

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF TAWSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON
TUESDAY 18th FEBRUARY 2025 AT 7.00 p.m.**

Present: - Councillor Bowden (Chair)
Councillors Bates, East, Jenkins, Knight, Lines, Needham, Norman and Short.

NDC Councillors Coombs, Knight and Norman.

M Isaac (Clerk)

In Attendance: Parishioner/Members of the Public – 2

188. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Lofthouse and Mason and DCC Councillor Leaver.

189. PUBLIC SESSION

A Parishioner asked the following question:

When the Bus Gate is operational again will it be enforced? Councillor Knight agreed to meet the resident to update on the current situation.

It was further stated that the planning notice to amend the use of the bus gate to include emergency vehicles only prohibited vehicles north bound but did not include vehicles south bound.

**190. ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE
CHAIR SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY**

The following issues were raised:

- a) Councillor Knight reported that the branches of two trees in Tower View Recreation Area (pictures previously circulated) had been chewed/bitten probably by a dog.
It was agreed that Lewis Evely be requested as a matter of urgency to investigate the damage to the trees and suggest a solution to the problem.
Councillor Knight agreed to immediately erect signs highlighting the problem.
- b) In the absence of Councillor Mason, the Chair reported the following on his behalf:
Litchardon Cross Solar Farm Community Fund: the bank account had been set up and during a request for confirmation of the funding document Infinis had rescinded their offer of allowing the new CIO to manage the fund, instead wanting their new community engagement partner to manage it. It was unsure what this would seek to do nor what impact that would have (given Fremington Parish Council had offered to manage this free of cost on a rolling basis). It was agreed by trustees to go back to Infinis to ask them for more information and to provide further detail on their proposal.
NDC Councillor Coombs reported that Horwood, Lovacott and Newton Tracey Parish Council had rejected new the offer.

191. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

192. CORRESPONDENCE

It was noted that a consultation had been received from NDC on the Draft Housing Strategy. It was agreed that the necessary infrastructure works should be provided prior to the commencement of any approved housing developments.

Councillor Knight reported that the Government had increased the number of houses to be provided in North Devon/Torridge area to approximately 1,475 per annum. He also stated that although affordable housing was required to be provided the Government did allow developers to assess development viability at a later date which may deem that affordable housing provision was not viable as part of the scheme.

193. FINANCIAL MATTERS.

a) Payments

RESOLVED that the following payments be approved:

North Devon Council Clerks Salary + Admin Fee	£695.99
Ucanstore.com – Storage	£28.60
M. Isaac – Clerks Expenses	£6.85
L. Evely – Grounds Maintenance Contract	£940.43
Sticklepath Methodist Church – Room Hire (Nov – Jan)	£165.00
Totally Awesome Toys – Mesh Fencing Tudor Park (Debit Card)	£35.99

b) Financial Position

The Clerk updated Council on the current financial position as at 5 February 2025 Current A/C £33,281.26 (includes £6,581.62 ringed fenced for Tower View Project) and Business Reserve A/C £16,486.50

194. MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to minute 185 being amended to read that Councillor Needham had been appointed Vice-Chair and Treasurer for a two year term of the Taw and Torridge Estuary Forum.

195. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING NOT LISTED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

There were no matters arising.

196. COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORTS

In the absence of DCC Councillor Leaver the Council noted the following report (previously circulated) to all Members:

- Budget 2025/26 - Devon County Council was meeting later this week to set the budget for the coming year. The financial position of the council remained extremely difficult. All councils were required to produce a balanced budget each year. This was being achieved in Devon by taking funds from reserves and relying on the extra funds allocated by the Department of Education as part of the Safety Valve Agreement

(SVA). The SVA was based on DCC cutting costs on the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) budget and achieving improvements in the service. Currently the required savings had not been made, and the overspend was expected to increase. There was a risk that if DCC was unable to agree a revision to the SVA and funds were reclaimed by government, the financial position of the council would not be sustainable.

- Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and Devolution – DCC failed in its attempt to put off May's elections for a year or to be part of the Priority Devolution Programme. Government had asked for an in-principle submission on the future shape of local government in Devon by 21 March 2025, and final detailed plans in the autumn. Options were being discussed, and data gathered, to support DCC decisions on a future unitary council model. It was expected that DCC's preferred model would be a Super Devon Council, covering most of the current county plus Torbay. District Councils in Devon were also working up plans.
- Highways, HATOC. Since the last Parish Council meeting there had been a meeting of the North Devon Highways and Traffic Orders Committee (HATOC). The committee was given a verbal update on the position of the bus gate on Old Torrington Road (OTR). The restrictions had been suspended temporarily while the road works to put in a bus lane from Gratton Way to the Link Road, and the committee noted considerable traffic disruption in the area and high volumes of traffic on OTR. I had continued to push for officers to find a way to get the cameras installed and the agreed scheme to be fully delivered, once this work had been finished. All of the physical work had been paid for by the Persimmon Homes. They had also provided DCC with the funds to pay for the cameras. The matter would not be considered by HATOC again until June 2025.
- Highways, Old Torrington Road. Over the weekend South West Water responded to an emergency of low water pressure and had road works in place at the southern junction of OTR and Shorelands Road, closing OTR to through traffic. Traffic coming north up OTR was being diverted along Broadclose Road and Rhododendron Avenue. Highways officers had not been consulted and agreed with me that this route was not suitable for a diversion – and the contractors had been instructed to find an alternative route. Works were scheduled to be finished on 20 February.

197. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS

a) NDC Councillor Knight

Councillor Knight reported that the Brynsworthy Recycling Infrastructure improvement works were continuing.

b) NDC Councillor Coombs

Councillor Coombs reported the following:

- That the applicant had been given to the end of February to resolve the unauthorised internal and external advertisement signs and 2 totem poles for new Roundswell Petrol Station just off the A39 (Tallins Drive).
- That she had reported the litter problem on the link road.
- That she was going to raise a question at the next NDC Council meeting regarding the unauthorised Starbucks flags on the roundabout.
- That she had made representations to DCC regarding the lack of legible lines on the A39 roundabout but had received a response that DCC did not see any problems. She would raise with DCC Councillor Henderson.

c) NDC Councillor Norman

Councillors noted the report by NDC Councillor Norman (previously circulated). He further reported that the recommended Council Tax increase would be 2.99%

198. HIGHWAY ISSUES

There were no issues raised.

199. PLANNING MATTERS

The Chair updated Council on the Planning Applications considered by the Planning Committee.

200. PARISH SURVEY

In the absence of Councillor Mason, the Chair reported the following on his behalf: He had been trying to get in touch with Royal Mail about their leaflet drop. According to their website it was £500 minimum for up to 8,160 leaflets being dropped along with post, although this was dependent on size. They could offer a “business reply” service which hopefully we’ll have details on soon.

It was noted that the leaflet drop equated to approximately 16p per leaflet drop.

It was agreed to defer consideration to the next Parish Council meeting and that Councillor Knight meet with the form designer.

201. GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP

Councillor Needham reported on the Working Group meeting held on 12th February 2025 (previously circulated). It was noted that the next Group meeting would be on 12th March 2025 and not 12th February as stated in the notes.

It was agreed:

- a) That the notes be noted.
- b) That the Document Retention Policy (previously circulated) as recommended by the working group be adopted.
- c) That the Asset Register be noted and regularly reviewed.
- d) Risk Assessment for provision of CCTV and solar lighting in Tower View Recreation Area
That the DALC information be circulated to all Members and further consideration of the provision of CCTV and Solar lights in the recreation area be considered at the next Parish Council meeting and at the Governance Working Group before the end of April.

202. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Councillor Knight reported that Fremington Parish Council had no objections to our recommendation to the re-alignment of the existing boundary as the line cut straight through buildings in Roundswell Business Park and then headed off straight across the field that cut halfway through the new Business Park south of the A39.

He further reported unofficially that Barnstaple Town Council may wish to take over the urban part of Tawstock and part of Bickington.

203. PROVISION OF NOTICEBOARDS.

- a) Eastacombe.
In the absence of Councillor Lofthouse the matter was deferred to the next meeting.
- b) Tawstock Burial Ground.
Councillor Knight reported that he had obtained a quote for a 4 A4 size noticeboard.
It was considered that a 4 A4 size noticeboard may not be large enough.
It was agreed to defer consideration to the next meeting and for Councillor Knight to obtain a quote for a larger noticeboard

204. TUDOR PARK: UPDATE.

Councillor Needham reported that the Park was in good order and looking good and thanked Councillor Knight for erecting the security protection fencing.
However, the resident of 13 Tudor Drive had replaced his fence but located the fence supports on Parish Council land.
It was agreed to write to the resident stating that the support fencing needed to be re-located on his own land and that it was a potential hazard to young children using the park but that sending of the letter be held in abeyance for Councillor Needham to confirm that the fence supports were on Parish Council land.

205. DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER- ZOOM PRESENTATION.

In the absence of Councillor Mason, the Chair reported the following on his behalf:
He had attended the zoom call. There was no new information given and most of the queries were just people not wanting to be left unfavourable compared to the current position, and people wanting to get details of the timeline and processes, neither of which DALC could really answer. Lots of queries of “who was going to be doing which services in future” but nothing of import to report. Only real information was that Devon County Council had hoped to be fast-tracked along any process, but won’t be, and that DCC were willing to merge with Cornwall CC to form a mayoral-size authority by CCC had declined that offer.

206. REMOVAL OF LARGE TREE BRANCH, ELIZABETH DRIVE (TOP CORNER). TO CONSIDER QUOTE.

The Clerk reported the receipt of a quote from Lewis Evely for £290

207. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETING

The following matter was agreed:

Taw and Torridge Estuary Forum

208. DATE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

It was noted that the next Parish Council meeting would be on Tuesday 18th March 2025 at 7.00 p.m.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 8.07 p.m.