

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE MILTON ABBOT GROUPED PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON THURSDAY 2nd JULY 2014 AT MILTON ABBOT VILLAGE HALL AT 7.30PM.

(available at www.chillaton.net and www.miltonabbot.net).

PRESENT: Cllrs H. Asbridge (C), R Brewer (C), J Spurr (MA), R. Tucker (MA) (until 9pm) and Mrs A Westcott (C) (Chair)

Cllr Bob Baldwin (WDBC)

Cllr Brian Moore (Lifton PC)

Three members of the public also attended.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllr J. Anderson (MA), D. Gradidge (D), P. Hough (MA), M. Pahlsson (B)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: None were declared.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8th May 2014 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4. DEVELOPING A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cllr Brian Moore, from Lifton Parish Council, kindly attended the meeting to advise on Lifton's experience to date in developing a Neighbourhood Plan for their parish. Cllr Moore circulated copies of the 21 stage process now being carried out by the Lifton Neighbourhood Planning Team.

Cllr Moore stressed that the focus of any Neighbourhood Plan would be the identification of potential sites for sustainable housing or employment within the area of the Plan but, by doing so, our ability to resist unwarranted development would be increased.

It was noted that Lifton had benefitted greatly in their work so far, from the use of an experienced planning consultant and from the support of WDBC's Strategic Planning Officers. The consultant had been financed with a Locality Fund grant. However, this fund was cash-limited and was fast running out.

The Parish Council thanked Cllr Moore for his helpful advice and decided that:

(i) the Parish Clerk should contact the consultant used by Lifton Parish Council, to establish whether, if the Parish Council so wished, it would be possible to retain his services in support of our Neighbourhood Plan.

(ii) the Parish Clerk should contact WDBC's Strategic Planning Officers to confirm the Parish Council's intention to proceed as quickly as possible with a Neighbourhood Plan and seek their advice on the initial stages required to initiate this project

(iii) a special meeting of the Parish Council be held as soon as possible to consider the outcome of the above action and to take this issue forward.

5. POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES

Members had received a schedule of sites recently assessed by a group of technical officers from various agencies, on behalf of West Devon Borough Council. The sites had been identified by the landowners concerned, in response to a request from WDBC to identify land for development.

Chillaton Parish Councillors had reviewed the three sites affecting their village and had prepared a draft statement to be considered by the Parish Council and, if suitable, endorsed and sent to WDBC.

The statement was considered and one site in particular [land between Marlow Crescent and Sunwaye] was discussed in detail, with contributions from members of the public who were present.

The need for any development to meet local housing requirements and the work being done to create a Housing Needs Survey more appropriate to rural areas was also discussed, with contributions from members of the public who were present.

Cllr Spurr gave an initial assessment of various sites proposed in Milton Abbot.

It was agreed that:

(i) Milton Abbot Parish Councillors should meet as soon as possible to carry out a similar exercise to that done in respect of the sites in Chillaton. [Note: In doing so, they should have regard to the views submitted to the Parish Clerk by email, from Cllr Pahlsson.]

(ii) the views of Chillaton Parish Councillors be endorsed as follows:

Generally:

(i) These sites are not the outcome of a rational review of the need for more housing in Chillaton or of potential development areas in the village. It is therefore possible that other more suitable sites will emerge within the relevant time frame. The current site of the Chillaton Garage is one example. It has outline permission to relocate and if it does so, the existing site will no doubt be re-developed for housing.

(ii) As the technical officer group noted, the question of whether or not Chillaton is capable of further development, because of its lack of facilities and the impact that has on private car usage, has not been determined. That study should be done before any application to develop a particular site is encouraged.

(iii) Chillaton already has a good mix of housing stock, including lower-cost homes that are either for rent or purchase. Generally, there are always houses for sale or rent in the village. However, new development should not be discouraged if it makes a contribution to the viability of the village. That is, for example, housing that meets the needs of local residents who require affordable housing, enables younger families to remain in the village or allows older residents to move to more easily managed properties. The aim should be to encourage a balanced, mixed village community in Chillaton.

