

BERE FERRERS PARISH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held in the Council Chamber Bere Alston on Tuesday 22nd October 2019.

Present

Cllr. D. Pengelly	Vice Chairman
Cllr. B. Lamb	Chairman of Council
Cllr. P. Crozier	Cllr. R. Leithall
Cllr. P. Dennis	Cllr. E.K Wager

**260. Apologies.**

Apologies were received from Cllr. Maycock due to business.

Cllr. Lam received a communication from Cllr. Maycock asking for a two month sabbatical and resigning as Chairman of Finance & General Purposes. Cllr. Lamb proposed that Cllr. Pengelly take over as Chairman of Finance & General Purposes. Cllr Pengelly declined and proposed Cllr. Leithall for Chairman of Finance & General Purposes, seconded by Cllr. Wager. All were in favour. Cllr. Pengelly will stay as Vice Chairman.

**261. Notification of items for information at the discretion of the Chairman. No action can be taken on these items.**

- a) Cllr. Dennis – It is the A.G.M. for Bere Alston Regeneration Partnership on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> October at 7pm in the Council Chamber, all are welcome.
- b) Cllr. Pengelly – The pot hole on Denham Bridge is getting bad by the day. This was repaired a few months back, there was also an abandoned car there on Saturday. The parishioners will be paying twice for shoddy work and to get the car removed.
- c) Cllr. Pengelly – I would like to congratulate the Workman on his excellent work on the gate into the dog exercise field.

**262. Matters arising from the minutes of the 17<sup>th</sup> September**  
**Matters Arising.**

Minute 211(142c) With reference to the litter bin at Pilgrim Drive by the recycling bins, Cllr. Crozier stated that if the parishioners wanted a bin, the Parish would have to purchase it and pay for its emptying, that would cost approximately £175 initial layout for the bin and thereafter, £3 per week to empty it. Cllr. Pengelly will go back to the parishioner who asked for one.

Minute 211 (142d) Depth of rubber chip at Sarah Park. This has been dealt with.

Minute 220 (a) Cllr. Lamb and Cllr. Dennis are to meet with Jeremy Maddock next week to discuss the tender for the road work at the Cemetery.

**263. To accept accounts for payment.**

The Clerk sent October accounts for payment out to all members. Cllr. Crozier proposed payment of the accounts, seconded by Cllr. Dennis.

**264. To accept the Financial Statements**

The Clerk has not been able to bring the accounts up to date but is working on it. Cllr. Leighall stated the Committee recognise that the accounts seem to be complete and up to date till July. The Clerk hopes to bring

them up to September by Full Council. Cllr Leithall proposed that the Clerk go ahead and arrange training on the Rialtas accounts package, seconded by Cllr. Crozier.

### **265. To receive the External Auditors report for the conclusion of the Audit ending March 2019**

The Clerk presented the auditors' report which states;

On the basis of the review of sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we drew to the attention of the authority;

The smaller authority has confirmed that it has not complied with the governance assertion in Section 1, Boxes 1, 4 and 5, but has provided the appointed auditor with an adequate explanation for non-compliance and details of the actions necessary to address weaknesses identified.

Committee reviewed the report and proposed the Full Council accept the final External Audit report.

### **266. To receive an update on online banking**

The Clerk has spoken to the bank, all they need for the Clerk to have access to information on the account, is a letter asking for access by the Clerk, date of birth, a password and signed by a Councillor who is on the Bank Mandate.

### **267. Lighting on the front of the Parish Hall**

Cllr. Dennis – A new light has been installed above the Parish Hall door which gives light down the path. A bracket has been placed above the window for a temporary spot light to be fitted for special events.

Cllr. Crozier mentioned we should be looking at motion sensitive lighting, approach Adam Smith for a quote on LED lighting with motion sensor.

### **268. Review Risk Assessment Management**

Cllr. Lamb – there are alternations needed. It was agreed Cllr. Lamb put in the alternations and circulate to all for their comments.

### **269. To receive the Property Inspection Report**

Refer to next month.

### **270. Correspondence.**

- 1) West Devon Borough Council. Council scoops Future Proofing Business Award.

West Devon Borough Council recently won the Future Proofing category of the Federation of Small Businesses Council Awards for its environmental features in Council offices and business premises. The Devon branch of the Federation of Small Business (FSB) has been running the Awards for 10 years. At the beginning of each year, they select award categories from a range of issues which have an impact on local small businesses.

The awards celebrate the work that councils do to support small businesses locally, with entries being judged by a panel of small businesses.

The Council's award was won in recognition of the features it has built into offices and business premises over the years. These include rainwater harvesting and solar panels with future plans for the introduction of electric vehicle charging points in Council owned car parks.

