

# St GILES IN THE WOOD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held.  
on the December 7th 2022

704

Present: Mrs L Herniman took the chair, Mr G Hookway Cllr Chamings Mr N Hopkins Mr B King Mr J Ayre Mr P Middleton, and Mrs A Snell (Clerk)  
Apologies Mrs G Hookway Mr R Petherbridge Cllr R Lock Cllr R Clarke (District Councillor)  
In Attendance Cllr A Saywell (County Councillor) PCSO Brown and one member of the public

Time for Public Participation

Declaration of Interests – Councillors are invited to declare any personal or prejudicial interest, including the nature and extent of such interests they may have in any items to be considered at this meeting. They are also reminded to consider whether in the light of recent activities any items within their Register of Interests should be updated.

1. The minutes of the meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> November were agreed and signed, with the amendment regarding the culling of hounds, only old hounds are being culled young hounds are being drafted to other packs.

2. Clerk's report i. The TFH kennels, minuted above, no other report.

ii. The Wicksteed playground inspection recommendations have been carried out.

3. Chairman's report i. A brass plaque has been ordered; a reminder has been sent.

ii. Unknown Tommy plaques, the cost is £375 for a pair, it was agreed by all to order two, with "Lest we forget" at the base, Cllr Clarke is to be asked for a grant towards the cost, all in favour.

Souper Friday is being very well supported and spilled over into the church at the last gathering with around 20 in attendance.

4. Highways i

5). County and District Councillors items.

Cllr Saywell reported on the **Recruitment of Chief Executive** – I am pleased to report that the Appointments Panel was able to make a unanimous decision in appointing a new Chief Executive, Donna Manson, who is currently the Chief Executive of Highland Council in Scotland – the UK's largest rural authority. She has a track record of improvement, best value and successful budget delivery, rebuilding substantial reserves and resilience within the Highland Council, while implementing significant investment projects. Her background is in Education and Children's Services in three Scottish councils, having started her career in teaching where she was also a 'trouble-shooter' Head Teacher. The decision should be ratified by Full Council on the 8<sup>th</sup> December, with Donna due to start in mid-February. She has already had meetings with senior directors already, including the Director of Finance, so should be in a position to hit the ground running when she formally joins us next year.

**Budgets** - You will probably have seen the media coverage now about this. The projected £40m overspend for this financial year has been brought down to £6m... but that has been achieved through having to make savings on existing budgets this year and postponing long term projects in IT and recruitment etc. However; the Children's Services Budget continues to overspend and every possible effort is being made to contain and reverse the overspend but it is not easy.

Nonetheless, we should be able to balance the books for this financial year... the challenge is going to be next year. Prior to the Autumn Statement we were looking at a projected budget gap of £60m,

which on top of the £15m planned savings identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, means that we are looking at overall projected savings of £75m.

The numbers are still being crunched but it looks as though the Autumn Statement has been favourable to DCC. However, difficult decisions will still need to be taken to deliver a balanced budget. Unlike a lot of central government institutions, local government has to balance our budget every financial year by law. If we do overspend, then that has to be covered from reserves or some other external income stream. If we can't, we have to issue what is called a Section 114 notice which, in effect, means the local authority becomes bankrupt.

Needless to say, a bankrupt council cannot help anyone. The £75m savings can be achieved but it will mean deep and painful cuts as the Council Leader has already outlined.

This is not a problem that is unique to Devon. It is a national issue, from speaking to colleagues across the country their budget problems are similar, and many actually are worse! Cornwall's budget deficit for next year is £62million (they are smaller than Devon), Plymouth is facing similar problems. Further afield, Norfolk County Council has a £60m budget gap for this year. Kent's is £70m.

Inflation has been the main driver for a lot of these cost pressures, with some sectors such as Highways actually experiencing hyperinflation.

#### *Non Budget Matters*

**Cost of Living Help** – Devon has received a further £5m funding to help households weather the rising costs of living, with help to pay for food, energy and other essential items. More information about this is online here - [Councils to receive additional funds to help support households with rising food and energy costs - News \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)

**Support for Children during school holidays** – Free holiday activities with hot meals are now available for children during the Christmas 2022 holidays. All children are eligible to register, although priority places will be given to children aged five to 16 years old (or four-year-olds, if in reception), who are eligible for and receiving benefit-related free school meals and their families. More information available online here - [HAF providers – Christmas 2022 – Education and Families \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)

**Devon Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy** – A public consultation is being held on the draft Devon Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy. This consultation aims to find out your views on the draft strategy and its recommendations. Information about the Strategy can be found online here - [Devon Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy - Have Your Say](#)

#### 6. Finance

##### i. Approve and sign the following cheques: -General Account.

594	Citizens Advice Bureau	£75.00
595	Torridge Community Transport	£75.00
596	Clerks salary	£700.00
597	Office expenses	£28.87
598	St Giles Hall	£220.00
599	Christmas Tree	£25.00

- i. The quote from Plandscape was discussed, Cllr Ayre declared a prejudicial interest and took no part in the discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Middleton seconded By Cllr Hookway to accept the quote all in favour.
- ii. The Precept, it was proposed by Cllr Ayre seconded by Cllr Chamings to keep the precept unchanged at £6000, all in favour.

7. Planning	P C recommendations	TDC
1/0578 /2022/FUL	Removal of condition 3 of planning approval 1/1190/2018/FUL (time restrictions) Shepherds View, St Giles in the Wood	Being considered
1/0899/2022/FUL	Conversion of a barn to holiday accommodation (Resubmission of 1/1033/2021/FUL) barn at Hill Farm, St Giles in the Wood.	Being considered
1/0930/2022/FUL	Erection of dwelling South View Cottage, St Giles in the Wood	Withdrawn
0/1063/2022/FUL	Conversion of sawmill into residential dwelling effecting the public rights of way, The Old Sawmills High Bullen.	No objections

8. Police Report i. In the last 30 days there has been one crime of theft and no calls logged, Speedwatch is difficult at this time of year due to the lack of light in the evenings it will resume in the New Year.

9. Recreation Field,

10. Correspondence i. DALC Newsletter

Date of next meeting—: **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2023 7.30pm** in the Parish Hall Parish Council meeting.

..... Chairman.....Date

Forthcoming meetings: Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023 7.30pm