

**Minutes of the Meeting of
LONGHOPE PARISH COUNCIL
held online on Monday 15th March 2021**

PRESENT: Cllrs. S Collins (Chair), G Nicholas, A Toomey and T Beard

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr I Barrett (Clerk), County Cllr. B Robinson and 8 local residents

1. There were no apologies for absence.
2. There were no declarations of interest.

3. Public Forum

A local resident expressed concern as to vehicles speeding along Church Road and asked if the village, as a community should be doing something. The resident noted that the figures in the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2021 as to the number of vehicles registered by the Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) and exceeding the speed limit were incorrect and asked that the record be amended. In addition, the local resident asked if the figures were to be published elsewhere going forward. Cllr Nicholas stated that he had recently assumed responsibility for the VAS and would look to posting these. The data had been forwarded to the local Police Community Support and possible traffic calming measures would be discussed with Highways.

A local resident noted that Item 7 of the agenda was to discuss footway accessibility in the village. The resident stated that along Church Road the pathways were narrow and in a poor state of repair. Considerable concern was expressed that should the pathways be widened this could result in the grass verges being removed which would take away and spoil the character and history of the village. It was also observed that the pathway from the housing estate towards the church had been narrowed by the banks and hedges encroaching the footway. It was therefore felt that should the footpaths be widened for accessibility - and the local resident fully supported such action - then this should be achieved by widening towards the bank, and not taking away the grass verges. This viewpoint was fully supported by the Council.

At the last meeting of the Council an application from All Saints Parochial Church Council for a grant of £200 towards maintenance of the churchyard was refused. A local resident stated that many villagers were unhappy that the Council had declined to support the request. It was explained that the Council had sought advice from the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils who had stated that it was illegal for a Council to contribute towards the upkeep of an open churchyard. The local resident countered that they had also sought clarification from the Diocese who in turn stated that such a contribution was possible but according to the clerk this was furnished as an opinion. It was pointed out that the Council had previously afforded a modest contribution towards the maintenance of the church and that this had now been stopped. The Council accepted that this had previously happened but it had recently been brought to their attention that this was unlawful. However the matter could be reviewed.

The assistance of the Council towards Covid-9 relief was challenged. A local resident stated that it was advertised at the previous Council meeting that the Longhope Emergency Fund had not been used and suggested that this was perhaps due to the

church supporting a local food bank. It was asked if the Parish Council could work with the church to support the food bank with perhaps a donation. It was further emphasised that if the Council had monies available that it should go out of its way to help. Cllr Collins stated that nobody had approached the Council for assistance and that opportunities had been widely publicised. The local resident felt that the Council had not been sufficiently proactive in advertising the assistance available, such as, for example, putting a notice on the Parish Notice board for those residents who did not have access to electronic media. It was pointed out that for the last 12 months the matter of providing help had been devolved to the Longhope Volunteer Group and it was only very recently that the Council had assumed responsibility.

A question was asked about the newly acquired dual waste bins which would be a depository for both normal rubbish and dog waste. It was confirmed that the current (red) dog waste bins would be removed and that the new bins would be placed at various locations around the village and emptied by the Handyman.

County Councillor Robinson Report

Cllr Robinson reported that the County Council Budgetary Meeting had sat and that the County Council tax had risen by 4.75% and the District Council tax had risen by £5, which represented an increase of around 3%. The County Council tax rise included a social care levy.

Cllr Robinson stated that he had recently attended the Adult Care Scrutiny Committee and that it had been noted that residents in care were still contracting Covid-19. As an aside it was noted that vaccinations do not stop Covid-19 in totality but lessened the effect. Cllr Robinson considered that during the period of the pandemic the focus had been on physical requirements of adult care and that perhaps emotional wellbeing had been overlooked, particularly towards those who had been in isolation.

The Economic Scrutiny Committee had recently been attended by Cllr Robinson. There is a team which is providing assistance to businesses struggling due to Brexit. It would seem that Gloucestershire businesses were not fully prepared for Brexit; the team has had more to do than originally conceived and therefore were not able to provide the full support that they would have wished. Cllr Robinson expressed concern that funding for the team is cease at the end of March 2021 and that there is no plan as to a way ahead to provide support. It should be noted that the effects of Brexit not only impact on those directly importing and exporting, but also on many other businesses.

