

## Minutes of Yarnscombe Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 26 January 2022

Present: Cllrs. Brice (chair), Cooke, Cllr. Clarke (Torridge District Council / TDC), Jeffery, Pengilley (via Jitsi), Williams and M. Dymond (Clerk)

### 22.1 Apologies, Declarations of Interests and Dispensations

Apologies had been received and accepted from Cllrs. Farr, Newberry, Lock (Torridge District Council / TDC), Saywell (Devon County Council / DCC). There were no declarations of interest and no requests for dispensations had been received.

### 22.2 Public Participation and Feedback

It was brought to the council's attention that the recycling truck had lost rubbish / left it behind (especially noted at Langley Cross). This had happened more than once and Cllr. Clarke (TDC) had heard similar complaints from other parishes.

**Actions taken:** Cllr. Clarke will contact relevant department and report back.

### 22.3 Representatives Reports

#### 1) County/District Councillors

**County** — I am sorry I cannot be with you tonight, I am attending Winkleigh Parish Council. If it is not too late can I wish everyone on the Parish Council a Happy New Year!

Overall, it was quiet over the Christmas period but it is busy again now as we have started setting the budget for the next financial year. The main updates from DCC:

**Covid** — Covid rates had been falling throughout Devon. However, they have started to increase again, mainly driven by the surge of infections in the 0–19 year olds, mostly school age children, and we have seen several Covid outbreaks in primary schools. Rates are still going up in all districts including Torridge (868 per 100,000), which is just below the England average (988). Cases are still highest in younger age groups (primary and secondary schools) and going up in this age group and working adults 20 to 59 years. Hospital rates overall within Devon have gone up to 257 patients, although North Devon remains fairly static at 10 patients, and across all of Devon just 3 people are in Intensive Care Units (ICU), none in North Devon, which is good news and seems to bear out the findings that the Omicron variant is more mild. The key public health messages remain the same: get vaccinated, lateral flow test regularly, hands/face/space. The good news is that the booster jab rollout has gone well in Devon. Around 85% of eligible people in Devon have had a booster. And 93% of people aged 12 and above have had at least one dose. Regarding testing, there is now a change in policy: if you have no symptoms and test positive via a lateral flow test, you need to isolate, you do not get a PCR any more. If you test negative on day 6 and 7 you no longer need to isolate. If you do have symptoms, then you need to isolate and get a PCR test.

#### *Non-Covid Matters*

**Budget Preparations** — Budget setting has begun at DCC. There will be an uplift in overall funding for Children's and Adult Social Care services, along with a small increase for Highways, but it is likely to be a tight budget overall. Draft budgets are now being presented to the Council's Scrutiny Committee before final approval by Full Council in February.

**Torrington Work Hub** — The new Work Hub in Torrington is now operational with a soft opening with people using the space for the next few weeks to give feedback on what works best and what will need improving. The Omicron wave and 'Plan B' has seen the official opening postponed but despite the immediate challenges with Covid, I believe this will be a great asset for the town and the wider rural area and I am delighted this project has come to fruition.

**Free school meal vouchers doubled for Christmas** — DCC doubled the value of supermarket vouchers for families with children on free school meals from £15 a week to £30 a week for Christmas holidays. Families received £60 voucher per child for the two weeks to help with the additional financial pressures the festive period can bring.

Appreciative Inquiry into Adult Social Care and support for staff — DCC held a unique event celebrating the Adult Social Care sector when it held a conference that brought together leading national and local figures with care workers and providers to discuss adult social care. The inquiry is being held to celebrate the incredible work being done by the 30,000 care workers in Devon who support vulnerable people and promote their independence on a daily basis. But it also aims to raise awareness of acute challenges now faced by the industry and identify recommendations that will help secure and improve its future, and realise its full potential. I look forward to reading the inquiry's findings in due course. Also on Adult Social Care, over Christmas there was further support given by DCC to staff and carers working in Adult Social Care, with £3m for domiciliary staff and £5.3m to help support independent sector residential and nursing care workers. The funding comes from the Government, and NHS Devon has also contributed to the one-off funding package.

