

**Minutes for the meeting of Colyton Parish Council held in the Colyton
Town Hall on Monday 12th February 2024 at 7.00 pm**

Present: Cllrs Real, Stenning, Parr, Gardiner, Clifford, Hay, Chesterton and Turner.

Also in Attendance: DCC Cllr Hartnell, EDDC Cllr H Parr and S Haines (clerk)

Member of public: 1

A minute silence was held for Mr Bob Collier who was a Parish Councillor, District Councillor and did so much for Colyton.

24/02/20 Receipt & Approval of apologies for absence. Cllrs Mann and Arnott.

24/02/21 Police Report. Not received.

24/02/22 Declarations of Interest. None.

24/02/23 Public Question time.

A member of the public stood and spoke about his concerns over South West Water and the state of the sewage system around Colyton. He stated that his family have been complaining about the state of the system for over thirty years, where the pipes run above ground there are multiple visible defects and you can clearly see leaks and sewage pushing up from the manhole cover on his land. A meeting was held with some officers and engineers of South West Water and they admitted there was a problem and are planning to line pipes, but surely this will just make the pipe smaller? They need to be made bigger so they can cope with the expansion of the town.

Cllr Hay explained that they won't do anything until the weather dries up as the pipes run across a flood plain but he did raise concerns about why the Environment Agency don't seem to be concerned over this. Cllr Hay suggested writing a letter to the Environment Agency and South West Water and ask for a reply within 14 days, this was seconded by Cllr Real and agreed by all.

24/02/24 Approval of the minutes of Parish Council Meeting held on 8th January 2024. Cllr Turner proposed these be approved, seconded by Cllr Stenning and agreed by all.

24/02/25 Matters arising from the Minutes. None.

24/02/26 Report from County Councillor. Cllr Hartnell had a couple of updates from his January report:

The Devolution deal – the consultation has started online from today. A deal has been struck between the Government and Devon County Council, Torbay Council and District Councils to get funding directly from Westminster. This will give us more control over areas where currently we do not have control, such as a closer relationship with Homes England, giving us more say around affordable housing. Lots more control over the local economy, especially through training, for example adult education will come under the control of the County Council rather than from London which means we will be able to specify areas where skills need to be grown and help businesses in the area. The initial deal is worth around £16 million to be invested in green jobs, skills, business growth and to accelerate the transition to a net zero economy. We will also be working with Devon and Torbay on a linked transport system so a 'one ticket does all' scheme to make it easier for people to move around the County using public transport. There will be a roadshow going around the County to explain in depth to Parish and Town Councils and there will be opportunity to comment. There will also be a public consultation which has gone live from today.

The second update is regarding Seaton Hospital. The Adult Health Scrutiny Committee at DCC have considered an update from NHS Devon and Property Services. The League of Friends and a Steering Group which has been put together are trying to work out the best way of securing the former ward space. They are putting together a plan on how to use the space. We have been given six months by Property Services to come up with a case of why the space is so important and that we can run it ourselves locally. In the meantime Property Services will be considering other options. The Health Scrutiny committee have heard the report and will continue to monitor the situation. In the meantime, we have been successful in a bid to have the hospital declared as an 'asset of community value' which gives us a further six months under the Community Value scheme for the community to put together another solution and another bid. This can come from outside of the League of Friends. This all means the hospital has a 12 month stay of execution to come up with a workable plan. In the meantime, 50% of the hospital will continue to run as it is now, it is only the former ward space which is in question. We have a couple of options already, there is a Dementia Care Charity which may be interested, also Jurassic Childcare

which already have space at Budleigh Health Hub. The idea is to find a couple of larger groups who are established and can pay their way and then some smaller groups to come in who offer value services.

Full Council will sign off the budget this week, there will be more money going into care, special education and vulnerable areas. Other areas will have to be cut for these areas. Highways will be getting some funding from the government. We should know more about that in early March. Being as it is an election year we will hope it is a good amount. There is an ongoing special education needs deficit of over £100 million which is very close to bankrupting the Council, but there has been a huge amount of work put into this by many dedicated officers to see the Council stays afloat. The Government has been sent a plan to show how we can transform the Special Education Needs service to make it more sustainable for the future which they have accepted, and we are expecting them to release some funds to draw back some of that deficit any day now.

Cllr Real asked about the amount of cones on the highway. He had bought this up before and Cllr Hartnell explained that the highways officer could pick them up. Has this happened? Also the double yellow lines on South Street still have not been completed. He also reported that he cycled Cownhayne Lane last week and the potholes are horrendous.