Cllr Robinson stated that he was pleased that grant for the play equipment had been received and looked forward to seeing it when it was on site.

Cllr Robinson stated that he had a meeting scheduled with the lead flood officer which would be the first meeting of those key agencies who would be addressing the future flood risk for Longhope.

Cllr Collins noted that each year there had been a tax rise for the Police and Crime Commissioner and challenged the value that was being obtained. The view of the Commissioner is that the police need full support however Cllr Robinson encouraged voters to examine what is required of a Police and Crime Commissioner. That said, Cllr

Robinson expressed the viewpoint that the police are in the front line of social care as they will be the first responders to any incident.

Finally, Cllr Robinson noted that central government has provided more funds to Councils than had been expected and as a consequence a rise in taxation could increase Council reserves. It was further noted that all Covid-19 expenditure had been covered by central government.

A local resident noted that those running the foodbank had every opportunity to contact the Council for assistance and moreover considered that it was quite correct for the Council to advertise that the playground had been made a much safer place for the children.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 15 February 2021 were agreed as a true record with the exception of the figures from the VAS which were to be amended. The minutes would be signed when conditions permit.

5. Planning

The planning report had been circulated to Councillors. The planning application considered were as follows

P0028/21/DISCON. Latchen, Land Off Old Monmouth Road. Discharge of condition 12 (tree protection measures) of planning permission P1307/17/FUL

When previously presented to the Council planning application P1307/17/FUL received no objections. The clerk reported that a local resident had written to the District Council raising an objection to application P0028/21/DISCON. A copy of the letter had been sent to the Council but due to the lateness in receipt, Councillors had not had time to review the submission. It was therefore agreed to defer a decision until Councillors could study the contents of the letter.

[Afternote. After considering the application and the local resident's letter, the Council did not raise any objections.]

P0431/21/TCA Coglean Cottage Old Monmouth Road. Reduce the height of one multi-stemmed (8 stems) Thuja to 3 metres in line with the rest of the existing hedge.

No objections raised.

P0352/21/AG Farmstead Adjacent To Lonehead Little London Longhope. Application for determination as to whether prior approval is required for further details. Prior notification for the erection of a steel framed portal building.

No objections raised.

P0333/21/AG Mayhill Lodge Yartleton Lane May Hill. Application for determination as to whether prior approval is required for further details. Prior notification for improvements to access track.

It was decided that a site visit was required to assess the requirements of the application.

Proposed Diversion of Longhope footpath DLH39

The formal consultation had been initiated for the diversion of a footpath on the former Richard Read site, such that the footpath skirted a building, rather than the going through the building itself. The Council previously had no objections at the informal consultation stage. No further objections were raised.

6. Members' Reports

A local resident from Little London had contacted Cllr Toomey to inform her that a footpath crossing the access to the property was being broken up by water from a neighbour's watercourse. The local resident had been put in contact with the County Council representative who was responsible for footpaths.

Cllr Toomey reminded the Council that historical footpaths had to be registered by 2026 otherwise they could subsequently be extinguished by landowners. Cllr Toomey stated that a bridleway in Veldthouse Lane and a footpath were being registered.

Cllr Toomey also reported a site visit, along with Cllr Nicholas, with a local resident who is experiencing issues with accessing the village due to her disability. The local resident was accompanied as she undertook a circular route around the village. Church Road proved to be a concern due to poor condition particularly between the Wend and the Church, soft verges were crumbling, banks had encroached on the footpath and in certain areas the camber made using a wheelchair very difficult. In some places manholes had become displaced and could be considered a trip hazard. Of particular difficulty was the ability of a wheelchair to negotiate the displaced barriers at the end of The Willows where it meets the Latchen, which was particularly exacerbated by the camber on The Willows. It was accepted that these barriers were intended to prevent children or cyclists coming out of The Willows straight onto the Latchen, however it was felt that a similar safety measure could be instituted by means of a kerbside railing on the Latchen, and thus allowing the barriers to be removed. Cllr Robinson opined that the removal of the barriers and erection of a kerbside railing could be the responsibility of the County Council, but he needed to seek advice on this matter. Cllr Robinson considered that a survey of all the footpaths in the village could be useful but this would need Highways involvement. It was further considered that the footpath at the bottom of the Latchen needs resurfacing and a dropped kerb could easily be incorporated to ease accessibility for wheelchair users. The overall conclusion reached that a plan had to be formulated in concert with Highways. Cllr Robinson asked that the work required be quantified and prioritised and that he would progress the matter with Highways. A small fund exists entitled Highways Local, and County Councillors can negotiate monies from the fund to accelerate minor projects, such as pavement improvement. That said, Cllr Robinson cautioned that the funding for this particular budget had been reduced.

Cllr Nicholas reported that he had been in discussions with Highways concerning flooding matters in that although the storm water drain chambers were clear, a blockage could exist in the pipe between chambers which would result in a backup of water in a period of heavy rain if the outfall to the brook was impeded. An example was quoted of a brick obstructing the pipe between Church Road and Latchen. As the drain chambers were relatively clear Highways would not undertake any interim pipe clearance until the next scheduled jetting. Cllr Robinson stated that he would take the matter up with Highways.

Two allotment plots had been recently vacated and would be offered to those next on the list.

Cllr Nicholas had met with a representative to discuss Electric Vehicle Charging Points and was awaiting the outcome of the report and a feasibility study.

The Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) had been moved to the top of the Latchen. Of the incoming traffic 222 were exceeding the speed limit by travelling between 31 and 35 miles an hour; 20 vehicles were recorded as driving between 36 and 40 miles an hour and 2 were registered as between 41 and 45 miles an hour; no vehicle speeds greater than this was recorded. This aggregated to 11.135% of all vehicles entering the village were exceeding the speed limit. Outgoing, 167 vehicles were recorded between 31 and 35 miles an hour; 11 between 36 and 40 miles an hour and one between 41 and 45 miles an hour. This equates to 8.58% of vehicles leaving the village exceeding the speed limit. The sign has been adjusted such that the VAS does not register at a lower speed and at speeds over 35 miles an hour the VAS illuminates with the caption 'Too Fast'.

Cllr Nicholas reported that the dual waste bins were being installed and that arrangements had been made for the handyman to empty these.

Cllr Beard reported that she had been contacted by residents of Brook End about vehicle parking causing an obstruction and in one case had prevented a resident receiving their delivery of heating oil. This issue had been previously reported in November 2020. It was emphasised that there was little the Council could do in this regard, however the clerk was to contact Police Community Support Officer to ask if Brook End could be included in regular patrols.

7. To Formally Approve Street Trading Licence Application Variation (Retrospective)

A variance to the street trading licence under application F/20/000349/STC allowing Made Without Gluten to trade in Longhope at the bottom of the Recreation Ground adjacent to Church Road had been previously verbally agreed. The matter was endorsed in Council, for record purposes.

8. Longhope Parish Council Safeguarding Policy

A draft Longhope Parish Safeguarding Policy, written by Cllr Nicholas, had been previously circulated to Councillors. The policy was unanimously adopted without amendment. Cllr Nicholas agreed to be the Safeguarding lead for the Council.

9. Accessibility

It was considered that improvements were required to village footways to improve access for those with a disability. This item had already been addressed in Members Reports (Agenda Item 6).

10. Annual Parish Council Meeting

It was necessary to determine a date for the Annual Parish Council Meeting. The clerk noted that it was a legal requirement that the annual meeting of the Council must be held

in May in all but ordinary election years. In an election year the meeting must be held on the fourth day after the date of the election or within fourteen days thereafter. The third Monday of May which would be the usual date for the Council meeting is the 17 May 2021 which satisfies the necessary parameters to accord with an election date of 06 May 2021. The 17 May 2021 was therefore to be the date of the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

11. Annual Parish Meeting

The clerk reminded the Council that the Parish meeting must assemble annually between 01 March and 01 June (Local Government Act s9(1)). The clerk noted that the regulations that allow local authorities to hold meetings remotely apply to local authority meetings that are required to be held, or held, before 7 May 2021. This means that, without any further action from the government, all local authorities including local councils must return to face-to-face meetings from 7 May 2021. However, this ruling was being challenged in the light of the ongoing situation. It was therefore decided to defer the selection of the date for the Annual Parish meeting until the next meeting of the Council, when the situation may well have clarified.

12. Award of Contracts

Two contracts had received tenders and the details of these had been circulated to Councillors. The first was that for the demolition of the redundant bus shelter on the A40. This contract was awarded to 4 Seasons Worx.

The second contract was for the minor grass cutting in the village comprising Brook End, Latchen Room Grounds and the strips in front of Meadows End. Two tenders had been received however the clerk was asked to revisit the schedule of work with the contractors to include the strip of grass in front of the allotment fence. Some discussion ensued as to whether the village Handyman could include this grass cutting within his duties.

13. Purchase of Play Equipment

The Council approved the purchase of play equipment, a ramp structure with slide and a wheelchair carousel the total cost being £17,828.94. It is to be noted that this purchase has been mainly funded by a County Council grant secured by Cllr Robinson.

14. Clerk's Report and Correspondence

- Public Rights of Way. Notification had been received of the need to register by 01 January 2026 any footpaths which do not appear on the definitive map. Failure to do so could result in landowners extinguishing the paths. This point had already been brought up during Members Reports (Agenda Item 6).
- Grant to GP Surgery. The GP surgery in Mitcheldean had received the grant from the Council in memory of the late Mr Stanley Stevens. Although no formal ceremony had been conducted acknowledgements and thanks had been posted on social media.
- Sheep Liaison Group. The secretary of the Sheep Liaison Group (SLG) had written to all Parish Councils to inform them that as in previous years there is an opportunity for non-members to address the SLG in the matter of running sheep in the statutory Forest, should there be a requirement so to do. Due to the current situation the SLG is

not conducting meetings, however any areas of concern should be addressed to the secretary of the SLG.

- Marie Curie. A request had been received from the Marie Curie charity for support to Marie Curie and their Great Daffodil Appeal. The Council unanimously considered that this was a worthwhile cause and agreed to a contribution of £50 to the Appeal.
- Tree Felling. The clerk reported that he had received two 5 Day Notices for the felling of trees; one for a tree at Little Court, Church Road and the other for a tree at Kiln Wood Stables. The 5 Day Notice procedure is used for trees that are dead or dangerous, making them exempt from Tree Preservation Order and Trees in Conservation Areas regulations/procedures.
- Election Timetables. The clerk advised the Council that the timetable for the forthcoming elections had been published and was available if required.
- Diabetes. The Gloucestershire Diabetes Prevention Programme had contacted the Council and wished to publicise its free service for those who are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- Area Behind the Latchen Room. A further approach had been received by a local ecologist who wished to initiate a project to create a community orchard in the ground behind the Latchen Room. Whilst being grateful for the continued interest the Council did not feel that this was the right moment as alternative plans were being considered for the area. In addition, due to the reduced number of Councillors it was not possible to take on another it was not possible to take on another venture. In addition, there was some concern as to a possible financial commitment.

15. Finance

The following invoices were approved for payment:

Ian Barrett	Salary – March 2021	436.48
Paul Sims	Salary – March 2021	230.00
Merlin Waste	Dog Waste Collection, March 2021	156.00
Smiths Waste	Provision of waste facility	70.32
Ian Barrett	Refund of printer ink purchase	32.00
HMRC	PAYE	789.20
PATA	Payroll Services	47.55

The clerk noted that the payment to HMRC would be paid in the next Financial Year.

The monthly financial report was received and approved. The end of year forecast was made on the basis of projected spend.

16. Next Meeting – Monday 19 April 2021 at 7pm

Signed:.....Chairman. Date:.....

Clerk to the Council: Mr Ian Barrett, The Barn, High Street, Blakeney, Gloucestershire, GL15 4DY
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