**YARCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES**

**Remote Meeting held via Zoom, Monday 1st February 2021 at 8.00 pm**

In Attendance:

Cllrs C Stone (Chair), T Long, L Pidgeon, C Ford, S Horner, D Little, D Barnes (via speaker phone), C Vining, S-J Martin (Clerk & RFO)

Members of the Public present – 2

Cllr Stone welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for joining us.

**1. Apologies for Absence**:

Cllr D Key

**2. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Stone asked if anyone had any Declarations of Interest for the meeting, to which none were declared.

**3. Minutes.**

The Councillors were asked if they were happy that the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 4th January received by email, were correct and that everyone was happy for them to be signed. Everyone agreed and they will be signed as a true record outside of the meeting.

**4. Reports**

**To receive the following Reports**

1. **County Councillor – Cllr Iain Chubb**

Cllr Chubb had just received a Covid 19 briefing in the morning (to be circulated) and the roll-out is going very well with all the over 80’s who have taken up an offer of a vaccine, have been vaccinated through the very precise system which is in place and 97% of all Care Home residents have been vaccinated.

Cllr Ford advised the system in place at Taunton racecourse was excellent.

Cllr Stone raised the issue that the Devon Assn of Local Councils has advised that there are no plans to extend the law in place allowing Parish Council meetings to continue to meet remotely after May 7th and we shall need quite a bit of notice if public meetings are to commence. Cllr Chubb advised there are similar concerns over the Devon County and Crime Commissioner elections, especially as C-19 can travel on paper. Cllr Chubb advised there may by hybrid meetings where a couple of members are in a village hall and the remainder are on zoom, depending on the internet capabilities of the village hall.

**b**. **District Councillors – Cllr C Brown**

Cllr Brown advised it is quiet at the moment and they are just about to commence the budget setting process.

**c. Police**

A full yearly crime/incident report for the Parish of Yarcombe for Crimes and incidents reported between 01/01/2020 and 11/01/2021.

Crimes reported - 13 for 2020/2021 versus 17 for 2019/2020, being a decrease of 23.5% year on year.

Incidents reported 101/999 or online 86 between 2020/2021, versus 154 between 2019/2020*,* ***being a decrease of 44.2% year on year – this is made up of:*** Anti-social behaviour 2020 – 3, Crime recorded/not recorded (1st point of contact) 2020 – 3, Public safety 2020 – 10, Transport (NOT just accidents) 2020 – 70.

Hopefully, I will be able to update you very soon about our rural connectivity plan.

Cllr Stone commented that 70 traffic incidents seems to be high.

**d. Yarcombe Community Land Trust**

Cllr Horner advised they are bringing together comments from the EDDC planners – some slightly contrary – and those from us and the Housing Association which has enabled us to now have a “composite compromise” that we can put back to the planners and we hope the planners will accept some of our changes. We wish to have Devon banks around the property, but the planners were not seeing it, as necessary.

**e. Reports from Individual Councillors**

All the Councillors were asked if they had anything to report and none did.

**5. Open Session for Public Participation**

Cllr Stone advised that Nick Randle would like to address us and requested if he could please forward to our Clerk a copy of what is to be read. (this was received and included below)

Good Evening Councillors

Well, when I stood down from the Parish Council in 2019 I little expected that the next time I addressed you would be under circumstances such as these.

Since Clive appeared on my doorstep a couple of months ago, I have written a lengthy note to him and, also written to all of you and to members of the sub-committee that you appointed to investigate the issue relating to Rag lane. I don’t know what the terms of reference of the sub-committee were, but I can assure you they have been very assiduous in pursuing the matter. I hope however you have all read the correspondence from me, that you have a good understanding of Wendy’s and my viewpoint and if not will take this opportunity to discuss it with me. Having written I don’t propose to go through everything again. I will however, if you will permit me, just make a few observations before you make your decision in a few minutes time.

The erosion of the banks in Rag lane has been an ongoing problem for me and the previous owners of my property and for my neighbours the Clarkes, for several decades. This is more significant because our outbuilding, which has been there for at least 80 years is perched on top of the bank at the top of the lane. Erosion has occurred due to run off in the particularly heavy rains we have been having and by vehicles making their way up the lane and grinding parts of it away as they go. This latter problem was exacerbated when Satnav came in about 15 years ago and traffic, including delivery vans, started getting wedged into the banks and had to be pulled out with some regularity. This resulted in the lane being designated as unsuitable for motor vehicles at that time which significantly reduced the problem.

It’s worth mentioning that the erosion has in fact, in recent years, widened the lane in places at the expense of our garden. My many attempts to stabilise the bank over the years has had limited success.

As you will know, last year during the first lockdown cracks appeared in our outbuilding , the bank slumped away from the foundations and our fence on the boundary in parts collapsed into the lane. We took emergency action to reinforce and restore the bank and so far, this seems to have helped in terms of the building. Just as we were heaving a sigh of relief Clive turned up and we were suddenly faced with a different problem entirely. As you will know my deeds and the line of the actual point where my drive meets the road clearly indicate that the gabions are within my boundary. However, based on what Clive has said I take it that he and possibly other members of the appointed sub - committee are not convinced.

