

Minutes of the Belstone Annual Parish Meeting Held on 3rd May 2016 in the Village Hall

Present: 6 members of the parish, with M. Ash in the chair and clerk R Hill. Also present was Ian Brooker (Dartmoor National Park Ranger)

1. **APOLOGIES:** None

2. **MINUTES:** The minutes of the meeting held on 28th April 2015 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 Chairman presented his report, which is included with these minutes.

The report was accepted by the meeting. Proposed by J. Pike and seconded by A Norman

5. **STATEMENT OF BELSTONE PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS TO 31.03.16**

The balance at 01.04.16 was £2330.66 in the bank with £0.35 being held in Petty Cash. Last year's balance was £2024.55. This year's figure includes a contingency of £200 which was added to the Precept, which was set at £ 1900. This was considered necessary at the time after warnings of severe budget cuts with references to reduced grass cutting of verges, gritting during severe weather and re stocking grit bins. As things have turned out this has not been needed. There was also a small amount of interest on the Reserve Account and VAT of £59.10 has been reclaimed. This covers the last two financial years. Expenditure has included insurance, subscription to Devon Association of Parish Councils, rent to the Village Hall and the clerk's salary. A payment is made to South Hams District Council for administration of the clerk's salary and notification of PAYE to HMRC. Section 137 payments totaling £95 were paid to Okehampton and District Community Transport, Victim Support Devon, North Dartmoor Search and Rescue, West Devon CAB and 1st South Zeal Scouts. Total payments to date amount to £1657.93. Savings having been made in petty cash and stationery expenses. All payments were approximately in line with budget estimates. There is one outstanding cheque to HMRC for £112. This is included in the accounts.

A precept of £1,700 has been set for 2016/17. The council considered that it was not necessary to include a contingency fund this coming year. It was also agreed by the Council to increase the clerk's pay by £20 and to replace the precept 137 donation to Victim Support with one to StOC. The clerk explained that the accounts had been revised after consultation with the internal auditor to include a cheque to HMRC that had been written but not cleared within the current year.

SKAIGH WOOD TRUST ACCOUNTS TO 31.03.16

The end of year balance for the Skaigh Wood Trust was £9870.76. This includes rent for Skaigh Warren £1120 and interest £66.34 from the Barclays Business Account. Expenses were £348.74 for insurance, a £100 honorarium to the clerk and £162.50 to R. O'Bryen for a tree survey in part of Skaigh Wood.

Once again I would like to thank Simon Herbert who has kindly audited both the Parish Council and the Skaigh Wood Accounts.

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

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 Brenamore Common.

Ian Brooker DNPA Ranger

7. SKAIGH WOOD TRUST ANNUAL REPORT: Chairman

The Chairman presented the Skaigh Wood Trust Report which is included with these minutes. 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.

It has been another successful and varied year for Belstone Village Hall. Our old favourites continue – yoga (now 2 evening classes a week plus the Wednesday day time class) and Pilates, Art Group, Thursday café, the Village Fair, the Craft Fair as well as the Belstone Bazaar (now down to 2 a year at Christmas and Easter), informative talks and the Dawn Chorus bird walk.

Our community café is run by excellent volunteers who treat us to a range of bakes that are rapidly becoming known throughout the village (Andy Whitmarsh's tea cakes, Bob's carrot cake and Mae's gluten free brownies to name but a few!). This year, without the photographic competition, we decided not to have a Village Hall Christmas Coffee morning but held the Xmas 100 club draw during Thursday Café with Carols, with the church volunteers providing mince pies and other festive delights. This is the type of collaboration that we feel is important in our community which is why we donated half of the funds from our very successful Village Fair to the ongoing church fundraising for a loo – splendidly named Cash for Kazi.

The Craft Fair and the Bazaars attract very different contributors and visitors, but each one requires a good deal of planning and co-ordinating. For this we are very grateful to non-committee members David Gundry (for organising the Craft Fair), Ann Taylor (for the Craft Fair catering) and Edwina Hill (for overseeing the Bazaars). There are also an army of bakers, soup makers and on-the-day helpers who help make these events such a success.

Chris Walpole delivered a fascinatingly illuminating talk on Belstone in WW1 (due to public demand, this was repeated a few weeks later) and led a happy band of early birds on the annual Dawn Chorus walk. A sumptuous breakfast, as is now tradition, awaited us all, thanks to Marion.

There have also been new things in the hall – The Belstone Grub Club has seen the hall transformed with candelabras, excellent food and charming young waiting staff; the meeting room has been re-decorated; the outside of the hall has been completely transformed with clipped hedges and new gravel – we are now awaiting the gravel traps to make wheel-chair/pram access easier; and Colin Lawson has again brought us up-to-date with the addition of a smart new sound system and ambient lighting (thanks to the Belstone Players for their generous donations to make this possible). Talking of smart systems ... you may (or may not) be aware of the recent Opus Energy debacle. To cut a long story short, our new electricity provider sent an engineer to install a 'smart' metre. Unfortunately, in the process of installation, various electrical items in the hall blew up! Thanks to the persistent badgering of Colin and Chris we were eventually reimbursed for all the damage caused.

Things that have not happened have been the acquisition of some second hand solar panels we were offered and the erection of an internet mast by Airband. Both of these were proposals that were discussed at length and the committee decision was not to proceed with either.

Our hall continues to be used as a community hub, hosting events ranging from parties to wakes, defibrillator training to dog training! It is central to the life of Belstone and is an amenity that we, as a community, should be rightly proud of.

Current Chair: Theresa Weaver

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.....