

NORTH TAWTON TOWN COUNCIL

Town Clerk:
Mrs R Rice

14a The Square North Tawton
EX20 2EP
Tel 01837 880121
northtawton.towncouncil@yahoo.co.uk

Minutes of the **North Tawton Town Meeting** to be held at the **Town Hall** on **TUESDAY 15TH APRIL 2014** at **7.30 pm**.

In attendance: Cllr N Morgan (Chair), Cllr Dr P Brickley, Cllr Mrs G Hoggins, Cllr Mrs C Burrow, Cllr Mrs J Morgan, Cllr A Gillespie.

Mr K Dentith (DCC), Mr I Sweetland (DCC), Mr D Womack (SW Highways), Mr T Cook (SW Highways) and Mrs J Smith, WDBC.

Mrs R Rice

21 Members of the public were present.

1. Chairman's introduction and report.

Cllr N Morgan, Chairman welcomed everyone to the Annual Town Meeting and welcomed Mr K Dentith and Mr I Sweetland from Devon County Council, Mr D Womack and Mr T Cook from South West Highways who were going to outline the details regarding the forthcoming major bridge repair works at Taw Bridge and the arrangements being made regarding traffic and Mrs J Smith, West Devon Borough Council who was going to outline the responsibilities of Riparian Owners. Dr P Brickley would briefly update regarding the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan Project Group.

We were going to invite a representative from the CPRE regarding the proposal for a solar farm, but the planning application has not yet been submitted. Kinetica recently held a public exhibition in the Town Hall, this was their decision, Kinetica organised this themselves.

Having spoken to the Chair of the Planning Committee for advice, I am of the opinion that as the application has not yet been submitted it would be premature for the Town Council to invite the CPRE or any other consultees to the Annual Town Meeting or to a Town Council meeting.

When, and if, the application is submitted, CPRE will be invited to a Town Council meeting to express their opinion. We will also invite other consultees to attend and express their opinion.

The Planning Committee and other Councillors must keep an open mind on the proposal and must not predetermine the application. The Council must hear and see all the facts and evidence, and then make a recommendation on the proposal which will then be sent to West Devon Borough Council, who are the planning authority.

Any person or other consultee, if they so wish, can hold their own public exhibition or meeting before the application is submitted.

On to other matters – because of Government cuts in their funding to the County and Borough Councils, we, the Town Council are having to do more of the front line work that they have done in the past, this costs money, but we have bid for funds to do these. We have been successful with two of the bids for a parish Lengthsman and extra road sweeping. We have included in our contract for grass maintenance weed spraying which County use to do. We have also included in our budget gulley emptying once a year, as County have cut down the frequency of gulley emptying. We do not know what we will be required to do in the future, but with the further known cuts taking place there will no doubt be more.

As you know we had some flooding at the bottom of the town, which was caused by lack of maintenance of the road drains, the failure of the pumps to work. Jacky Smith from West Devon is still working on the cause of some of the flooding, and she is working with the Environment Agency and Devon County to help overcome these problems. We would like to thank Jacky for the time and effort she has put into sorting out these problems.

The Town Council is responsible for the Church Yard and the Cemetery and because of the large amount of urgent work that needs to take place we have applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund, we have also included in the bid at the request of the Church, funds for some work to be done on the Church Clock and work inside the spire. We would like to thank Geoff Cawse and Devon Heartlands for helping the Council with this bid.

There has also been unexpected costs with regard to trees for which we have responsibility.

The Council are looking at ways to try to bring all the history of the town together collected by Jean Shields and David Hoare and other residents in the town.

We will no doubt be asked, if possible, to help with the funding of the Youth Centre as DCC have cut its support for its youth service nearly to the bone.

The Council would also like to thank those who run the many different groups, clubs etc., without them young and old alike would not be able to carry on their interests.

We have also written to support a campaign to allow small town and parish councils to receive a share of the local business rates, to provide better facilities for their area.

I would like to thank Councillors and our hard working Clerk for the work they have put in this year. Over the coming years those who take up the challenge will find the work load increase if the Government keep cutting the funding the Councils receive.

2. Financial report.

Cllr I MacLeod gave a brief financial report. 40% of the budget for the Town Council is fixed (wages, rates, utilities, insurance, loan repayment and money set aside for reserved).

25% of the budget is for ground maintenance, Memorial Park, cemetery, Church Yard, car parks.

12% of the budget is for amenities. The Town Council took the decision to refurbish the toilets, using £25,000 from reserves. Summer flowers and Christmas trees/lights are funded by the Town Council budget. £2,500 grant is made to the Town Hall. 12 ½ % of the budget is used for clearing litter, provision of litter bins and generally keeping the town tidy. 10% is for miscellaneous expenditure.

The Town Council finances are managed by the Proper Officer, (The Clerk); the accounts are reconciled every month and presented to the Council. Every year the accounts are audited by an independent auditor and then a statutory audit is carried out. The Council is required to keep reserves.

A lottery grant submission has been made for the work to the stone walling, refurbishment of the clock and bell on the church. We are still awaiting to hear if the application has been successful. If grant aid is not forthcoming then we will have to use money from the reserves to have some, if not all, of this work carried out. Devon Heartlands and Mr Geoff Cawse have been involved with this grant submission.

The park railing will eventually need replacing, probably like for like. Access to the Cemetery extension needs to be laid out. Repairs to the Chapel of Rest roof are necessary and repairs to the doors.

More and more seems to be coming to the Town Council from Devon County and West Devon. £1,000 less grant from Central Government this year.