## 2) West Devon Borough Council – Electoral Registration – Canvassers Door Knocking

Good afternoon, I just wished to advise you that it is that time of year again when West Devon Borough Council will be sending out canvassers to all properties within the Borough who have not yet returned a Household Enquiry Form (HEF) with regard to Electoral Registration.

This is an annual process. There will be nine canvassers in total (three of which will be our Mobile Locality Officers) and they will be trying to make contact with those households who have not returned information that we have requested under Electoral Registration legislation.

I have advised the police that they will be calling on households but also just wanted to let you know in case you have any contact from concerned residents. The canvassers will be carrying ID and will be delivering forms and not taking information at the doorstep, unless it is offered to them.

This is a statutory process which needs to be completed in advance of publishing the new Electoral Register on the 1<sup>st</sup> December.

## 3) West Devon Borough Council – Council Tax Support Grant for 2020-21.

I am writing to you regarding the Council Tax Support Grant for Town and Parish Councils for 2020-21.

At the Council meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2019, Members approved the following recommendation:

*‘that the Borough Council consults with all of the Town and Parish Councils within the Borough, on the basis that the Borough Council is ‘minded to’ withdraw the Council Tax Support Grant from Town and Parish Councils with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, in line with the other Devon District Councils’*

As background information, following Council Tax Benefit being abolished in 2014, the Government provided financial support for local authorities (Council Tax Support Grant) to assist Town and Parish Councils in dealing with the effects of the benefit changes on their Council Tax Base. This grant has been paid to Town and Parish Councils annually and over the past four years the grant has been reduced by 8.6% per annum, in line with the reduction in the Grant which the Borough Council has received. As the last Government financial settlement was a four year settlement (from 2016/17 to 2019/20), a four year of reduction of 8.6% per annum for the Council Tax Support Grant were agreed with Town and Parish Councils for 2016/17 to 2019/20.

As the last Government Spending Review ended in 2019/20, the Council needs to consider the level of Council Tax Support Grant for Town and Parish Councils for 2020/21 onwards. The Council has consulted with other Devon District Councils and they ceased paying the council tax support grant between 2017/18 and 2019/20.

South Hams District Council had taken the same approach as West Devon and will also be considering this in their 2020/21 budget setting process.

The Council acknowledges that Parishes and Towns would need to consider increasing their Precepts in 2020/21 in order to absorb the reduction in Council Tax Support Grant and so the Council has raised this at an early stage in the 2020/21 budget setting process. The Council is mindful of the need for the Borough Council and Town and Parish Councils to work together collaboratively to deliver services to our residents to effect real change for our communities.

In order to understand the impact on your Precept, I attach a schedule (Appendix A) which shows the levels of Council Tax Support Grant for 2019/20 and the percentage that the grant currently equates to as a percentage of your Precept for 2019/20. The total Council Tax Support Grant paid to all Town and Parish Councils in 2019/20 equated to £59,178.

## 4) West Devon Borough Council – Cost to Parish Councils towards Election costs.

I have now had the opportunity to calculate these and, as you will be aware from my previous emails, the Borough Council will be recharging a cost for uncontested scheduled elections from this year. The attached spreadsheet highlights the cost to each town/parish council (with regard to any contested towns/parishes (or part thereof) I will send these separately).

Please note the following:

This is for information only at this stage ahead of your precept considerations. We will forward the invoice for the recharge at an appropriate time in 2020 to enable you to pay in the new financial year

The admin charge is calculated on the time taken for various tasks relating to each election area, whether contested or not, e.g. preparing and taking nomination papers, preparing and sending official notices, writing to candidates regarding result/expense deadline, and differs for each area dependent on the number of candidates who came forward

The cost of the nomination papers is the material cost (we have not charged for those we posted or delivered) and is multiplied generally by the number of seats your council has plus two (we supplied at least a couple extra per council)

- 5) West Devon Borough Council – Planning application consultation. Reference no: 3320/19/CLE  
Shutecombe Barn Hensbury Lane, Bere Ferrers.

Lawful development certificate for existing use of the site as an apple orchard with a pig shed.

The above application has been submitted to the Council for determination. Evidence is required to either support or refute the claim that the land/building has been used for the purpose described in excess of the last ten years. This application is to be dealt with on the basis of factual evidence only.

We are currently researching the Council’s records to seek to establish whether there exists available evidence which might support, or indeed refute the claim. In the same way we are writing to the Parish Council and local people who may have knowledge of the site.

If you are able to provide any factual evidence from your personal knowledge of the site, which might support or refute the claim, we would be pleased if you could do so within 21 days from the date of this letter.

Cllr. Wager would like Council to ask Mr. Westlake to take immediate action and remove the fencing on the corners as agreed.

**271. Agenda items for next meeting.**

- 1. Property inspection.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked members for attending and declared the meeting closed at 8.57pm.

Signed this 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Chairman.....