

LONGNEY AND EPNEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY 12th March 2018

A meeting of **LONGNEY AND EPNEY PARISH COUNCIL** was held on Monday 12th March 2018

PRESENT:

Cllr. Godwin (RG)
Cllr. Russell (AR)
Cllr. Harvie (JH)
Cllr. Wingrove (GW)
Cllr. Everett (LE)
Cllr. Gill Oxley (GO)
District Cllr Stephen Davies/Stroud District Council (SD)
Clerk Nikki Leach (NL)
Sixteen residents

APOLOGIES:

Cllr. Dave Mossman (DM)

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA: Cllr. Harvie stated that the solar farm development will be at the bottom of his drive and therefore he does not feel that he can comment impartially. Cllr. Wingrove declared a potential interest in the agenda item School Related issues due to his position as a School Governor

3. MINUTES OF THE JANUARY MEETING: The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING: None.

5. COUNCILLOR VACANCY: The post of parish councillor has been advertised. Each candidate submitted a summary paragraph outlining their interest. The Chairman proposed that Louise Everett would be co-opted on to the council. This was seconded by Cllr. Wingrove. Thanks were given to all of the applicants.

6. POLICE REPORT: No updates were provided.

Action: None

7. PLANNING:

Two new applications have been received since the last meeting:

1 New Buildings – an appeal was submitted for the initial response on 05-Mar-18. The Parish Council have responded to this application. A revised application was submitted on 30-Jan-18 and is pending a response from SDC.

The Solar Farm application came through today. This will be discussed under the separate agenda item.

Updates since last meeting:

Astmans Farm – permission was granted for this application on 21-Feb-18

Action: None

8. CORRESPONDENCE:

An email has been received from a parishioner requesting access to previous meeting minutes and the councilor code of conduct. The website is not currently up to date. We are

Draft minutes to be finalised at the meeting on Monday 14th May.

transitioning ownership of the website to Cllr. Everett. A meeting is held for Monday night. Any updates required for the website are to be sent to the Clerk in advance of this meeting.

An email has been received from Geraldine Le Coint, head of planning, confirming her attendance at the Annual Parish Meeting – she has requested an early slot on the agenda. It was suggested that parishioners with specific questions should raise these in advance so that they can be provided to Geraldine before the meeting.

An email has been received regarding the working party from HMP Leyhill prison. This working group has been used in the past and was extremely successful. This will be considered by the Parish Council, suggestions included footpath clearing and litter picking, in particular clearing the sea wall.

Action: Clerk to provide an update to the parishioners regarding the planning update by SDC at the Annual Parish Meeting, this will be shared by email and social media to try and gather questions.

9. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: 412.9 million is the budget, increase of about 11 million. Local authorities are not cutting their spending. Only 4.5% increase in council tax. Increase in adult social care is a top priority as is an increase in children's services (extra 16.3 million going into this). 150 million going into roads. 30,000 is to be spent on local projects so the District Council are looking for imaginative and good projects. The money is to be spread across councils. Potentially this could be put on the agenda for discussion at a future meeting.

Action: None

10. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: Cllr. Oxley provided a quick update. Recycling calendars are no longer being provided, this is a cost initiative. They can be downloaded from the website. Anybody who cannot access the website can ask Stroud who can send a hard copy in the post. Free energy advice is available for vulnerable consumers. Available until the end of March. Run by Warm and Well, face to face energy advice to people on how to switch tariffs. Contact number 0800 500 3076. Hardwicke post office has been closed since the beginning of January. It is now up and running again. There was a problem with the lines, there has been very poor communication but thankfully the issues have now been resolved. SDC has agreed to provide a £2 million pound small business grant to develop the Merrywalks centre in Stroud.

A parishioner asked about telephone contact to certain departments within SDC, there are some internal problems. Cllr. Oxley agreed that they are aware of these problems and will feed this back.

11. VILLAGE PLAN:

- Garden Group/Equipment: No update. A reminder was given that the Parish hold a rotavator and shredder which is available to hire for a nominal fee.
- Website: A meeting has been arranged for Monday 19th March to review the updates required to the website in line with the transparency code.
- Newsletter: The next newsletter update has been provided from Father Andrew. It is not possible to distribute this at present without the updated email distribution list. Cllr. Godwin has an email distribution list for the emergency contacts. The email list was set up for sending information and so it should not be in breach of data protection to use this for the newsletter distribution. GAPTC will be sharing updates on the new data protection legislation over the coming weeks.

Action: Clerk to meet with Cllr. Everett to discuss the planned website updates.

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12. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE: The bridge in Saul will be shut from 9th April to 24th April and Sellars Bridge will be shut from 28th April to 13th May. This will cause some inconvenience.

Cllr Wingrove addressed the flooding outside Manor Farm with the property owner, the ditches were dug out and in the heavy rain last week there was no flooding so it seems that this was successful.

Action: Clerk to share the information regarding the road closures on facebook and in the newsletter. Cllr. Godwin to send this on the information email if possible.

13. VERGE MOWING: A rise of 2.7% in the charges will be made this year. An updated contract has been created with the increased costs included. There will be 2 cuts per year. The first will be between 10th and 31st May. All were in agreement regarding the revised contract and it will be signed and sent to the contractor for signature. We pay an additional amount for strimming around each item of street furniture (bollards etc).

Action: Contract to be sent to the contractor for signature.

14. SOLAR FARM DEVELOPMENT: A meeting was held at The Anchor Inn on 13th February where Elgin energy made a presentation on the proposed solar development. A subsequent meeting was held with the Parish Council and David Meehan from Elgin Energy to discuss the application in more depth. Following the meeting in The Anchor, Elgin Energy agreed to amend their application (as this was only received this evening the Council have not had time to review the details and so cannot be sure what has been included). Cllr. Godwin suggested sending a short survey to each household in the village asking whether or not parishioners are in support of the development. These will be hand delivered and hand collected to try and ensure collection of as many views as possible. It is important that the Parish Council know the views of the parishioners. Elgin energy offer a sum of money to the parish, as compensation. The sum of money will depend on the size of the solar farm as the cost is per megawatt of energy produced. On Thursday Cllr. Godwin will meet with a representative from Knight Frank who will advise the council on whether the sums of money appear reasonable and if there are any other considerations. The Parish Council have not yet discussed the planning application and so does not yet have a final decision. It was suggested that a group of trustees be set up to manage the sum of money that comes in from Elgin Energy, the Parish Council will be represented on the group of trustees, along with other individuals. Cllr. Godwin asked David Meehan if he would attend the Parish Council meeting and he refused.

A resident suggested that a referendum would be a good idea. He also suggested that a short yes/no may not be sufficient as the parishioners are likely to have questions on the application.

The Parish Council response to the planning application need to be submitted before 2nd April 2018.

The timescale for response was discussed and a resident expressed the concern that there is only one month to collate the views of the parish and respond. Cllr. Godwin advised that a 28 day period is usual to respond to a planning application. Cllr. Everett also asked if the PC could request an extension to the timeline. Cllr. Wingrove will contact the planning department in the morning and ask for an extension.

A parishioner asked about the meeting with Knight Frank, would it be possible to find out based on their experience if this will have an impact on property prices in the area following the development.

Cllr. Davies advised that the PC could request this to be put in front of the DCC Committee if there was a likelihood that this may be objected.

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The sum of money is large and it is difficult for the parish council to respond without bias unless a referendum is held to collate the views of the parish. A parishioner asked about the other benefits that the parish would gain from this. It was not clear what other benefits there will be, some local businesses may benefit during the construction phase. The option of an energy subsidy for the parishioners was discussed using the money that will come in to the parish. The energy company responded to several parishioners to state that there is no way that they would consider subsidising energy for parishioners in the village directly. Cllr. Davies suggested that other local councils have a model on how to set up the solar fund.

A parishioner requested that the development be referred to as an industrial/solar installation rather than a solar farm.

Potentially 8 lorries a day will enter the village for around 16 weeks with a peak towards the end. There will be approximately 120,000 panels to come. The lorries need to come in via Epney through Frampton due to the weight limit on the bridge and out over the Pilot. This could impact school traffic.

The acreage will cover approximately 6% of the village.

It was suggested that in order to collect the opinion of the village, we need to separate out the questions that are based around legality and fact and those which are based solely on personal opinion. It would be helpful to know if other parishes have done the same. People should be directed to the Elgin energy website if they have specific questions. It was suggested that the amount of money should be shared with people so that they can make an informed choice regarding their opinion.

Elgin put in a pre-planning application in 2016. Stroud DC were not at liberty to share this information as it was sensitive in nature. Elgin have a high success rate with their applications.

The issue of dismantling the development after was discussed as there were concerns that the energy company would walk away. There are also concerns that the majority of land surrounding the village is owned by Smiths Charities and it would be helpful if they understood the impact that this development will have on the parishioners.

The distribution of questionnaires will be shared between the parish council. It was suggested that the questionnaires be distributed, then a consultation meeting be held, then a period after for households to consider and then the questionnaires will be collected.

A parishioner asked how this development fits with the village design statement. They also stated that you cannot swap money for the countryside and asked for confirmation as to whether the land will become a brown field site after as this could alter the decision of many parishioners.

A parishioner asked if the referendum will be per household or per individual. It should be individual and will be for all those of voting age.

Action: Cll. Wingrove to contact SDC planning department and request an extension to the response deadline. Clerk to draft a questionnaire.

15. FOOTPATHS: Cllr. Godwin and Cllr. Harvie met with Sarah Macauley on 1st March. The Lapperditch footpath is still under discussion, 2 parties have requested to have this extinguished. This discussion has been ongoing for around 3 years now and has involved a lot of discussion and debate. Sarah at Amey believes that there will be objections to this from open spaces and from ramblers associations. This has been challenging. Cllr. Godwin asked the views of the parish council and asked the council to consider this as at some point soon the parish council will be asked for comment. There is no application in yet to have this closed.

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ELY11 runs around the back of Astmans Farm. 2 of the parties are happy to pay for having the footpath diverted, the third party is also happy but has not yet confirmed the financial commitment. One of the parties commented that they have been offered a 6 month temporary closure order due to the building works that will be ongoing making it unsafe for people to walk the footpath.

Action: None

16. FIBRE OPTIC BROADBAND UPDATE: There has been another outage with BT which lasted for almost a day. Cllr. Wingrove reminded the meeting that by December 2018, phase II of the Fastershire project will deliver the new high speed internet for every property that does not currently receive 30 MG or more. The new cable will come under the canal. This will also provide to the properties in Epney. It will be an intrusive development to put in. There is a pot outside each dwelling and each property will then need to pay for connection to that.

Cllr. Davies said that if you enter your postcode and do not receive an update as to when the high speed broadband will be available then please let him know as they will go back to Gigaclear. The positive news is that Gigaclear will ensure that Fibreoptic will be brought to your property, unlike BT where it depends on the exchange. A resident has commented that if you ask for compensation at the time of the outage then you will receive this.

Action:

17. FINANCIAL UPDATE:

The current accounts were circulated for review.

Account balances:

Current Account: £14,415.94

Deposit Account: £2,407.15

Invoices to approve:

GAPTC Subscription for 2018: £84.46 proposed JH seconded GW

Clerks Fees: £483.54 proposed JH seconded GW

Clerks expenses: £3.25 proposed JH seconded GW

The precept request for 2017/2018 was submitted in advance of the deadline.

Action: None

18. SCHOOL RELATED ISSUES: There have been a few comments relating to the state of the car park. The bark chippings in the corner of the car park were a by product of some work conducted at the school. They are currently occupying the place where the planings will be put to level the car park. The school are addressing this.

19. CANAL BRIDGE – PARKING: No updates.

Action: None

20. VILLAGE TELEPHONE KIOSK / DEFIBRILATOR: Cllr. Wingrove has met with the project officer who advised Frampton PC on the installation of the defibrillators. The PC are renting the defibrillators at a cost of £1400 per defibrillator from the South West ambulance service. This takes away an element of the risk. There is a cost of installing the cabinets at a cost of around £200 each. They were installed in October and so far there has been no vandalism. If there were to be any vandalism the ambulance service would replace them. Cllr. Wingrove has a contact number of who to speak to.

Action: Cllr. Wingrove to make contact and progress the discussions.

21. VILLAGE PARTY: The date has been agreed as the 19th May. The plans are moving along very well.

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A member of the village party committee asked if there would be a possibility that the parish council could consider offering a small donation. Cllr. Wingrove checked the Good Councillors Guide and this is an approved use of council funds. The party committee will discuss how much they would like to ask for and agree this with the Parish Council.

Cllr. Harvie asked if there could be a litter pick at the same time. It was agreed that this might not be practical on the same weekend but there has been good support for a litter pick on social media and so this should be considered for a separate date.

Action: Party committee to advise PC regarding the sum for donation.

22. CHAPEL: There will be a closing ceremony at the end of April / beginning of May. After that it is not clear what will happen to the chapel.

23. ELECTORS FORUM: None

Action: None

24. ANY OTHER MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION: None

THE CHAIRMAN thanked all Councillors and residents for attending the meeting. The meeting was closed at 21.09.

25. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Monday 14th May. This will also be the Annual Parish Meeting followed by the Annual Parish Council Meeting. The Annual Parish Meeting will begin at 7.30pm.