



**ROCKBEARE
PARISH COUNCIL**

Chairman: Philip Franklin

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MINUTES OF ROCKBEARE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

HELD ON

WEDNESDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2023

PRESENT: Cllr. Franklin (Chairman), Cllr M. Nequest (Vice-Chairman), Cllrs. R. Nequest, S. Brodie, A. Dunn and P. Dunn

Also: Cllr. S. Randall-Johnson (Devon County Council), Cllr. T. Olive (EDDC) and ten Members of the Public

Parish Clerk: Carolyn Y. May

AGENDA

46/23 Apologies – Cllr Mark Nequest (Vice-Chairman), Cllr. Simon Brodie, Cllr. Todd Olive (EDDC), Cllr Sarah RANDALL-JOHNSON (Devon Council)

47/23 Declarations of Interest - None

48/23 Public Session

Andrea Cook – Rockbeare Hill sign – The Clerk advised that this matter had been passed on to EDDC.

Ford Oaks Solar Farm Inquiry - Mrs Cook had addressed the inquiry as a resident representative. Mrs Cook advised the meeting that she had canvassed her neighbours, who had raised several issues.

Reduction of Speed on Rockbeare Hill – Mrs Cook asked if it was possible for the Parish Council to consider a reduction in relation to the permitted speed of traffic on Rockbeare Hill. The older cob buildings on Rockbeare Hill are situated close to the road, and these vibrate when large vehicles pass. A further problem arises where residents are at risk being knocked over by lorries, when out walking. There have been two recent incidents.

Cllr Franklin stated that it is possible to have speed restrictions imposed and that, looking to the future, if the Ford Oaks Solar Farm is approved, there will be an even greater volume of traffic on Rockbeare Hill. Therefore, a speed restriction would be sensible.

The Clerk advised the meeting that the issue of vehicle speed on Rockbeare Hill was raised as part of the formal objection to the Solar Farm application and, that the local lanes were considered to be unsuitable for the type of vehicles being proposed for use by the developer.

The Clerk added that any matter appertaining to the highway, fell into the remit of Devon County Council, Highways Department. Whilst the Clerk can raise the matter with the DCC Councillor for the area, there is more to be gained from each resident accessing the DCC website and, individually, reporting the issues.

Cllr Franklin suggested that an alternative to reporting the issues by email, would be to arrange for a petition to be signed by residents, or for each resident to write to DCC.

49/23 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD on 18th July 2023

Members considered the draft Minutes for the last meeting of the Parish Council, held on 18th July 2023.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Rebecca Nequest, **seconded** by Cllr. Andrew Dunn and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes would be accepted as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting, Unanimous. **Carried.**

50/23 REPORTS

50/23.1 Chairmans Report - Cllr Frankin advised the meeting that he had attended the Ford Oaks Solar Farm Appeal and had addressed the same. There was a significant number of attendees and there appeared to be more against the application, than in favour of it.

There was some concern at the conduct of EDDC, which withdrew some of its objections to the application. The withdrawal of some objections had been undertaken late into the process and it had been felt that the organisation should not have been permitted to do so. The conduct of EDDC was viewed as irresponsible and lacking in transparency.

It was noted that EDDC did, in fact, own some of the land which was to be used for the proposed development. That fact raises questions in respect of 'conflict of interest'.

Members agreed that the Parish Council should write to the CEO of EDDC, in order to express the concerns raised during the extant discussion.

Mrs Cook advised the meeting that the Appellants have requested costs from EDDC, on the grounds that they had been led to believe that the original application had been guaranteed to succeed. When the Planning Committee voted against the application, there had been some anger on the part of the Chair of the committee and officers.

The Clerk stated that, if the application had indeed been signed off by Council Officers, then that action was 'ultra vires'. Officers are appointed to advise Members, not to make decisions in their stead. The decision not to accept any pre-decision made by Officers was, in fact, the price of democracy.

The Clerk requested to be advised of the matters upon which there had been a change of heart by EDDC Officers. She was advised that the areas concerned were heritage, soil,

highways and flooding. Indeed, the issue of flooding was not one which the parties wished to address.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Franklin, **seconded** by Cllr Dunn and **RESOLVED** that the Clerk would draft a letter to EDDC, in which the disappointment and concerns of the Parish Council, in relation to the conduct of EDDC Officers on the Ford Oaks Solar Farm application, and appeal, are raised. Unanimous. **Carried**.

