

Meeting of Black Torrington Parish Council

To All Black Torrington Parish Councillors,

You are hereby summoned to attend a Parish Council Meeting of Black Torrington Parish Council, which will be held on Tuesday, 5th December 2023, 7:00 pm at the village hall for the purpose of transacting the following business.

In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 members of the public are welcome to attend, contact the clerk for details of how to do this.

D Osborne

28/11/2023

Members of the press and public requiring access to any of the documents mentioned in this agenda are asked to contact the Town Clerk (electronic links to documents are provided where available).

AGENDA

1. **To receive and accept apologies** (Please make any apologies known to the Parish Clerk)
2. **Declarations of Interest** - To receive declarations of personal interest and disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda.
3. **Parish Council Minutes** - To approve and sign the minutes of the Black Torrington Parish Council meeting held on 10th October 2023 and the October Extraordinary Meeting as a correct record.
4. **Public Question Time** - At the discretion of the Chairman, to receive questions from members of the public relevant to the work of the Council. Matters raised may be added to future agenda. Answers may be given in writing.
5. **Clerk & Councillor Reports** - At the discretion of the Chairman, to receive reports from Councillors (Parish, District, and County) - for information only.
6. **Coöption of New councillor to fill a vacancy outstanding since the May elections**
7. **Action List, matters arising from the minutes:**
8. **Website maintenance and content provision.**
9. **Future projects for the parish council/strategic plan** What do we want the PC to achieve next year
10. **Finances**
 - Bills to pay, cheques to be raised
 - Grants to be agreed
 - S137 to ratify payment of £150 to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal
 - Grant to the Local Citizens Advice

Grant to Holsworthy Community Transport

- To consider a donation in remembrance of Rev. G Mathews

11. Black Torrington Playing Fields

- Playing field committee report
- Tree to replace the horse chestnut that died.

12. Planning

- **Torrington District Council are determining authority has asked for comments on the following applications:**

Reference number: 1/1126/2023/AGMB

Description: Prior notification for the change of use of agricultural building to 1 no. dwellinghouse and associated building operations under Class Q

Location: Agricultural Building At Grid Reference 246705 104126 Black Torrington Devon

Reference number: 1/1073/2023/FUL

Description: Construction and operation of a pumping station including access and landscaping

Location: Land At Grid Reference 246582 103711, Highampton, Devon

Any planning application which is received after this Agenda is published may be discussed here though no formal agreement can be made.

- **Does the parish council still believe that it should have a published policy for commenting on planning applications and calling extraordinary meetings.**

13. Correspondence

14. To confirm January 9th 2024 as the date of the next parish council meeting

15. Close

Minutes of Black Torrington parish council's December meeting

Held on 12 December 2023 at 7.00pm In the Village Hall

The meeting started at 7:00pm

Present:

Cllrs M Moulton (Chair), M Down (MD), E Heesom (EH), P Mills (PM), C Lock (CL), W Frost (WF) and A Pallatt (AP). For part of the meeting M Hall (MH)

In Attendance:

Ward Councillors P Hackett (PH), 1 member of the public (MoP) coöpted onto the committee during the meeting and the clerk

1212/1 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from County Councillor J Morrish, Ward Councillor S Gibson and Councillor T Reeve

1212/2 Declarations of Interest

None

1212/3 To confirm minutes for the October 2023 parish council meeting and the October extraordinary meeting.

The minutes will be signed as a correct record by Cllr M Moulton after the meeting

1212/4 Public question time

There were no members of the public present following the coöption of M Hall

1212/5 Clerk's and Councillors' announcements

Ward Councillor

Ward Councillor Hackett reported that he has called in to committee the planning application in Victoria Road discussed at the October extraordinary meeting. The call in has been judged valid should the determining officer be minded to approve the application.

Parish Councillors

Councillor Moulton commented that there was a need for affordable housing in the parish.

Councillor Down asked what PH thought the chances of the application being refused were. PH could not answer.

Clerk

The clerk reminded councillors that some of them are still being asked for their declarations of interest by Torridge District Council ('TDC').

The clerk reminded himself that he should give a list of site passwords for services used by the parish council ('the council') to the Chair

1212/6 Coöption of New councillor to fill a vacancy outstanding since the May elections

It was proposed by the chair and agreed without dissent that M Hall should be coöpted onto the committee. He then took his seat as a member of the committee

1212/7 Action List, matters arising from the minutes:

Regarding the worn drain cover in Broad Street

The chair has been in contact with both Devon Highways and the Water Board regarding the worn drain cover. Neither organisation is interested in replacing the cover. It was suggested that the council could replace the cover or put sand on the existing cover but there was some concern as to whether this might lead to some liability if there was a further accident.

1212/8 Website maintenance and content provision

Councillor Heesom has been researching requirements for parish council websites and options to meet those requirements with help from AP and the Clerk. EH circulated a review paper to all councillors before the meeting (Appendix 1).

It was agreed that having meeting the statutory requirements by having a site hosted by TDC was the most pragmatic option. The clerk will investigate how this might be done.

1212/9 Future projects for the council/strategic plan

It was agreed that the budget should include a chair's allowance of £200 a year

The clerk reported that the council's computer will need replacing in the next few years so a fund should be built for that purpose

The chair suggested that the land by Rose Cottage could be used for parking. The clerk confirmed that the council does have the power to buy or rent land for that purpose.

Councillor Frost suggested that swift boxes could be bought and installed as nesting sites could be lost to development

1212/10 Finances

• Bills to pay, cheques to be raised

The following payments were agreed:

1. Black Torrington Village Hall £42 for 2 meetings in October and the current meeting
2. Parish Magazine Printing £223.40 to print the latest BT & Chilla Times

• Grants to be agreed

S137 to ratify payment of £150 to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal

It was **resolved** to grant the Royal British Legion £150 using powers available under s137 of the Local Government Act (1972) ('LGA')

An interim amount of £120 has already been paid so a further payment of £30 will be needed.

Grant to the Local Citizens Advice

It was **resolved** to grant the Citizens Advice £75 using powers available under s137 of the LGA

Grant to Holsworthy Community Transport

The Holsworthy Community Transport has recently gained a Big Lottery Fund grant so is more secure. Last year it asked for a commitment from Parish Councils to give £500 a year for 5 years but that is no longer needed.

It was **resolved** to grant the Holsworthy Rural Community Transport £200 using powers available under s137 of the LGA

• To consider a donation in remembrance of Rev. G Mathews

It was **resolved** to grant the Friends of Blake House Surgery £100 in remembrance of the Rev. Mathews

Councillor Frost has ordered a plaque for a bench on the playing fields.

1212/11 Black Torrington Playing Fields

- **Playing field committee delegate report**

There will be a Playing Field Committee ('PFC') meeting next week during which a discussion will be held to decide where the tree to replace the dead horse chestnut tree will go

A 'Songs in the Park' event will take place on the 19 December

- **Tree to replace the horse chestnut that died**

The PFC will chose a location for the replacement tree. Several whips will be planted behind a fence and after 4 or 5 years the best will be selected.

1212/12 Planning

- Torridge District Council the determining authority has asked for comments on the following applications:

Reference number: 1/1126/2023/AGMB

Description: Prior notification for the change of use of agricultural building to 1 no. dwellinghouse and associated building operations under Class Q

Location: Agricultural Building At Grid Reference 246705 104126 Black Torrington Devon

Reference number: 1/1073/2023/FUL

Description: Construction and operation of a pumping station including access and landscaping

Location: Land At Grid Reference 246582 103711, Highampton, Devon

The council does not wish to comment on either of these applications

- Does the council still believe that it should have a published policy for commenting on planning applications and calling extraordinary meetings.

Councillor Mills reminded the council that it was agreed by the last council that they would not respond to planning applications as a form of protest. However, it was generally agreed that there are times when the council should respond. It was agreed that the council should respond and if necessary an extraordinary meeting called if 2 or more members complained to the council about a particular application.

1212/13 Correspondence

The letter from Sir Geoffrey Cox KC MP asking for which projects the council would support to spend Levelling Up money on was briefly discussed. It was generally agreed that none of the projects were of much benefit to Black Torrington parish so there was no need to discuss it. The roads petition has been well supported.

1212/14 To confirm January 9 2024 as the date of the next council meeting

January 9 2024 was confirmed as the date of the next meeting

1212/15 Close

The meeting closed at 8:30 pm followed by much carousing and debauchery.

Website options review for Black Torrington Parish Council – Emma Heesom-Phillips

Background

The Black Torrington website was created some years ago and was created as a local resource as well as containing the standard parish pages commonly found.

In recent years some of the information has become out of date and other forums such as the Black Torrington Facebook page have become the go-to place for promoting events.

The PC recognised the need, following some enquiries about incorrect information, to review and update the current site.

There is an issue with keeping the current pages up to date, it would fall to a volunteer or need a paid role a few hours a month to audit and update.

During this process the Parish Clerk attended a website meeting and the option to have a .gov page was discussed as 'best practice for local Parish Councils.

Evaluation of similar local PC pages

1. Sheepwash: <http://www.sheepwashparishcouncil.co.uk/>
2. Shebbear: <https://www.shebbearparishcouncil.org.uk/>
3. Beaworthy: <https://beaworthyparish.com/>

None of these use a .gov domain and all have a varying number of pages and information.

Options

1. Keep a PC and local information website and update all out-of-date info on the current page.

Costs	Agency time to move to current templates, carry out maintenance £400-600 (est) EHP will volunteer to work with agency to identify edits but not ongoing maintenance
Pros	Keeps consistency. Offers highest level of local information.
Cons	Will need fairly significant ongoing maintenance to keep events pages and contact details for clubs and groups

2. Keep the current web address but strip away additional pages so only the minimum recommended are kept.

Costs	Agency time to remove pages, update onto an easier to use format that works better on mobile phone (which we believe most people would use) £600 (est). EHP will volunteer to work with agency to identify edits but not ongoing maintenance
Pros	This is the option that would need the least ongoing updates, could potentially be maintained by the Clerk and would not look out of date.
Cons	

3. Move to a .gov website or new site with existing domain with a very simple minimum page profile.

Costs	Agency time would be approximately £2000 to create the new page, design, work with ELH and clerk to obtain the domain
Pros	We get to create a new up to date and bespoke site using best possible accessibility and design Follows best practice (if we choose .gov option)
Cons	Higher costs to get started. More time needed from ELH and clerk as pages will need writing from scratch

Ongoing costs

- Hosting costs: Depending on option £0 - £150 a year
- Domain Name costs: Depending on option £11.50 to £50 a year

Recommendation

My view, for discussion, is that we should remove the additional pages that are not a statutory requirement. I spoke to a few people who had no idea BT have a website or don't look at it because it was deemed to be out of date. It seems obvious that there is too much info to keep updated and having less to maintain would help the page stay more current.

As BT has a thriving Facebook group, a parish newsletter and forums such as Time Out I believe there are existing channels to amplify things like youth club, church service dates, fun days and local services such as flu jabs – all these can be found on the local Facebook page.

It is for my fellow councillors to discuss and decide if, as the Clerk has raised, we should use this opportunity to 'future proof' and move to a .gov page.