

## Thurlestone Parish Council

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<p><b>Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 7:30pm held via Zoom</b></p>
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There was an open forum of 15 minutes at the beginning of the meeting to allow members of the public to ask questions or make comment regarding the work of the Council or other items which affect the Parish. The following comments were raised:

### Community Led Housing (CH)

Q At the community meeting on Jan 28<sup>th</sup> 2019, some 65 parishioners and potential parishioners were in attendance to discuss the CH project. Minutes were issued and 2 things were promised: 1) that we would all receive an email keeping us up to date with progress and 2) a public meeting to update us all as progress was made and prior to site approval. Neither of these two promises have been met to my knowledge. This has led to a suspicion amongst some parishioners that the PC has a hidden agenda and are attempting to by-pass the procedure to get development in unsuitable areas. Surely Community Housing can find an acceptable site without letting the land owner dictate what he/they put on offer for his/their own benefit and not that of the Community? Will council agree to meet their commitments of January 2019 please?

Q Why has Thurlestone village not had any proposal for community housing, which is a laudable development? We have two sites unoccupied as I write. We have bus service, school, pub, brilliant shop and post office etc. tennis courts the lot. Near enough to the beach, which seems an important ingredient. It would seem a fine choice.

A It was explained that landowners were approached and any land that may be suitable for affordable housing was put forward – no sites in Thurlestone were on offer. The need is for 6 affordable houses to buy and land in Thurlestone was simply not available. The NP Housing Working Group had started talking to landowners as far back as 2016. The PC will be looking at Thurlestone for affordable rentals in future, though SHDC is looking very closely at the existing 47 affordable rentals before thinking about building any more. It was agreed that it would be good to have more younger people in Thurlestone to help address the age imbalance.

Q What about the land behind the church?

A It was explained that this is not on offer.

Q If there isn't a suitable site then the project shouldn't go ahead. We should stop the project because we only have one site.

It was explained that a large majority of responses have been returned in favour of the Bantham site which shows that this is suitable.

*The meeting convened.*

**Present:** Councillors Rhymes (Chair), Munn, Mitchelmore, Marshall, Williams, Crowther and Hurrell  
**In Attendance:** Helen Nathanson (Parish Clerk), County Councillor Gilbert (from 8.10pm to 8.18pm), District Councillors Pearce and Long, and 12 members of the public

1. To receive apologies.

There were no apologies.

2. To receive any amendments necessary to Members' Registers of Interests.

There were no amendments.

3. To confirm the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020. The Minutes will be signed once the Coronavirus restrictions allow.

It was resolved to approve the minutes of 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020.

4. To consider any matters arising from the Minutes.

The following matters arose:

#### Public Question Session

Response to a question asked about the allocation of moorings in the river:

'The Bantam Estate had responded to the Council's request regarding the allocation of moorings.

The Estate had explained that the wait list for the moorings is maintained in chronological order and that when one becomes available, then the next person on the list is offered it. Historically, they said they had tried to give local residents priority but that it had proved impracticable to apply and would now be too complicated from a legal perspective. They also assured us that the wait list arrangements are completely transparent and while the list itself cannot be shared due to data protection, any queries should be raised with Estate Manager Ryan Hooper who has day-to-day responsibility for the harbour and its management.'

A question was asked about how the PC will assess the votes on the voting cards on the subject of community housing. It was explained that the community-led housing is a parish-led initiative and the Parish Council will support what they believe is best for the parish. When making their decision, Councillors will take into account environmental, topographical, ecological and highways issues, as well as residents' comments and likely development costs, since the housing must be affordable.'

5. To comment on the following planning applications and works to trees:

1665/20/HHO Higher Furlong, Warren Road, Thurlestone, TQ7 3NT

Householder application for 3no. dormer windows, external alterations, and erection of detached garage to rear

The application was discussed. Cllr Mitchelmore had spoken to the neighbours in the property behind and they are very concerned about light pollution from the new windows and are not sure why the garage needs to be so large. Cllr Crowther described how the applicants are not extending the footprint as they are replacing the existing extension. They are not changing the Arts and Crafts appearance of the property so it is appropriate and proportionate in design but it would be good to reduce the number of windows, which we can take a closer look at, though there is precedence for

windows in the roofs of similar properties on the Yarmer Estate. There is also a question about the number of roof lights in the new garage, which is being built as the existing one is to be incorporated into the house. The attic floorplan is missing from the documentation to show the internal layout so this will be requested. The deadline is the end of July and it was agreed to approve the final decision by email to allow time to hear any comments from neighbours.  
Cllr Pearce agreed to request the attic plans from the Planning Officer.

