

EAST ANSTEY PARISH COUNCIL

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DRAFT MINUTES

These minutes will be agreed at the Parish Council meeting on 2nd March 2022 and might be subject to slight amendment.

The Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 2nd February 2022 at East Anstey Primary School at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr's J Griffin, (Chair of Meeting), Mrs H Warne, R Milton, Miss L Moore and Miss R Warne.

In attendance: Cty Cllr J Yabsley, District Cllr E Ley, Ms M Bailey, two members of the public and the Clerk, Mrs J Larcombe.

80/02/22. To agree a Chair for the meeting. As Cllr Mrs Warne had lost her voice due to a cold it was agreed that Cllr Griffin would chair the meeting.

81/02/22. To receive apologies. Apologies were accepted from Cllr's Ms J Gannon, R Gibson and I Vigus.

82/02/22. Disclosure of interests in items on the agenda. Cllr Milton declared a personal interest in item 85/02/22 d) as Chair of the Exmoor National Park Authority Committee.

83/02/22. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 1st December 2021 as an accurate record of the meeting. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

84/02/22. Matters arising from the minutes, not included on the agenda. There were no matters arising.

85/02/22. Public Questions. There were no questions.

Cllr Miss Warne joined the meeting during this item.

86/02/22. Planning

a) To make a recommendation on any planning applications received by the council before the meeting.

74705 Extension to dwelling and creation of garage at 2 Hollow Walls Cottages, East Anstey. Grid Ref: 287016; 125660. Comment: No objections.

b) To note any decisions made on planning applications by NDC. No decisions received.

c) APP/X1118/W/20/3264903: To note that the appeal is allowed and planning

permission is granted for the erection of one storage building, plus the change of use of land from agricultural to equine and the erection of stables together with formation of manege, without complying with conditions attached to planning permission Ref 61739, at Pigginswood Stables, East Anstey. Noted.

d) Exmoor Local Plan Five Year Review. Cllr Milton explained that it was important to make sure that the plan is fit for purpose and more suitable for young people. There is a need for local housing for young people and for older people who want to be able stay in their communities. Cllr Ley felt that where there is suitable land for local housing the owners will want the last penny for it. It would need to be compulsory purchase in some cases. In the National Park the conversion of stone barns can only be for affordable dwellings. Outside of the NP it doesn't. The Local Plan needs the capacity to have local needs conditions rather than affordable housing.

Cllr Griffin remembered that there had been some discussion about extending the boundaries of the ENP. The report from The Glover Review is due in eleven weeks' time but there is not expected to be anything in it about extending the ENP boundary, but it will leave it open.

e) Any other planning matters. There were no other planning matters.

86/02/22. Highways: any highways issues. Councillors reported that there were lots of potholes.

87/02/22. Reports

a) District Cllr. Cllr Ley noted that the Jubilee Inn website states that it is now residential. Cllr Mrs Warne said that she had checked with NDC Licencing department in August 2021 when this was first noticed and it was still licenced as a pub. The website claims that it closed in 2017 and there were concerns about the four/ten year rules for change of use. Some councillors said they had used it as a pub since 2017. It was open as a pub on 1st January 2020 when the hunt met there.

NDC will add £20 to their share of the Council Tax for a Band D household.

Cllr Ley said he had been accosted at a funeral and asked why the proposed work on Anstey Village Hall wasn't going ahead.

Ms Bailey joined the meeting at 8pm.

88/02/22. Presentation from Maria Bailey, NDC Service Manager (Development Management). Ms Bailey introduced herself and said she had been with NDC for seven months. She had started her career in local government and had then set up her own business before returning to local government full time. She explained the difficulties the NDC planning department had been experiencing. Three fairly senior members of staff had left around the same time as well as some other members of staff and although they had tried to recruit they had been unsuccessful. They had expected less applications because of Covid but that had not been the case. A backlog had built up but they are now working on reducing that. More resources and the support of members was needed. She explained that enforcement is discretionary and not mandatory and if a backlog of planning applications build up then enforcement falls by the wayside as planning applications take precedent. Enforcement Officers have now been given more authority which makes them less reliant on planning officers. The backlog in

validating applications was two days but in the summer it went to five to six weeks. The team has worked hard to get on top of validation and since Christmas they have done so. Planning apprentices and graduates are being recruited and trained and they will hopefully be retained and the department will be more resilient. The Planning Department is looking to improve the use of the software system it is using. Although it has been in place for three years it is only be used at 10% of its efficiency. The department has been given extra resources to get this to 60 -70% by the summer. A lot has been done manually and mistakes have been made. Improving the use of the software will enable Ms Bailey to be notified when an application is ready for her to sign off.

