



**ROCKBEARE
PARISH COUNCIL**

Chairman: Jeremy Wollen

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MINUTES OF ROCKBEARE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

HELD ON

WEDNESDAY 19TH JANUARY 2022

PRESENT: Cllr Jeremy Wollen (Chairman) and Cllrs: Ron Forrest, Simon Brodie, Susan Wollen, and Phil Franklin

Also: Cllr Richard Lawrence (EDDC) and 11 members of the public

Parish Clerk: Carolyn Y. May

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Colin Please, Sarah Randall-Johnson (CC)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: Cllr Brodie declared an interest in Matter 21/3209/FUL

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION:

Ford Oaks Solar Farm Proposal

Mr Julian Turnbull and Mr Paul Jefferson attended, with several other Parishioners from Marsh Green, in order to raise the on-going issue of the proposed solar Farm at Ford Oaks, Marsh Green.

Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss requested that the Parish Council hold a separate meeting, at which the proposal could be discussed at length, and questions asked of the Developer. She highlighted the constant changes being made to the proposal by the Developer made it difficult to understand what the precise intention of that company is.

Another attendee raised the issue of the impact of the proposed development on flooding and watercourses in the area of Marsh Green. He added that, although work has been carried out to alleviate the existing problem, the run-off from the proposed development will not be solved by the installation of a few drainage ponds. It was highlighted that the documentation provided by the developer sought to emphasise the benefits of the proposed development. However, some residents were of the opinion that the total opposite was true and that the problems arising from the proposed development would be significant.

The potential conflict of interest in respect of Devon County Council was alluded to, in relation to their ownership of many of the fields to be utilised by the developers. It was felt that a great deal of work had already been carried out in respect of the proposal.

AGENDA

628.0 MINUTES

- 628.1 The Minutes of the meeting of Rockbeare Parish Council, held on Wednesday 17th November 2021 were considered. The Clerk advised the meeting that Mr Julian Turnbull had asked for an amendment, in order to clarify a point. It was **agreed** that the amendment would be accepted.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Susan Wollen, **seconded** by Cllr Forrest, and **RESOLVED** that the minutes for the meeting of Wednesday 17th November 2021 (with the agreed amendment) would be approved and signed as a correct record of that meeting. Unanimous. **Carried**.

629.0 REPORTS

629.1 Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported that, on the 11th of December 2021, he attended a meeting of the Airport Consultative Committee, at the Airport.

Mr Steve Wilshire (Managing Director) gave a report in which he highlighted that passenger numbers were holding up, from 18,000 in August 2021 to 25,000 in November 2021.

The Airport currently employs 210 permanent staff. The maintenance business that took over from the old Flybe operation is doing very well and is running at maximum capacity.

Also discussed were potential changes to the way that air traffic is routed on take-off. Several flight patterns were highlighted but the Committee felt that the current take-off route should be maintained, this being in a westerly direction, with an optimum of 1,000 feet being achieved when reaching Middlemore, then veering left to avoid overflying the city, thus minimising noise pollution.

Emerald Airways, a new carrier to Exeter, should be starting soon.

There are currently nine domestic flights out of Exeter, with about the same internationally.

- 629.2 The Chairman reported that on the 13th of January 2022, he had attended a meeting at Marsh Green Farm. The meeting had been called by Mr Phil Cookson, of Low Carbon Alliance, in order to discuss the proposed Ford Oaks Solar Installation. Also in attendance were representatives from Aylesbeare Parish Council and Devon County Council, also Mr Paul Davey (Farmer).

The overall scale of the proposal was quite alarming and the actual logistics of creating the installation are equally concerning. It is proposed that a staging post will be set up close to Exeter Airport to receive all equipment, plant etc. From that point, all materials (cables, solar panels, stanchions, and plant machinery) will be transported by road, in radio-controlled vehicle convoys, along Long Lane, and through Westcott, up onto the Ridge Road, to the site of the Solar Farm. Attendees were advised that this process would take in the region of six months.

It is clear that this process will create a huge amount of disruption.

It was proposed by the Chairman that the Parish Council should formally reject this proposal and that he saw no point in allowing a representative of the company to attend Parish Council meetings, only to browbeat Members and Parishioners into accepting the project. He added that the Parish should actively fight the proposal on all fronts.