(iv) Given the constraints identified in developing the sites put forward and the lack of facilities within the village, there needs to be a better understanding of the future housing needs of Chillaton residents and others with a valid local connection. It is therefore essential that a Housing Needs Survey, designed to identify a wide range of requirements, is carried out in the parish before any new housing developments in Chillaton are considered.

Comments on the specific sites:

Land west of 1 Springfield Cottages [Ref: WD 42 07 08/13] Although the point made by the technical officers group about additional traffic on the narrow access lane is understood, its impact depends on the scale of the development proposed. At this time, the views of the technical officers group are endorsed, but it might be that some small scale development here would be viable.

Land east of Marlow Crescent [Ref: WD 42 08 13] The views of the technical officers group are endorsed, with the additional comment that if this site and the adjoining one [see below] were developed, there would be a significant increase in the village's housing stock, far in excess of what may be required for any local needs.

Land between Sunwaye and Marlow Crescent [Ref: WD 42 09 13] This would represent a significant extension of the village boundary, because it would create a

ribbon of development from the new garage site to the village centre. The site is described by the technical officer's group as flat but unsuitable for wholesale development, because of its impact on the character of the landscape. In fact, the site is not flat; it descends considerably from road level, which makes it difficult to see how the technical officer group's idea of a development along the frontage of the site could be achieved.

Furthermore, there are two streams that cross the site in culverts. One is a substantial watercourse in winter and both play a significant part in the drainage of the hillside opposite. The cost of accommodating those streams underneath any development of the site suggests that the only area that would be economically viable lies to the side and the rear of Sunway. That would create the same objections on grounds of amenity and non-typical village development as the technical officer's group found would apply to the land at the rear of Marlow Crescent.

Conclusions:

As far as Chillaton is concerned, the Parish Council has no objection to the creation of a small number of new homes, if they are needed to respond to the changing requirements of local residents and they contribute to maintaining the viability of the village community.

None of the sites identified is entirely suitable; all have factors that would either affect their viability or have a significant adverse environmental impact, or both. Given the lack of village amenities and the identified need for further study of the impact of any new development, it is not recommended that any of these sites are taken further at this time.

However, it is very likely that a brownfield site in Chillaton will become available [the site of the existing Chillaton garage] and this should be developed with housing that contributes to meeting needs identified in a future housing needs assessment.

That assessment will be a precursor to the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan that will include Chillaton and will identify any additional sites needed to respond to demand for housing in excess of that which could be met on the Chillaton garage site.

(iii) at the conclusion of the review referred to in (i) above, the Parish Clerk will combine any general comments as appropriate, and forward the resulting document to the Chair and Vice-Chair for approval prior to submission to the West Devon Borough Council, as being the Parish Council's views on all the sites concerned.

6. PROGRESS REPORTS

Lifton Feed Mill – Discussions were on-going with the feed mill and it had been noticed that there had been a considerable drop in the number of feed lorries coming through Chillaton.

Housing Needs Survey -- Cllr Asbridge had continued to work with WDBC on the development of a Housing Needs Survey that covers a wider range of need than the current form. This was nearing completion and the final version would be used within the parish.

Playground inspections -- Cllr Anderson was to receive the safety inspection reports shortly. A copy of the Play Group's playing fields insurance policy had also been sent to the Parish Council.

7. TAP FUND APPLICATION

Cllr Asbridge reported that he had had some initial discussions with the Chair of Lifton Parish Council regarding the possibility of making a joint application to the Town and Parishes [TAP] Fund to pay for the clearance of neglected areas of highway and pavements, blocked gullies and drains, etc, so that they can then be brought back into regular cleaning/maintenance cycles in future.

