

East Down Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of East Down Parish Council held in the Village Hall on
Monday 18th September 2023 at 7.30 pm

Attendance: Cllrs M. Wright (Chairman), Mrs S Black, R Crocker, R Crossman, Mrs D Fry, Mrs J Kift.

- 1. Apologies for absence.** Cllr R Tarr, County Councillor A Davis
Also in attendance None
- 2. Declaration of interest/Dispensations** – There were none
- 3. Public participation.** There were no members of the public present

Part ‘A’

4. County/District Councillors’ Reports

County Councillor A Davis had apologised in advance for her absence but had forwarded her report.

- 5. Minutes of the Meetings of the open and confidential minutes held on the 21st August 2023, and the confidential minutes held on the 11th September 2023.**

RESOLVED to accept and sign

6. Matters arising from the minutes

The Chairman confirmed that Mr Keith Fletcher had accepted the position of Clerk and would attend the meeting to meet Councillors at 8.00pm. The Chairman had informed the other applicants. It was **RESOLVED** that the current Clerk would also attend the October meeting, and the Council approved the cost involved. It was also **RESOLVED** that North Devon Council, Devon County Council, and DALC be informed of the change of contact details.

7. Planning Applications

There were none

8. Financial statements of accounts for the year and to agree payments

Bank balances Sep 2023 Parish Council Account: £7146.86 and the Parish Paths Account: £1060.83

A Cheque was signed at the meeting for Clerks salary (£125.00)

9. Chairman’s items

Foul water issue (update)

Cllr Crossman updated the Council on the present position with this issue, the matter was still with the Environment Agency. Cllr Crossman spoke to the person who had conducted the survey but annual leave had prevented any further progress. **RESOLVED** to report again in October

Council Notice Board Ongoing **RESOLVED** Deferred to October for a further update

10. Correspondence

- County Councillors report
- Dalc bulletin
- Community Grant scheme
- Advance notice of National Trust presentation to the Council in November

Date for next meeting October 16th 2023 at 7.30 pm

Part 'B' (Confidential Restricted information)

The Chairman moved that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public are to be temporarily excluded and they be instructed to withdraw

Conduct of Council Business

The Chairman had circulated a procedure document prior to the meeting and invited Councillors comments. It was **RESOLVED** that the document, a copy of which is appended to these minutes, should be **APPROVED**.

Clerks Position

Mr Keith Fletcher had accepted the post of Clerk with effect from the following day, the 19th September 2023.

Members discussed the transition arrangements and it was **RESOLVED** that the existing clerks services be retained for one month to assist with the handover

The meeting closed at 7.52

East Down Parish Council Process for raising Issues

Issues should ideally be raised with the Chair in the meeting in which the issue arose. If appropriate an issue would then be discussed in the meeting it occurred, or if substantial / requiring consideration / external advice at the next meeting of the Council.

Issues arising or becoming apparent subsequent to a meeting should be described concisely in either a phone call or an email to the Chair, Vice Chair, or Clerk. A phone call where the issue is not resolved in the call would then be followed by an email formally describing the issue. Emails would be acknowledged as received and the issue would be addressed as an agenda item at the next meeting of the Council.

If urgent (i.e. the issue should be resolved before the next scheduled meeting of the Council), then an extraordinary meeting would be called if determined to be appropriate by the Chair. If not and the Councillor raising the issue felt it had to be resolved sooner, then the process for two Councillors to formally call an extraordinary meeting would be followed, as laid down in the Standing Orders.

The normal rules for email and telephone etiquette should be followed at all times, and using email to progress Council discussions have not proven to be helpful. The best and quickest way to reach a resolution is in a properly constituted face-to-face meetings with a quorate of Councillors present where issues are properly understood, debated, and a resolution agreed.

September 2023

Free Tree Scheme 2023/2024

This year, Devon County Council are offering free tree packs to landowners and communities within Devon, for the fifth consecutive year. Each free tree pack will contain 45 trees comprising three types of native broadleaved tree commonly found throughout Devon.

There are currently plenty of schemes and initiatives encouraging landowners and communities within Devon to plant native broadleaved trees. Doing so will help replace the vast number of ash trees that are now dying through ash dieback, as well as supporting wildlife, enhancing our landscapes for people to enjoy, and helping to reduce greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

Last year, Devon County Council gave away 150 packs of free trees to landowners across Devon, thanks to the Emergency Tree Fund.

Are you eligible?

If you have a field corner or another area where you would like to establish a small copse, linear woodland or extend an existing woodland, you can apply for a free tree pack. In previous years free packs of 45 saplings containing oak, birch and rowan trees have been supplied to eligible landowners. To give trees enough space to develop a good crown and grow to maturity, we advise planting at 3m random spacings, which requires an area of approximately 400m sq. (e.g. 20m x 20m) for 45 trees.

How to make an application:

To apply, please complete our online form by 27th of September 2023. This is the deadline that would enable tree packs to be delivered in time for you to plant in National Tree Week (25th of November – 3rd of December). Applications after this date would be subject to availability. You will be notified if you have been successful before the end of October 2023 and your tree pack will be dispatched to you on a date confirmed by the tree nursery we appoint.

If you are interested in the scheme, please do not delay applying. In previous years, the scheme has been extremely popular and highly oversubscribed.

Growing Communities fund

This DCC grant aims to help local groups and organisations become more resilient and help those in the communities cope with financial pressures. Groups that are encouraged to apply include those who bring communities together for meaningful activities and social interaction, offer people a warm, safe haven or alleviate food poverty. The aim is to build self reliance and resilience within a community.