A member of the public asked about street sweeping and whether or not we have been successful in getting someone to do this work. It was stated a tender had been accepted for both North Tawton and Chagford.

Central Government have made cut backs, the Town Council has had to take on more responsibilities.

3. Minutes of the Town Meeting held on 13th May 2013 and any matters arising.

The minutes of the Town Meeting held on the 13th May 2013 were agreed and signed.

4. Short Presentation by Kevin Dentith, Chief Engineer (Bridges & Structures), Devon County Council regarding Rebuilding Works - Taw Bridge, Fore Street and Temporary Prohibition of through traffic and parking - 2/6/14 – 30/9/14

Mr Dentith began the presentation by outlining the problems with the bridge. He stated that ideally the bridge should be knocked down and new steels installed to widen the bridge, but this cannot be done because the bridge is Listed. The road closure is planned from 2nd June – 30 September 2014. A Listed Building Consent had been submitted to WDBC. The completed works should have a 50 – 60 year lift.

The road over the bridge will be closed to traffic, but lorries to and from Gregor's will be allowed over the bridge, in a convoy system, lorries will be let through every 20 minutes or so. There will be 2 gangs working 2 shifts, 7 days a week. The work is

going to be fairly quiet. A pedestrian bridge will be erected over the river through the Rugby Club. The buses will be allowed to turn in the yard at Gregorys.

Questions from members of the public included:

Is the pedestrian bridge going to be permanent? The answer was no.

There will be 2 or 3 days when complete closure of the bridge will be necessary, during these days lorries will have to come up and down through the town.

Questions from members of the public included:

Are advance signs going to be put up so that people know in advance of the road closure? Yes signs would be put up.

Is the bus company going to notify passengers in advance so that they can make arrangement? Yes the bus companies have been contacted.

Will the footbridge be put up before work commences, and can dogs go over the bridge? Yes the footbridge will be put up prior to work commencing; dogs are not permitted on the Rugby Club land.

The Chairman thanked the staff from DCC and SWH for attending and they left the meeting.

5. Presentation by Mrs Jacky Smith, Senior Engineer, West Devon Borough Council on “Responsibilities of Riparian Owners”.

Mrs Smith gave a brief presentation; she first explained her role at West Devon. Following the flooding problems of Christmas it was felt that an explanation of the responsibilities of Riparian Owners would be very useful.

Riparian owner is someone who has land with a water course, stream, river ditch or pipe running through it. It is the Riparian owner’s responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the bed and banks to keep the water free flowing. If there is a dead cow is found, it is the Riparian owner’s responsibility.

Drainage and flooding is a complicated matter, if you need to any advice then please telephone me. The main river is the responsibility of the Environment Agency; the flood alleviation scheme is the responsibility of the Environmental Agency. If you have any questions about the Flood Alleviation scheme please ask me or the Clerk.

Recently the Environment Agency, WDBC, DCC Highways walked the watercourse that runs from the bottom of Bouchers Hill to the Bridge, and generally it is in very good condition. There are a few issues at the bottom of Fore Street, a blocked gully, but we are working with highways on this matter. The Environment Agency is responsible for water quality. South West Water have done a lot of work to sort out the problems of combined foul, waste water and rainwater in this area.

Mrs Smith answered a question regarding fallen trees in the river, she advised to report the matter, as both Environment Agency and Highways were reactive, so please report any problems.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Smith for attending and she left the meeting.

6. A brief update on the Neighbourhood Plan Project

Cllr Dr P Brickley gave a brief update on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan Project:

- The Project Group were delighted with the response to the Questionnaire – 39%, which in terms of surveys it is good; Hatherleigh had 23%, Bere Peninsular just over 40%, and this response will give a sound basis for the final plan. Data entry and analysis was being carried out. Someone requiring work experience was helping out. It is important that this data entry and analysis is done by June as it is intended to hold focus sessions, on various subjects including the call for sites. Still awaiting the WDBC call for sites information. The Government grant application would be submitted within the next few weeks. Students from the University of Plymouth were going to help with the traffic survey. A Town Planning Consultant was going to be employed to help with the technical aspects of the plan. Housing allocations awaited from WDBC regarding their emerging Local Plan. By the Autumn we should be drafting policies and this will be brought back to the town.

51% of the vote at a referendum will be required for the Neighbourhood Plan to be adopted; this is why we need to carry out so much consultation so that the plan is what the majority of people want.

The proposed solar farm application may be viewed as premature as the Neighbourhood Plan Project may be viewed as an emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

As this is a 20 year plan the focus groups need to involve younger people. The Neighbourhood Plan Group had spoken to the youth club and school and will be speaking to the Parent Teacher Association.

Dates for the focus groups would be advertised early.

Members of the public asked question;

- Was the Wainhomes development going to go ahead? The Section 106 agreement had not been signed yet, and until this is signed the work cannot commence.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Dr P Brickley

7. Any other business

Mrs C Blood from the Environmental Trust informed the meeting that they had received notice to quit from South West Water from the land they rent. They have been asked to leave the premises by the end of May. Mrs Blood read out the letter from South West Water together with the Environmental Trust's response asking for an extension of time to allow the Trust to find an alternative site. Several young families have start using the polytunnels and planted vegetables already. The Clerk was requested to include this on the agenda for the next Town Council meeting.

Parking issues were raised again. The Clerk pointed out that the matter of enforcement for on street parking had transferred from West Devon Borough Council to Devon County Council. The Clerk would again ask for Enforcement Officers to visit the town in the early evenings.

8. Close of meeting.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 9.05 pm.