The Local Plan Review has started, there is an ambitious timeline and it is hoped to submit a draft plan in 2024. The joint committee has been told there cannot be a slip in the timing. The current Local Plan is not fit for purpose, particularly for rural areas.

She said she was pleased that she was starting to see some differences. She has a young enthusiastic team but they have a lot to learn and training is being put in. She is aware that there has been a lack of communication and this is why she is going out to speak to Town and Parish Councils. She has told planning officers that they must communicate better with everyone and need to explain the reasons to Town and Parish Councils when they go against their recommendations.

Cllr Griffin asked about enforcement being discretionary. Ms Bailey explained that it is mandatory for NDC to deal with planning applications but there is nothing in legislation to say that they have to deal with enforcement. It is however in the public interest to do so. In the past planning officers have been told to forget about enforcement and to concentrate on dealing with planning applications. They will not be dealing with minor enforcement issues such as raised decking.

Cllr Griffin was concerned how the people who worked hard to stop unauthorised development going ahead felt. Ms Bailey explained that more of the enforcement work was now in the hands of enforcement officers and there were only small bits for planning officers to do. The staff resources are now there for the legal work.

Ms Bailey was asked what was the process that was likely to happen at Oaklands Poultry Farm when the enforcement notice period comes to an end in April. Legal proceedings are now being instigated for the concrete pads and structures. A Planning Contravention Notice will shortly be served for the caravan. She is then expecting a planning application for the caravan to be submitted, which will be refused, and then an appeal. NDC has to be seen to be acting reasonably. They have to give time but, in the past, have been slow in acting when the time period is up. She was warned that the owner is unlikely to give up. Ms Bailey has talked to the team and they will go for a court injunction. Cllr Milton referred to an enforcement case in ENP that has been going on for fourteen years, the bailiffs are now going in. NDC has to get it right and has to go through the courts. They will be reliant on the legal teams. Noting that the farm is on the market (with an enforcement notice) she was asked what would happen if it was sold. She said the enforcement process would continue. No officer would go to the site on their own, a whole team would go in.

Cllr Milton noted there has been a lot of change in environmental assessment for agricultural buildings and asked how it would impact in the future. Ms Bailey said she was meeting with the NFU who want NDC to be in a position to help their members. It can be a minefield and there will be a lot of consultants working with farmers. She is looking at improving the website to give more planning guidance.

Cllr Yabsley joined the meeting.

Cllr Yabsley asked if the website was working properly now as there had not been any updates and the area search was not working. Ms Bailey explained there was an upgrade planned for tomorrow and tomorrow night. A person is now working ten hours per week to improve the system. DCC had a problem with their system which impacted on the District Councils. Cllr Yabsley complained about some planning officers and it was explained they were interim during the time in which recruitment was taking place and a team being brought in.

Cllr Ley said the Jubilee Inn was currently shut because of family issues. If the owners were looking to have it shut as a pub and were to sit on it for a number of years would the four/ten year rule come in? It was explained that there are policies for community facilities. It would have to be actively marketed it as a pub, at a reasonable price, for at least eighteen months. A lot of pubs have been lost but they have had to go through this process. Some have been saved for community assets. They will be asked if they have gone to the public to try and retain. Cllr Ley was concerned that there was the potential for a similar scenario to what has been happening with the White Hart, Bratton Fleming. No process will start unless it goes onto the market.

Ms Bailey was thanked for coming to the meeting and she said she hoped it would become an annual thing.

