

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 7th January 2015 at Marystow Church Hall** for the purpose of transacting the business set out below.

H.J. Asbridge, Acting Clerk to the Council

Wednesday 31st December 2014

A G E N D A

Part 1

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
- 3. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on 5th November 2014**
- 4. Open Session – Members of the Public may speak regarding parish matters**
- 5. Proposed Wind Turbine at Cardwell Farm, Long Cross**

At its meeting on the 5th November, the Parish Council agreed to inform WDBC of its view that there were deficiencies in the pre-application process for this proposed wind turbine, namely the lack of a public meeting, an apparent failure to include all relevant properties in a postal survey and an increase in the height of the turbine since that survey was carried out.

In the light of those deficiencies, the Parish Council considered that the applicants were unable to demonstrate that all those concerned had had the opportunity to express a view on the definitive proposal and have it taken into account before an application was submitted. It was therefore premature for the Parish Council to express a view.

Planex, consultants for the applicants, subsequently decided that a public meeting should be held, as part of the pre-application process. As with previous turbine proposals, this was arranged by the Parish Council and chaired by the Parish Clerk.

As well as a general discussion at that meeting about the benefits and dis-benefits of on-shore wind power, the following issues specific to this proposal were raised:

The turbine height had been increased because the latest version of this model was 2m higher, but it generated 20% more power and should be quieter than the previous version. In theory, it should power 107 homes.

The original location would have had too great an impact on the AONB and so a lower position, requiring a taller turbine had been chosen, but local wind-speed studies had not yet confirmed its suitability.

The turbine would be connected to the National Grid and the majority of the power generated would not be consumed on the farm.

The applicants would investigate the potential for the contamination of the water supply currently extracted from bore holes in the area.

The applicants undertook to have the turbine and its concrete base removed after the expiry of the 25 years of operation that would be approved, should planning permission be granted. They would set aside the necessary funds to ensure this took place.

The postal survey had not included a property that was one of the nearest to the turbine site, because it was not occupied.

As well as general concerns about the effects of large on-shore wind turbines, the following specific issues were raised:

Despite the statement by Planex that this turbine would sit much better in the landscape than other nearby proposals and would not interrupt the skyline, there was concern at the visual impact on Brentor and of the eastward extension of large turbines towards the DNP.

Although Planex stated that there had not been an impact on Cornish tourism as a result of the large number of turbines erected in the county, it was considered that there would be an adverse impact on local tourist-based businesses in this area.

There needed to be more detailed studies of the potential impact on bats, given the presence of a rare species in the area and also barn owls, as there were five breeding pairs nearby.

76 people attended and all those expressing a view were opposed to this development.

One of the main concerns of the Parish Council has been met by the holding of the public meeting and a reason has been given for the increase in the height of the proposed turbine. The scope of the postal consultation exercise and the apparent omission of one or more properties has not been addressed.

Other than the commitments given at the meeting by the applicants, as set out above, the Parish Clerk has not received any indication from the applicants that they are able or willing to amend the proposal to take into account the concerns of local residents. Indeed, as many of the general concerns relate to the perceived visual impact of the turbine and its adverse effect on the quality of life in the nearest properties, it is hard to see how those issues could be satisfactorily resolved unless the proposal was abandoned.

The Parish Council therefore needs to consider whether:

- I. There are any aspects of the pre-application consultation process that it still wishes to draw to the attention of WDBC as inadequate.
- II. It wishes to express a view on this proposal, at this stage, or defer doing so until it has considered both an application for planning permission and the associated Environmental Impact Assessment.

6. Progress Reports

To review any developments since the last meeting, regarding the following matters:

Proposed Wind Turbine at Beckwell Farm – outcome of Appeal, if known.

Traffic issues - Felldownhead Road: current position.

Purchase of speed warning signs – These have now been ordered.

MACKPlan: The training/briefing sessions by the external consultant have been held and the team will be meeting shortly to use its project plan to determine its initial activities in 2015. The necessary claim forms and progress reports have been submitted to Locality on schedule.

Localism Act – Identification of Community Assets: current position.

7. Declaration of Precept for 2015/16

At its last meeting, the Parish Council decided not to change the level of next year's precept. Notification has now been received from WDBC of the tax base for the Parish Council for 2015/16. The standard basis for offsetting the effect of the minor reduction in Council Tax Support Grant, as provided by WDBC, would see the Parish Council's budget remaining at last year's level i.e. £4,085 and not the £4,051 forecast in Appendix B to the agenda for the last meeting. This would be made up of a precept of £3,901 and a Council Tax Support Grant of £184.

The Parish Council is therefore recommended to formally approve a precept for 2015/2016 of £3,901.