Cllr Hartnell answered that yes, the highways officer can pick the cones up but he doesn't know if he has been out yet. The double yellow lines are booked into the system with the lining team but frustratingly they had been in the system for so long that the order time had run out so had to be put through the traffic scheme again. Finally roads and potholes issues are not unique to Colyton. Devon is a huge area and the budget has to be spread evenly. He thanked Cllr Stenning for sending recent photos of vehicles stuck in the ditch on Cownhayne Lane which is down to have a full report and costing drawn up once the lane dries up but nothing will happen quickly.

Cllr Hay asked about the damage to Ridgeway Lane where the leat is washing out the road and also about the blocked drain at Guernsey Corner which he reported in December 2022 and 2023. Nothing has been done.

Cllr Hartnell explained that Ridgeway Lane is booked into the system and the drain at Guernsey Corner should have been done by now. He explained that the drainage teams have been cut but there are plans to reinstate them in the next financial year. Cllr Stenning also mentioned the drain at School Lane which is clearly blocked and has been reported.

24/02/27 Report from District Councillors Cllr H Parr read through her report – see appendix A.

Cllr Real asked her if she could chase up on a report that he made to Cllr Arnott on 23rd January about the street lights being out in the Dolphin Street car park. They are still not working and the car park is extremely dark in the evenings.

Cllr Parr shared his disappointment at Cllr Arnott's absence tonight as he wanted to ask him a question about the Grant Thornton report about the culture of bullying at EDDC. The report is pretty specific about what went on, particularly at points 22 and 23. Moral was low and the Council was dysfunctional and not communicating with the residents. This was at exactly the time they were doing the Colyford Governance Review and that is why they did not consult with us, used the wrong Act and did not reply to our emails. We really should have that whole process redone because obviously it wasn't done properly. I would have liked Cllr Arnott to have been here to hear that. We really should push him for a review of the whole process. Cllr Stenning proposed the clerk email Cllr Arnott and let him know the Council's thoughts, this was seconded by Cllr Parr and agreed by all.

24/02/28 Highway Matters

a) Road closures without any notification. The clerk explained that there has been a few reports of cones appearing on the highways with no notifications or explaining road signs, then a couple of days later South West Water turn up and do some work. Cllr Hartnell explained that if it is emergency works then they don't always go through the whole process to close a road and notify residents but if you look on the one.network website, that should list all works, even emergency works. Cllr Stenning reported that when cones appeared on Coly Road opposite Courteney Drive, she checked the one.network and there was nothing on there. Cllr Hartnell asked that if that happens again then we should report to him.

24/02/29 Report from Meetings Attended. Cllr Hay attended a meeting of the Reece Strawbridge Committee. They are having a new sewage pipe fitted. There is a new company looking at Pat Goates clock as the original manufacturer has gone bust. Hopefully this will be working again soon. There are plans in place to restart the youth club and hopefully this will be up and running by the second May bank holiday.

24/02/30 Representative needed from the Feoffees for the Parish Council. This will be added to the annual list which will be discussed over the next three full meetings as per the Standing Orders.

24/02/31 Co-option for one Councillor. No volunteers so will remain on the agenda.

24/02/32 Date for the Annual Parish Meeting. To be held between 1st March and 1st June – usually on a Wednesday. Suggestions for a guest speaker. Clerk to ask the hall caretaker if the hall is available for the 17th April. Cllr Real suggested no guest speaker, this was agreed by all.

24/02/33 Environmental Health regarding sewage contact. Covered during public question time.

24/02/34 Correspondence

- a) Rural Bulletin
- b) Rural Funding Digest – January and February Editions.

24/02/35 Finance

Minutes of the finance committee meeting held Monday 22nd January 2024 (appendix X) to be noted.
Accounts to be approved for payment

DD Biffa waste management 242.05 VAT 48.41. Total 290.46 pounds.

DD Talktalk phone and broadband 41.83 VAT 8.37. Total 50.20 pounds.

DD British Gas Lite workshop energy 30.97 VAT 1.55. Total 32.52 pounds.

BACS Halcyon Landscapes cemetery grass 526.75 VAT 105.35. Total 632.10 pounds.

BACS SLCC membership. Total 148.00 pounds.

BACS Scribe accounting tool 345.60 VAT 69.12. Total 414.72 pounds.

BACS Mr Fitzpatrick toilet caretaker. Total 120.00 pounds.

BACS Source for Business water at the allotments. Total 8.00 pounds in credit.

BACS PKF Littlejohn annual audit for 2022 23 952.50 VAT 190.50. Total 1143.00 pounds.