1787/20/TPO   Grove Cottages, West Buckland, TQ7 3AG  
A1-5: Ash x5 - Removal as trees have ash die back

There was discussion about the need to remove the trees and the evidence for ash dieback. A report has been produced by a tree surgeon to accompany the application and this provides the recommendation for removal of the trees. The SHDC Tree Officer will check this as part of the application process and it was agreed that, if ash dieback is present, then the trees will have to be removed. Supported.

1785/20/TPO   Grove Cottages, West Buckland, TQ7 3AG  
FA1, FA2: remove x2 fallen alder branches (exempt works); LA1: Reduction of alder and branch on East side over pond raised beds by approx. 15 metres; LA2: Reduction of alder and branch on East side over neighbour's summer house by approx. 15 metres.

The applicant, Ruth Hatton, was allowed to speak to clarify a point. She explained that this application responds to previous advice given by Cllr Mitchelmore that, if the alders were to be trimmed rather than removed, this would be supported.  
The PC supported the application.

1714/20/TCA   All Saints Church, Eddystone Road, Thurlestone  
T1: Holm Oak - crown reduction by 1.5/2m on east side to reduce pressure on union and likelihood of further failure, installation of bracing system to help support remainder of the union. T2: Corsican Pine - crown reduction by 2-3m on east side to appropriate growing points due to heavy stem lean.

The Parish Council supported the application subject to permission from SHDC as the church is in a Conservation Area.

**6.** To discuss residents' comments about the two possible sites offered by local landowners for community led housing which were publicised in the June-July edition of the Village Voice and to make a decision which site the Parish Council wishes to promote for community led housing.

Cllr Rhymes explained that he thought the responses were very positive and he thought we should go ahead.

Cllr Williams said that the CH group on the PC had worked very hard to get the project going and it had been very challenging. She considers that we have done our best through all the public meetings and consultations and that she has spoken to lots of people locally, including children of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation local families, who are the people who would benefit from this housing. She doesn't want to stand in the way of people being able to buy their own homes and a project like this could have benefits in the future as the children may want to do the same in years to come and this will

benefit the community. She has been told that many years ago there were around a dozen occupied permanent homes in Bantham and along with the estate cottages which number around 17, this made the village more of a community but those homes which were principle residence are now second homes and just 19 out of 48 homes in Bantham are lived in all year round. If we are representing the community and the majority is giving us a clear remit to support this site in Bantham then that is what we should do.

Cllr Crowther had asked for some informal initial feedback from a quantity surveyor and the AONB Unit Manager to find out what they think about the West Buckland and Bantham sites. She thought this would be helpful for councillors when considering their decision. The responses are 'without prejudice' and any application would, of course, be subject to a full planning application:

On the West Buckland site, the Quantity Surveyor made the following observations:

i) His main concern was the gradient and the Devon bank that is approx 5m high. This would not only mean digging out a large quantity of material with considerable disposal costs, but also having to form retaining walls of 5m high or more along the back and down the side of the site. ii) A better option would be to have the properties raised up 3 or 4m above road level and form a new longer access road, moving the entrance much further to the right and taking additional land to do this. iii) In terms of cost, housing build rates would usually be around £1,600/m<sup>2</sup> based on overall floor area of the property. This rate would exclude roads or general site infrastructure. The rate can vary considerably depending on quality and any specific planning requirements. If faced with excavating material and retaining walls (as above), then there would be a considerable cost in preparing the site that could run to £200k - £300k, which would mean adding another £460/m<sup>2</sup> to the cost of the properties (approx. 30% uplift).

