

**Minutes of the Fremington Parish Council Meeting
Held on Monday 2nd December 2024 at 7pm at the Beechfield Centre,
Beechfield Road, Fremington**

Present: Cllrs S Kingdom (Chairman), S Adams, J Bridgeman, J Cann, D Dixon, D Harris, S Haywood, C McCormack-Hole, B Sherborne and H Walker.

1 Member of the Public
Cllr C Norman, North Devon Council
Cllr C Lever, North Devon Council
Mr E Smlatic, Co-option Candidate
Mr P Duffy, Co-option Candidate
Mrs V Woodhouse, Executive Officer

2412/08

Apologies

Cllr F Biederman, N Denton, it was agreed to accept Cllr Denton's apologies for the foreseeable future.

2412/09

Declarations of Interest

None.

2412/10

Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman thanked Cllrs for their attendance at the Remembrance service.

2412/11

Public Participation Period

A member of the public spoke in favour of planning application 79375 as the Agent and explained that it was a sustainable development in a sustainable settlement. The Parish Council has declared a housing crisis and the proposed development would provide 30% affordable and could be completed within three years. The developer has engaged with DCC as the Highway Authority and there would be a new footpath, extension of a 30 MPH zone, traffic calming and a new crossing. They would retain and enhance the ecological interest in the site with a 10% net gain in biodiversity and there would be financial contributions and no impact on the parish.

2412/12

Minutes

It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 4th November 2024 as a correct record.

2412/13

Committees

To receive, and adopt the minutes, and note the decisions therein, of the following Committee meetings:

- Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting held on 26th November 2024

It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to adopt the minutes and note the decisions therein of the minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on 26th November 2024.

2412/14

Co-option

The two applications for Co-option were circulated prior to the meeting. The applicants were invited to provide a short five-minute presentation and answer any questions.

Cllr Lever entered the meeting at 7.07pm.

The Chairman proposed and it was unanimously agreed to vote via a Secret Ballot.

Mr Duffy received three votes.

Mr Smlatic received seven votes, and it was therefore **resolved** to Co-opt Mr Smlatic to the Parish Council.

2412/15

County and District Councillors' Reports

Cllr Norman – Roundswell Ward

Cllr Norman reported that the central team at NDC has been asked to prepare a monthly bulletin that Cllrs can give to town and parish councils, NDC will be charging a premium Council Tax for second homes from the 1st April 2025, the joint local plan is being reviewed and there is a review for the Public Space Protection Order for the Pannier Market.

Cllr Walker/Cann - Bickington Ward

Cllr Walker reported that NDC will be charging 200% Council Tax for second homes and NDC is currently working on its draft budgets. The recycling centre is on track and should be finished by February 2025, the improvements will enable the centre to be more efficient and take more waste which will help to increase the recycling rates. Selladoor who manage the theatres is in a better financial position than it was this time last year and they are working hard to bring national shows to the area.

Cllr Cann reported that NDC has added to its fleet of vehicles and the Public Space Protect Order is on a three-year cycle and a public consultation is held at the end of this cycle on whether or not the Pannier Market should remain closed at night.

Cllr Lever – Devon County Council

Cllr Lever apologised for not having been able to attend meetings, but they have clashed with prior commitments. Cllr Lever reported that DCC will need to find an extra £13.5million pounds on top of what has been budgeted for salaries following the Government's changes to employer National Insurance contributions and living wage increases. The maintenance contract for highways ends in 2027 and is currently being reviewed there are five models being considered including bringing the service in house. The backlog to repair the current potholes is £200 million and it is recognised that repairs need to be of a higher quality, so they last longer. During the Tough Choices consultation in 2010 it was agreed to cut the depth of the top dressing on the roads which has a lifespan of 10/12 years and is now reaching the end of its lifespan. Cllr Lever encouraged everyone to report

any issues via DCC's website.

Cllr Lever reported that those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) are entitled to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), there is currently a backlog of 1200 at a cost of £17,000 each, therefore a cost of £20million to clear the backlog. 38 councils across the country signed up to the Government's safety valve agreement but to release the funds associated with the agreement the Council has to not overspend and improve services. DCC needs to save £10million a year to help pay towards the £160million overspend and services will need to be cut. Ofsted inspected Children's Services and rated as inadequate at the last inspection and for the last five years, changes have been implemented including a new Director of Children Services, and another inspection has taken place, but DCC do not yet know the outcome of the inspection.

Cllr Lever reported that the Combined County Authority which is proceeding means that there will be a restructure of Devon County Council and the North Devon Council as a result.

Members thanked Cllr Lever for her in depth report and Cllr Lever and Norman left the meeting.

2412/16

Membership of Committees

- a) To appoint two members to the Environment and Community Committee. It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to defer the appointment.
- b) To appoint one member to the Parks and Open Spaces Committee. It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to appoint Cllr Smlatic.
- c) To appoint one member to the Tews Lane Committee following the. It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to appoint Cllr Dixon.
- d) To appoint one member to the Fremington Quay Management Committee. It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to defer the appointment.

2412/17

Parish Council Representatives

- a) To appoint a representative to the Fremington Quay Environment Group.
- b) To appoint a representative for Plastic Free North Devon.

It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to defer the appointment.

2412/18

Budgets and Precept

A recommendation was made from the Finance and Personnel Committee to increase the precept by £1.33 based on a Band D property to allow for continued increases in running costs, including the Government's amendments to employer National Insurance Contribution Rates.

Members were informed that North Devon Council has decided to charge a premium for Council Tax on second homes from 1st April 2025, it was suggested at the recent Parish Forum that parish and town councils could

use this towards a project and agreed to review once the number of second homes had been confirmed

Members considered the recommendation and the draft budgets, and it was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to accept the recommendation and increase the precept for 2025/2026 to £310,985.76 for the initial calculation and review once the tax base and impact of second homes has been received, with thanks to the Executive Officer for keeping the increase to below inflation.

Cllr Adams left the meeting at 8pm and did not return.

2412/19

North Devon Council - Planning Applications

North Devon Council, the determining Authority, has asked for comments from this Parish Council on the following applications:

It was formally noted that participation of the Councillors who are also members of NDC in both the debate and subsequent vote (in respect of any of the below), were preliminary and on the basis that the views expressed were made on the information available at the time to the Parish Council. The District Councillors were reserving their final views on the applications until they were in full possession of all the relevant arguments for and against.

79375 Proposal: Outline planning permission for residential development for up to 220 dwellings, a local shop up to 390 square meters (Use Class E), with landscaping, access, public open space and associated infrastructure work (All matters reserved except access)

Location: Land North of Old Bideford Road, Barnstaple

It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary and one abstention from Cllr Walker, to recommend REFUSAL, the development is outside of the Local Plan, the local infrastructure is not of a standard to support the development without significant improvements to the sewage system and pumping station, the highways and secondary schools in the local area are fast running out of space, along with Dr surgeries with a local surgery already oversubscribed and a lack of dental care in the area. Development of the parish has already reached saturation point and this development would create oversaturation of the parish. The site claypit land and will add to drainage issues in the area.

If the North Devon Council is minded to approve the application then there needs to be more pedestrian crossings on the Roundswell side of the Roundabout and a continuous walking route with dropped kerbs for those with less mobility or prams to get to the school and a good amount of laybys and bus stops, along with a Section 106 contribution to bring the drainage on the Queen Elizabeth II Playing Field, Tews Lane up to standard.

2412/20

Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Council Meetings

Members were informed that there is a consultation to enable remote attendance and proxy voting at Council Meetings. Concerns were raised

that remote meetings could lead to a detachment from communities and about the loss of interactions, it was also noted that it would be useful in certain situations to support inclusiveness and in emergencies.

It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to respond to the consultation to confirm that the Parish Council is supportive of members being able to attend hybrid meetings to enable Cllrs to attend remotely in emergency situations, members would not wish for this to become a regular way of Cllrs attending but would consider individual cases if required. Members were not in support of Proxy Voting.

2412/21

Neighbourhood Plan

A report was circulated to members prior to the meeting. It was recommended by the remaining member of the Steering Group and the Administration and Projects Manager that following advice from the Planning Authority the Parish Council does not move forward with the preparation and submission of the Neighbourhood Plan (FNHP).

It was noted that in order for the FNHP to move forward there is still a significant amount of work. NDC has confirmed that the Parish Council would need additional technical input as well as revisiting the previous community engagement work, due to the amount of time since the original data was collected and the dynamic of the Parish has changed considerably since the plan was started. A Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the development plan for the Parish. In addition to writing the document, the Parish Council will need to submit evidence to justify the inclusion of the policies as well as preparing several background documents to demonstrate that the plan meets the required basic conditions. All of which will be examined by an independent examiner, a referendum can only take place if the examiner recommends that the plan should proceed to this stage. Councils are facing a significant increase in housing numbers and the pressure for development the parish has faced in recent years is likely to increase. The only way to minimise it would be to allocate housing sites within the plan, this would not only be a significant amount of work, but it would also require further technical expertise, which would incur further costs.

Members felt that there was a considerable amount of work still required to take the plan forward a significant amount of further funding required. Members expressed their thanks to everyone that had worked on the plan to date especially Mr Jury and the Administration and Projects Manager.

Cllr Bridgeman reported that Braunton Parish Council presented at the recent Parish Forum on its Neighbourhood Plan and the conclusion was that for the cost and amount of time taken there was not the benefit. It was agreed that the Parish needs a strategic plan/vision for the next 10 years with achievable and costed goals.

After discussion it was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to not proceed further with the Neighbourhood Plan but to use the information gathered and the review of the strategic review to create a cost business

plan for the Parish Council.

2412/22

Councillors Questions

Cllr Harris asked why the play area in Aspen Grove is blocked off, it was noted that this is not a Parish Council managed area and suggested that Cllr Harris contacts the District Cllr.

Cllr McCormack-Hole asked what is happening to the bus services? She explained that they are turning up as they should, and onward connections are difficult. It was agreed to invite Stagecoach to a future meeting to discuss further.

Cllr Kingdom asked what was happening with Brannams Car Park.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Signed Dated

DRAFT