



**ROCKBEARE
PARISH COUNCIL**

Chairman: Cllr. Phil Franklin

Clerk: Carolyn Y. May

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MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF ROCKBEARE PARISH COUNCIL

HELD ON

TUESDAY 17th JANUARY 2023

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Franklin (Chairman), M. Nequest, R. Nequest

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

Apologies: Cllrs A. Roberts, S. Randall-Johnson and H. Gent (DCC)

Clerk/ RFO: Carolyn Y. May

AGENDA

764.0 Declarations of Interest - none.

765.0 Questions from the Public

765.1 Three parishioners, residents of Hazel Grove, attended the meeting in order to raise their concerns and objections, in respect of Planning Application 22/2824/OUT.

The residents alluded to the lack of privacy that will ensue, for residents of Hazel Grove, should the proposed properties be built. In particular, gardens would be overlooked.

A further issue related to the retention of water at the site. Currently, run-off water collects at the bottom of the fields at the proposed site. Residents were concerned that this would impact on the properties in the area. One resident highlighted the fact that 'soakaways' had not addressed the situation in the past.

Cllr M. Nequest advised the residents that the Parish Council had only just received the documentation relating to the application, and that there had been no opportunity for Members to consider the same in any depth. Therefore, the Parish Council, as a body. Was not in a position to determine a response to the Planning Department of EDDC.

Cllr. M. Nequest added that the Parish Council was entitled to request that conditions be appended to any planning application. Therefore, the points raised could be alluded to in any response submitted by the body.

Cllr. Lawrence (EDDC) advised the meeting that the proposed development was small (four properties). He added that a problem with development applications arose as a result of EDDC not being able to satisfy the five year land supply requirement. Therefore, an opportunity for commercial development had been created.

Mr Mark Readman highlighted that the Rockbeare Neighbourhood Plan, which had been approved by EDDC, approved small areas of development within the Parish. This included development of areas around the boundary of the Parish, and infill, within the villages.

Action It was **agreed** that the Clerk would request an extension to the closing date for comments, to enable the matter to be discussed in depth by the Parish Council.

765.2 A parishioner from Marsh Green wished to thank the Clerk for accurately recording his comments, made at the last meeting of the Parish Council, on 13th December 2023.

765.3 A parishioner raised the poor condition of Quarter Mile Lane. The road is rapidly becoming impassable, due to the potholes and unmaintained condition of the road surface. It was felt that, apart from maintenance, there was a need for a weight restriction to be applied to the route.

Action It was **agreed** that the Clerk would report the condition of the road to Devon Highways.

765.4 The Chairman thanked the Parishioner for his contribution to the meeting.

766.0 Approval of Minutes

766.1 The Minutes of the last meeting of the Parish Council, held on Tuesday 13th December 2022 were considered.

766.2 It was **proposed** by Cllr. Franklin **seconded** by Cllr M. Nequest and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes would be accepted as a true record of the meeting. Unanimous. **Carried.**

767.0 Reports

767.1 Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported that he had attended the meeting of the Rockbeare Parish Hall Committee.

767.2 The Clerk reported that a letter of Resignation had been received from Cllr. R. Forrest. It was **agreed** that the Clerk would write a letter of acknowledgement to Cllr Forrest and thank him for his service to the Parish.

767.3 District Councillors Report

Statera Energy is proposing to submit plans to develop a new battery energy storage facility on land to the south east of the existing Exeter substation and to the south of Saundercroft Road, near Broadclyst.

Battery storage facilities carry a significant fire risk. While the probability of a fire is low, the hazard can be rated as critical or catastrophic leading to a medium to high-risk rating overall. Lithium batteries are prone to thermal runaway and there are now many documented cases of battery storage units that have led to serious fires and, in some cases, explosions and/or injury to firefighters.

-Battery fires are difficult to extinguish and can re-ignite some considerable time later. Very large volumes of water are needed for many hours to control the fires and they need dealing with promptly, as the fire will cascade from one battery to another. The hazard increases with the number of batteries stored. Fires can reach temperatures of 800C. As well as the direct hazard from fire, there are also hazards from the release of flammable and toxic gases, such as carbon monoxide, hydrogen chloride, hydrogen fluoride, hydrogen cyanide, benzene and toluene. These gases are generated within the cell enclosure before venting.