The above accounts were approved for payment. Proposed by Cllr Hay, seconded by Cllr Stenning and agreed by all.

a) The s.137 expenditure limit for 2024/25 has been announced and will be 10.81 pounds per elector. Noted.

b) The Allotment Association have made a request for a donation towards the community shed – they have also asked if it would be acceptable to put it on a small concrete base, no more than 4m X 3m. Cllr Parr proposed that a donation could not be given and a base would not be allowed, seconded by Cllr Gardiner and agreed by all.

c) Prices for securing the allotment gate during wet weather. Clerk not getting responses but will keep trying.

24/02/36 Planning

Minutes of the planning committee meeting held Monday 22nd January (appendix Y) to be noted.

a) Planning Applications

24/0065/PDMA Antiques Centre Old Station Yard Station Road – Ms Nunn - Conversion of former antiques shop to new dwelling. *Comments due by 9th February.*

Ratification of the decision made during the planning committee meeting held 22nd January 2024 to ‘not support’ this application. ****Application Withdrawn****

23/2605/VAR Mill Stream Bungalow Colyton – Mr & Mrs Carthy - Variation of conditions 2 (materials) and 3 (approved plans) of planning permission 05/1078/FUL, (First floor and single storey extensions with alterations), to amend the materials and design. *Comments due by 16th February.*

Cllr Parr proposed this not be supported due to the size being considered overdevelopment of the area and not in keeping with the existing property. This was seconded by Cllr Real and agreed by all.

24/0078/VAR Rockerhayne House Northleigh – Mr & Mrs Docherty - Variation of condition 2 [approved plans] on Listed Building Consent 22/2636/LBC - Alteration, extension & refurbishment of

dwelling house including: a. raising of roof including elevation and levelling of wall-plate; b. demolition of single storey rear extension, comprising toilet, store & veranda; c. erection of single storey rear extension, incorporating self-contained bat haven; d. replacement of timber and Crittal windows with new timber windows, and e. creation of new doorway to and conversion of ground floor store to living space. Proposal to reduce the amount that the ridge and eaves of the main roof are raised by using existing timbers.

Comments due 21st February.

Cllr Hay proposed this be supported, seconded by Cllr Stenning and agreed by all.

b) Planning Decisions

23/2450/LBC 3 Sunnyside South Street – CH Johnson - Remove existing 'dovecote' from stack and replace with flaunching; add new pot and cowl; suspend chimney liner from cowl to attach to wood burner on ground floor; replacement register plate to hearth. Approved.

23/2339/FUL Cadhayne Farm House Colyton – Mr & Mrs Berry - Proposed conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to form 3 dwelling houses, provision of associated parking and associated works and demolish/dismantle existing barn and slurry tank. Refused.

23/2686/FUL & 23/2687/LBC 3 Sunnyside South Street – CH Johnson - Take down and rebuild section of garden wall. Approved with conditions.

22/2795/MRES Land North Of Sidmouth Road (Cerantec) Colyton – L. Downs (Housing Development Agency) - Reserved matters application (seeking approval of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale pursuant to outline permission 18/1850/MOUT) for the development of 72 new houses and six B1 use class light industrial units. The proposal includes the discharge of conditions 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24 and 25 of the outline planning permission. Approved with conditions.

Cllr Gardiner asked that it be minuted that she watched the EDDC planning meeting and there was a total disregard shown for the thoughts of Colyton Parish Council when it came to decisions on this application. She claimed that there was no respect shown to this Council. Cllr Turner added that there was also no regard shown for any of the other organisations comments. Cllr Parr stated that there were comments made that his Mill Pond is a dirty pond which can be used for drainage and that this is not the case, the pond is used for his business and has to be kept clean. He also stated that the comments made that money will come to him is incorrect. Cllr Hay stated that points raised about the Schools, sewage systems, amenities and doctors surgery were all ignored and no care at all has been shown to residents of Colyton. Cllr Parr proposed a letter be written to EDDC planning with the leader copied in highlighting the concerns raised and asking them to explain why the Parish Council was not listened to. This was seconded by Cllr Stenning and agreed by all.

c) Memorial applications

Memorial application received for a cremation plot – standard size. Application has been circulated to all Councillors.

24/02/37 Amenities

Minutes of the amenities committee meeting held Monday 22nd January (appendix Z) to be noted.

- a) Request from the Feoffees to plant an Oak tree on the PMPF along the river. Cllr Real will bring this up at the next playing fields meeting but it shouldn't be a problem.
- b) P3 bid is due – wardens have not found any substantial damage or maintenance needed for paths. The P3 account currently holds £4017.00. Noted.
- c) Meeting held at the PMPF on 4th February regarding the flooding of the football pitch. A plan and quote is being put together. Noted.

24/02/38 Items brought to the CPC's attention after the agenda had been published

Cllr Turner reported that a panel has been kicked out of the bus shelter at Coly Vale – handyman to fix. The clerk reported that Cllr Mann has met with Lee Clifford to discuss the barriers at the PMPF.

