

**BELSTONE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
**TUESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2019**  
**DRAFT MINUTES**

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**Present:** Michael Ash (Chairman), Ann Norman (Vice Chairman), Paul Boyce, Peter Cooper, Elisabeth Emerson, Susan Norrish and Jon Pike

**In attendance:** DNPA Cllr Derek Webber, Tony Dale, David Emerson, Andrew Terry, Chris Townsend, Emrys Mason and Edward Currie.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and then led a minute's silence in memory of Adrian Little who had died last week.

1. **Apologies:** None
2. **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 1st May 2018:** The minutes were signed as a correct record.
3. **Matters arising:** None.
4. **Annual Report of the Parish Council:**

The Council has had eight meetings, plus two planning meetings. Members' attendance has again been good and WDBC, DNP and DCC representatives have also attended, as have members of the public. Four planning applications were received and discussed. Two have been granted, one refused and no decision has been received on the most recent of these from the DNPA.

The Precept for 2019/2020 was set at £2,177, plus a £34 Council Tax Support Grant.

The Council has signed a ten year lease on the car park and the maintenance of this is now the responsibility of the Parish Council. The incoming Council will need to look at the question of kerbing and making good where Highways left off. Although they made a far better job in the end than we expected. I understand that work on the problem drain in the middle of the village is due at last, to be done in May. A new gate post was installed at the cattle grid on the Tongue End road but there appears to be a drainage problem in this area which will have to be looked at.

The power cables around the middle of the village were put underground in Jan/Feb and all poles removed.

Repairs to village seats have been carried out and a new one placed in memory of Wilfred Westlake, the original having rotted. The new seat being given Mr. David Westlake, his grandson. StOc has replace the West Cleave seat with a simple wooden bench.

Many other items have been attended to during the year and as usual there has been much correspondence to deal with. Council members have again attended WDBC, DNP and Highways meetings at various venues.

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

My thanks to Kate Little for her work as Clerk and to Simon Herbert for his excellent job as the internal auditor. Also once again thank you to Mrs Kuhn for looking after the Pound garden.

Finally may I wish all those standing in the forthcoming election, the best of luck!

Michael Ash  
Parish Council Chairman

## **5. Statement of Accounts 2018-19 and Precept for 2019-20**

The balance at 31.03.2019 was £1'197.73 in the current account and £1'998.32 in the Business Reserve Account. £266 in VAT expended during the year has been reclaimed from HMRC.

A payment is made to South Hams District Council for the administration of the clerk's salary and payment of PAYE is made to HMRC. Section 137 payments totalling £65 were paid to North Dartmoor Search and Rescue, West Devon Citizens Advice Bureau and Belstone PCC (Flower Festival).

The Parish Council budget has been set at £2'211.00 for 2019/20. This is made up of £34 Council Tax Support Grant and £2'177 precept. It was agreed to increase the clerk's salary by £50 to £1'250.00. Other increased expenditure was required for the car park maintenance (for which a 10 year lease had been signed with the landowner during the year) and to cover anticipated election costs.

Payments made in March/April 2019:

- District Assoc. of Local Councils' subscription for 2019/20 - £62.24
- PAYE for 2<sup>nd</sup> instalment of Clerk's Pay - £120 – from 2018/19 budget
- Payroll fee to WDBC - £120 – from 2018/19 budget

It was proposed to donate £25 to the Belstone Parish Church Flower Festival

The first instalment of the 2019/20 Precept has been received - £1122.50

Kate Little - Parish Clerk.

## **6. Report of Cllr Derek Webber - DNP**

It is 70 years since the DNPA began and there are many events to celebrate this. For example, Meldon Wildlife Day was a great success with approx 400 youngsters present.

The Dartmoor Local Plan is presently out for consultation and participants are welcome.

Funding is a big problem for the DNPA and continuing support for public toilets is under discussion and car parks are now charging for parking.

Cllr Webber has been the Farm Manager of the Dartmoor Prison Farm and has instigated at least 23 junior schools to visit to see the work that is carried out there.

There were no questions for Cllr Webber.

## **7. Report of Cllr James McInnes DC**

Hatherleigh & Chagford Division Annual Report 2019

### The Budget

It has been challenging putting together the DCC budget for 2019/20. Since 2011 the County Council has had to make £250 Million in savings from its budget. The 2019/20 net budget has risen to £493,850 from 2018/19 £479,416. Budget savings have been identified of £13 million.

Children's Services have had a rise of 9.4% about £11.3 million and Adult services a rise of 2% about £11.75 million. There remain considerable pressures in Children's and Adult Services.

Highways has also had a small rise and this on top of the extra £18 million capital we received in 2018/19 for highways from central government.

Against the backdrop of changes to how Local Government is funded and the uncertainty of funding levels in the future we have reluctantly agreed a council tax rise of 3.9% which includes a 1% increase which will go to Adult care.

The Council continues to re-model its services around people and is starting to reduce the barriers that get in the way.

### Cabinet Member

I continue to be Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools and have in the last year also become Deputy Leader of the County Council.

Child Social Care Services are continuing to improve, and we are investing extra money in Edge of Care Services and Crisis Care. The Children's Services budget is currently overspent, and we need to be forward thinking in how we can improve the services that can support the whole family when a child is in crises, where possible.

Education funding is in crisis. We have seen 525 teachers and classroom assistants leave Devon schools in the last year. Schools are struggling to balance their budgets. Devon is working with schools to show government the pressures they are under. We are a Member of a group called F40. Over forty councils that are poorly funded for education are working together to campaign and put information and case studies to the Department of Education and H M Treasury. F40 has an education model for fair funding which we continually discuss with the Dfe. We were pleased to host Damian Hinds MP, the Secretary of State for Education in Devon, late last year and were able to have robust discussions about education funding. I find myself Chair of F40 and this gives Devon a central role in the F40's work.

Some of our services for children have been delivered by Virgin Care in Devon. This contract is coming to an end and on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April we are bringing Health Visitors and School Nurses in-house to the County Council.

This has been a big decision for us and the aim is to get the system of services for children and families as seamless as possible.

## Highways

It has been an average winter and we are still seeing potholes. Please help by reporting them, don't presume that someone else has. As I mentioned earlier we received an extra £18 million capital from government for highways in 2018/19. This is very welcome but will not help with the many years of low investment. All Divisions will see some investment from this funding.

I remain a Member of Dartmoor National Park Authority and chair the Development Management Committee. The local Plan is progressing well and following public consultation late last year the updated version will be out for consultation and go to the inspector later this year. The DNPA has suffered from funding pressures just like other local authorities. The Moor Than Meets The Eye project has been very successful, and we are looking at ways of continuing the best elements of the project going forward.

The four County Councillors for West Devon Borough Council area sit on the local Highways & Traffic Order Committee and the local County Committee. Challenging issues at times.

We continue to have the Locality Budget. Not large sums of money, but very helpful to kickstart local project.

## Climate Change

Many residents ask me, what is the County Council doing about climate change and the environment. Below are some actions we are taking.

- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – recommends 45% reduction by 2030 from 2010 levels, and 'net zero' by 2050.
- This will be an “unprecedented” and “rapid” change to the way we live:
  - How food is produced
  - How we travel
  - How we power our homes and businesses
  - What our countryside will look like
  - How often we use air travel
  - How many consumer items, like clothes and electronics, we buy
- The County Council's emissions have reduced by 36% since 2012/13. Target set for 50% by 2030 – exceeding the IPCC recommendation by 5%. We have:
  - Installed LED lighting in buildings and street lighting
  - Switched street lighting to part-night as appropriate
  - Upgraded IT infrastructure
  - Replaced boilers
  - Replaced older fleet vehicles and started using electric vehicles