She was asked how she wanted Parish and Town Councils to respond to planning applications. She is talking to the Chief Executive about training and has noted the MDDC is offering councillors in its district. This would also include the Local Plan. It was suggested that might work best for groups of parishes. Cllr Milton said it would be how to phrase comments to have the correct weight behind them. Ms Bailey said they were trying not to be too descriptive in the new local plan. Cllr Milton said that ENP had tried to cover too much and had put too much detail in theirs.

Ms Bailey left the meeting at 8.35pm.

87/02/22. Reports

b) County Cllr. Cllr Yabsley reported that DCC are putting together their budget. The first briefing has taken place and the second will be next week. The Scrutiny Committees have been working through the proposed budget which will increase DCC's share of the Council Tax by 2% plus 1% for adult social care. The Government has allowed adult social care a 6% increase over three years but only 1% is left. £40million has had to be shaved off the budget and every department except highways has had to take a share of the cut. Adult social care has had to shave £19.6million off a budget of £340million. This budget is almost half of the entire budget. An expert that has been brought in cannot see how DCC can make that amount of cuts without a real impact on services. For over twenty five years adult social care has shared budgets with NHS for domiciliary care. While DCC has to set a balanced budget the NHS doesn't have to do so. Cllr Griffin asked how it sat with levelling up and was told that this is a levelled up service. DCC has put a lot into care homes, £40million more than the government has given them.

The High Needs Block of SEND has been overspending and by the end of the coming year the amount of the deficit will be about the amount of DCC's reserves.

Cllr Yabsley assured councillors that there was a lot of good stuff going on and

he encouraged them to keep reporting potholes. Cllr Milton said there was a different team checking drains and they were doing a good job. Roads are getting narrower, hedges are creeping out and the drains are not in the road now. Cllr Yabsley said the North Devon Conservative County Councillors were concerned that things are not happening and they are now meeting with senior highways officers.

He is the Chair of the Farms Estate Committee and ten of the farms on the estate have been let this year. There were fifty seven applications for seven farms and 19 full applications interviewed. It was a tough job to decide who to award the tenancies to. Some land around Exeter has been released and DCC has bought some land at Rose Ash. The Farms Estate is yielding a revenue profit of £0.5million.

89/02/22. Finance:

a) To approve invoices for payment. It was resolved to make the following payments: Mrs J Larcombe – £194.30 Clerk's salary for December and January and expenses (Payment ref: 2122/27)

Exmoor Creative LLP - £65.00 website hosting and domain name (Payment ref: 2122/28)

b) To note and receipts or payments made since the last meeting.

Oakford Village Hall - £12.50 room hire (Payment ref: 2122/26)

Bank charges - £18.00

c) To note the bank balances. Current account - £5,853.56. Instant Access account - £53.34

90/02/22. Play Area

a) Any issues arising from playground inspections. There were no issues arising.

b) To agree who will carry out inspections until the next meeting. Cllr Griffin will carry out the inspections.

c) To discuss applying for funding for new play equipment. At this point it was decided to use ear marked funds and, if necessary, some reserves, to purchase some new goal posts. Cllr Miss Moore will look at options and bring to the next meeting.

91/02/22. To discuss holding a Village Fete in 2022. It was agreed to organise as a get together rather than a fete and combine it with the Platinum Jubilee celebrations being held over the bank holiday weekend at the beginning of June. It will include a barbeque, bar, music and games for the children. A working party was formed to organise it and the members are Cllr Mrs Warne, Cllr Griffin, Cllr Miss Moore and Cllr Miss Warne. The group will also look at the possibility of applying for funding. It will report back to the next meeting.

92/02/22. To discuss joining in the lighting of a beacon for the Platinum Jubilee. In the past East Anstey and West Anstey have done this together. Cllr Milton will find out whether West Anstey have made any plans and this will be discussed at the next meeting.

93/02/22. Correspondence. West Anstey has invited East Anstey to join their defibrillator refresher training session and share the costs. This was agreed.

94/02/22. To agree the date and venue of the next meeting. The next meeting will be held on 2nd March 2022.

Signed:
Chair

Date: