MINUTES OF SPARKWELL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Held on 13th November 2018 at Sparkwell Parish Hall

**Present**: Cllrs May, Taylor, Small, Lee, Pearson-Bunt, Hughes, Peacham and Ashley

Dawn Johnson (Clerk)

**In attendance**: Cllr John Hart (DCC), Cllr Keith Baldry (SHDC), Cllr Blackler (SHDC)

**Apologies for Absence**: Cllr Milford

**124/18 Police Business**

No apology received or report supplied.

**125/18 District Councillors Business**

Cllr Baldry reported:

1. The number of planning applications to SHDC is at an all-time high and far exceeds the capability to deal with them. There are delays and determination dates are not being met. There is no criticism of planning officers but it is due to lack of resources. They are looking at this as part of the budgeting process in order to add extra resource.
2. Great success with regard to the planning application for the 110 houses in Lee Mill being refused. It was good team work; Cllrs Ashley and Hughes had done a lot of research and spoke well at the planning meeting and Cllr Taylor had put in a lot of work beforehand.

Cllr May thanked Cllr Baldry for his support on the planning application.

Cllr Hughes asked whether Plymouth City Council officers were still assisting on planning? Cllr Baldry confirmed that Plymouth CC and others were helping to plug the gaps. They were bringing in temporary officers and a lot of overtime is being done.

Cllr Blackler reported:

1. Improvements have been made resulting in prompter dealings on calls in to SHDC.
2. Improvements to town centres will have further consultations.
3. Only 20 complaints in 12 months to date were referred to the Ombudsman but only 3 were upheld.
4. A period of Purdah starts on 26th March next year during which funding of projects cannot be considered from localities funds.
5. As Cllr Baldry mentioned, there has been Planning overload in the second quarter of this year, hence delays were inevitable in giving decisions.
6. An improvement in waste collections had been noticed from a survey carried out. There are exceptions, but it is better than it was.
7. Refusal of the Lee Mill planning application was a good result but there is concern that it will go to Appeal.
8. There is a Town and Parish Council Event at Follaton House on the 10th December.
9. With regard to Boringdon Camp, Historic England have agreed to a fresh grant of £8000 to the tenant to graze sheep on the land, which was in addition to grants already made. This was conditional upon SHDC not disposing of the site in this financial year and upon maintaining the current approach to public access. There was a meeting in the summer which included the leader to discuss the option of selling the land and this option was supported in principle by all who attended.

Cllr Ashley stated that this was another year that the farmer has been given a further grant to supposedly raise his sheep on the land. He said that this information wasn’t given at the recent meeting. Historic England seemed to be hiding behind SHDC and are controlling how the land is utilised. They weren’t told where the money was coming from but it was Historic England and yet it is SHDC land.

Cllr Blackler said he had been pushing on keeping the land but other councillors think it should be disposed of.

Cllr Ashley stated that it was mismanagement by SHDC officers who haven’t communicated properly.

Cllr Peacham said that the grant sounds incoherent and should be reported. The land was owned in effect by the public and paid for by the public and yet access was excluded.

Cllr May asked what the PC could do?

Cllr Hart asked whether there is a lease on the land to the tenant? Cllr Blackler understands it was an annual agreement.

Cllr Ashley said that the contract with Historic England and managed by SHDC and in that case he believes that SHDC has a right to do something.

It was suggested that the PC write to SHDC for an explanation as to why public access to this land, which is public open space, is being excluded.

***Action*** *– Cllr Ashley to draft a letter to the Leader, Chris Brook, copied to John Tucker, that we can send on and invite them to a Parish Meeting to discuss.*

Cllr Hughes commented regarding the town centre plans. She believes they are purely commercial and are plans to sell off car parks which has upset all of the towns.

Cllr Baldry left the meeting at 7.19pm

**126/18 County Councillors Business**

Cllr Hart reported:

1. He assumed everyone had read today of the bonus of £18.75M for roads from Central Government which was part of £400M given to the whole of England. Devon has received way above the average. They will be planning how to use the funds but it is a surprise package very late in the financial year and was on top of other funding coming; there were only so many road repairers in the South West to do the work.
2. With regard to business rates, £15M is expected this year. In 2020 business rates and council tax will be the only source of income as no other grants from Central Government.
3. There has been an 81% cut in Government funding in the last ten years. DCC is in the process of drawing up the budget for next year. It is expected to balance the budget by the end of this week but it will mean cuts.
4. The National Minimal Wage cost DCC £7M when it came in, £15M last year, £20M this year, and £23M in 2021. Cllr Hart was surprised at this as he thought that the threshold of pay was higher. There is a problem with continued increases as it resulted in higher grades being squashed as the gap between lower and middle/higher grades gets smaller.
5. Spending on Adult Services in 16/17 was up by £18.7M. In 18/19 it is up by another £13M. Spending on Children’s services in 16/17 was up by £11.4M, year 17 £2.3M and year 18 by £6.5M. Adult Services is holding but there is an overspend of £8.1M on Children’s Services.
6. Staff levels were previously at 6604 (full time equivalent) but are now 3840.
7. There is £300M less to spend per year but DCC is still spending a total of £1.2/1.3 billion per year.
8. The earth mounds at Langage Power Station seem to have worked to stop travellers accessing part of the area but the lower end has become a dropping area. There have been substantial costs to clear up the sites. If they go to court they can protect a site for 6 months. They could possibly look at a gated system to stop lower end being available and/or yellow lines right through the patch so a notice can be served if they park up. Devon County Council could enforce with Police support.

Cllr Pearson-Bunt reported that there are currently 7 vans and 2 light vehicles at the lower end of the site.

***Action*** *- Cllr Hart will look into the matter tomorrow as his understanding was that notice had been served. This could have been done but others could have moved in. They need to establish whether it is the same group.*

Cllr Pearson-Bunt said that the fear is that it builds up in the summer; this was a national infrastructure so they did not want encampment there.

Cllr Lee asked whether the road funding is for repairs or drainage. Cllr Hart explained that he was unsure as they still had to plan for the money but he said that it had previously been decided they would spend more money on drainage.

There was discussion about drainage/flooding problem areas around Sparkwell including cars trapped again under Venton Bridge and the work to be carried out on Ledgate Lane which will hopefully deal with the flooding at Sparkwell Bridge. Clearing of verges, leaves and drains is needed.

***Action*** *– Cllr Hart will check out drainage plans.*

Cllr Hughes asked whether there was any update on the Challonsleigh application. Cllr Hart did not have any news yet but believed DCC Highways was not happy with lorries going to Ivybridge but perhaps South Brent was an alternative.

Cllrs Hart and Blackler left the meeting at 7.49pm

**127/18 Open Forum**

* 1. Wolf Minerals/Drakelands Mine.

Cllr May had drafted and circulated a letter to be sent from the Parish Council to the Environment Agency and Devon County Council regarding any future use of the mine which was discussed.

***Action*** *– Cllrs to send any suggestions and amendments to the Clerk to finalise letter and liaise with the Chairman to send. The letter should also be sent to the Official Receiver. The item should remain on the Agenda going forward. All agreed.*

**128/18 Declarations of Interest**

None

**129/18 Approval of Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th October 2018 were approved by all present subject and signed by the Vice Chairman (who had chaired the meeting).

**130/18 Local Plan**

The Clerk had previously circulated the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan Main Modifications.

There was discussion that the main modifications had come up as part of the consultation process and there was nothing to affect Sparkwell

No comment from the Parish Council

**131/18 Planning**

1. Installation of new generator at Holland House Unit 1, Eastern Wood Road, Langage. Supported.
2. Provision of agricultural storage building at Choakford Corner, Plympton.  
   Not in Sparkwell.  
   Nil impact.
3. Portworthy Storage Tank, Park Lane, Lee Moor.  
   No comment.
4. Replacement of sheet cladding to agricultural building adjacent to Baccamore Pits, Sparkwell.  
   The paperwork was missing the future plans.   
   No comment at the moment. Cllr Taylor will inspect the site and if it is straight forward, then no objection would be made.

**132/18 Road & Snow Warden**

Cllr Peacham reported that he had arranged for 2 tonne of salt to be delivered (1 tonne last year). This was for the minor roads and the area appeared to be well covered by salt boxes. Let him know if any more boxes are needed.

Cllr Pearson-Bunt raised the issue of the drainage problems such as Sparkwell Bridge. If there was to be no remedial highways work then the problems will continue. She asked whether there is a contractor we could have on call (informal) to clear the drains?

Cllr Peacham said that his experience of dealing with Highways was that they were extremely busy so it is much better if you can come up with a solution. For example if we can say what needs to happen such as the drain to go across a field, the field was owned by X and we had negotiated on it, then Highways might come up with the budget to implement.

***Action*** *- It was agreed to firstly see whether the planned Highways work will remedy the problem.*

Cllr Small said there was also flooding on the track around Houndall Barn.

**133/18 Chairman’s Business**

1. There needs to be slabs opposite the bus stop where people stand. At the moment there is a drain going in so perhaps whoever is putting the drain in could put some slabs down.

***Action*** *– Cllr May will speak to whoever is putting the drains in.*

1. There is a wish for more Community Engagement but after discussion it was agreed that it is best to leave until after the election next year.

***Action*** *– Clerk to put an article in the Pump about election. [Advert should go in nearer to the election to encourage more candidates]*

1. The Chairman had received a request for approval for the Clerk to take on the Administrator role for the Sparkwell and Shaugh Prior Community Interest Company which has close links with the PC (salary paid by the CIC).

Request approved by all.

Cllr Peacham said there is currently £47,000 already in the Fund with more to come in April. One idea is to consider solar panels on Sparkwell, Hemerdon and Lee Moor Parish Halls. This needs a feasibility study – Cllrs Peacham and May will discuss.

**134/18 Correspondence**

* 1. Healthwatch Hub Devon – invitation to join the network   
     ***Action*** *– Clerk will sign up.*

**135/18 Finance**

1. Budget Analysis October 2018
2. Bank Reconciliation October 2018

**136/18 Payments and Receipts**

Grant payments as agreed at October meeting:

1. £150 to CAB (cheque)
2. £400 to Parish Pump (cheque)
3. £500 to Sparkwell Cemetery (cheque)
4. Clerk Salary - £206.02 (online payment)
5. Clerk expenses - £30.00 (online payment)
6. Payroll4Business - £10 (online payment)

**137/18 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on the 11th December 2018 at Sparkwell Parish Hall commencing at 7pm.

Meeting closed at 8.53pm

This is a true and accurate record of the meeting

Signed ……………………………………………………………….

Name ……………………………………………………………….. Date …………………………………………..