- Emissions pan Devon have reduced by 27% since 2005. Substantial effort in delivering energy efficiency and renewable energy is necessary to go further. We've applied, and are awaiting decisions, for funding to:
  - Install solar canopies on public car parks
  - Install a network of electric vehicle charging points at strategic locations
  - Help vulnerable households replace storage heaters with central heating
  - Install a solar farm on a redundant landfill site
- We have funding for projects that are:
  - Trialling innovative approaches from Holland to deep-retrofit homes and commercial buildings.
  - Testing the opportunity to produce and use energy produced locally, which is currently difficult due to the way the electricity grid works
  - Collaborating on energy initiatives with Plymouth, Exeter and Bristol councils
- All waste must be treated as a resource – recycling rate in Devon is 54%. In February the Brynsworthy transfer station opened enabling 100% of residual waste to be used to generate electricity. As a result, practically no waste in Devon goes to landfill, which limits methane production.
- Our Plastics Strategy aims to reduce the amount of single-use plastic consumed in Devon, which is a needless use of a material that is very energy intensive. The authority has already removed about 100,000 single-use plastic items each year from its food outlets.
- Every sector of society and the economy will have to help achieve these carbon targets – no one organisation in Devon is responsible.
- Devon has 23 community energy organisations – the most of any county in England – many supported by schemes run by the County Council. They have already invested £14 million in renewable energy.
- We'll collaborate with partners to agree a carbon-neutral target for Devon and produce a plan to continue the work already done

Always here to help if I can.

Cllr James McInnes  
Hatherleigh & Chagford Division

## **8. Dartmoor National Park Ranger's Report**

Expenditure so far in the financial year 2019/20: First of all, my humble apologies for not being present this year at the annual meeting! Whilst this report is being read I will be somewhere in the Chilean Lake District enjoying what Northern Patagonia has to offer, including several active volcanoes!

You are probably already aware that National Parks are under scrutiny again and this time the Glover Review has been asked to have recommendations available for debate by autumn this year, so that any recommendations can be taken forward to the next spending review. We already know that engagement with young people from wider backgrounds; how we maintain and improve the biodiversity of the areas and the possibilities of streamlining our governance, are all high up on the agenda but what else will be considered, only time will tell!

The pressure remains to improve our income generation and this has certainly happened with the introduction of car parking charges at several car parks that we own across the moor, including the one at Meldon Reservoir. Generally this charge has been warmly welcomed especially as the money raised can be used to maintain and improve the facilities.

We also took part in a 'Ranger Experience' pilot project with four other National Parks to see if there was any demand for small groups of visitors to join a ranger for a day to have a 'behind the scenes' type experience! Although Dartmoor's Experience did attract some reasonable numbers of people willing to spend £125 each (yes really!) it was felt that the time involved in running these could not be justified by the financial return, so it will not be continued. However, the feedback from those taking part was very good and it was pleasing to see some recognition for what the Ranger team do.

On a more local level, the Himalayan Balsam bash, organised in July, was very successful and my thanks to the Belstone Commoners Association for the excellent refreshments provided to the local volunteers, via the Tea Room.

We have also completed the path improvements to the lower leat path in Belstone Cleave thanks to the wonderful efforts of the Royal Naval Merlin helicopter pilots and ground crew in what turned out to have been the most horrific weather conditions! 14 tonnes of stone was airlifted into position and this has now been spread along the path by volunteers from the Sticklepath and Okehampton Conservation Group (StOC)

Work has also been completed in the same area to improve the habitat for Pearl Bordered Fritillaries and whilst the work was being done, the eggs of the Brown Hairstreak butterfly were located on some of the younger Blackthorn stems. They are incredibly elusive butterflies to see but hopefully someone will get the chance this year and it will add to the already impressive list of moth species which were recorded during an event in the village, hosted by the Butterfly Conservation Trust. We continue to get some problems with overnight camper vans using the common land and small amounts of flytipping, especially in the Skaigh Valley. However, I am grateful to the local people that have stepped forward to help to get the appropriate messages across to people who are generally ignorant of the law and for helping to remove the rubbish.

My thanks as usual to my Voluntary Warden, Ian Solomon who continues to complete various tasks in the area and of course for the tremendous local support for other projects that I am involved with.

I am more than happy to respond to any issues or questions that may arise from this report, so please contact me either on my mobile 07720 509273 or via e-mail after 14<sup>th</sup> April please.

