WEST HATCH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting of the West Hatch Parish Council held in the Village Hall on Tuesday 31st January 2017

**16/62 ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES**

**Councillors: Read (Chairman), Biccard, Harrison-Sleep, Knight, Lodge and Middleton**

**Public: Mrs E Bray, 5 members of the public, Cllr J Williams (TDBC)**

**Apologies: None**

**16/63 TO CO-OPT MRS E BRAY TO THE COUNCIL**

**It was resolved to co-opt Mrs Elizabeth Bray to the Council. Mrs Bray duly signed a declaration of acceptance.**

**16/64 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

**There were no declarations of interests.**

**16/65 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

**The minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council meeting, held on 29th November 2016, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**16/66 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

1. **Road Safety issues (16/25)**

**The Clerk had written to Highways regarding village name plate signs. Wording is restricted under DfT guidance. Highways has recommended that the PC secures funding, following which a site visit will take place to agree the location. The signs can be considered at the start of a hamlet where the environment changes and the dwellings start.**

**It was resolved that the Clerk would submit an application to the Road Safety Fund.**

**16/67 PARISHIONERS' FORUM**

**Mr Wheatley reported on the usage of the Council’s website. It currently attracts approx. 100 visitors each month. Mr Wheatley advised the Council that the renewal of the domain name would occur shortly and could be renewed for a period of 5 or 2 years. The Council will discuss this matter at the next Council meeting.**

**The issue of the recent widespread verge and hedge cutting of the A358 was raised with several parishioners commenting on the quality of the work undertaken, particularly as the resultant debris could obstruct the watercourse. It was agreed to bring this to the attention of SCC Cllr David Fothergill, Portfolio Holder for Highways.**

**One parishioner expressed disappointment at the Council’s decision not to renew its subscription to the Somerset Wildlife Trust. This was noted by the Council.**

**16/68 TO CONSIDER COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED MERGER BETWEEN TDBC AND WEST SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**The Council has been asked to comment on the proposal to create a new District Council by amalagamating the current TDBC and West Somerset District Council.**

**In order to protect the future sustainability and viability of both Councils, it is proposed to form a new District Council covering Taunton Deane and West Somerset. This will result in a review of ward boundaries and a reduction in the number of Councillors elected. It is hoped to achieve savings of £3.1m.**

**Following a discussion, it was agreed that although the Parish Council was supportive of the proposal, some concerns were raised. The figures quoted for redundancy payments seemed high and it was suggested that every effort should be made to ring fence salaries for a certain period of time and retrain personnel which would lead to a certain amount of natural wastage, rather than release staff with a redundancy pay out. Considering that the new business model relies on the digitisation of more services, the robustness and suitability of the IT system was questioned as there appears to be too much reliance on software that may not be proven.**

**Cllr Middleton agreed to draft a response on behalf of the Council highlighting these concerns.**

**16/69 UPDATE ON THE EXTENSION OF REFERENDUM PRINICPLES**

**The Clerk advised that DCLG has confirmed that Council Tax referendum principles will not be extended to parish and town councils in 2017/18.**

**16/70 NOTIFICATION OF NEW PCSO DETAILS AND NEW POLICY RE POLICE ATTENDANCE AT PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**

**Scott Windsor has been appointed as PCSO for the area. It has been decided by the Police and Crime Commissioner that there will no longer be a police presence at Parish Council meetings as a matter of course due to limited resources. If there is a specific problem that a Parish Council wishes to discuss, then an officer may be able to attend if given sufficient notice.**

**16/71 FORMAL EXPENDITURE APPROVAL**

**The following cheques were approved**

**Clerk's** salary £259.97

**Clerk's expenses £ 53.48**

**16/72 PLANNING MATTERS**

**To confirm the Council’s response to Planning Application 47/16/0015 – Walnut Tree Cottage, Meare Green**

**An application has been received to build a large extension at Walnut Tree Cottage. Several parishioners have raised concerns at this proposal as the property in question has flooded in the past and it is thought that a larger footprint would increase the amount of surface run off, thereby increasing the risk of flooding to nearby properties.**

**Conservation issues have also been raised as it is believed that the site may host crested newts and bats.**

**The Parish Council has submitted a response to the application objecting on the grounds of increased flood risk and conservation issues and has requested that the application is decided by the Planning Committee and not by the Planning Officer using delegated powers.**

**Several parishioners present made further representations to the Council emphasising the above points. With regard to the possible presence of bats, a parishioner believed that a previous prospective purchaser of the property did commission a survey which confirmed that bats were present. It was suggested by the Parish Council that the parishioner may wish to inform the Planning Officer of this information.**

**16/73 REPORTS OF PARISH COUNCIL WORKING PARTIES**

**Report from Footpaths leader : No problems to report**

**Report from Trees/Conservation leader: It appears that ash die back is not as bad as feared in the area.**

**The Crown Estate appear to be felling several oak trees in the area and trees chosen for felling can be identified by green or orange marks. To protect these trees, provided there is no reason for their removal, a Tree Protection Order can be obtained by contacting David Galley, The Tree Officer at TDBC.**

**Report on Highway matters: Nothing to report**

**Report from SALC representative: No matters to report**

**16/74 CORRESPONDENCE FOR INFORMATION**

* **Report a road problem**

**Members of the public are now able to report road defects such as pot holes and blocked drains on the Travel Somerset website,** [www.travelsomerset.co.uk](http://www.travelsomerset.co.uk)

* **Taunton Deane Citizenship Awards 2017**

**Nominations are now invited for the 2017 Taunton Deane Citizenship Awards.**

**The closing date for nominations is 24/02/2017 and nomination forms are available from** <http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk>

**16/61 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Tuesday 28th March 2017 at 7.30pm**

**The meeting closed at 8.50 pm**