So, I would just like to summarise the following points:-

Rag Lane is not an essential thoroughfare for motor vehicles as the A30 runs almost parallel to it.

It is however well used by walkers, cyclists, horse riders ,cattle drovers and quad bikes who continue to use it daily. Perhaps in the 21st century it should be formally acknowledged that this is its primary purpose.

As you will know each year the growth of field hedges either side of the lower lane reduce its width to no more than a footpath, and it is only shown to be any wider when the hedges are trimmed in the autumn. This extreme narrowing happens every year, as far as I know without anyone making a complaint, and without the Parish Council ever having shown any interest in it.

Clive has pointed out in correspondence the Parish Council are neither qualified nor responsible for making decisions on such matters.” If you do have a role it’s in trying to build an understanding between residents with a different interest and viewpoint in an issue.

We are concerned that if you make the resolution you are being recommended to make you will in fact be endorsing the view of the complainant. While we are confident of our position, we would rather not be embroiled the ongoing bureaucratic investigative process, which that would inevitably initiate.

We strongly believe that if you wish to exercise your community leadership role you could , instead make one or both of the alternative resolutions that we have suggested to you. We will address the matter with highways but preferably without the matter having been prejudged.

In conclusion we feel it’s regrettable that this issue has evolved as it has but we ask and trust that the Parish Council will facilitate a constructive resolution.

Responses:

Cllr Stone advised this matter has now been covered in some considerable detail and all Councillors kept informed by email and asked if there were any specific questions anyone has or new points that have not already been covered?

Cllr Little stated that the lane is narrower than it used to be.

Cllr Ford advised she attempted to go down the lane as had been parked at the top, but her car got stuck on the wall.

Cllr Horner advised we had a duty/obligation as Parish Council to forward a complaint concerning Highways, to Highways.

Cllr Stone welcomed Liz Pole (Labour Constituent and Community and Business reporter for the Midweek Herald) to the meeting and said I know we previously forwarded to you a list of Yarcombe and Marsh activities and organisations and in your role as Community and Business columnist we hope you will be taking back with you some good news from our Parish in these difficult times:

Our Affordable Homes project is currently being considered by EDDC

A playground group has been formed within the community

We have been able to hold the Parish Precept at last years level, thanks to Iain Chubb's locality budget which is paying for the Parish Council achieving the new website compliance requirements and just three days ago new tenants moved into the Yarcombe Inn.

We do have a concern as a Parish Council and as a community that currently we are only able to continue remote meetings up till the 7th of May and I’m sure our Parish is not alone in hoping that government authorisation will be forthcoming to extend this to run for many more months and that they clarify this sooner rather than later.

Another concern in the community is the traffic speeding through our village on A30.

It is a credit to everyone in our community that there have only been a very small number of COVID-19 cases in the parish.

I am very pleased to say that all of them isolated and have recovered and benefited from the proactive community spirit, helping each other, and keeping in touch through a long established Yarcombe Voices village magazine, our Good Neighbours Scheme, the Yarcombe Coronavirus Support Group and Marsh Together and our thanks to everyone involved

Also, local businesses, services, organisations, and other key workers have all adapted to help everyone which we see as a local BEACON of HOPE amongst all the other daily news reports in the media and thanks also to all of them.

Cllr Stone then asked Liz if she would like to comment and Liz replied that this is all good to hear and this is all great news and what a super community you are all in – it all sounds very positive to which Cllr Stone agreed

Cllr Stone advised that other app reported potholes and blocked drains have been promptly rectified and I would encourage everyone to make use of this app to report problems - <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/>

The lane from A303 to Birch Oak Cross now reinstated to a VERY high standard.

**6. Parish Council Priorities including Clerk and Correspondence.**

**Highways**

Thank you very much to Tony Wiggins for reporting two large potholes in Hay Lane near Sunnyways using the Pothole App.

Rag Lane

Cllr Stone advised this matter has been covered in various emails which have been copied to Nick Randle and to all Councillors as appropriate and following the further comments in tonight‘s meeting and said I hope you’ve all got a comprehensive background to the situation in Rag Lane and asked if anyone had any further or new comments which they wish to raise that have not already been covered?

Cllr Stoner asked for a show of hands for those that were in favour of referring the matter to Highways. Cllrs S Horner, T Long, L Pidgeon, C Ford, C Vining, D Little and C Stone were in favour.

Cllr Vining thought the Complainant should be the one to refer the matter to Highways, but Cllr Stone advised they wished to remain anonymous.

RESOLVED

It was agreed the matter will be forwarded to highways and Cllr Stone advised that in forwarding the complaint he suggested it would be appropriate that we also enclose the information that we previously received directly and through Voices from Nick together with tonight’s report /address by Nick as background to and reasons for the work being carried out.

Potholes

Amy Tucker from Lower Luxton Farm has reported potholes on the stretch of lane from Knapp Farm towards Williambear and complaining they haven’t been done. Since the meeting, Highways have reported this is scheduled for repair and Clerk has asked Amy to keep us updated. This has been followed up with an email 02.02.21 asking Amy if the repairs had been carried out.

**Village Amenities**

New Website

A vote was held on the name for the website and it has been decided it will be [www.yarcombeparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.yarcombeparishcouncil.org.uk). The website can now be commenced to be built.

Yarcombe Play Area

Cllr Horner gave an outline of the current position with the desired Yarcombe Play / Social Area and advised there is a group of ladies who would like to develop such an area and have been informed by EDDC there are fund available for a possible development. These funds go back to a development in 2014 at Watchford Farm. Cllr Horner referred to Cllr Pidgeon as possibly knowing something about it but at the time, Lesley advised there was nothing to spend the money on.

Cllr Horner has advised there are 4 areas of land the money could be spent on being the Tennis Court (where the ladies wish to place the play area), the Church graveyard, the Baptist Chapel graveyard, and an area of land in Drakes Meadow. Cllr Long advised this piece of land is private and belongs to David Meyrick.

Cllr Horner advised legislation requires a working group is formed of EDDC and other bodies. Cllr Chubb advised the Parish Council at Kilmington wanted to spend the funds on a fence around the play area, but they were refused as the money had to be spent on items for the play area.

Cllr Horner has been liaising with Sulina at EDDC who “wants a chat” but it is Cllr Horner’s view that a working party needs to be formed first and that the current “Yarcombe Inn Community Benefit Society” is changed to “Yarcombe Community Benefit Society” and thinks EDDC are being difficult about it.

Cllr Brown had spoken to Sulina who would like to set up a Zoom meeting between the Clerk and Cllr Horner so that the next step could be taken. The Clerk advised a lunchtime Zoom meeting would be OK and it was agreed Cllr Brown would liaise with Sulina. Cllr Horner will email Cllr Brown the email trail and questions to her.

Cllr Stone has spoken to Cllrs C Vining and L Pidgeon but Cllr Pidgeon is not overly enthusiastic in principle as project similar to this have surfaced in the past and they have all failed due to health and safely requirements / insurance costs plus the hall committed had previously refused the use of the tennis court as it is used as a car park overflow for events held there. Cllr Little advised with the Hall having spent so much money on the hall sound and audio with a view to holding more events it seems unlikely they would grant permission for the tennis court when it is clearly needed.

Cllr Pidgeon mentioned that the group ought to first establish in writing from the Hall Committee whether they can obtain that piece of land. Cllr Horner agreed but stated a working party needs to be set up first in order to follow a procedure and do things properly.

Cllr Stone asked Cllr Horner if he could please forward all relevant information to the proposed working party members.

Landmark Tree

We have postponed the placing of a Brass Plaque near the tree until we can meet outside.

**Additional Items**

Review of Standing Orders

Cllr Stone has asked Cllr Little to look at these with him as there are a couple of areas identified for revision.

Cllr Stone also asked the Clerk to include the link for the new EDDC Local Plan which is as follows: <http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/newlocalplan>

Sandbags

This is on diary to order more if required this year.

Troughs on layby

On-going – we shall wait to see if any more plants have been plated by Tony Baker and if not, consider topping them up. Perhaps on the outside some hardy year-round plants and in the middle a selection of wild-flowers – Beebombs – £29.99 - native wildflower Beebombs (native wildflower species, enough to create over 105 sq. ft / 10m² of wildflower meadow). Lesley Sutton has also suggested bulbs and grasses. This was agreed we could purchase some bee bombs to brighten them up

**7. Finance**

a. The Councillors received the Clerks report on the current Financial Position by email and Cllr Stone asked if everyone was happy with the finances. None of the Councillors had any comments.

b. Payments within the Clerks Report schedule were agreed:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Payment Date | Payee | Details of Payment | Amount |
| 02.02.20 | HMRC | January PAYE | 59.80 |
| 02.02.20 | Sarah-Jane Martin | January Clerks wages | 239.20 |

**8. Planning**

**To receive and endorse the Planning Decisions of the Council taken since last meeting under delegated authority.**

Cllr Long advised that during this time, site meetings have been held with a skeleton of Parish Council members, where he felt it necessary and consequently hasn't been inviting all the Parish Councillors to all the applications, due the present circumstances.

Cllr Long also apologised for his current internet issues and reminded everyone that all comments submitted by Yarcombe Parish Council can be viewed on the EDDC Planning Portal. He went through the current applications and the comments made and thanked everyone for their comments on planning applications but added a small reminder that when we received planning applications, to please not visit the site or speak to the applicant as Councillors should not go and visit the site.

Emphasis was also placed on the continuing requirement that we are keen to see dark grey anthracite cladding on agricultural development which is in our Neighbourhood Plan and the AONB also wish to see this.

Cllr Stone concluded the meeting and thanked everyone for joining us.

**The date of the next meeting is Monday 1st March at 8pm which will be held remotely.**