The proposed site at Hawkchurch has recently been refused planning permission by EDDC

Cllr Lawrence alluded to the proposed meeting, to be held at Rockbeare Village Hall, Rookwood Lane, Exeter, EX5 2LG Thursday 26th January 2023 – between 5:30pm - 8pm. He urged interested parties to attend.

768.0 PLANNING MATTERS

PLANNING APPLICATION 22/2824/OUT – The Littlefield Land, South of Hazel Grove, Rockbeare - Outline application (all matters reserved) for the construction of up to four dwellings.

Deferred.

DECISIONS – Noted

769.0 CORRESPONDENCE

769.1 Parish Newsletter – Cllr Franklin provided a draft Parish Flyer, which is intended to be published and provided to all homes within the parish. It was proposed that the title of the document should be 'Parish News for Rockbeare and Marsh Green'.

It was suggested that the document should contain updates of Parish Council projects/ consultations etc, news of upcoming events (as opposed to reporting on past events, and items of interest from parishioners.

Mr Mark Readman is to advise the Parish Council of the role that he may wish to take in relation to the publication.

It was **proposed** by Cllr. Franklin, **seconded** by Cllr M. Nequest, and **RESOLVED** that the Parish Flyer would be progressed. Unanimous. **Carried.**

769.2 Parking Area within Rockbeare Village

It was noted that the 'Residents Only' parking signs had not been removed from the area next to the telephone box. No communication had been received by the Clerk from those who maintain that it is their sole right to park in the space.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk would draft an appropriate notice for the Parish Council website, and the local Facebook page, stating that the 'Residents Only' parking signs must be removed (within a specified period of time). In the event that the request is not complied with, the Parish Council would arrange for such removal, with no responsibility being accepted for the signs, or damage to the wall.

The Parish Council will then arrange for a sign to be erected, advising that the land is owned by the Parish Council, and may be used as a drop off / pick up point for any member of the public.

It was **proposed** by Cllr. M Nequest, **seconded** by Cllr R. Nequest, and **RESOLVED** that the matter would be progressed. Unanimous. **Carried.**

- 769.3 Report Request** - The Clerk reported that she had received a number of emails from a non-parish resident, who had requested a copy of the Flooding Report, commissioned by the Parish Council, in relation to the Ford Oaks Solar Farm application.

The Clerk had responded by stating that the request would be put before the Members. The author of the correspondence immediately entered into FOI claims. FOI is an action of last resort, when a document is requested and refused. This had not been the case. The Clerk had wished (as is standard practice) to advise the Members of the request – prior to progressing the matter.

The content and tone of the correspondence was noted by Members, who confirmed the statement made by the Clerk. Namely that the document was, in fact, in the public domain and could be accessed through the EDDC Planning website. It was **agreed** that the applicant should be referred, again, to that site.

770.0 BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Members considered the Schedule of Payments for January 2023.

It was **proposed** by Cllr. M. Nequest, **seconded** by Cllr Franklin, and **RESOLVED** that the schedule of payments would be approved. Unanimous. **Carried.**

770.0 WARM SPACES

- 770.1 Sharon Thorne had forwarded a draft SLA to the Clerk, for signature. Members felt that the document was overly complicated and would require revisiting. Fixed costs would need to be clearer, and the provider would have to provide a definitive list of the items which required to be purchased.

- 770.2 It was **agreed** that the Parish Council would support the provision of the service, prior to the signing of the SLA, which should be revisited later.

It was **proposed** by Cllr. Franklin, **seconded** by Cllr M. Nequest, and **RESOLVED** that the project would be supported, for a short term, prior to agreeing the terms of the SLA, which would be revisited.. Unanimous. **Carried.**

771.0 GRANT APPLICATION

- 771.1 Rockbeare Rockets Football Club is to submit an application for funding, to meet a 1/3 part cost of restoring the Rockbeare Pavilion. The balance of the cost to be met by the Manor Estates and Rockbeare Village Hall (1/3 each).

- 771.2 The Pavilion is in a state of disrepair. However, it is used to store equipment. The NHS Corporate Responsibility Scheme has agreed to provide, free of charge, five qualified

tradesmen, for a period of five days, to bring the structure up to standard. The funding is being requested to meet the cost of the necessary materials. Once restored, the Rockets are to be permitted to use the structure at no charge.

- 771.3 Members agreed that they would require sight of the application at the next Parish Council meeting but agreed in principal to provide the sum of (sum) for the project.

It was **proposed** by Cllr. M. Nequest, **seconded** by Cllr R. Nequest, and RESOLVED that the , subject to sight of the application, the sum of (sum) would be granted to the Rockbeare Rockets Football Club for the purpose specified *ibid*. Unanimous. **Carried**.