There has been some discussion in respect of the non- attendance of Mr Cookson at the extant meeting, However, the Chairman highlighted the fact that there were to be further changes to the plan between this date and our February 2022 meeting. The formal application is likely to be submitted in March 2022.

The Chairman added that the impact of the proposed development would be horrendous for both Marsh Green and Rockbeare. He added that, in his opinion, it is incumbent on Parishioners of Marsh Green to identify and put forward a member to represent the village on the Parish Council.

The Clerk requested permission to ask a question. **Granted.**

The Clerk asked if any of the arrangement being presented had actually received approval (even outline approval) from Devon County Council? The response was 'not from our knowledge'.

Cllr. Forrest asked if 'Due Diligence' had been applied to this operation. He added that he had looked into financial standing the applicant company (LCA) and had noted that it appeared to be a 'shell company'. It was highlighted that the company had only been trading for eight months (formed 21st April 2021), total net assets of the company are £19,699. Cllr Forrest asked how the company could run the proposed operation with that net asset base?

A further company owned by one of the LCA Directors (one of 72 initiated by this person – 60 have been liquidated) was also formed in April 2021. The capitalisation of this company is £10,000, with 90,000 shares having been allocated. The profit from this company has been zero.

This system of operation of many identifies plots of land and then seek planning permission for the same, often without the knowledge of the landowner. If planning permission was granted, the company would then offer the landowner a sum for the land (well over the normal value of the land) and purchase the plot, which would then be sold onto another developer at a vast profit.

It is possible that the operation being presented to us mirrors this model. It is likely that this package will be sold to a leading development company, which will fund the development.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Forrest, **seconded** by Cllr Wollen, and RESOLVED that the Clerk would be authorised to purchase financial reports relating to, LCA and (name), to distribute to Members, and that the reports should also be submitted to EDDC. Unanimous. **Carried.**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Wollen, **seconded** by Cllr Forrest, and RESOLVED that and Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council would be called, in order to discuss the Ford Oaks Solar Farm proposal. Unanimous. **Carried.**

629.3 **District Councillor Report**

With regard to the proposed grass area transfer to the Parish Council. EDDC is supportive of the transfer and the matter has been handed over to the Estates Department, for consideration.

Cllr Lawrence also alluded to the new East Devon Plan, highlighting those areas have been identifies for small pockets of housing. There is only one area in the Parish coloured green. Nothing has been decided yet and this document is merely a little 'upfront' news.

Each Parish in the EDDC area is to be provided with an Oak Tree, to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

629.4 **County Councillor Report** – Received after the meeting (attached).

630.0 **FUNDING APPLICATION**

630.1 **Marsh Green Village Hall**

Members considered a grant funding application, submitted by Mr Julian Turnbull, on behalf of Marsh Green Village Hall. Members were advised that the lavatories at the venue need refurbishment, at an estimated cost of £6, 413.

Cllr Lawrence advised the Meeting that, at present, Devon CC has monies available for projects of this type. The Clerk agreed to contact Cllr Randall-Johnson about this.

It was **proposed** by Cllr. Jerry Wollen, **seconded** by Cllr. Susan Wollen and **RESOLVED** to provide a grant of £3,500 towards the refurbishment. A request for further funding to be made to Devon CC, and consideration of additional funding by RPC if necessary. Unanimous. **Carried.**

630.2 **TRIP FUNDING**

TRIP Update – **Mr Neil Hurlock** provided Members with the following update: The Marsh Green Monthly Meeting is the most popular of the groups run by TRIP. There are currently three hubs, Marsh Green, Dunkeswell and Honiton. Marsh Green is now seriously oversubscribed. Rockbeare residents attending the Marsh Green Meeting are also taken to the other venues. It is encouraging to note that parishioners who had, previously, felt unable to socialise are now happily attending meetings and events. The feedback from attendees has been encouraging. The PC was thanked for the publicity which it had helped to generate for the project. The support given by the PC at Christmas had brought several attendees to tears.

The support received from RPC has been much appreciated and has enabled the establishment and continuance of the group.

Mr Hurlock concluded by thanking the Members for enabling the establishment of the group in this area and for providing opportunities for residents.

It was agreed that the Grant Application would be discussed at the end of the agenda.