The Manager of the AONB Unit made the following observations about the sites:

He emphasised the statutory duty to have regard for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the South Devon AONB and the general planning policy criteria that must be met.

i) West Buckland: A steep, undeveloped hillside of a secluded valley, mainly wooded in character that would need to be accessed through a Devon bank, require significant underbuild and re-profiling and would result in the introduction of development away from the existing linear built form of the village on the other side of the valley. Development of the site in any form would not conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.

ii. Bantham: If approached as roadside development and subject to a series of caveats including appropriate design and use of materials to reinforce positive local distinctiveness, limited residential development could in principle be read as a natural extension of the existing linear built form of the village. Critical to the success or otherwise of a scheme would be a landscape character led sympathetic response to the treatment of site boundaries, the relationship with the road, role and appearance of the development in forming a new gateway into Bantham village. Views of the site across the AONB from the SE and SW would need to be mitigated using appropriate landscaping including boundary features, to help conserve the natural beauty of the AONB. Any scheme at this site would need to provide further biodiversity and landscape improvements to enhance the natural beauty of the AONB. Careful consideration should be given to the design of any housing to avoid massing and ensure sufficient variation with different rooflines so as to echo the character of the existing built form and to ensure it reinforces the distinctive character of the area.

Cllr Marshall endorsed what Cllr Williams said and thought her observations were spot on. He said that he was very worried that this has taken so long to get to where we are – he believes very firmly that the worst decision is no decision and that it is high time we took one.

Cllr Mitchelmore asked about the possibility of building bungalows instead as they would sit lower in the landscape. There is a precedent for this at Island View. Cllr Crowther said that this would take up too much land.

Cllr Munn was concerned that no one had mentioned that this is land that the Bantham Estate has previously looked to build on and that, with the Prime Minister declaring that he is tearing up the planning rules, we need to be aware of this.

The Parish Clerk explained that she had taken advice from Devon Communities Together, which supports and leads CH projects, and they reinforced that there is no statutory or legal framework around consultation for CH and that what the PC has done is aligned with the nature and frequency of what they would do when leading CH projects. Cllr Crowther gave the numbers for people attending the previous CH meetings, which are as follows: 65 people at the first meeting, 9 at the second and 40 at the third. This is in comparison with the number of people reached with the VV leaflets, which is 418. She thanked all those in the parish who took the time to respond and make their views known.

Cllr Rhymes reiterated that he was happy that the PC had done everything properly.

Cllr Hurrell expressed his concern at the site and its connection with the Bantham Estate but said that he did not want to stand in the way of CH.

Councillors held a vote to decide to approve the Bantham site for community led housing.

Cllr Munn - Against

Cllrs Rhymes, Crowther, Mitchelmore, Williams, Hurrell and Marshall – For

It was therefore approved.

Cllr Crowther emphasised that the project must be 100% affordable housing and that the PC must be involved with the design, bearing in mind what the AONB unit advised.

**7. To note the reports from District and County Councillors and to ask any questions arising.**  
The reports were noted.

Cllr Pearce

Cllr Mitchelmore thanked the all the waste services staff for providing such an efficient service throughout the lockdown and he wanted that to be passed on to them. Cllr Pearce said that she would do this.

Cllr Long raised the matter of public toilets. He felt that SHDC worked hard to get the toilets open across the District, especially in the coastal areas. They are being cleaned and looked after very well and many other districts have not got theirs open yet. Cllrs agreed and thanked SHDC for doing this. There is a new HLF-funded project which is being led by Devon Wildlife Trust called Saving Devon's Treescapes. There are five areas in Devon covered by the project and one covers the Thurlestone ward area. The project will run initially for 5 years and will involve working with landowners, farmers etc to increase tree and hedge planting and maintenance. Schools and communities will also be involved. Cllr Long sits on a Landscape and Ecology Resilience programme so he is keen to flag up this project.

Cllr Gilbert submitted a written report, which was noted. He drew attention to the latest DCC Covid Bulletin which contained lots of info about the local outbreak management plan: in the event of a Leicester type outbreak in Devon, DCC will manage it.

Cllr Mitchelmore asked about the roadworks outside Modbury – this is a complicated problem and even the engineers themselves don't yet have the solution. It is likely to be a longer term issue.

**8.** To receive updates about Parish matters, including but not restricted to: Highways, Parish Hall, Trees, Litter Bins, Toilets and DAAT Landing Site.

Cllr Marshall asked how the installation of speed signs in the villages was getting on. Cllr Williams has been collecting the materials for putting them up. Cllr Rhymes offered to help with this.

There are signs of roadworks being prepared from the top of Clanacombe Head all the way to Chapel Cross. This will be investigated.

The Parish Clerk has contacted the Bantham Estate about illegal parking by the church in Thurlestone but has not yet had a reply – she will follow this up. Cllr Rhymes made the point that parking is a real problem particularly in Thurlestone and that he would not want to be too prescriptive about it, provided that residents are not blocked in, which has been happening. All agreed that they also do not want more signs littering the area.