It was agreed that the Parish Clerk be authorised to discuss the idea further with Lifton Parish Council and if a viable scheme could be developed, submit it to the Southern Area Link Committee for consideration.

8. APPOINTMENT OF PARISH CLERK

The Parish Council considered whether to recruit another Parish Clerk without delay, or to continue with Cllr Asbridge as Acting Clerk for the time being.

It was noted that there were several instances where current admin procedures needed to be overhauled and that it might be necessary to review the Clerk's hours and salary to assist in an eventual successful recruitment. There was therefore some benefit in Cllr Asbridge carrying out any necessary review of procedures, etc., monitoring the hours involved in the Clerk's normal duties and reporting thereon in due course before a further recruitment exercise was undertaken.

Cllr Asbridge was willing to carry out the Clerk's duties for the time being and undertake the reviews referred to above and it was agreed that he should do so.

It was also agreed that the previous post-holder's expenses of £3.63 should be re-imbursed.

9. MEMBERSHIP OF DEVON ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS [DALC]

DALC provided advice and support to Parish Councils in Devon, on payment of an annual subscription, currently £164.97 including VAT.

A Parish Council subscribing to DALC would obtain model standing orders, procedures for letting contracts, any necessary advice on financial returns, etc as well as the ability to keep up to date with new regulations and legislation as they arose.

Given the need to ensure that the Parish Council's activities were properly regulated in accordance with up to date procedures, etc., it was decided to join DALC with effect from the beginning of the municipal year.

10. OUR PLAN

It was noted that WDBC was organising workshops for parish councillors on the following issues, as part of their development of a new local plan – Our Plan:

- 25th July – Renewable energy
- 26th September – Growth and development options
- 24th October – Health and Wellbeing

Cllr Asbridge would be attending the Renewable Energy Workshop. It was agreed that any other parish councillors wishing to attend any of the workshops would contact the Parish Clerk to make the necessary arrangements.

11. EXPENDITURE 2013/14 AND BUDGET FOR 2014/15

Although Members had already received details of actual expenditure for 2013/14 and forecast income and expenditure for 2014/15, these reports had not been formally acknowledged by the Parish Council.

It was also noted that the annual financial return sent to a previous parish clerk had not been completed. The Acting Parish Clerk had obtained another copy and would complete it as soon as possible. However, one of the statutory deadlines associated with this return had not been met.

It was agreed that:

- (i) the reports of actual expenditure for 2013/14 and forecast income and expenditure for 2014/15, previously circulated be approved

(ii) that payment of £100 to Kelly Church PCC in respect of the maintenance of Bradstone Churchyard, for which there was provision on the 2014/15 budget, be approved.

12. HIGHWAY VERGES – GRASS CUTTING

In many parts of the Parish, no work had been done by DCC contractors to cut down the summer growth on highway verges, leading to dangerous situations due to restricted visibility at junctions, etc.

It was agreed that the Parish Clerk would make further efforts to have this work carried out as soon as possible.

13. LIAISON WITH ADJOINING PARISH COUNCILS

It was agreed that any necessary liaison with adjoining parish councils in Devon or Cornwall would be carried out as required.

14. DRAFT DOG CONTROL ORDERS

The Parish Council decided not to make any representations about the draft Dog control Orders published by WDBC, as they covered types of land not found in their area.

15. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Additional meeting in July or August to discuss Neighbourhood Plan – date and location to be determined.

Wednesday 3rd September 2014 Marystowe Church Hall

Wednesday 5th November 2014 Milton Abbot Village Hall

Wednesday 7th January 2015 Marystowe Church Hall

Wednesday 4th March 2015 Milton Abbot Village Hall

Wednesday 13th May 2015 Parish Meeting for Milton Abbot, Dunterton and Bradstone at Milton Abbot Village Hall.

Thursday 14th May 2015 Parish Meeting for Chillaton followed by the AGM and an ordinary Council Meeting.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.40pm.