Launch of Devon's £9.3m Community Renewal Programme — As previously reported, DCC was successful in securing this funding from the Government, with the funding supporting 13 innovative projects over the next six months including a range of employment and training, environmental and community investment across Devon through to mid 2022. Projects supported include:

- £1.35m awarded to the Biosphere Foundation to take forward a mixed programme of economic and environmental development activity, seeking to build upon opportunities across Northern Devon's unique marine and rural environment to generate sustainable jobs, industries and investment.
- £1m awarded to Petroc College for two programmes of activity: promoting business innovation and development through new digital technologies; and taking forward additional youth and community activity across Northern Devon, with a focus on working with those harder to reach in rural and coastal communities.
- £2.76m awarded to DCC for four projects, including grant activity to support diversification in the agricultural sector, support for the development of digital skills among harder to reach communities, a delegated grant programme to support business innovation among small businesses in Devon, and additional support to assist those with a disability to access employment.

Open Up to Skills initiative launched — A new initiative is being launched to provide training opportunities for people working in Devon's catering, hospitality, leisure, retail and tourism sectors. The "Open Up To Skills" project will support 700 additional training places to improve workforce skills and will also benefit businesses within these sectors as part of DCC's economic recovery response to the coronavirus pandemic. More information online here: "Open Up To Skills" initiative launched — news ([devon.gov.uk](https://www.devon.gov.uk)).

I hope this update is useful. As ever, if there is anything you need me to look into locally please get in touch.

#### **District**

Cllr. Clarke pointed out that Omicron had affected the hospitality industry in Devon, but over the last month her main focus had been on housing. TDC is working in partnership with housing associations to see what land TDC owns that would be suitable for housing. At present, 50 families are in emergency/temporary housing; by the end of March permanent housing will need to be found for them. In order to achieve this it would be possible that TDC contacts private landlords, takes on the tenancy, secures the rent and ensures that at end of tenancy the condition of the house/flat is acceptable. Cllr. Brice raised the possibility of accommodation barges with their power supply, water, sewage system and engineer on board. Cllr. Clarke explained that in the coming weeks two Afghan families will be housed in Appledore and Bideford respectively. She assured councillors that councils are starting to clamp down on second home / holiday home owners who by declaring it a business which earns under £15,000/year avoid paying rates. Cllr Clarke also pointed out most new planning developments don't offer enough affordable houses. She will attend and report back from Northern Devon Planning Meeting (28/01/2022). Councillors also raised the issue of how the Enforcement Team at TDC could be more efficient. Cllr. Clarke will look into it.

**Actions taken:** Cllr. Clarke to report back on issues raised.

2) Village Hall / Social Club — several committee members had resigned, new contact for now is Michael Avery.

3) Youth Club — none

- 4) PCSO/Police Report — will circulate once received
- 5) Playing Field  
Chippings for playing field gateway and installation of new gate — in process  
**Actions taken:** Cllr. Cooke to report back next month.
- 6) Snow Warden — None

#### 22.4 Minutes from Meeting of 15 December 2021

Minutes were signed off and approved as a true record.

#### 22.5 Matters arising from last Meeting

None

#### 22.6 New Matters

None

#### 22.7 PROW Monthly Report

Financial report — P3 financial forms for previous years have to be returned by 14 February. There had been no P3 expenditure this year.

**Actions taken:** Clerk to fill in and send off form.

#### 22.8 Planning

1/1433/2021/FUL, change of use of land and erection of equine stables and hay store for private use, land adjacent to Northchurch Farm, Yarnscombe, EX31 3LW — councillors had no objections regarding this application.

**Actions taken:** Clerk to forward comments to planning department.

#### 22.9 Additional Planning

None

#### 22.10 Accounts

Cash book entries October 2021 to December 2021 and bank reconciliation

**Actions taken:** To be put on next agenda, as bank statement had not arrived on time.

Meeting closed 8.15pm.

3rd February 2022