Ian Brooker DNPA Ranger

## **9. Annual Report of the Skaigh Wood Trust**

There have been eight meetings of the Trust over the past year.

The gales during the winter caused problems with fallen trees, two of these falling into the property of Mrs H. Clark at the Sticklepath end of the wood. Just recently Ian Brooker reported that a walker had contacted him regarding a beech tree which looked to be dangerous. I went and had a look at this tree and found that it was not on Trust land. We received a request from Penny Fraser of Okehampton to plant some trees in memory of her mother. This request was granted and the trees have now been planted. The family will be responsible for their upkeep.

The trust has taken back the common rights attached to the Skaigh Wood area and they are now registered in the Trust's name with the Dartmoor Commoners' Council.

Mr Luxton has been given notice of a rent review on the Warren. The current rent has been paid.

The insurance on the Wood has been renewed with the NFU.

Our thanks to Ian Brooker and stOc for the various jobs they undertake for us in the Wood.

The financial position as of 5.3.2019 was as follows:- current account £1,527.73 and deposit account £8,367.79.

The footbridge has been inspected and cleaned of mud and debris and is still in sound condition.

Lastly, thanks to my fellow Trustees for their interest in the management of the Wood and to our clerk, Kate Little and to our auditor, Simon Herbert.

Michael Ash – Chairman of Trustees

## **10. Report of the Village Hall Committee**

Thank you for inviting me to report on this last year in the life of our village hall.

I think it is fair to say that the hall continues to thrive – or more accurately, continues to be a welcoming and appropriate place for many village activities as well as being hired out as a venue for organisations and individuals beyond the village. An indication of the value and usefulness of the hall can be seen by glancing at the bookings planner, either in the foyer or online: there are very few days in the week when nothing is happening – just occasional Mondays I think – and on many days the hall is in use several times. You can fight flab and age at pilates or yoga, exercise your creative side at art class, learn to

navigate the moor and elsewhere with GPS, grow even more beautiful gardens, rise at dawn and listen to the Belstone birds, teach your puppy how to behave, feast your eyes and empty your pockets at the craft fair and bazaars, use the outreach post office, educate yourself painlessly and pleasurably – and of course, eat cake!

On a more serious note: the management committee sees it's remit to be one not only of maintaining the present facilities and ensuring the hall remains solvent, but also to improve and enhance the hall. Behind-the-scenes activities include such things as keeping our policy on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults up to date and putting in place a GDPR (general data protection regulations) compliance policy. We have also been updating our use of IT, much helped – and encouraged – by Simon Hill, such that we can now, for example, sell tickets online for events at the hall. We are very grateful to Simon for volunteering his help and expertise.

Changes that are more obvious to see have included in the last year further improvements in the kitchen: the new commercial dishwasher has been a great success, largely because of its speed, and there is now an extractor hood over the cooker: this significantly reduces heat, smell and condensation when serious catering is under way.

Other physical changes are in the pipeline: we have responded to many comments about the inadequacy of the bar facilities at licensed functions and this year has seen us exploring, with the help of an architect, ways of improving this. As I write this report we have tenders in from building firms to create a new serving hatch for a bar at the back of the hall. The final decision on this has not yet been taken but will be discussed following our AGM on 1<sup>st</sup> May. Additionally there are worked through proposals to give the foyer a significant facelift – again this will be taken forward on 1<sup>st</sup> May.

And: we remain on hand to given what financial help we can to the Parish Council as it advances its' plans for the car park/road interface.

None of these physical improvements comes without its price tag. This is why we continue to fund raise and continue to depend on fellow villagers to support us. We thank everyone who has contributed and helped in many and various ways.

Rona Gundry – Village Hall Cttee Chairman 2018/19

#### **11. Any other business:**

- A planning meeting will take place on 16<sup>th</sup> April
- Edward Currie reported that the tarmac at the Restland House cattle grid was breaking up. It was suggested that he report it to DCC Highways. The Parish Council would discuss the matter at it's next meeting.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20pm

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Chairman**