772.0 RE-AFFIRMATION OF PARISH COUNCIL POLICIES

772.1 The following Parish Council Policies were approved:

- **Standing Orders**
- **Financial Orders;**
- **Statement of Internal Control;**
- **Data Protection Policy;**
- **Complaints Process**
- **Grant Awards Policy**

It was **proposed** by Cllr. M. Nequest, **seconded** by Cllr R. Nequest, and RESOLVED that each of the policies would be accepted and published on the Parish Council website. Unanimous. **Carried**.

773.0 MILLENIUM FIELD UPDATE

773.1 Cllr Nequest provided an outline of the next steps of the Millenium Field Project.

- Two contractors have been asked to submit quotations for the thinning of trees and cutting of paths;
- The provision of a storage facility at the site;
- Installation of fencing at the 'community space area';
- Installation of a 'kissing gate' and vehicle access;
- Provision of appropriate benches/ play equipment/ BBQ hard standing.

A member of the public raised the matter of flooding at the site. Cllr M. Nequest explained the drainage system to be put in place at the one area where water collects. Land drains are to be installed along the trench at the entrance to the site and three ponds are to be created on the site itself. These works are intended to alleviate the flooding problem.

Cllr M. Nequest added that the Marsh Green Hub is to take on the day to day maintenance of the site, once it has been brought up to a basic standard. An appropriate plan of works will be published.

It was **proposed** by Cllr. Franklin, **seconded** by Cllr R. Nequest, and RESOLVED that sum of £15,000 would be allocated to the project, in the first instance. Unanimous. **Carried**.

The meeting closed at 9.36 pm.

Next Meeting: 17th January 2023 at Marsh Green VH

DRAFT

Rockbeare Parish

Council Statement of Internal Control

Introduction

Rockbeare Parish Council is a local authority funded largely by public money and is responsible for ensuring its financial business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council is required to review at least annually the effectiveness of its system of financial control. This is informed by the work of the internal auditor and Finance Committee, who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal audit environment, and also any comments made by the external auditors in their annual report.

The Purpose of the System of Internal Control

The Council's system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure. It cannot provide an absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised, and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them effectively and economically.

The system of internal control accords with the practices set out in the Governance and Accountability in Local Councils: A Practitioners' Guide (2011 edition).

The Internal Control Environment

The Council has adopted Financial Regulations which set parameters for the Council's financial operations. The Council has appointed a Responsible Finance Officer who implements financial systems and controls.

Any issues raised by the Internal Auditor are reported in writing to the Council and agreed actions are monitored to ensure that they have been carried out and actioned within agreed timescales. Additionally, the Council seeks and receives appropriate property, legal, insurance, and health & safety advice to manage risk.

The Council is responsible for:

- Establishing and monitoring the achievements of the authority's objectives
- The facilitation of policy and decision making • Ensuring compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations
- Identification and management of risk
- Ensuring that best value and value for money are achieved in all purchases
- Ensuring all committees receive regular and up to date reports on financial activities under their direction
- Ensuring performance is regularly monitored against financial and operational budgets
- Control and reports on the financial management of the Council

Review of Effectiveness

The Council through the Responsible Finance Officer has responsibility for conducting a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and the internal audit process.

The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is monitored by:

- The work of officers within the Council reporting to the Responsible Finance Officer.
- The Parish Clerk is the Council's Responsible Finance Officer who acts as the Council's legal advisor and administrator. The Clerk is responsible for administering the Council's finances, for advising on compliance with laws and regulations which the Council is subject to, and for managing risks. The Clerk also provides advice to help the Council ensure that its procedures, control systems and policies are adhered to.
- Those elected Members of the Finance Committee who have particular responsibilities within this area. Members of the committee monitor progress against objectives, financial systems and procedures, budgetary control, and carry out regular reviews of financial matters. Minutes of committee meetings are circulated to all members of the Council and recommendations are considered at full council meetings. The full council meets 10 times each year. It monitors progress by receiving relevant reports from the Finance Committee and the Responsible Finance Officer.
- The work of the Internal Auditor. The Internal Auditor, an independent person specialising in local council matters, reports to the Council on the adequacy of its records, procedures, systems, internal control and risk management.
- The External Auditors in their annual report.

Any concerns about the effectiveness of the system of internal control are investigated and action taken as appropriate.