You can complete and submit the grants application form online. For more information, please contact communitygrants@devon.gov.uk or telephoning 01392 383379.

Rural Give Way marking project

This project is aiming to remark all the rural Give-Way and Stop markings across the whole of the County. In addition to simply remarking them DCC are using a more robust product that will improve the life-expectancy and lead to a lower whole life cost and reduced carbon cost.

There are approximately 6,000 rural Give-Way markings that will be treated. For your information there is another 1,500 in our market and coastal towns. The project is estimated to take 4-5 years to complete.

Lining works to include:

To remove existing markings and refresh

- single dashed white lines
- double dashed white lines
- stop lines
- give way triangles
- up to 5 centre lines from the junction

Safety Defects

Following the extremely high numbers of publicly reported potholes across the network during the first part of the year, and the increase in repair gangs as a response, numbers have gradually stabilised through the spring and into the summer, however, remain above average for the time of year. This has meant that there is still some residual pressure on inspection teams in assessing backlogs. Evening and weekend working has remained in place in some areas to assist with this.

Work is underway to improve the messaging on the 'report a problem' webpages to reduce the number of defects that are incorrectly reported – since January this year this represents around 55% of all reports received.

Following a very challenging winter for asset condition and safety defects, the numbers recorded across the network had reduced sufficiently that Highway Safety Inspectors (HSI) were able to re-start the identification of non-safety or 'serviceability' defects in June. This process offers HSI's the discretion to record defects that do not meet investigatory criteria in our Highway Safety Policy.

The 'Elastomac' trials demonstrated at the Members event in Spring is continuing. The product is envisaged to provide a lower carbon and cost-effective means of repairing carriageway defects. The mastic product uses up to 70% recycled materials, including lorry tyres, that would otherwise be incinerated and, in the right scenarios, allows reactive works gangs to undertake repairs much more quickly when compared to conventional techniques.

Winter Service

Preparations for winter have been taking place over the summer, with the fleet of gritters receiving their annual servicing and calibration checks. Works to install solar panels on some of the salt barns have also been progressed and salt stocks are being replenished ahead of winter.

By keeping the age of the gritting vehicles under 10 years old maintenance costs are reduced and ensures the fleet is safe and appropriate for the task in hand. In preparation for this winter, 8 of our oldest/most costly gritters will be traded-in against 6 nearly new vehicles. This will reduce the secondary fleet from 12 vehicles down to 10, an appropriate balance of service resilience against financial pressures.

Gully Cleaning

Over 5,000 drainage issues identified by the gully cleaning crews and highway officers have been resolved since April. The challenge remains dealing with over 15,000 outstanding reported issues with funds available.

The ongoing trial to pre inspect gullies due to be cleaned on the cyclical programme has shown 49% of gullies inspected to date do not require cleaning. The aim of the trial is to ensure plant and equipment is being deployed where it is most effective.

A joint trial with Devon's Flood team to place gully sensors in selected streets in Devon is in the preparation stages. It is hoped this externally funded trial will offer insight into whether technology can be used to inform policy or reaction for cyclical gully cleaning. The trial intends to run for an 18-month period from the winter period.

Roadwarden Scheme

It is a formal agreement, between Devon County Council and a town or parish council, which enables them to deliver minor works in or around the public highway.

The Road Warden Scheme allows communities to:

- • organise minor works either on or off the live carriageway (see types of work below)
- • carry out minor works either on the live carriageway or away from the live carriageway.

- • Pothole repairs (when they do not meet our intervention criteria).
- • Clearing weeds.
- • Cleaning signs.
- • Cleaning drainage (gully grating).
- • Cutting grass.
- • Repairing finger posts.
- • Cutting hedges.
- • Set up a road closure for special events.
- • Managing verges for wildlife

All works must be discussed, in the first instance, with the local highway neighbourhood officer. This list is not exhaustive. Work must be undertaken in line with guidance (method statements) provided by Devon County Council. Please see the 'Details' tab for guidance documents.

Road Wardens would not be responsible for carrying out safety repairs as this remains the responsibility of the council.

A Road Warden should:

- • be nominated as suitable by the town or parish council
- • be the communication link between DCC and the parish council
- • agree to work within the arrangements set forward by the Road Warden agreement
- • co-ordinate any minor works which are undertaken within the parish or town
- • ensure that risk assessments are undertaken and are easily accessible upon DCC request.

A Road Warden volunteer should:

- • be nominated as suitable by the town or parish council or similar body
- • have received suitable training to carry out minor works
- • agree to work within the arrangements set forward by the Road Warden.

In my parishes who have joined the scheme it is proving to be very popular and useful. Parishes can apply for funding for equipment etc. I would be very pleased to support any application from the Parish.

Snow Wardens

Gentle reminder to order any salt you need, the colder weather will soon be upon us. You may need to update contact details if there has been any change in who your snow warden is, with an election earlier this year I am aware we may have forgotten to talk about this during the summer.

Grit bins should be filled but if you would check just in case that would be really helpful, if they need filling the link is below;

Grit Bins map – Road and Transport (devon.gov.uk)

Reminder of how to report a Highway issue;

Report a problem - Roads and transport (devon.gov.uk)

0345 155 1004 Live chat is available on the Highways website Monday to Friday 9.30 am to 12 pm and 2 pm to 4.30 pm (4 pm on Fridays). To report a problem with road maintenance, traffic management and parking, streetlights and signs and public rights of way

Andrea Davis

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