

LITTON CHENEY PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of the meeting of Litton Cheney Parish Council
held on Tuesday 8 January 2019 at Litton and Thorner's Community Hall

Present: Bill Orchard (Chairman); Kathryn Brooks; John Firrell; Andy King; Tessa Mulhall; Steve Kourik; Maggie Walsh (Clerk). Also in attendance: Cllr John Russell; Cllr Mark Roberts and 8 local residents.

1. **Apologies:** Bella Spurrier; Cllr Keith Day
2. **Declarations of interest:** none
3. **Democratic time** the following issues were raised:
 - Q. Could the allotment public liability insurance be included in the Parish Council's policy as the current premium of £77 accounted for most of the allotment subs?
 - R. The PC had previously undertaken some research on this but agreed to look at it again. It may be worth contacting Loders and Puncknowle PCs to share their experience. **MW**
 - Q. The allotment was flooding as the stream was beyond the site. James Williams kindly offered to look at it.
 - Q. The base of the new fence was not pegged down and rabbits were still getting in. The cost of the fencing was disproportionate with only 3 plots being cultivated
 - R. Nine plots were being cultivated and the base would shortly be pegged down.
 - Q. Rabbits had made the football pitch unusable. Why were the full-size goal posts to be removed? Children who used the field would prefer full sized goals with nets.
 - R. Minutes of the last meeting reflected that the full-size goal posts needed to be removed as they were loose and therefore unsafe but that they would be replaced if required – if any children/villagers wish to use full sized goal posts please would they contact the Parish Council?
4. **Approval of Minutes of Parish Council meeting held on 13 November 2018** - it was proposed by Cllr Firrell, seconded by Cllr Kourik and carried unanimously that the minutes be approved.
5. **Matters arising from previous meeting not covered at this meeting:** None
6. **DCC/WDDC overview** – Work continued behind the scenes to form the new unitary authority: a snap election would not affect the process. Several senior appointments had been made and a number of senior officers were leaving. It seemed likely the new authority would start with a substantial deficit of around £15m. The boundaries and candidate selection were becoming clearer. The newly elected council would decide when the Local Plans should be combined.
7. **Finance report** (Maggie Walsh, Clerk and RFO) - The finance report had been circulated with the agenda. Parish funds currently stood at £11,876.89. Approved spend since November's meeting was £3,749.19 comprising £565.99 clerk's salary; £937.20 for grass cutting; £6 hall hire; £500 donation for cemetery and £1,740 for allotment fencing. Income since November's meeting was 21p interest.

There was one invoice of £74.81 for clerk's expenses for approval. It was proposed by Cllr Firrell, seconded by Cllr Brooks and carried unanimously that this be approved.

2019-2020 Precept A copy of the RFO's precept report was published with the agenda and is appended to these minutes. MW clarified that VAT was included in the current year so figures were comparable to the finance report but was omitted from next year's projected figures as expenditure and income netted back to zero. Where VAT income and expenditure differed, this was because it was not always recovered in the same financial year. The PC had allocated reserves to cover election costs.

Cllr Orchard proposed that the precept be frozen at £10,600 for 2019 to 2020, as per MW's recommendation. This was seconded by Cllr Firrell and carried unanimously. **MW**

8. Councillors' portfolios:

Highways/Transport (Bill Orchard): works to the collapsed stream opposite Tithe Barn potentially required permission from the Environment Agency (EA) and County Highways. The EA did not support the suggestion made at the previous meeting for paving the bottom of the stream. However, it appeared the PC were permitted to remove silt and stones from the bottom and reinforce the edge of the stream up to a height of 75mm above road level. He planned to consult a local builder and the lengthsman team to ascertain options and costs and would report back to the PC for approval. Whilst the PC were willing to consider funding these repairs, there was a risk the damage could recur, in which case the PC may require the farmer to pay future repair costs or recover them from sub-contractors. The damage was caused by large sub-contractor vehicles having to make a wide turn into the access when parked cars restricted the bellmouth. The PC would therefore consider painting white lines at the bellmouth to try to discourage parking. Cllr Roberts said that DCC Highways might be able to mark white lines as it did not require a traffic order. The bank at the junction of School Lane and Hines Mead Lane had been damaged by a large vehicle: although the mess had been cleared the bank had been undermined and might collapse. Work had been completed at the BT chamber and appeared to have been successful.

Playground/Playing Field/Allotments (Andy King): the hedges alongside the access to the playing field/allotments had been cut: the widened access meant there was potential for wide vehicles to damage the stream bank. Allotments had been discussed in democratic time and AK had nothing further to add.

Footpaths/Rights of Way/Mobile Phone Mast (Steve Kourik): the Chalk Pit lane bridleway had been blocked at the southern end for some time. SK had chased this up and it was down as "under investigation". Please advise SK of any finger posts requiring attention. Water drainage on the Rocks had improved following recent works. Frequent rodding and sweeping also seemed to be helping. DCC still needed to remove overhanging greenery. The purpose of the new bracket that had appeared on the mobile phone mast was still a mystery.

