post.

Street Party – 12th June

The main event is taking place in The Mall, London where a traditional 'street party' lunch for 10,000 guests will be held. Communities are being encourage to take part and hold their own street parties.

The Parish Council is requested to consider whether or not to support or be involved either of these events.

21. Venn Hill, Milton Abbot

Concern has been raised by a Milton Abbot resident regarding damage to the road surface of Venn Hill and The Parade by heavy vehicles and machinery currently using the roads to access a property to which work is being undertaken. This has been reported to the Highways Officer by the Clerk who will look into the situation when he is next in the village.

22. TV Production

The Clerk has received a request from Ricochet, a TV Production Company, who are making a new a 35-part series for Channel 5 daytime "To B&B The Best" (provisional working title) about homeowners who are hoping to make some cash from their spare rooms. Ricochet are enquiring about a means of advertising for interested locals who may wish to take part in the production to come forward and have requested that the Parish Council include this within the Agenda of a council meeting. **The views of the Parish Council** are requested.

23. Councillors' reports and items for future agenda

Each Councillor is requested to use this opportunity to report minor matters of information not included elsewhere on the agenda and to raise items for future agendas. Councillors are respectfully reminded that this is not an opportunity for debate or decision making.

24. Dates of future meetings

Wednesday 4th May 2016 Parish Meeting for Chillaton Marystowe Church Hall

Thursday 5th May 2016 Parish Meeting for Milton Abbot, Dunterton and Bradstone at Milton Abbot Village Hall followed by the AGM and an ordinary Council Meeting.