

Alwington Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at Alwington Village Hall on 7 November 2023, commencing at 7.30 pm.

Present: Cllrs Gordon Lester (Chair), Elaine Beresford, Alison Browning, Chris Moore and Neil Rothney.

In attendance: Michael Olley (Parish Clerk) and two members of the public.

1. Min. 32:23/24 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Adams. The Chair reported that Sarah Bourke had given him her resignation as a Councillor, with immediate effect. He suggested that the Council formally record its thanks for the considerable work she had undertaken as a member of the Council. Proposed by Cllr Beresford, seconded by Cllr Rothney.

2. Min. 33:23/24 Declarations of Interests

No declarations were received in respect of personal or prejudicial interests.

3. Min. 34:23/24 Minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the meeting on 5 September 2023 were approved as a true record of the meeting; proposed by Cllr Browning, and seconded by Cllr Beresford.

4. Min. 35:23/24 Correspondence and Communication

a) Correspondence

Various bulletins and correspondence from Devon Association of Local Councils, Devon County Council (DCC), Torrington District Council (TDC), Devon Climate Emergency, Electrical Safety First, Zero Hour, Devon Communities Together and PCSO Liz Rendle were noted.

Correspondence was also received from Geoffrey Cox KC MP. The roads petition calling for HM Government to reallocate funds to DCC to facilitate a comprehensive scheme of road improvements available was discussed. It was agreed to add a notice to the Parish website and to make the petition available at suitable events within the Parish.

With regard to the priorities for the Levelling-Up Partnership, the rejuvenation of Bideford, Northam, Torrington and Holsworthy town centres with a town centre improvement scheme and special retail zones was agreed as a top priority. The restoration of the Bideford-Barnstaple railway lines was seen as second priority with the creation of a Bideford Maritime Heritage area, including historic ships and a Maritime Heritage Centre as a third priority. The Council agreed that the delivery of the Appledore Clean Maritime Centre should also be suggested as a project for consideration.

Geoffrey Cox had also requested feedback on the performance of Royal Mail letter post and broadband provision. The Council agreed that a daily mail service was not being delivered within the Parish by Royal Mail. They also agreed that the roll out of fibre broadband by Airband was unsatisfactory.

ACTION: The Clerk to respond to Geoffrey Cox KC MP with the views of the Council, including any responses to the roads petition.

ACTION: The Clerk to write to the Chair at Connecting Devon and Somerset with detail on the failings of the rollout of fibre broadband within the Parish by Airband, referencing the response given to Geoffrey Cox KC MP on this, copying the correspondence to Cllr Wilton-Love.

b) County/District Council Reports

No reports were given.

c) Use of Ionos for council email and website services

No problems were reported by Cllrs following the switch to Ionos for Council email use and website domain services. The Chair thanked Cllr Beresford for the work she had undertaken to make the switch happen. It was agreed that, due to practical constraints, the website itself would continue to be provided by Squarespace.

PUBLIC SESSION

One member of the public gave a short presentation on the Torridge Growing Together project and asked for the Council's assistance to make more Parishioners aware of the project, what it aimed to achieve and how they could help. Feedback was given on ways to achieve a greater awareness.

5. Min. 36:23/24 Financial Matters

a) To receive an update on the current financial position

As at 30 October the total in the Alwington Parish Council bank account was £15,023.73. As agreed at the last meeting payments were made to the Chair £13.70, Neil Beresford £707.56, TDC salary recharge £1390.08 and the first monthly instalment of the contract with Ionos (1&1 Internet Ltd) of £16.20.

b) To receive any accounts to pay

Approval was sought for a donation of £50 to the Royal British Legion and payment of an interim invoice for works undertaken on the Bus Stop repairs. The payments were approved, proposed by Cllr Rothney, seconded by Cllr Beresford.

c) To note any income received

A settlement payment was received from the Council's insurers (Zurich Insurance) of £3789.38 for repairs to the bus stop signs. The second precept payment was also received from TDC for £2540.

d) To note any other financial matters arising and to consider any small grant applications received

A small grant application received from Alwington Residents Association was discussed. Payment, subject to the association supplying a copy of their accounts, was proposed by Cllr Rothney, seconded by Cllr Beresford.

Following agreement by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services on a 2023/24 pay award the Clerk's salary was discussed.

The Clerk left the room for this discussion.

It was agreed the Clerk would be paid at SCP 20 rate of £15.75 per hour, backdated to the 1 April 2023.

ACTION: Chair to write to TDC to implement the change to the Clerk's salary.

e) To review and approve the Fixed Asset Register

The updated Fixed Asset Register was approved. Proposed by Cllr Beresford, seconded by Cllr Browning.

f) To consider and approve the use of a debit card on behalf of the Council by the Parish Clerk

The use of a debit card by the Clerk and/or Chair, up to a limit of £250, was approved. Proposed by Cllr Beresford, seconded by Cllr Rothney.

6. Min. 37:23/24 Planning Matters:

a) To note and consider any applications received

The Council had been consulted on an application for a rear extension at Corner Cottage, Fairy Cross (1/1074/2023/FUL). The chair requested that comments be given to the Clerk by 23 November.

b) To note any permissions granted

It was noted that the applications for conversion of an existing barn to a holiday let at the Barn adjacent to Homestead, Fairy Cross (1/0798/2023/FUL) and for change of use of an existing building to dwelling/occasional holiday let at the Old Post Office Annexe, Fairy Cross (1/0778/2023/FUL) had been approved.

c) To note any refusals advised.

No applications had been refused since the last meeting.

d) Any other planning matters arising:

The Council noted an appeal against TDCs refusal of a planning application for erection of a storage building at land at Knotty Corner (1/0141/2023/FUL).

7. Min. 38:23/24 Maintenance and highways

Cllr Rothney reported that, following a survey undertaken with Cllr Adams, they had identified 12 new potholes that they would report to DCC. Cllr Rothney offered to act as Community Road Warden within the Devon County Council Community Road Warden Scheme. The offer was gratefully accepted and it was agreed that Cllr Rothney would connect with Devon County Council as the Community Road Warden for Alwington Parish Council.

8. Min. 39:23/24. Alwington Parish Plan & other issues for action in 2023/24.

a) To review and approve the Website Accessibility Statement

The draft Website Accessibility Statement was approved. Proposed by Cllr Lester seconded by Cllr Beresford.

b) To discuss and review the introduction of fibre Broadband within the Parish by Airband

The Council agreed that this item had been covered under Min. 35:23/24.

PRIVATE SESSION

The following items were discussed in a private session under S1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

Min. 40:23/24 Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Gardens

The Chair gave an update on the establishment of the Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Gardens and thanked Cllr Moore and members of the Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Gardens Sub Committee and Alwington Residents Association for the work they had undertaken.

Signature _____ (Chairman) Date _____