To note the update from the Parish Hall Committee – see Attachment to Item 7.  
This was noted and the Parish Hall Committee was thanked for submitting it.

To note that play parks and areas will be open from 4<sup>th</sup> July.  
This was noted.

A request has been received from a resident regarding the two mirrors that have been erected at Aune Cross to aid road safety. He asks if it would be possible to erect two further mirrors on the opposite side of the road: the other road from the farm is used by residents, farm vehicles and delivery vans and pulling on to the main road is very dangerous as there is no way of seeing traffic. Cllrs agreed that the mirrors were useful. Cllr Rhymes will have a look and see if one new one would make a difference and, if so, the PC will pay for a new one which he will install.

Cllr Rhymes said that to date, litter and dog bins have been kept emptied and in good order and the thanked SHDC for this.

SHDC was thanked for getting the toilets opened and this has been well received.  
Andy has cleared the undergrowth around the blocks free of charge, for which he was thanked.

DAAT landing site – the area has been cut and is fit for purpose. A discussion was had about who should have responsibility for maintaining the site and councillors were happy to pay for cutting it if the landowner wants this. Cllr Rhymes will speak to him and find out what they would prefer. The Parish Clerk will check with DAAT to see if there is a minimum standard required.

Cllr Marshall gave an update about the Covid helpline, which has been and still is running very successfully. It is now quite quiet but still being used for requests for help or to talk. It costs £6 per

month for the phone and he asked for approval to keep it running, which all councillors approved. Thanks were passed on to the helpers and Cllr Rhymes said that, when things had returned to normal, there would be a big get together to thank everyone who had helped within the community. A question was asked about thanking the village shop for their contribution. He agreed that this was a good point and thanked the speaker for making it. He thought that there were many, many people like this to be thanked and that it would be done collectively in time to come.

## 9. Accounts

- To receive and note the Internal Audit Report for 2019/20.  
The Internal Audit Report for 2019/20 was received and noted.
- To approve the Certificate of Exemption for 2019/20  
The Certificate of Exemption for 2019/20 was approved.
- To approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Statement for 2019/20  
The Annual Governance Statement for 2019/20 was approved.  
To approve the Accounting Statements for 2019/20.  
The Accounting Statements for 2019/20 were approved.
- To note the bank account balance of £21,457.04 to date 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020  
This was noted.

At this point Cllr Munn took over as Chair because Cllr Rhymes lost internet connection.

- To approve the following payments:

Helen Nathanson	Parish Clerk pay	£615.60
	Stamps	£8.40
	Printing	£3.49
	Zoom Pro-licence	£14.39
Sue Crowther	NP Expenses	£32.18
Margaret Houghton	Mobile phone for parish helpline Apr-Jun 20	£29.00
Julian Lee	Grass Cutting	£270
EDF Energy	DAAT Landing Site	£24.95
<b>Total</b>		<b>£998.01</b>

The payments above were approved to a total of £998.01. The following additional payment was also approved:

Paul Martin	Repairs to phone box	£20.87
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**10.** To note the date of the next Council Meeting which will be held remotely on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2020 at 7.30pm.

This was noted and the meeting ended at 9pm.

Councillor Rhymes  
Chair

County Councillor Gilbert

#### COVID-19

Devon is 146<sup>th</sup> out of 150 areas at risk in England. So at present very low risk.

As at 30<sup>th</sup> June there were now two positive cases per week.

The government has placed responsibility for local Covid-19 outbreaks with upper tier authorities. Devon (DCC) has an advanced 'Local Outbreak Management Plan' LOMP in place, should it be necessary.

#### ECONOMY.

About 30% of workers in Devon have been furloughed or made redundant, with up to 90% in tourism.

Tourism = 5.5% of Devon's economy and employs 12% of the workforce being about 63000.

DCC Economy (my portfolio) is working hard to restart, regrow and reset the economy with the main sectors being

Tourism, Retail, Construction and Agriculture food & drink.

#### BROADBAND.

Mobilisation of new CDS Devon and Somerset contract set for early 2021. There are six lots to tender individually or as a group.

There is plenty of interest with contract completion by December 2024.

BT Gainshare has provided £6Million to date which has allowed an additional two thousand hard to reach properties to be connected. The take up has been 65% as against the national average of 61% which has improved the Gainshare monies.

Libby Simmons of Bentham has been in touch and am trying to help resolve a defective BT pole issue.