Cllr Clifford reported that somebody keeps parking on the grass at Road Green near the business park and is churning the ground up – could a ‘no parking’ sign be installed? Next agenda.

24/02/39 Matters to be taken into Committee

24/02/40 Dates of future meetings

Committees – Monday 26th February

Full Meeting – Monday 11th March.

Meeting closed: 20:30.

Appendix A

Report of District Councillor Helen Parr- Feb 2024

Report of External Auditors, Grant Thornton

This report was debated at the Audit and Governance committee meeting on Thursday 14 Dec 23.

<https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=149&MId=2245&Ver=4>

During the debate I expressed serious concern about the problems with Governance. A culture of bullying was found to be affecting the Council’s decision making, causing a breakdown in the operating effectiveness of the Council. Other external reports had also raised this as a weakness.

Recommendations from the previous reports designed to improve matters had not been carried out, and the problem was still present. Staff well-being is a primary concern.

Following the debate, BBC Spotlight did a piece on the bullying for which I was interviewed. The Leader of the Council was also interviewed and denied knowledge of any bullying, despite the findings in the Grant Thornton Audit report. This is surprising and concerning in view of the evidence.

Public Toilets- There has been considerable public dissatisfaction with the Council’s planned closure of many public toilets. As result the matter was reconsidered by the Overview Committee

<https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=2103&Ver=4>

See officer report at item 23. It was agreed-

1. To extend the closing date and any necessary revenue budgets for Category B and C Sites [eg. Colyton Dolphin St toilets] until 31st March 2025, to allow a further 12 months to enable an urgent revisiting of negotiations with town and parish councils to look at freehold disposals and other changes to the offer, according to a specified timetable and including a renewed effort through Ward Members to engage town and parish councils, with the reality of reduced or removed public toilet provision at the sites, should agreement not be reached.
2. For this Council to write to the Secretary of State to push for public toilets to become a statutory service, and to invite other councils in Devon and Cornwall to also do so.

Link to Residents’ Update 2 Feb

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKEDDC/bulletins/387790b>

Peer Review of the Council Tues 6 - 8 Feb 2024

A team of officers and cllrs from other councils visit by invitation, and carry out a review, acting as a Critical Friend and make Recommendations to assist the Council to improve.

The last Peer Review took place in 2019 and the findings were very positive. However, the current Leader of EDDC and several other Lib Dem and Independent Cllrs voted not to accept the report, and several of the Recommendations have not been implemented.

Councillors will hear initial feedback from the Peer Review Team at the end of their visit this week. Their final report with recommendations from this 2024 review will be published on the Council website within 3 months.

Green Wedges are to be debated at The Strategic Planning Committee 13 Feb 24.

The main purpose of Green Wedges is to prevent coalescence of settlements and protect their individual identities by strict control of development.

The Green Wedges between Colyton/Colyford/Seaton are strongly supported locally.

It is proposed to reduce the area of Green Wedges across East Devon by over 70%.

Also to be debated, **Designated Neighbourhood Areas Housing Requirement-**

This matter was discussed at a District Council/ Town and Parish Council Seminar, where the T & P Councils expressed a great deal of doubt about Neighbourhood Planning Groups willingness and ability to undertake this work.

The Recommendation is that Local Plan Housing numbers should be decided by the District Council not by Neighbourhood Planning Groups assessing and allocating sites/local housing numbers.

<https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Mid=2164&x=1>

Devolution-

A preliminary deal has been signed between Government, Devon County Council and Torbay, Consultation must follow before the deal can be finalised.

The Deal would allow important decisions to be taken locally by people who know their areas best, on things that matter to local people, such as building more affordable homes, investing in new quality jobs and skills, and improving public transport.

Summary of the highlights:

- under the proposals, the CCA would have direct control of adult education to create up to 1,000 new training and retraining opportunities by 2030
- it would create a stronger relationship between employers and schools, colleges and universities to provide the skilled workforce the local economy needs for the future
- it would see the Government transfer over £16 million to invest in new green jobs, homes, skills, and business growth, and accelerate Devon and Torbay's transition to a net-zero economy
- there would be a stronger partnership with Homes England to create a joint local action plan for affordable housing schemes for local people, and reduce homelessness

- it would lead to even closer working between Devon and Torbay to improve the efficiency and co-ordination of public transport. There is an ambition to introduce a single ticketing system for travellers and investment in services to provide greater access to public transport
- Devon and Torbay would be responsible for developing, designing and delivering the next stages of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund from 2025
- there would be a significant boost to high growth business sectors in Devon and Torbay, such as advanced marine engineering, defence, photonics and digital

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKDEVONCC/bulletins/3871072>