**Bere Ferrers Parish Council**

At a meeting of the Bere Ferrers Parish Council held in Council Chambers, Bere Alston on Tuesday 12th December 2017.

Present

 Cllr. R. Leithall Chairman of Council

 Cllr. H. Boot-Handford Cllr. M. Page-Bailey

 Cllr. D.M.A. Chapman Cllr. D. Pengelly

 Cllr. S. Hanson Cllr. H. Rogers

 Cllr. R. Maycock Cllr. E. Wager

1503. **Apologies.**

Apologies were received from Cllr. Dennis due to business, Cllr. Lamb and Cllr. Reed due to prior engagement.

1504. **Chairman’s Report.**

**Bere Alston Victorian Evening**

Cllr. Ralph Maycock, Mrs Mary Taylor and I attended the festive Victorian Evening organised by the Bere Alston Carnival Committee in support of the Carnival Queen and special guest Mr. Nick Henderson from local estate agent Mansbridge & Balment Ltd who judged the Christmas Window displays and best dressed Victorian. There were many attractions and the evening was well attended.

**Southern Links Meeting, Tavistock 30th-Nov-2017**

Cllrs. Brian Lamb, Mark Page Bailey and I attended the Southern Links Meeting Dec 30th November 2017 held at Tavistock. A full report will be given later in this meeting, a highlight of which was

our two TAP fund grant applications which were both approved. These were for a contribution towards the cost of some refurbishment of Sarah Park children’s play park equipment submitted on behalf of BARP, and for a contribution towards the cost of renewing Parish notice boards in Bere Alston and Bere Ferrers.

**Superlinks Meeting 11th-Dec-2017**

Cllr. Mark Page Bailey and I attended the Devon Superlinks Meeting held at Meldon Village Hall on 11th December 2017. A full report will be given later in this meeting.

**Reminder Council Office closed over Xmas**

1505. **Notification of items for information at the discretion of the Chairman. No action can be taken**

 **on these items.**

1. Cllr. Hanson – reported that footpath 51 is back in full working order.

2. The Chairman – reported that it is Mrs. Kathleen Webber’s 102nd birthday this Saturday, could any

 Councillor deliver the card and flowers as he would be away. Cllr. Wager offered to

 deliver them.

1506. **To approve the minutes of Full Council held on 28th November as a true record and taken as**

 **read.**

Cllr. Leithall proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Boot-Handford.

Matters Arising

Minute 1478 (1429) – the Clerk reported SWW have taken responsibility for these manhole covers and will

 be painting them with non-slip paint.

Minute 1481 (1469) – Mrs. Cole, Clerk to Gulworthy Parish Council, has confirmed that they owe us £808.

**SO RESOLVED**

1507. **To approve and adopt the Plans minutes held on Tuesday 75th December and taken as read, to**

 **deal with matters arising.**

Cllr. Maycock proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Page-Bailey.

Matters Arising.

Minute 1485 – Application 40438/17/OPA for erection of two dwellings at 8 Drakes Park.

The Chairman welcomed Mrs. Debbie Harrison who wished to speak on this application.

The closing date is 28th December the residents were not notified until Wednesday, there has been nothing in the Tavistock Times and Council has made their decision on Tuesday 5th December.

It is understood there are to be two 3 bed properties, whereas the ones below are two bed properties. Traffic is already a nightmare, people have to park on Station Road which has now become a single lane road. It is becoming so congested and these new properties have only got parking for 1 car each, and as we all know most families have at least 2 cars.

There has been a previous planning application for 1 house which was refused.

 This bank has always been cut by Devon County, so who does it belong too.

Cllr. Leithall recommended that this application be looked at again at the next planning meeting on 9th January. Clerk to contact West Devon Planning to withdraw our comments. Planning committee to look at timings for our comments.

Cllr. Maycock proposed adoption of these minutes with the exception of minute 1485 planning application 4043/17/OPA, seconded by Cllr. Chapman.

