

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
OF DREWSTEIGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at 7.30pm, Drewsteigton Village Hall

Present: Cllrs Savage (Chairman of the Parish Council), Hester, Brennan, Brooks, Imrie, James, Ridgers, Redman, Rowe and the Clerk.  
Nine parishioners including representatives of local organisations.

Apologies: Bunny Johnstone, Drewsteigton Gardening Club  
James McInnes, Devon County Councillor

The Chairman of Drewsteigton Parish Council welcomed all present. Cllr Savage asked if anyone would like to hear the minutes read, declined by all. Cllrs agreed the minutes were a true record of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2018 and were signed by Cllr Savage.

**PARISH COUNCIL REPORT; Cllr Bill Savage**

A busy year started off in May with a public consultation meeting concerning a farm shop & cafe at Whiddon Down attended by a record 51 members of the public. As with most planning, the Parish Council had previously met on site with the applicant to discuss his proposals but eventually the proposal was withdrawn. This was only to be resurrected in a slightly altered form a little later in the year. When the Parish Council met to discuss and give our opinion on the proposal no fewer than 82 members of the public attended our meeting surely a record? In February this year we learnt West Devon Borough Council refused the application – we wait to hear if there is to be an appeal of that decision.

In addition to this we have been consulted by WDBC or DNP on 19 planning applications in the parish. Thanks go to Cllr Graham Hester who is our “planning monitor”.

The playing field committee under the stewardship of Alison Chapman are responsible for the running of the facility on behalf of the Council. Over many years the hedge along the road to Fingle had been allowed to grow unchecked which made maintenance difficult. Following a number of estimates the council agreed that C B Trees from Chagford should be given the job of reducing the height of the hedge and this work was undertaken in the autumn. Cllr Imrie has been working through the year with Alison and the Devon Air Ambulance trust to establish a Community Night Landing site at the playing field. We have just discussed the council’s response to the Dartmoor National Park for planning approval of the ten metre lighting pole which will be installed ready for use when the helicopter is needed at night.

With the reduction of maintenance of the roads and footpaths by Devon County Council more and more problems are being identified and quite frankly if we do not do something the whole parish is likely to be overgrown by weeds!! Thanks to Cllr Ysanne James who came up with the idea of approaching the Community Payback scheme, various locations in the parish especially Crockernwell have had a tidy up. These are offenders who have been given a community sentence by the courts.

The council were aware the Parish Plan published some ten years ago could do with a bit of an update. As the original document was researched and compiled by parishioners not the council, we

tried to recruit a new team in the summer, we did not receive one reply from any parishioner who was interested.

Cllr Graham Hester worked with Sticklepath Parish Council on a bid for finance for a Mobile Vehicle Activated Speed sign to use in the two parishes. This was an attempt to slow traffic in our villages as because of more cut backs, the police were no longer in a position to conduct speed checks and deal with offenders, most of whom are in fact locals!! Devon County Highways then put a spanner in the works by dictating where the sign could be placed, we are working on that problem.

The parish Facebook page was set up in the summer and thanks for the administration of that goes to Ysanne.

Problems were identified by residents at Sandy Park with the amount and type of traffic attending Castle Drogo in the summer with a noticeable increase in motor homes. Cllr Paul Ridgers met with residents and Drogo staff to try and resolve the issues. Subsequent problems with parking at Sandy Park preventing the Dartline bus from using the road are still being addressed. Years ago households in our villages didn't have a car or if they did they would have only had one. Times change most houses have two and sometimes more and parking of these vehicles are causing concern. Rather than taking the step of Traffic Orders and yellow lines all over the parish, the council are appealing to residents to think about where they leave their vehicle and drivers to drive to the conditions presented to them not what they might like to expect.

We wanted to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WW1 on behalf of the Parish, thanks to our Clerk Lucy who spotted a remembrance bench which was manufactured in Scotland, we purchased one and installed it outside Drewsteignton Post Office and placing the existing bench in the car park. Thanks to Cllr John Redman for fixing the bench to the ground and looking after the car park. Together with Cllr Ian Rowe they are the council "fixers" saving both time and money when simple practical jobs can be done without having to find contractors or Devon County Council to do them.

There are many unsung heroes about the parish who do their bit to keep the parish clean and tidy and our thanks go out to them. Special mention should go to Dee Douglas who looks after Whiddon Down. I would also like to thank Pauline Rowe who has looked after the Parish Post for the last ten years. Thank you to Lucy who has undertaken her duties in an efficient and professional manner despite a number of problems thrown in her direction over the year!! I would also like to pay tribute to Cllr Debi Brooks who, like me, will not be standing again as councillors in May, thanks for all the work with the playing field and car park over the time you have been a councillor. A word of welcome too should be given to Cllr Peter Brennan who has just joined us.

A previous Parish Council Chairman thought it would be nice to recognise one person in the parish each year who, in their opinion, has made a significant contribution to the parish. It is my pleasure to make this award for 2019 to someone who, in my opinion has not only made a significant contribution this year but has done so for several years. It should not be any surprise when I tell you she has already been mentioned in my report and please show your appreciation for Alison Chapman.

#### **FINANCIAL REPORT: The Clerk**

The Clerk made available copies of audited accounts for the year 2017/18 giving details of receipts

obtained and the breakdown of expenditure within the various cost centres of the council. The council made had a restrained year financially, and the current situation remains comfortable.

In June 2017 the Parish Council paid £1280.00 to have the exterior of Drewsteignton WC's redecorated and in October 2017 made a £400 donation towards the Drewsteignton Paying Field Fireworks night.

The Clerk reminded everyone that monthly and annual accounts are posted on the website, [www.drewsteigntonparish.co.uk](http://www.drewsteigntonparish.co.uk)

Alison Chapman asked if the financial year end had to be March, the Clerk replied that yes it does, 31<sup>st</sup> March is the year end for all parish councils.

### **WEST DEVON BOROUGH COUNCIL (WDBC) Paul Ridgers**

The situation is tougher for rural councils like West Devon Borough Council. We have a bigger area to cover, something like ½ area within the M25, which costs more, but less people paying Council Tax to cover the costs. In fact we only have approximately 22,000 homes to raise tax from.

In terms of sparsity, West Devon Borough Council is third at the top of the table of councils who are covering the largest area with the smallest population. The total amount of money we have to provide all of the services we run is £7.1 million

We were facing a major budget shortfall for 2019/20 of nearly £1 million. To reduce the shortfall in funds:

We have been fortunate to have been included in a national business rates pilot

A £¼ m saving has been received from letting the new waste and recycling contract jointly with South Hams DC

A new homes bonus grant £375,000 has been received for new properties in the Borough

Increase in income for rural councils by central government - our Rural Services Delivery Grant. Government recognises that it is harder to deliver services in rural areas where properties are spread over a large area.

Income received from property investments

The council tax from West Devon has risen by 2.99%

We have balanced our books this year and we will continue to lobby government to recognise how difficult it is for rural councils like ours, but essentially we are on our own and we have to make our money and assets work better for us in order to balance the budget in future years.

Over the year we have seen recycling levels reduce slightly 52% as a result of less paper in the waste stream. We are looking into ways of recycling more materials particularly plastics. Planning enforcement and processing has improved a little and so has the speed of call centre handling. The outreach team service is still proving popular around the Borough.

Recently we called in a Peer Review Team from other Councils via the Local Government Association, to review everything that West Devon and South Hams Councils do. This included the Councils' management and finances.

The Peer Review team gave us a good review **It stated:** "It is a credit to both Councils (West Devon and South Hams) that front line services have been protected in the main since austerity 2010... The

Finance Officer and her team have a good grip on the finances of both councils... they are to be congratulated on guiding the Council finances to this point”.

**DREWSTEIGNTON PLAYING FIELD; Chair Alison Chapman**

The Playing Field has had another very good year. Our 2 main fund raising events, the Family Fun Day and the Bonfire Night went well, although the Family Fun Day numbers were down as England were beating Sweden in the World Cup on the same day. We had a puddings night for the first time with some fabulous puddings and we will try that again later in the year.

After quite a lot of effort we finally managed to get our hands on the £1,005.61 that belonged to the old Youth Club. This NS&I account started life in the sixties or seventies and had been sitting around effectively dormant for many years. We owe a big debt of gratitude to Brian Bradford (Pauline Rowe’s brother) who was instrumental in getting us this money.

We were planning to add a nest swing to the Field, but our priority has had to be the zip wire which was in poor condition. On Saturday, while cutting bits of it down, we found that it was in such a bad state that the whole thing has now been taken down and cut up. We will need to build a new one. We have about £8K in the bank although we will be looking to raise more.

There are many people who support and help us during the year but special thanks must go to Jimmy and Chip for all the work they put in. The Bonfire Night has truly become a community event and that’s just the people helping. Without them we wouldn’t be able to put the event on, especially now that we have to ticket the event and manage the parking.

Our next event is our Family Fun Day with our unique and special water slide and that will be on Saturday 13th July.

**CASTLE DROGO; Heather Kay**

**At the Castle:**

The major conservation building work is now entering its 7<sup>th</sup> year and there is definitely light at the end of the tunnel. We have faced far more complications and extreme weather than anyone predicted, which has caused delays, but we are finally on the home stretch. The final pieces of conservation work is scheduled to take place over the next 6-9 months and work is now underway to start re-presenting the Castle as it transforms back to a family home by 2020.

Over the past winter, significant work has taken place to re-plaster and paint some walls and ceilings providing a high standard base for the presentation of the collection to take place. We are delighted to have the Drawing Room and Dining Room back on display ready for the start of the new fully open season but further work will continue throughout the year in front of the public.

Also over the winter, the garden team have re-landscaped the path which leads from the Visitor Centre down to the main drive. We worked with the team at Living Options Devon to design a path which is far more accessible and easier for people with mobility difficulties or who use a wheelchair. Feedback from visitors has been hugely positive.

We are exceptionally proud of the work we have been able to do over the past six years and it has only been possible through the incredible support from the local community. Thank you to everyone in their parish for all the support we have received and we are delighted to invite everyone to a free

locals open day on Wednesday 10 April from 11am until 3pm.

### **On the Estate:**

#### **Work completed/ongoing**

- The thinning work has been completed by Euroforest in Rectory woods, improving the condition of this PAWS (Plantation on an Ancient Woodland Site) area. Some of the timber is still to be uplifted by them down near Fingle, Ton Wood is chasing them to ensure it is removed. Once it is gone a contractor will be working in the woods making good the tracks.
- We have recently performed a soil survey of some of our land around Drogo, as well as that of some of our immediate neighbours in order to get some context, using local soil specialist Tim Harrod. Many thanks to all our neighbours/ parishioners who helped with this and apologies to those who were inconvenienced. The results will be out in due course and will be shared with our neighbours and the parish council.
- We are continuing with work on Piddledown common, new fencing allows us to graze ponies on the common for a longer period of time, we have also done a fair amount of scrub and small tree clearance on various sites on the common. This will continue next winter. The long term aims are to push back some of the tree cover at the edges of the common, and improve the structure of habitats within it. If you haven't already, get up to the common on a May evening and listen out for the Nightjars.
- We welcome dogs on the estate but we continue to have challenges with dog poo being left bagged in inappropriate places, the National Trust would be grateful if all local dog owners could bag and bin their dog poo or flick it with a stick to get it away from paths. More worryingly we are seeing an increase in deer and sheep disturbance by dogs either out on their own or off a lead whilst the owner is walking. Both of these actions are not only illegal but cause huge amounts of suffering to the animal concerned and financial loss to the owner in the case of livestock, any local people seeing this can report it to us via the castle or straight to the DNPA who have a dedicated livestock welfare officer who can take further action if we know the owners of the dogs in question.

#### **Upcoming works**

- We will be undertaking some presentation improvement work around Fingle Bridge prior to the influx of summer visitors. We might also look at trying to tackle the problem of inappropriate parking at the end of Shute Lane.
- We will be thinning the big beech trees along either side of the main castle drive in the next couple of years, they are long overdue for this.

#### **CHAGFORD SCHOOL; Not represented**

#### **PARISH LANDS NON-ECCLESIASTICAL CHARITY; Chairman George Gillard**

There has been some work carried out with the installation of a heater in a bathroom although the installation of a wood burner was declined by the committee. The same three tenants are in situ.

**DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY; Not represented**

Cllr Savage explained that the Cllrs walk the parish footpaths every year, and that National Park Ranger Pete Rich is always available if required, he covers a very large area.

**TEIGNTON FAIR: Not represented****WHIDDON DOWN VILLAGE HALL; Jenny Turner, Acting Chair**

Whiddon Down Village Hall have had a busy year!

In August we held a maintenance day, whereby we identified things that needed to be addressed. We cleaned, rubbed down, painted and emptied sheds. It was well supported and we achieved a great deal.

Fundraising began in earnest in the autumn to raise money for the window refurbishment. The Christmas Fayre with The Methodist Chapel, bingo and our pig racing event made enough profit to pay for phase 1 which was £1700.00. Thanks to the generous donation from Chagford Show Committee and a £2000.00 grant secured with the help of Cllr James McInnes we have enough to go ahead with phase 2. We still need a further £5000.00 to complete the project.

Thankfully we have quite a strong Committee at present, although sadly our Treasurer has tendered her resignation so this position is now vacant. Easter bingo 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019. The AGM is 13th June at 8.00pm.

Thank you for all the local support we have already received and for any help we receive in the future.

**DREWSTEIGNTON VILLAGE HALL; Alison Chapman (treasurer)**

The Village Hall is infrequently used these days and is now just ticking over. Since there is a great deal of uncertainty over the Hall's future, the small committee of three people aren't really motivated to try to raise money to, say, repair the windows. We keep the Hall going and we probably have enough money to do that for a few years until something changes.

**HOLY TRINITY CHURCH; Norma Gillard.**

Services are poorly attended unless a special event ie Christmas, Easter, Harvest Festival. There is now money available and the permission granted to repair the windows. There was carol singing at Christmas, and a dead tree removed from the churchyard and new ride on mower has been purchased. A new group, the Friends of Drewsteignton Church has been started and is doing well with the first concert well attended. Thanks to the Parish Council for their support.

**FRIENDS OF DREWSTEIGNTON CHURCH; Jennifer Mullins**

This is a new group. The first concert was well attended but clashed with another big local event, Jennifer will work on ensuring as closely as possible that events are planned to fall on a free day.

**GARDENERS CLUB; Alison Chapman**

The club had a very successful year and we now have over 40 members including many from Chagford. We don't aim to make a profit, but last year we made £400 and now have over £2K in the bank. Our plant sale and the Village Show went well and we had visits to Bickham, Endsleigh Hotel gardens and Rosemoor. Meetings were also well attended.

**WHIDDON DOWN METHODIST CHURCH; Margery Wonnacott**

There have been many meetings but no big decisions. The Good Friday concert was well attended with the Church nearly full. Services are held fortnightly. There are five members of the Church and as the amount required to stand alone is six the Church will amalgamate with Tedburn St Mary Methodist Church, with finances shared. The hope is that services and events will carry on unchanged.

**NEDCare: Julia Darby**

NEDCare was formed in 2015 after Moretonhampstead Hospital closed and there was not enough ability locally to deliver regulated care in the area. This is a Community not for profit organisation and is owned by the Moretonhampstead Development Trust. NEDCare covers 200 square miles and provides 600 hours of care each month, employing 20 carers. 60% of the care is locally funded. The Moretonhampstead Hospital League of Friends left a legacy on their disbanding, to provide care for those who cannot afford it – this is now being sued and funds are dwindling. They are aware that they are meeting only one third of the demand. NEDCare pays well and provides training, and flexible working. There is a group Friends of NEDCare.

Cllr Savage asked Julia to confirm that NEDCare provides care in the home and Julia replied yes, via social services, NHS and private, and were not for profit.

**PROVIDENT SCHOOL TRUST: Jennifer Mullins**

Provident School Charity for Young People (PSCYP)

At the recent Trustees meeting:

Jennifer Mullins was welcomed as a Drewsteignton PC nomination

Confirmed award of £250 to support a pupil on an educational trip to Mumbai

Agreed importance of raising awareness of Charity through annual Chagford coffee morning and organisation of events to publicise it in other parishes

Organise leaflet and banner for PSCYP for use at events and wider distribution:

**Draft text for leaflet for Provident School Youth Fund**

Provident School Youth Fund supports young people in Chagford, Drewsteignton, Gidleigh and Throwleigh. The Fund is administered by The Provident School Charity for Young People and makes grants to individuals and organisations for educational, sporting and cultural activities such as:

- Support for education and training events and programmes
- Apprenticeships
- Sports equipment purchases
- Contributions to school visits and exchanges
- Assisting those with disabilities
- Music lessons and instruments

If you wish to apply for funds, please send details of your request to:

The Secretary, Provident School Charity for Young People, 2 Lower Street, Chagford, TQ13 8AZ or e-mail.

Grants are usually awarded twice a year in July and January.

The Provident School Charity for Young People was established with proceeds from the sale of Provident School, Throwleigh, date to be confirmed but early 2000's. Donations are very welcome and can be sent to the Secretary.

Provident School Charity for Young People (Reg No.), 2 Lower Street, Chagford, TQ13 8AZ

The Trust provides grants for young people up to age 25. There is £3000 per annum available, always with an educational bias.

Cllr Savage gave thanks to Jennifer and also Roger Burridge. The Providence School was saved by local Cllr Gay Hill some years ago, and is for the young people of the parishes of Drewsteignton, Throwleigh and Chagford.

**Other matters raised by Parishioners;**

Cllr Savage thanked everyone for their reports, and their continued contribution to the Parish community. He asked if anyone would like him to read out Cllr McInnes emailed report, this was declined.

Cllr Ridgers thanked Cllr Savage for his outstanding work for the Parish Council over 14 years. Cllr Savage is standing down, he was in the Police for 30 years and a Parish Councillor for 14. He said it was good to see new people standing on the council, with new ideas to take forward.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.24pm