Still no more news on Edmeston traffic lights since my last update to you on 12<sup>th</sup> June.

Rufus

DCC Cllr. Rufus Gilbert

Cabinet Member Economy & Skills



District Councillor Pearce

**REPORT to Thurlestone Parish Council for the meeting on Monday 6 July 2020**

With the Season officially opening up on 4<sup>th</sup> July, it might be useful to report on where we are in Devon with COVID-19, in order to reassure residents, now that second homes can be used and everywhere is likely to be very busy, at least until the schools reopen in September. The rates of infection in Devon generally, and in the South Hams in particular, are very low at the moment, with only one positive test in the whole of Devon in the last five days (as at 30 June). Track and trace, when needed, should work well here. Local councils are well versed in the system from tracking other infectious diseases, and there are excellent relations between the local public health officials and Public Health England, which means that more and better data will be shared. Very surprisingly, this apparently relies on a trust relationship between the agencies. That between the South West and the centre is said to be the best in the country.

Relaxation of lock-down rules originally started before the spring bank holiday in May and the beaches were very busy for a number of days then because of the fine weather. South Hams opened all their beach car parks and their public toilets as possible so that day visitors could access the beaches, but nothing much else was open. Notices were placed in all car parks and on social media advising people to pay in advance by the Ringo app so no cash would be involved. Contrary to local fears, there has been no apparent increase in Covid cases since that date. The Thurlestone toilets opened on June 23<sup>rd</sup> as part of a phased reopening programme, and as arranged, are being cleaned by SHDC.

There has been much in the media about chaos on beaches, with isolated complaints from residents. South Hams beaches have been very busy on some days when the weather has been fine. The day after the last parish council meeting, I spoke to our MP Anthony Mangnall to ask if the government was going to do anything about imposing social distancing or limiting access to beaches. Nothing has materialised on this from central government, so I have done some research myself as to whether the situation is any worse than usual. So far, particularly as far as Bantham is concerned, access has never reached higher parking figures than those recorded in past summer days – notably lower than on record days in the 1970s and '80s, and many dates since. Whilst there has been a lot of traffic in the lanes, this can in no way have endangered local people as far as infection is concerned, because all cars have parked up on the beach car park. The question of emergency service access remains the same as ever. For real emergencies, the Air Ambulance could be called out.

Both the Bantham and Thurlestone shops have remained open, and they have regulated access well and within the rules and provided a very valued local service. The Golf Club 'overflow' car park has been well used on busy days, as has the Links car park. There have been a few instances of parking on the road outside the Links car park and it is to be hoped that the County Council on-street civil enforcement officers will be persuaded to come round at appropriate times, and when necessary visit Bantham too, but this is not within the District Council's remit.

I hope all this will reassure residents, because it is very important that the visitor economy should be allowed to open up so that businesses that rely on tourism are able to operate as near normally as possible within the rules and regulations, in order that the economy of the area does not fail. It will no doubt be very difficult for many and some may falter, but let us wish them all well, welcome the visitors and wish everyone a good summer and as good a time as is possible whilst respecting social distancing and the remaining emergency regulations.

As regards other matters: South Hams will be passing an emergency budget in September. We are still hoping for more relief from central government, as our income streams have been badly hit by the pandemic. In particular, the collection fund has suffered, where legislation makes us pass on the percentage of council tax we collected last year to the County Council and blue light services this year, even though we may be collecting substantially less than last year because many people are seeking discounts or arrangements because of severely reduced incomes. Since we only retain about 9% of the amount collected, the shortfall can present us with a cash flow problems. Whilst the situation is not rosy, we do have some reserves, so we are not expecting not to be able to balance our budget whatever happens, unlike some other councils, even nearby in Devon, where the situation is much more serious.

Finally, the planned improvement in waste collection and recycling is having to be postponed until the spring, because of delays due to the emergency in rebuilding the depot in Ivybridge, delays in the delivery of the new kerbside recycling vehicles and containers, and Christmas now getting in the way of an earlier, but still late, roll out of the service, which had originally been planned for September.

The ramifications of COVID-19 will no doubt haunt us for some time yet. Once again, I would like to thank all the volunteers and the local shops and businesses for all they have done to help and sustain parish residents through this difficult period, and to reassure you that your superlative efforts have not gone unnoticed and are very much appreciated.

Judy Pearce, Ward Councillor and  
Leader of South Hams District Council

30 June 2020