631.0 ROCKBEARE VILLAGE FIELD DISCUSSION

631.1 The Chairman opened the discussion by highlighting the point that the matter of the ownership/ lease of the Parish Field had arisen due to the fact that the current lease is set to expire in 2023. It was felt by Members that it might be advantageous to both the Parish, and the Village Hall, to investigate the possible purchase of the field, by the Parish Council. The intention of the purchase would be to ensure that the Parish Council could hold the land, in perpetuity, for the benefit of Parishioners. That is, the land would become an asset of the Parish Council.

It was emphasised, during the discussion, that the request to purchase did not include the Village Hall building, and that maintenance/ insurance etc would become the responsibility of the Parish Council.

Potential projects for the site had been mooted in the past but no action had been taken in respect of the same, as ownership of the asset/ a long lease would be required in order to access funding from Sport England. That fund was available for the encouragement of sporting activities in the area.

Mr Jeremy Smith (Agents Representative – Saville's) advised the meeting that the Trustees for the land would be unlikely to sell the same. He suggested that a public consultation should be held in order to determine the views of the parishioners, reference potential use. He also stated that the Parish Council should put a proposal together.

The Clerk advised the meeting that a short lease was of little use, as Sport England and the relevant EDDC Officer has suggested a minimum of 50 years would be necessary. She added that if purchasing the land was an option, then future plans for the provision of activities were not a matter for discussion with the Trustees. A purchase would amount to a business transaction, and the sole purpose for the request was to ensure that the land could be kept, in perpetuity, for the benefit of Parishioners.

Mr Smith reiterated his view that the Trustees would be unlikely to sell the land. He was, however, requested to take the Parish Council's request to purchase the land, to the Trustees for consideration.

632.0 PLANNING

632.1 Planning Matter 21/3209/FUL- The Parish Council does not object to this application.

632.2 Planning Matter 21/3320/FUL- The Parish Council does not wish to comment on this application.

632.3 Planning Matter 21/3041/FUL- The Parish Council does not object to this application.

632.4 Planning Decisions - Noted

633.0 CORRESPONDENCE - None

634.0 BUSINESS AND FINANCE

634.1 Members considered the Schedule of Payments and Bank Reconciliation.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Susan Wollen, **seconded** by Cllr Forrest, and **RESOLVED** that the schedule of payments would be accepted, and the liabilities discharged. Unanimous. **Carried.**

634.2 The Bank Reconciliation was accepted.

635.0 RURAL BROADBAND REQUIREMENT

Cllr Forrest raised the matter of poor broadband service in Westcott. It was **agreed** that the Clerk would contact the relevant authority to discuss this matter.

636.0 SCHOOL LIGHTING MATTER

636.1 The Clerk reported that this matter had been raised with DCC Highways. There is currently no money assigned to increase the number of streetlights. The PC could elect to pay for these (2 suggested), but no work can be undertaken without consultation with neighbouring property owners.

637.0 MARSH GREEN SIGNAGE

637.1 Conduct of this matter has been taken over by Helen Selby. The items have been ordered and will be delivered and installed as soon as possible.

637.2 It was brought to the attention of the Clerk that an unknown person had taken it upon themselves to contact the Cornwall Council Officer dealing with the initial request for Marsh Green signage. The tone of the caller was not acceptable, and the matter was reported to senior officers. The caller had claimed to be a Rockbeare Parish Councillor – this was proven to be false.

638.0 TRIP FUNDING

638.1 The funding application from TRIP was considered by Members. It was felt that TRIP should provide the Parish Council with accounts and clear information relating to the contributions received from both Crediton and Dunkeswell Parish Councils, who also benefit from the TRIP service.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk would request the information to be provided, prior to the application being decided upon.

639.0 PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE

639.1 Cllr Franklin advised the meeting that he had written to the website providers but received no response. He managed to find a contact number and spoke with a representative of the company, who undertook to advise the correct person of the discussion and ask that person to respond to Cllr. Franklin. To date, Cllr Franklin has not been contacted,

639.2 Cllr Frasnklin suggested that, to move this matter forward, and to address the website issues, the PC would have to arrange to have the domain transferred. The new site would have to be created in parallel to addressing the transfer. It was **agreed** that the Clerk would provide Cllr Frankilin with the relevant passwords to access the site.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm