

BERE FERRERS PARISH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Full Council held in the Bere Ferrers Church Hall on Tuesday 22nd February 2022.

Present

Cllr P Crozier	Chair of Council
Cllr B Lamb	Vice Chair of Council
Cllr p Graeme-Drury	Cllr. D. King
Cllr R. Leithall	Cllr J Maciejowska
Cllr. R. Maycock	Cllr. D. Pengelly
Cllr H Rogers	Cllr C Shaw

391. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs P. Dennis and H. Peace. The Council accepted their apologies.

392. Declaration of Interests

No declaration of interests was made.

393. Chairman's Report

Cllr. Crozier:

1. All government covid restrictions were lifted on Thursday 24th February and there continue to be low number of cases in the area.
2. West Devon Borough Council have agreed on the 2022-23 budget and there will be an increase of £5 in Council Tax, which is the maximum allowed.
3. West Devon Borough Council last week debated on the current housing crisis, which resulted in 15 points being made about the Housing Emergency.
4. West Devon have found two plots of grass land totalling over 20 acres in the Walkham Valley, and they are looking to plant trees there and rewild them.

394. A discussion from Alex Rehaag, District Housing Officer on social housing in the Parish.

Ms Rehaag gave an update on the issues facing social and affordable housing in the area, highlighting that the private housing market is very difficult at present, with few affordable properties coming onto the market or affordable housing being sold off. The Council though are continuing to look for suitable affordable housing for local people, who are on the housing register.

Livewest are the main landlord for social housing and there are 175 affordable housing units in Bere Alston and 4 in Bere Ferrers.

The Housing Strategy is in the process of being updated and a number of actions attached to that have been completed.

The Homelessness strategy is also being updated and if anyone wishes to comment on that, please forward on to Alex.

The Council are also looking to help people to get on the property ladder, through various schemes, including rent to buy, shared ownership, discount market sale and further information on each of these models, if so required.

Questions from the public:

Q. What is classed as an affordable house?

It is calculated on the number of bedrooms in the property, for example if renting a 1-bedroom property, rent will be approx. £102 a week. For new housing developments, 30% of properties should be affordable housing and of that 30%, we ask that 65% be rented properties and the other 35% is shared ownership.

Q. What about people who can't afford the deposit for a mortgage?

A. There is a rent to buy scheme. People rent the property at an affordable rent rate and the difference between what they would have paid on the open market against the affordable rent, is saved towards a deposit.

Q. Do you have a document which shows where affordable housings is in the area?

A. An inactive map is in the process of being putting together which will show all the areas of affordable housing and this will be available to the public to view when published.

Q. Within the Housing strategy are you making stipulations that energy saving measures are installed?

A. There are a lot of standards that the Council ask the Developers to build to. For example, can request solar panels be installed and provide electric car charging points. The council are hoping by the end of June that all new houses with maximum their installation.

Q. There is a great need for cheap accommodation whether its rented or purchased for the younger people in this Parish, is a housing need survey being considered?

It was discussed that as the Parish Council are in the process of updating its Neighbourhood Plan, the Council will prioritise updating the area's housing need survey.

Cllr. Crozier thanked Alex Rehaag for coming to the meeting. If members of the public wish to contact Alex her email address is Alex.Rehaag@swdevon.gov.uk

395. Retiring Chairman, Paul Gentle, The Bere Alston Regeneration Partnership (Beregen)

Paul Gentle gave an update on Beregen.

- There are four new Trustees and the three existing Trustees will now retire at the end of March. The new Chair and Deputy Chair will be voted in at their next meeting on 4th March.
- Beregen have been successful in a couple of funding initiates and have recently submitted an application, which they hope will fund capital works in of renewal false/lower ceiling in the hall for installation.

There has been a review of Beregen's charitable objectives, and following this Beregen wish to organise some and community conversations, in partnership with the Parish Council.

Isobel Saxby and Stuart McQueen, two new Trustees, spoke about how these monthly themed meetings, held in the Parish Hall, on certain topics will give Beregen and the Parish Council, a direct line on what is needed in the area.

Several Councillors agreed that this was a positive and exciting proposal and the Council should engage with Beregen on this initiate.

Cllr. Crozier thanked the Trustees for coming to the meeting and thanked Paul Gentle and his fellow outgoing Trustees for their service to Bergen and all their efforts in keeping it going, especially over the last two difficult years.

396. Reports from the District and County Councillors

Cllr. Philip Sanders:

I would also like thank Paul Gentle for all his hard work with Beregen over the years.

Devon County Council will have a 2.99% increase in the Council Tax and have had to get money out of Reserves in order to balance the budget.

An extra million pounds has been budgeted to deal with drains and pot holes, an additional £29.6 million for care of adults and £17.1 million for care of children. The care of the young, old and the vulnerable uses up 77% of the Council's budget.

National Parks – The government has produced and published its response to the Glover Report. The document can be downloaded from the gov.uk site Landscape review (National Parks and AONB's Government Response). The consultation period is now open and the deadline to return comments is the end of March.

As there are some big changes for National Park being suggested, Cllr. Sanders strongly recommended that the Parish Council looks at that document and submits their comments.

The AONB of Tamar Valley are also engaging in consultations with Parish Councils and members of the public and the Parish Council will have an opportunity to participate and suggested the Clerk contact the AONB for further information.