9. Our Plan – Housing targets for local communities

At the last meeting, the Parish Clerk reported that WDBC had originally proposed that Milton Abbot might take between 20-30 new houses over the 15 year life of Our Plan. This was because the main centres of population, Okehampton and Tavistock, could not generate enough new development to meet the target, although they would provide the great majority of sites.

That target was then increased to 20-50 homes. The Parish Clerk made further representations on behalf of the Parish Council and at a meeting on 5th December, WDBC proposed that the target for Milton Abbot be a minimum of 20 homes but with no maximum. Chillaton will not have a separate allocation but may contribute to the overall achievement of the Milton Abbot target.

Our Plan is still at an informal stage and WDBC has invited comments on the various consultative e-newsletters that have been previously circulated. The closing date for this informal consultation is the 5th January. The Parish Clerk intends to submit comments on relevant issues affecting the parish and will circulate any paper produced, before this meeting. The Parish Council will then be able to either endorse or amend the submission of the Parish Clerk at this meeting. Hopefully this will then be taken into account by WDBC.

A draft of Our Plan will be considered by WDBC on 20th January and there will then be a formal consultation process in February and March.

Appointment of Parish Clerk

Cllr Asbridge has been carrying out the duties of the Parish Clerk on a voluntary basis for several months, during which time he has produced revised standing orders, new financial regulations and an annual cycle of financial reporting and control, all of which have been approved by the Parish Council.

There are still several significant elements of the Parish Council's administrative processes that need to be overhauled and recently approved initiatives, such as risk management, need to be implemented. Cllr Asbridge is prepared to carry out the work necessary to introduce whatever further improvements the Parish Council sees fit to adopt, but we have now reached a stage where any new recruit to the post of Parish Clerk would have a firm basis upon which to support the work of the Parish Council.

Given the additional pressures on Cllr Asbridge's time that will now arise from his leadership of the MACKPLAN team, it is essential that a recruitment process is begun as soon as possible. As recent appointments have not proved successful, Parish Council needs to consider the scope of the role, the hours required to undertake it and the remuneration needed to attract someone capable of successfully carrying out the duties concerned.

The role of the Parish Clerk The job has several main duties:

Acting as the Parish Council's proper officer and responsible financial officer. This is a regulatory role, where the Clerk has a duty to monitor the conduct of meetings and the way in which the business of the Parish Council is conducted. There are particular responsibilities relating to the annual financial cycle and any purchasing activity.

Keeping Cllrs informed, co-ordinating responses to third parties and publicising the work of the Parish Council. It is essential that the Clerk filters information and passes on relevant material quickly and efficiently. The Clerk also has to be capable of presenting a professional image of the Parish Council in written communications with third parties and able to produce agendas and minutes on time and to an appropriate standard.

There are various other duties, but this report is not intended to be a job description, only to restate the key elements of the role.

Because of his previous local government experience, Cllr Asbridge has been able to undertake a large amount of work on behalf of the Parish Council that no ordinary parish clerk would be expected to do. That has included drafting 'technical' reports and minutes setting out the Parish Council's position on major planning applications, chairing public meetings and representing the Parish Council's views at seminars, etc.

This causes a problem for the Parish Council in trying to define the role of the Clerk and the hours needed. It also highlights the question of whether or not this additional work is necessary and if it is, who should do it in future.

The hours and salary required

Here are some examples of vacancies recently advertised locally, or on the DALC website:

Meeth PC	132 hours p.a	eight weekly cycle	£1,175
Lydford PC	300 hours p.a	four weekly cycle	£2,526
Bridgerule PC	240 hours p.a.	four weekly cycle	£1,920
MAGPC	100 hours p.a.	six weekly cycle	£750

Although this is a small sample, there does seem to be a correlation between the frequency of meetings and the hours worked. Adjusting the hours pro rata, to bring all the above examples on to a six week cycle, gives a range of 100, 160, 176 and 200. Of course, each parish council will have different responsibilities and these will place differing demands on a clerk's time.

In the budget for 2015/16, the existing provision for the Clerk's salary was increased to £1,500. The most common pay rate for Clerks seems to be about £8.40 per hour. This is based on the relevant salary scale and more experienced appointees may join at a higher point on the scale. There is normally an annual progression until the maximum for the salary grade has been reached. If a national pay award is made to local government officers, then the value of each point on the salary scale would be increased accordingly.

If MAGPC paid £8.50 per hour for three hours a week for 52 weeks a year, the current cost would be £1,326 p.a.

The Parish Council is requested to give initial consideration to these issues.

15. Consideration of planning applications

To report the outcome of the consideration of planning applications by the relevant Planning Committees of the Parish Council.

16. Payments due

In accordance with Standing Orders, the Parish Clerk will seek authorisation at the meeting for any outstanding payments to creditors, to be made by the Parish Council.

17. 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.

18. Dates of future meetings

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.