**SO RESOLVED**

1508. **To approve and adopt the F&GP minutes held on Tuesday 5th December and taken as read, to**

 **deal with matters arising.**

Cllr. Boot-Handford proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Page-Bailey.

Matters Arising

Minute 1471 – Defibrillator three monthly check by Mrs. King, has been done.

Minute 1469- Cllr. Pengelly asked about timing with regards the deadline for using the TAP grant.

Minute 1501 (4) – Reported bad language at a BAUFC match.

Discussions took place, it was agreed a letter be sent to the league reporting this kind of behaviour. Also a copy of reply from BAUFC to be sent with the complaint.

**SO RESOLVED**

1509. **Internal Audit carried out by Cllr. Boot Handford and Cllr. Pengelly.**

Cllr. Boot Handford reported that check A on the Guide Lines for Internal Audit was carried out (cheque trail). All was fine.

1510. **Correspondence.**

1) WDBC – Cyber Crime – Protect Yourself and Your Business this Christmas.

2) WDBC – Provision of sandbags and sand. In order for me to adopt a proactive approach could I ask you

 to let me know the following;

-          What provision of bags and sand you currently have within your parish?

-          Whether you require some immediate provisions, and if so in what capacity?

-          Confirmation as to the dedicated Parish address where deliveries, particularly sand, will need to be made during the winter months.

-          Contact details of the person who will receive any deliveries.

As we move through the winter months I will be the main point of contact for any additional provisions.

As always, there is some very useful information in regard to flooding and flood preparation available on the EA’s website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood/find-out-if-youre-at-risk>

3) Mark Hopwood Great Western Railway Upgrade Plan.

A very quick note to let you know that all is in place for both the work needed on the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) and on the commissioning of the overhead electric lines from Didcot to Paddington.

This will mean we can bring in more new trains, cascading others to areas where they are needed.  It will also mean some significant timetable changes, albeit that the major timetable change will come in January 2019 when all the new InterCity Express Trains are in service.

There is a lot of work taking place over the Christmas break.  We have worked closely with Network Rail to make sure plans are robust, but if there are issues we have contingency plans in place, and we will alert you should we need to activate any.

If you have any questions or queries about the progress of works, the new timetable or any other GWR matter over the break, Caroline Cummins, our Public Affairs Manager, will be available on 27 December on Caroline.Cummins@gwr.com, with Jane Jones, Head of Public Affairs, covering 28 December through to 2 January on Jane.Jones@gwr.com and Toby Elliott, Senior Public Affairs Manager at Network Rail is available on Toby.Elliott@networkrail.co.uk

The work Network Rail are now undertaking will make a tremendous difference to the quality of service we offer our customers and 2018 will be a further year of delivery.

Thank you for all your support over this last year, and I wish you all the very best for the season.

4) Devon County Council – Connectme – Stay Warm this Winter.

1511. **Report by Cllr. Leithall on Southern Links – Super Links Meeting.**

Southern Link Meeting.

Cllrs. Brian Lamb, Mark Page Bailey and I attended the Southern Links Meeting Dec 30th November 2017 held at Tavistock.

Matter arising previous minutes

The new TAP rules & guidance have been drafted, but not available yet.

Policing Issues

No police representative present, but Sgt Pennie Channing had provided Crime figures circulated to members before the meeting

DCC Highways

John Fewings was scheduled to cover DCC Highways matters, but had to cancel at short notice.

WDBC Update

John Fewings was scheduled to cove this, but stand-in was Richard Easter, the Locality Officer’s Team Leader for West Devon & South Hams. His team comprises:-

2x Engagement Officers

4x Mobile Officers – WDBC’s “Eyes and Ears” dealing with Fly tipping; Dog Patrol; Notices, Private Waste Testing etc.

Joint Local Plan: Contains overall Planning Strategy and new build house numbers, was submitted and Examination meeting scheduled at several venues in January and February. If the Plan is found to be sound, then likely to be adopted in Summer 2018.

Waste Collection/Disposal Procurement: Current contract expires by April 2019 so WDBC & South Hams are pursuing a competitive tendering process starting with a Competitive Dialogue phase. Whereas WDBC have already contracted out this service, South Hams operate in house scheme and they will be invited to tender. Likely to be a 7 year contract.

Food Waste Recycling: Food waste can be a source of energy used in a biomass process as it rots to create power and leaves compost that can go back on the land, and is currently producing enough energy to power around 268 homes, but could power up to 400 homes if all food waste was recycled. It is estimated that up to 20% of contents in general “black bags” refuse is still food waste. Therefore, everyone must be encouraged to separate food waste from general refuse. If food waste is left in general refuse in costs additional money to incinerate.

TAP Fund

The TAP fund applications were approved. This included Bere Ferrers Parish Council’s requests for a contribution towards the cost of some refurbishment of Sarah Park children’s play park equipment (£2,500 grant towards total cost of £3,000) submitted on behalf of BARP, and for a contribution (£1,300 grant towards total cost of £2,300) towards the cost of renewing Parish notice boards in Bere Alston and Bere Ferrers.

Lifton Parish Council’s request for £2,520 for weed clearance and other clean-up work was given conditional approval. As a first preference an application to the Highway Enhancement Fund must first be made, and only if this is refused would TAP funding be agreed.

NOTE: The Highways Enhancement Fund is potentially available for work requests that Devon County Highways will not undertake

The Chairman requested that if any Town or Parish Councils have TAP funding grants approved, but they now know that not all the money will be required then please notify Southern Links.

Other Matters

Over Xmas break consider whether these meetings fulfil our expectation and needs

Is Southern Links Town & Parish Council’s membership too big?

* Actually, meeting Terms of reference are about communication up and down from Parish Councils to West Devon Borough and Devon County Council

**Devon Superlinks Meeting held 11th December 2017**

Venue: Meldon Village Hall

Bere Ferrers Parish were represented by Cllrs Mark Page-Bailey and myself

Over the next 3 years Devon County needs to find savings of £66m. Explaining this a short video was shown, which is also publicly available and about “The Devon Budget Challenge” on-line at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=14UyGmjfgsU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14UyGmjfgsU)

Speakers were:

* John Hart: Leader of Devon County Council
* Philip Sanders: Leader of West Devon Borough Council
* Steve Jorden: Executive Director - Strategy and Commissioning and Head of Paid Service
* Sophie Hosking: Executive Director - Service Delivery and Commercial Development

Philip Sanders commentated that this may have been one of the poorest turn-outs of Town and Parish Councillors who were almost outnumbered by West Devon Councillors present, although it was noted that the dire cold weather forecast was a factor.

 Steve Jordon Executive Director is leaving middle of February, but there are no plans to recruit a replacement at the moment. Sophie Hosking was present at the meeting and she will take over some of his responsibilities.

Notes from talk by John Hart

Over the past 6 years Devon County has had to save £206m, nearly a third of Devon’s total budget. Despite the cost savings already made that includes cutting the workforce from 9,000 to 3,500 Devon County is still facing funding shortfall, and so is concentrating on what really matters to people, which are:-

* Keeping children safe
* Caring for the sick, the old and vulnerable
* Keeping our major roads safe and in good order

By year 2020 local governments across England are facing a funding gap of £10.8m (equivalent to a 30% raise in Council Tax) because central government funding for County Councils has been reduced. Also, the method of funding is under change, and from year 2020 local people via the Council tax and local businesses via Business rates will be the source of funding.

Devon County Council is on track to save a further £22m this year, and has continued to look for ways to deliver better value for money public services, whilst also encouraging and facilitating more community self-help. Examples include self-help salting of minor roads, and the wider Road Warden Scheme with 40 parishes equipped and signed up with still more that have undertaken some training.

Due to changed ways of working Devon County have some surplus property which they will possibly sell off and the proceeds re-invested to provide better services.

**Education**: funding for 3 to 4 year olds improved. More and more of the secondary and larger primary schools have either achieved or planning to seek Academy status.

Currently, the Offsted ratings for Devon funded schools are on the average better that their Academy counterparts. It is to be noted that Academy Schools receive direct government funding, and are not the responsibility of Devon Council.

Devon in particular, as a rural county suffers one of the poorest funding levels per pupil from central government. John Hart and his Council continue to lobby for a fairer funding per pupil and there has been some improvement, but still a way to go to achieve parity with other counties.

**Roads**: Keeping main roads in good order by concentrating on the 20% of roads used by 80% of the people. Devon has its own road laboratory which does such things as monitoring the quality of road repairs made by the Utility companies that are sometimes sub-standard. Effort is being put into maintaining good drainage for designated roads to avoid early failure due to water ingress under the tarmac surface.

Additional road funding has been sought and won, but it is an ongoing struggle because Devon County has one of the most extensive networks of narrow roads that are unsuitable to withstand the stresses of modern large and heavy commercial and agricultural vehicles.

**Devon Unitary Authority**: There are eight district councils in Devon. John’s conclusion that it is impossible to get all these councils to agree to work together and move to one unitary authority even though this would provide savings for the provision of services through economy of scale.

**Bus transport subsidy**: There are around 170,000 people using the free bus pass that costs £4m per year, whilst Devon County also contribute another £5m to subsidise rural buses. So for example, if the elderly bus pass could be charged at £10/year this would raise £1.7m whilst still representing good value to the public.

All children between 5 and 16 qualify for free school transport if they go to their nearest suitable school and live at least:

* 2 miles from the school if they’re under 8
* 3 miles from the school if they’re older than 8 and not over 16 years old

In the past Devon has provided a more generous scheme, but this has become more difficult to justify.

Notes from talk by Philip Sanders

**West Devon & South Hams Cooperation**

As we all know there was the unexpected Councils’ vote where West Devon rejected merger whilst South Hams approved a merger of the two Borough Councils. The reasons why a majority of West Devon Councillors voted against the merger are probably varied and may be difficult to understand given the circumstances faced with a budget deficit.

Despite the decision, all white collar staff continue to work across both Councils, although South Hams have their own employees for refuse collection.

Many South Hams Councillors feel very let down by West Devon’s rejection of the proposed merger, and a few of them are still refusing to sit in meetings with West Devon Councillors present.

**West Devon budget deficit.**

For the coming financial year, the projected £700k overspend has already been reduced to £260k

In the recent past, WDBC have already made savings by for example:-

* Staff reductions facilitated by IT and new ways of working
* £300k savings by improved deal in contracting out Leisure Centres in Tavistock and Okehampton

However, due to ongoing reductions in Council funding and increasing service costs there is budget deficit that by law must be closed. No decisions have been made, but things under consideration include:-

* Refuse collection reduced to once every 3 or 4 weeks. Competitive dialogue is being opened with prospective waste collection and disposal service providers.
* Change from black plastic sacks to Wheelie Bins
* Smaller budget for community grants
* Borrowing money to purchase commercial property where the rental income yields a worthwhile profit

Nothing is sacred, except staffing levels, which have already been reduced to a bare minimum.

Steve Jorden added, that it is 2½ time more expensive to deliver services to the Devon rural population than it would be for a more urban area of the same population.

**Idea for Income from commercial property**: Ultimately may be looking at borrowing up to £75m, but initially only considering £25m to £35m. Even at this lower level unlikely a suitable property collection would be available in Devon that offers a high rental return with low risk tenants

**Staff pay rise**: Have budgeted for a 1% pay rise which is a £45k cost increase to West Devon. Union negotiations are underway looking for 5% or more rise.

Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan

This joint plan between Plymouth City Council, South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough has been submitted and is now open to Examination in January and February in the New Year.

It was pointed out that there are funds available from Highway Enhancement Fund.

It was also stated that should it snow any farmer being public spirited to help out with his tractor can use red diesel.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked members and members of the public for attending declared the meeting closed at 8.10pm.

Signed this 30th day of January 2018.

Chairman………………………………..