

EAST BUDLEIGH with BICTON PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the East Budleigh with Bicton Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 29th June 2021 in the Village Hall

RISK ASSESSMENT BY CLERK (COVID MEASURES) – All correct

PRESENT: Councillors D. Wensley (Chair), J. Tresidder, J. Carter, F. Ward, H. Houston, K. Quant & M. Smith. District Councillors Alan Dent & Tom Wright

APOLOGIES: District Councillor P. Jarvis, County Councillor C. Channon.

A presentation was made by Paul Kurowski on behalf of All Saints Church, in respect of the upkeep of the graveyard. He explained how biodiversity was being encouraged, and as a result of their careful management, wildlife and wildflowers were flourishing. Grass cutting was an expensive annual cost and had to be done sensitively to remove strong grasses and encourage annual seeding of wildflowers. They received funds from the performance of Burials and Weddings and also from their recent successful open day but were still in deficit. He asked if the Council might be able to assist with a further donation to support their work. Council agreed to look at their account in November to see if a further grant could be made.

The **MINUTES** of the Parish Council AGM, held on 25th May 2021 were approved.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Cllr. Houston said she knew the people who lived at Rose Cottage (planning application), as she lived opposite. Council considered she was still entitled to comment on the application as they were not close friends.

MATTERS ARISING from previous Minutes - none

COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT – Councillor Channon had provided a verbal report to the Clerk. She had investigated the tragic accident involving young men from Bicton College that occurred on Budleigh Hill. She was thanked for her work and her findings would be actioned, if and when appropriate.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT –

District Councillor Alan Dent spoke of severe staff shortages particularly among the crews that carry out recycling, rubbish collection and grass cutting. He advised that if rubbish was not collected, it should be left outside for the next day.

District Councillor Tom Wright said that if crews work efficiently, they are rewarded. Rates of recycling are high, and the quantity of waste is the lowest per household in the country. He confirmed that textiles go to the Salvation Army, and the rest is re-cycled. The Clerk pointed out

that the village had a WhatsApp where the community gave away unwanted items, thus reducing the amount going to landfill.

Cllr. Wright said that internal issues of staff morale had hopefully, now been resolved.

On 12th July 2021, materials will be arriving for the Lower Otter Restoration Project. The project is proceeding, though some work is on hold until after the breeding season. The embankments will be worked on in 2022 and the project is due to end by March 2023. Cllr. Jim Carter circulated an email that confirmed the project was proceeding efficiently. Cllr. Carter intended to contact the County Council about the siting of temporary signs.

Cllr. Wright reported that farmers were permitted to have campers on their land for up to 56 days from 7th July. One of the farmers taking advantage of this is South Farm.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Design Codes & the Neighbourhood Plan

Sue Cooper had produced documentation covering the response of EDDC to our proposals for the Design Codes. A detailed discussion took place on each of her recommendations: -

1. Use the Design Code as a reference point when responding to planning applications

- Cllr. Wensley pointed out that Parishioners have not yet been consulted on the matter. Cllr. Carter was not sure of the scope of the codes, as trees and hedgerows should be left out and Yettington has not been included. Council voted No to this recommendation

2. When the NP is reviewed attach the Design Code as an Appendix and link to appropriate land use policies within the NP – Sue Cooper will provide an example of how this could work.

The Neighbourhood Plan is due for review in line with EDDC Local Plan, expected to be completed by 2024. Ms. Cooper expected the process to commence in mid-2022. The recommendation was approved.

3. Amend the code, if necessary, following further comments by EDDC and changes in national policy (any changes to be ratified by the Parish Council).

Council was in favour and requested that Ms. Cooper identify future changes..

Recommendations re the NP:

1. Review the NP in accordance with the above timetable unless monitoring of the NP and further EDDC guidance suggests an earlier timetable.

Council agreed

2. Produce an annual monitoring review of NP policies to include a conformity review of local and national policies and an assessment of NP plan policy implementation in the determination of planning decisions (Sue Cooper to produce). This could also include identification by members of the Parish Council (using a proforma if preferred) of any problems or issues they feel there are on the implementation of NP polices and/or missing land use policies, together with any significant economic, social, and environmental changes that could impact on NP policies.

After a brief explanation of planning processes by Cllr. Dent, Council decided this activity would be too complex.

Produce an annual monitoring review of Community Actions and updated action plan (as I believe is currently done).

Council agreed this already takes place and might include a review of Policies too in future

Ms. Copper had also mentioned outcomes from the initial EDDC Local Plan consultation. Council thanked Ms. Cooper for her report.

REPORTS

Chair: Councillor Wensley gave an update about the proposed Community purchase of the **Sir Walter Raleigh**. 500 questionnaires had been delivered and 214 returned. There was high support for the pub to be run by the Community, with support for a share offer and offers of voluntary help. A Commercial Valuer produced a detailed report. Based on the valuer's recommendations, the Founders Group made a written purchase offer to the vendor's agent, but unfortunately, the offer was declined. This is the end of the exercise for the moment. Cllr. Wensley explained the process of registering Assets of Community Value and this may be considered in future.

The Clerk reported rents had been paid by the Tennis and Football Clubs. Bins have been overflowing but were emptied on request. Staff shortages have caused a slow-down in the usual services to the Village including grass cutting.

The Clerk received an email from a parishioner in Oak Hill who is being disturbed by a dog barking late into the night. Cllr. Tresidder & Cllr. Ward thought it might be a dog in Brookfield Road. Efforts will be made to identify the owner, so that action may be taken to stop the nuisance. Resident Christine Hadley had asked that we record her pleasure at the smart refurbishment of the Public Toilets.

Yettington: Councillor Quant has a team of volunteers running Speedwatch in Yettington. During three one-hour sessions, 31 vehicles were over the limit and 356 vehicles passed in an hour. Three teams of three will be in action once a week during the Summer. Councillor Quant will attend the Police Engagement Session on 19th July when the new Policing of Crime Plan will be discussed. Cllr. Quant has spoken to Clare James of CDE about a potential permissive path from Yettington to East Budleigh. They will take this forward in September.

Parish Pathways: Jon Roseway had sent in a report. Grass cutting by DCC has been slow due to staff shortages. He has asked the PRow warden to prioritise paths that are getting choked with nettles and brambles.

Councillor Tresidder reported that the Brook was getting clogged up, particularly with Himalayan Balsam. He will liaise with Kate Ponting over further preventative work. The newly tidied VIP room, with improved Book and CD swaps, is proving very popular.

Wildflowers: Councillor Ward has taken bird boxes and Nature Trail kits to Drake's School. She hopes to develop more initiatives with the school in the Autumn.

Traffic Matters: Councillor Houston said several people were enthusiastic about setting up a Speedwatch on for Budleigh & Oak Hill. Cllr. Quant will assist with this. Cllr. Houston has met Emma Stamp, the Highways representative, but not had come up with solutions for the problems. She had given Cllr. Houston alternative routes to explore. In respect of parking near The Pound, if persistent offenders are logged, a Traffic Warden may visit the village to place a warning notice, but no proactive action will be taken until problems are recorded. Cllrs. Ward and Houston will ask County Councillor Channon if yellow lines might be placed where needed and potentially, limited speed signs.

Planning:

Ref 21/1638/FUL Rose Cottage

“The proposals are acceptable except the roof lights to the front roof elevation facing the road, which are not appropriate for the local street-scene, as there are no other road facing rooflights in the area. There are also concerns for the privacy of neighbours from the rear dormer window given the high level of this dormer, which may or may not be acceptable?”

Ref 21/1444/FUL Frying Pan Car Park

Pebblebed Heaths Car Parking proposals

General

The Design & Access statement states that 40,000 new homes are to be built in the area by 2030, putting additional pressure on recreational facilities such as the Pebblebed Heaths with an estimated 400,000 visits pa.. Car journeys are essential to reach the Heaths, but the response here is to reduce parking, especially in the small informal areas (153 spaces reduced to 119). As has been shown during Covid, lack of provided car parking does not stop visitors coming and they simply park elsewhere often inconsiderately or causing obstruction (e.g. Fire Access blocked, farm access / gateways blocked, passing places blocked) and damage to the environment. Such ad hoc parking is far more of a health & safety / highway hazard than formal parking. Irresponsible parking leads to anger when motorists cannot pass on blocked single-track roads and when farmers remove vehicles by force from blocked gateways. Most of the Heaths' parking facilities have existed for many years and environmental damage is likely to be less than the damage caused by ad hoc parking elsewhere on the Heaths – the law of unintended consequences. Covid has also encouraged more dog ownership and the Heaths are a favoured dog walking area. People are also encouraged to walk in open areas such as these for health reasons. Dog walking on the Heaths is the only exercise that many elderly people have.

If fly tipping is a problem, then closing a car park (Frying Pans) is probably not the best solution as the waste will be simply tipped elsewhere. It may be more productive to consider abolishing waste charges. It is difficult to see what problems existed with Uphams car park to warrant closure, it certainly is not evident. The military has private use of the Heath beyond, and it works well. Removing roadside parking from the very wide hard surface road edges at Wheathill is simply a waste of money as cars are not doing any damage whatsoever.

The parking situation with regard to the Bystock Nature Reserve is lamentable and to reduce the Squabmoor parking further exacerbates an already acute problem. This is clearly a favoured site for family visits and for children's educational experience, which is now being discouraged. Fire access barriers in this area are often blocked by vehicles and this could get worse.

The improvement works to the car parks, particularly relating to surfacing, is most welcome, but reducing parking capacity whilst visits are increasing is likely to lead to more severe environmental damage consequences than the status quo and is therefore counter productive.

Previously closed car parks

DWT car park by Bystock meadow
Car park near B3179 opposite top of Hulham Rd
Yettington and historically, many more

Proposed Closures

Uphams
Frying Pans
Woodbury Castle / Estuary View
Many informal parking places

Previously Reduced

Woodbury Castle
X roads Tuckers Plantation

Proposed Reduction

Squabmoor
Stowford
Numerous part barrier closures (74 spaces)
Many informal parking places (34 spaces)

Frying Pans specific comment

As per the general comments, closure of the car park because of fly tipping is not a solution to fly tipping or parking arrangements. It is interesting to note that EDDC and Highways appear to prefer roadside parking to an off-road carpark in this case, but the opposite is the case at Wheathill?

21/1442/FUL Stowford Woods Car Park

Pebblebed Heaths Car Parking proposals

General

General comments are the same as for Frying Pans above.

Stowford Woods specific comments

It is proposed to close the parking area on the East side of the road and allow spaces on the West side. The car parking strategy states that 10 existing spaces will be cut to 5 new spaces whereas the Design and Access statement states 7 existing and 7 new spaces. Either way the numbers are incorrect. There are currently 6 spaces available on the East side and around 9 on the West side. All these spaces are often occupied, especially at weekends, when mountain bikers visit.

As has been pointed out in the general comments, reducing the number of spaces by more than half will simply cause people to park in an ad hoc manner close by, thus causing environmental damage and obstruction. The East side is also the better parking facility currently.

EDDC installed two dog waste bins in this car parking area. One assumes that the Council expected more people to be visiting and parking than is now being envisaged? This area is too remote to reach by walking and car visits are the norm.

This application came in too late for consideration. The Clerk will fix a date for discussion.

Accounts & Finances: All bills and financial records were accepted. Council agreed that PKF Littlejohn be appointed as External Auditors for our accounts.

Any Other Business

Councillor Ward made a request for Clare James of CDE to attend a future meeting, to discuss various environmental and amenity initiatives. The Clerk will arrange it. Councillor Quant asked if a bin for dog waste might be placed in Yettington. The Clerk will investigate.

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm

Date of Next Meeting 27th July 2021 in the Village Hall