

ATHERINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 21 January 2025 at the Pavilion, Atherington at 7.30pm.

Present: Cllrs Ms C Norman (Chairman), J Andrew, A Boyce, C Hart, J Kiely and Mrs A Lindsay

In attendance: 6 parishioners, County Councillor P Henderson, Parish Clerk.

101. Matters Raised by the Public

Concern was expressed on the continues high speed of traffic through the village, despite the 20mph speed limit being in place. It was noted that at present the police had only authorised two locations from which the Community Speedwatch could operate.

Parking was still a problem, causing difficulties for other residents. The absence of the 'No Parking' road markings added to the problems

The new owners of the old church hall outlined their plans for the building, although they had not yet contacted the planning department. They were happy to discuss the future if the old telephone kiosk.

102. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were accepted from District Councillor Mrs S Whitehead,

103. Declarations of Interest None.

104. Approval of Minutes of meeting held on 19 November 2024

The Minutes of the last meeting was agreed and signed as a true record.

105. Matters Arising from the last meeting

No updates had been received following the visit to the parish by the planning enforcement officer.

106. Reports:

1. County Councillor

Full DCC Motion to Ask Government to Delay Elections

Following the publishing of the govt white paper on devolution shortly before Christmas, a major rewiring of how local government operates WILL be taking place.

To this end, both County and District Councils across the country will cease to exist, instead, they will be replaced by a unitary authority, many of whom will have elected Mayors.

Despite bitter voiced opposition from all Devon based District Councils, they will be integrated into a new unitary authority, as will the County Council. The white paper is NOT a discussion or consultation document, it is a statement of statute change.

The timescale for this change is incredibly short.

By September 2025, Councils must submit their plan for the new unitary authority which will then come into being. The government has asked that the district councils across Devon work with the County Council to create the structure of the new unitary authority. Presently, the District Councils are as far as I'm aware trying to halt this change. That won't happen and is the District Councils decide they won't work together with the County, then central government will instead impose a structure.

That would not be of benefit to any council or any resident.

So why delay an election?

Given the tight timeframe (September 25), if an election was to be held in May, purdah would kick in at the end of March stalling any form of collaboration to create a new unitary structure. Following the election, there is a five to six week induction period. This is different to town/parish/district elections. All newly installed councillors have to go through enhanced DBS checks and then there are numerous mandatory training courses covering topics such as adult health & social care, children's services - these are big complex topics which take a lot of time to begin to understand.

Given this, the newly elected Councillors would not be in a position to begin with the additional responsibility of restructuring multiple councils (and the staffing) which have existed for 50+ years until the middle of June. That leaves them a window of just 6 weeks to re-structure. Furthermore, the likelihood is that 60% or more of newly elected councillors would be brand new.

Finally, having had an election in May, those Councillors could only be in situ for a year at most before the elections for the new authority would happen.

To my mind it's better to have cross party/cross council working together now to structure a new authority that's fit for purpose with one single election to take place in May 26.....not to mention the cost savings to the public purse of holding 2 elections instead of 1.

Of course the requested delay of the May elections are subject to central government agreement so we may yet be heading to the polls this coming May.

2. District Councillor

District councillor not present – no report received.

106. Highways

The contractor hired to carry out lengthsman work had visited the parish and conducted a survey. Some work had already been carried out, but there was still more to be done.

108. Planning Application

79221. Installation of a covered picnic area. Smoke House Quiet Waters Atherington Umberleigh

It was agreed to recommend approval.

109. Finance

1. Request from ACPF to purchase furniture £840.76 + VAT

A request had been received from the Playing Field Committee requesting permission to purchase some more tables and chairs. This was agreed.

2. Payments:

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| 1. Clerk's Salary & Expenses | £100.00 |
| 2. HMRC | £ 25.00 |
| 3. AJ Murch Ltd spraying Knotweed | £240.00 |
| 4. ACPF – emptying dog bin | £ 10.26 |

The four accounts were approved for payment.

110. Playing Field

The annual fete was being planned for 5 July.

Some work was due to be carried out on the zip wire.

The hiring charges for the Pavilion was being reviewed.

It was hoped that the food van would return for the summer.

The matter of any effect on the pavilion's insurance cover would arise due to vehicles being parked in the car park overnight. The council's insurance company had advised that if a fire should occur in one of the vehicles which spread to the building, then the vehicle's insurance should cover any claim. It was agreed that those who parked at the Pavilion should ensure that their insurance company was advised where the vehicle was parked.

111. Correspondence Received

1. Letter of thanks from Ms Brayley
2. DCC – Road Closure 10 – 21 February for patching work
daytime 7.30am – 7.30pm High Bullen – towards Great Torrington
evening 7.30pm – Hatchmoor Rd industrial estate
3. Notification from NDC of a Special Parish Forum on 21 March
4. DALC Newsletter. Noted

112. Items for the next Agenda

None.

113. Date of next meeting:

Tuesday, 18 February 2025.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Signed

Chairman

Date