Planning (Kathryn Brooks):

- Land adjacent to Four Meads Farm since the last meeting, a retrospective application (WD/D/18/002711) for retention of the agricultural barn had been submitted (alternative scheme to planning approval WD/D/16/001006). Parish Councillors had discussed this application via an exchange of emails and had reiterated concerns. The new application was undecided.
- Charity Farm – erection of agricultural building – prior approval (WD/D/18/001183): a full planning application was required but had not yet been submitted. This was now with the enforcement team.
- Charity Farm – erection of 6 dwellings (WD/D/17/00758): no further update since November's meeting when KB reported that the S106 agreement was ready to be signed.
- Parks Farm Cheese Dairy – effluent lake (WD/D/17/002317): no progress
- Land west of Tithe Barn House – erect new dwelling and garage (WD/D/18/001959): the agent had submitted a rebuttal of the PC comments. The case officer hoped to make a decision in the next few weeks.
- The Mill House, Main Street - erection of extension and alterations and construction of a new bridge and vehicular access. (WD/D/18/002298 (Full) and WD/D/18/002299 (Listed Building)): KB had been unable to obtain an update from the case officer.

Risk Assessment/Transparency Code/Annual Report (Tessa Mulhall): TM would report at next meeting on the annual review of PC policies. She would also look at the playing field to assess any risk and report back to the next meeting.

Village Fabric/Maintenance/Devolved Services (John Firrell): he was about to put together a new list for the Premier Crew/lengthsman. JF and a group of villagers had been looking at the installation of an information board. Improvements had already been made to the Triangle and Dorset AONB had redone the signs. However, this area, which was effectively the centre of the village, could be further improved. The PC had also previously highlighted that BT were likely to decommission the phone box now the village had mobile phone coverage and that the village would be have the option to retain the box for alternative purposes: he had placed an item on the village website asking for ideas. He intended to set up a discussion group to formulate ideas for the area around the bus stop/Triangle. He would involve as many villagers as possible, including the school, with a view of a bringing a proposal to the PC possibly following the Village Assembly in May. Improvements might be funded from S106 funds or other donations. His hope was that, by the autumn, the village would have a focal point to be proud of. JF was also aware that the village noticeboards needed replacing.

Agricultural Liaison (Bella Spurrier): no report provided.

9. **Correspondence not dealt with as part of the agenda** – none
10. **New planning applications for consideration at the meeting** none
11. **Date of next meeting** – Tuesday 12 March 2019 – apologies Tessa Mulhall
12. **Meeting closed**

Maggie Walsh - Parish Clerk

Summary and Recommendation

Forecasts suggest that the previous two years' significant increases in precept were correctly pitched: the current precept of £10,600 remains appropriate for 2019-2020 and there will be adequate reserves to cover any irregular expenditure.

The Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) therefore recommends that the PRECEPT BE FROZEN AT £10,600 FOR 2019-2020. This equates to approximately £52.21 per Band D household.

It should however be noted that, given current uncertainties over the impact of local government reorganisation, the PC may need to consider appropriate increases in subsequent years.

Detailed consideration

Table 1 below sets out actual expenditure for the previous 2 financial years, estimated outturn for the current year and forecast expenditure for next year. An underspend of approximately £900 is anticipated at the end of the current year – this is primarily because the lengthsman scheme will not have been in place for the full year and also because the Litton Cheney Trust kindly refunded the cost of the bus shelter roof repairs.

Allowance has been made in the 2019-2020 budget for modest inflationary increases. VAT is excluded as income cancels out expenditure (unless occurring in separate financial years).

Table 1

Outturn	2016-17 Actual	2017-18 Actual	2018-19 estimated	2019-20 estimated
Income				
Precept & grant	£3,649	£7,225	£10,600	£10,600
Allotment fees	£100	£85	£125	£125
Donation from Litton Cheney Trust			£420	
VAT	£279		£3,790	
Total income	£4,028	£7,310	£14,935	£10,725
Expenditure				
Employee costs	£692	£2,152	£3,400	£3,500
Room hire	£70	£65	£70	£70
Admin	£726	£690	£1,050	£1,100
Maintenance/village fabric/lengthsman scheme	£1,147	£1,389	£3,680	£4,100
Donations	£725	£700	£725	£725
The Rocks		£420	£450	
Other	£341			
VAT	£207	£328	£3,463	
Total expenditure	£3,908	£5,744	£12,838	£9,495
Balance of Income over expenditure	£120	£1,566	£2,097	£1,230
Contribution to ringfenced reserves			£1,200	£1,200
Surplus of income over expenditure			£897	£30

The significant increase in precept for the last two years anticipated, in part, unknown pressures from local government reorganisation and services devolving to parish councils. At its meeting in November, the RFO explained the background to reserves and the Parish Council agreed to vire funds from general reserves into ringfenced reserves. The local government reorganisation/devolution of services reserve now holds £2,000 and, whilst the implications of the reorganisation are still not known, this amount is felt to be sufficient to fund any transition over the next few years. However, the RFO recommends an ongoing annual contribution of £1,200 to other ringfenced reserves: this amount is based on historic and anticipated pressures. Reserve balances are set out in Table 2.

Table 2

RESERVES				
Year end balance	£5,558	£18,557	£9,180	£10,410
Reserves C/F split as follows				
General funds		£18,557	£5,380	£5,410
Local government reorganisation/devolution			£2,000	£2,000
Playground equipment			£200	£600
Village fabric/maintenance			£600	£1,000
Equipment (e.g. Defibrillator, I.T.)			£700	£900
Election costs			£300	£500

Options considered

1. REDUCE precept – savings could be made by reducing or abolishing donations or contributions to reserves. The PC feels it is important to support organisations that benefit villagers and the level of donations budgeted equates to approximately £3.50 per band D household per year. The proposed £1,200 annual contribution to reserves is evidence based and reducing it would leave the PC vulnerable to having insufficient funds to carry out repairs or fund replacements.
2. FREEZE precept for one year – this is the recommended option.
3. INCREASE precept – option 2 budgets for all known costs and maintains adequate reserves. There is no justification for any increase next financial year.