

## **DRAFT Minutes of the Belstone Annual Parish Meeting Held on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017 in the Village Hall**

**Present:** 7 members of the parish, including M. Ash in the chair and clerk R Hill. Also present was Ian Brooker (Dartmoor National Park Ranger)

1. **APOLOGIES:** Elisabeth Emerson, John Hartingdon, Marion Walpole, Christopher Walpole

2. **MINUTES:** The minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2016 were read, accepted and signed (proposed by A. Norman seconded by S. Norrish).

3. **MATTERS ARISING:** None

4. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL:**

The Council held eight meetings, plus five planning meetings. Attendance of members has again been good and WDBC and DNP representatives have also attended, as have members of the public. Thirteen planning applications were received and discussed. One was withdrawn and the major application at White House Services was referred by the DNP. There will no doubt be further developments on this one.

After a mixture of underground and over ground work, the Broadband Project for Skaigh Lane was completed early this year.

The Precept for 2017-18 was set at £1730 which includes a £40 Council Tax Support Grant. This is a slight increase over last year of £30.

On the question of seats in the Parish, one at West Cleave has been removed as dangerous and a new one, in memory of the Nockolds family, has been placed in the Pound. At this point I would like to thank Mrs Kuhn for maintaining the garden in the Pound.

The usual highways' matters have been dealt with; potholes, blocked drains etc and there have been the periodic visits of the lengthsman. We took up the opportunity of a load of sand for sandbags and these are stored at Dagworthy.

We have received and discussed much other correspondence and filled in the usual questionnaires from various organisations, much of which does not have any relevance to Belstone. Council members have attended WDBC, DNP and Highways meetings at various venues.

I would like to thank my Vice Chairman and fellow Councillors for their help and interest in Council matters over the last year and for giving up their time to attend Council meetings and those of other organisations.

Lastly I must thank our Clerk, Robin Hill, for once again doing such a good job with the minutes and book keeping. Thank you also to Simon Herbert for his excellent job as the Internal Auditor.

Michael Ash (Chairman)

The report was accepted by the meeting. Proposed by P Cooper and seconded by A Norman

5. **STATEMENT OF BELSTONE PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS TO 31.03.17**

The balance at 01.04.17 was £2355.19 in the bank with no money in petty cash. Last year's balance was £2331.01. Income for the year included the Precept of £1700. This was a reduction from last year which at £1900 included a contingency figure of £200. There was a very small amount of interest on the Reserve Account. Expenditure has included insurance, subscription to Devon Association of Parish Councils, rent for use of the Village Hall meeting room and the clerk's salary. It was also agreed to increase the clerk's salary by £20.

A payment is also made to South Hams District Council for administration of the clerk's salary and notification of PAYE to HMRC. Section 137 payments totalling £95 were paid to Okehampton District Community Transport, North Dartmoor Search and Rescue, West Devon Citizens Advice, 1st South Zeal Scouts and Sticklepath and Okehampton Conservation Group. Total payments amount to £1676.52. VAT of £31.23 is yet to be reclaimed. All payments were in line with budget estimates and there were no outstanding payments. After taking into

account money set aside for seats, election costs, bus shelter repair and money held in a contingency fund 'True Reserves' amount to £1,491.52.

A Precept of £1730 has been set for 2017/18. It was agreed by the council to increase the clerk's salary by £25 and to reconsider the 137 payment to the 1<sup>st</sup> South Zeal Scouts and retain £15 for another local cause.

### **SKAIGH WOOD TRUST ACCOUNTS TO 31.03.17**

The end of year balance for the Skaigh Wood Trust was £9750.42. This includes rent for Skaigh Warren £1120 and interest £45.34 from the Barclays Business Account. Expenses were £350.68 Insurance, a £100 honorarium to the clerk, a £485.00 payment to Warren Dawes for tree work by the weir and two payments to R O'Bryen £50 for a tree inspection and £300 for a comprehensive safety audit throughout the wood. These payments amounted to £1285.68 which was a considerable increase from £611.24 in 2015/16.

The account statement was accepted by the meeting. Proposed P. Cooper and seconded by A. Norman.

### **6. NATIONAL PARK RANGER'S REPORT: Ian Brooker Sector Ranger**

In case you are not already aware, Central Government announced a four-year National Park Grant settlement in January, with no further cuts to our finances during this period. This was totally unexpected news and although we are not returning to our previous levels of funding, at least we will have some stability and now, the ability to plan for the future.

In late March we received the 8- point Plan for England's National Parks which includes: connecting young people with nature; delivering new apprenticeships; driving growth in international tourism; promotion of the best of British food from NPs; encouraging greater diversity in the visitors coming to NPs; enhancing peoples involvement in the interpretation of the historic and natural beauty in NP's; the promotion of health and well-being schemes and creating thriving natural environments. Full details at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

On a more local level, I reported last year about how the management of our rights of way network had to change, including the use of more volunteers to achieve the ongoing maintenance schedules. I am pleased to announce that a staggering 84% of all of the rights of way in my area are now annually cleared by volunteers showing the commitment to this change in a very short space of time. I cannot thank enough the people who have risen to this challenge but especially to my Voluntary Warden for the area, Ian Solomon who will also take on some of the strimming of local paths as he recovers from his recent knee operation.

DCC have also kept our rights of way budget the same and as a result we will be continuing to employ a contractor to tackle the annual summer cuts on some of the narrowest paths where it is appropriate to use small scale machinery, such as parts of the local bridleways. I am also hoping to complete some improvement works on the Tongue End bridleway later on in the year.

The project we completed last year on the same bridleway has worked really well and I have just replaced a stile with a gate, with the kind permission of both landowners near Priestacott which should enable easier access for all users.

The commons continue to take up some of my time with some unfortunate incidents such as fly-tipping adding to frustration and time away from more productive duties. However, some good projects have been completed with the local community including improvement works to the pond on Brenamoor Common.

Ian Brooker DNPA Ranger

**7. SKAIGH WOOD TRUST ANNUAL REPORT: Chairman**

Most of the Trust’s work over the past year has been concerned with work on damaged or dangerous trees. The Lawson’s Cypress near the weir, which was damaged in early 2016 was made safe, together with a nearby sycamore, at a cost of £450. The Trust decided to ask Rob O’Byren to carry out an inspection of trees near the footpaths in the wood. As a result of this inspection it was agreed to have two days of work done on the trees posing the greatest risk along the lower path.

The rent for the Warren has been paid by the tenant and the insurance on the wood renewed with the NFU.

The annual inspection of the footbridge for insurance purposes has been carried out and once again found to be in good order.

Thanks to Ian Brooker and StOC for carrying out various jobs around the wood and on the paths, this help is of great assistance to the Trust.

Lastly thanks to my fellow Trustees for their interest in the management of the wood and to our clerk Robin Hill and Simon Herbert auditor.

Michael Ash

This was accepted by the meeting. Proposed P Cooper, seconded J Pike

**8. REPORT OF THE VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE:**

In the absence of Theresa Weaver this was read by the clerk R. Hill.

2016-2017 has been yet another successful year for Belstone Village Hall. Our old favourites continue – yoga and Pilates, Art Group, the Dawn Chorus bird walk and a week of fun with the Belstone Player’s supper theatre (26 households providing meals for the sell-out performances). Paul Rendell gave an informative talk describing his 100 mile trek across Dartmoor with pack ponies and we also hosted a brilliant evening of music and dancing provided by Mike Robison’s band ‘One Foot in the Groove’. They enjoyed it so much they have agreed to come back again later this year.

Our main fund raising events this year were the Village Fair, the Craft Fair as well as the 2 Belstone Bazaars, earning the hall over £3,000, £800 and £580 respectively. The healthy hundred club has also raised over £1,000.

Our community café, with its excellent group of dedicated volunteers, continues to be a main contributor to village hall funds raising a remarkable £2,699 this year.

A major project this year has been to start improvements to the kitchen. We are in the process of installing a new catering sized range and a warming cupboard and will soon add a further combi-oven and hopefully a new dishwasher.

Unlike many village halls in the area, Belstone can boast a healthy end of year balance, and I would like to conclude with thanks to everyone involved in its continued success.

Theresa Weaver (Current Chair)  
27 April 2017

**9. AOB: None**

There being no other business, the Chairman thanked the meeting for its attendance. The meeting closed at 8.00pm.

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....