After a complete review of the AONB, Parish representatives are now being introduced. Currently there is one from Parish representative from Calstock and AONB are looking to bring in another one from a Devon Parish. Cllr. Sanders suggested someone from this Parish be put forward. Cllr. Crozier confirmed that the Parish Council have always nominated someone from this Parish Council to attend, but have only ever been invited to their annual forum.

397. To approve and adopt the minutes from the Council meeting held on 21st December 2021 as a true meeting and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.

Cllr. Lamb proposed a correction to the minutes as Cllr. Pengelly was present at the meeting but was not recorded and Cllr. Rogers was not present, but recorded as having attended. Seconded by Cllr. Crozier.

Matters Arising **Minute 379**

Cllr. Pengelly has previously spoken to Cllrs. Crozier and Lamb regarding this minute, as he and some of those who attended the meeting, do not feel this minute represented what was actually discussed at the meeting.

Cllr. Pengelly would therefore like to ask for an amendment to that minute to the following:

Cllr. Lamb proposed that the budget be increased by approx. £800 from £69,795 to £70,520. Cllrs. King, Maciejowska and Pengelly did not disagree with the increase, but was concerned that the increase was not allocated to an unfunded item. After lengthy discussions it was suggested by Cllr. Pengelly that F & G.P should allocate the increase to an unfunded item or items. ‘

Discussions took place regarding this proposed amendment. After a lengthy discussion it was proposed that Minute 379 be amended to say that the approx. £800 extra given in the budget, should go to the next F & G.P meeting and the money then be allocated accordingly.

A vote was taken. Eight were in favour, two abstained.

398. A report from tonight's Plans & Highways Committee meeting

Cllr. Maycock gave the Council a quick report on the meeting held earlier.

Cllr. Maycock was voted in as the new Chair of the Committee. Of the four applications discussed, three were approved by the Council and one rejected.

399. Reports from recent meetings of Task & Finish Groups, F & G.P & Opens Spaces

Cllr. Pengelly gave a report on the recent meeting held and also confirmed that he has received notification that BARP can claim gift aid.

Cllr. Leithall gave a report on the recent F & G.P meeting.

400. Adoption of the Standing Orders for 2022-23

Cllr. Crozier stated that the document had been modified where necessary. Cllr. Leithall proposed adoption of the Standing Orders, seconded by Cllr. Maciejowska.

401. Adoption of the Financial Regulations for 2022-23

The Financial Regulations had already been discussed at a F & G.P Task & Finish group meeting held virtually on 18th February, with recommendation to the Clerk it be forwarded to the Council for adoption.

Cllr. Leithall proposed adoption of the Financial Regulations, seconded by Cllr. Pengelly.

402. Adoption of the Council's Risk Management Scheme

The Risk Register, Management Scheme had already been discussed at a F & G.P Task & Finish group meeting held virtually on 18th February, which recommendation to the Clerk it be forwarded to the Council for adoption. Cllr. Leithall proposed adoption of the Risk Management Scheme, seconded by Cllr. Shaw.

403. Report by Cllr. Lamb on the state of the Lady Shelly Memorial

At a meeting held on 26th January, it was brought to the attention of the Chair and Vice-Chair that the structure known as Lady Shelley's well had cracks in it and some rocks had been dislodged. It was thought to be a danger and should be repaired and reduced in height. Its ownership was not known.

After numerous inquiries and extensive search of Parish Records, it was discovered the ownership of the site was transferred to the Parish Council in 2002. Subsequently a report from BSW consulting engineers (now closed,) from July 1999, following a structural appraisal of the Well, recommended a number of actions, the most important being:

"The two parts of the structure should be tied together using stainless steel ties grouted into holes through the rear of the stonework ----"

Cllr. Lamb could find no evidence that this work had been carried out. After extensive investigation of people who worked on the project at the time, Mr B. Bonfiglio. M.Eng. of the Bailey Partnership, successors to BSW has issued the following statement:

"Certainly, reassuring that the strengthening works were undertaken. I would recommend that the vegetation is removed, cracks are pointed with a soft lime-based mortar and that any loose stones are rebidged."

Therefore, Cllr. Lamb propose that in view of the potential serious consequences, the Council's Workman removes all of the vegetation and any loose stones and a contractor (after estimates of costs) be engaged to carry out this safety work as soon as possible.

Cllr. Leithall thanked Cllr. Lamb for all his hard work. All were in agreement.

404. Discussion on resuming face to face meetings

Discussions took place. Cllr. King proposed the Council resume face to face meetings for all Committees, seconded by Cllr. Maciejowska. A vote was taken, 11 were for, one abstained.

405. Correspondence

The Clerk read out an email from the Bere Alston Fire Brigade Station Commander:

'We are writing to thank you for your support in relation to our local fire appliance. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue have taken all feedback into account and we are thrilled to advise they have confirmed we are going to keep our current appliance and not replace it with a rapid intervention vehicle. We are delighted with the outcome and I am sure you will share our joy. Once again, thank you all for your assistance.'

406. Questions from any members of the public present, at the discretion of the Chairman.

The local history group are relaunching and holding an exhibition at the Parish Hall on Saturday 12th March. Gary Lewis from the Tamar Project will be there and giving a talk.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked members for attending and declared the meeting closed at

9.10 pm.

Signed by the Chair

Signed this date 29th March 2022.