50/23.2 Devon County Councillors Report – noted.

51/23 PLANNING APPLICATIONS – none

PLANNING DECISIONS - Noted

52/23 CORRESPONDENCE

Barclays Bank – the Clerk advised the meeting that a letter had been received from Barclays Bank, in respect of our recent application for an account. It was **agreed** that the Clerk would take the necessary action to address the content of the document.

Rockbeare Rockets – The Clerk advised the meeting that she had requested the return of the Line Marking kit, which had been loaned to the Rockets, for the season. The Clerk had been assured that the unused item would be returned to the Chairman. To date, this has not been done. It was **agreed** that the Clerk would send a reminder.

53/23 BUSINESS AND FINANCE

53/23.1 Members considered the Schedule of Payments and Bank Reconciliation

It was **proposed** by Cllr. Rebecca Nequest, **seconded** by Cllr. Andrew Dunn, and **RESOLVED** that the schedule of payments would be accepted, and the liabilities discharged. Unanimous. **Carried**.

53/23.2 The Bank Reconciliation was accepted.

54/23 WARM SPACES/ PARISHIONER SUPPORT – Report previously disseminated.

Members considered the invoice received from Inspiring Connections, the contracted provider for the Hub. There was some concern raised in relation to the high costs incurred for the last month. Cllr. Rebecca Nequest reminded the meeting that a budget had been set by the Parish Council for this facility, and that the total cost of providing the service had, thus far, appeared to have exceeded the agreed budget. It was **agreed** that:

- Sharon Thorne would be invited to attend the next Parish Council meeting, so that the continuation of the service can be discussed.
- Sharon should be asked to keep an accurate record of postcodes, for all attendees at the events.
- Sharon should be asked to compile a budget for the service, providing accurate costings for the balance of the extant financial year and beyond.

- It was noted that whilst food was being provided for attendees, very little had been received by way of donations. This is a situation that cannot be permitted to continue, and a weekly sum should be determined for each attendee to cover the provision of victuals.
- Additional funding streams are to be researched.
- An additional event, to be held monthly, will be researched. This event will provide a monthly social event for older residents of the parish, who may find it difficult to deal with larger crowds and noise. This event is to be researched by Cllrs. Ripley Dunn and Rebecca Nequest, with costings being presented at the October 2023 Parish Council meeting.

55/23 CAR PARKING AREA

The Clerk stated that the car parking area had now been tarmacked. Lining of bays will be undertaken once the final lay-out of spaces has been agreed. Cllr Franklin was of the opinion that there should be two reserved bays, which would be available to parishioners for a fee. These would be managed on a contractual basis. The annual sum to be set at £300 p.a. The reserved spaces would be offered on an open bidding system, with availability being advertised on the PC website. The security of the reserved spaces would be ensured through the provision of a fixed, dropdown, lockable post.

Cllr. Franklin added that there should also be a disabled car parking space provided, and either one, or two, 'open spaces' (depending on the amount of space available). The open spaces would be time restricted. A notice board will be erected, advising users of the waiting times permitted.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk would provide the requirements detailed above to the contractor.

56/23 PARISH NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will be published in **October 2023**.

57/23 MILLENNIUM FIELD UPDATE

Cllr nequest advised the meeting that t new benches had been delivered to the contractor, who will arrange for the items to be concreted into the ground. There are a large number of hedging plants to be place around the boundary, which has been cleared.

The drainage installed has prevented the land from becoming marshy, and the previously wet areas are now much more solid. The walkway around the site is now clear.

Hardcore has been laid at the gateway to the field, however, it is felt that tarmac would be a better option.

Cllr Nequest suggested that it might be appropriate for the Parish Council to host a bonfire event, with a hog roast. It was agreed that there would be no fireworks and only a token bonfire, corralled within a fire pit. Ideally, this would be a social event for parishioners, and the cost of tickets would be kept to a minimum.

It was **agreed** that the cost of a seating shelter for the site would be researched.

It was **agreed** that Cllrs. Nequest, Ripley Dunn and Andrew Dunn would undertake the planning and costing of the proposed event and obtain potential numbers - with the information being shared with Members as soon as possible. Members felt that social events should become part of the PC's calendar.

The Parish Clerk is to submit a Planning Application for the proposed storage container.

It was **agreed** that the wooden walkway for the site would form part of the 2024/25 Project Plan, and that this will be costed, prior to the setting of the next budget in November.

The Meeting Closed at 19.20 hrs.

