

MERTON PARISH COUNCIL

A meeting of Merton Parish Council was held on:
Monday 5th September 2016 at 7:30pm in the Clinton Hall

Councillors Present: Tim Horner (Chair), Steve Papworth (Vice Chair), Philip Collins, Bill Brown, Robert Nancekevill and Paul Scantlebury

Parish Clerk: Zena Tett (Parish Clerk)

Also in attendance: County Councillor Andy Boyd

Absent: Councillor Chris Laughton

Business to be Transacted

46. **Apologies for Absence:** Councillor Jill Malcolm, PCSO Sandra Brown and District Councillor Richard Wiseman
47. **Welcome:** Cllr Horner welcomed everyone to the meeting.
48. **Minutes of the last meeting:** held on Monday 11th July 2016 were agreed and signed as a true record. Cllr Papworth asked the Clerk if grass cutting money had been received – Clerk to check. **Action Clerk**
49. **Declarations of Interest:** None
50. **Public Speaking Time:** None
51. **Matters arising from the last Meeting**
 - a. Speed Sign and Community Speed Check Equipment update: C. Cllr Boyd to check status on who maintains and repairs the speed signs. **Action C. Cllr Boyd**
 - b. Projector: Cllr Collins to investigate whether or not the VH Committee are prepared to foot the cost of this at their next meeting, otherwise Parish Council may take steps to purchase their own. **Action Cllr Collins**
 - c. TAP Funding: Petrockstowe have agreed to share their funding for play equipment. Peters Marland declined as they are already working on another project. Clerk to complete and send off TAP Fund application. **Action Clerk**
52. **Community Grants:** Cllr Malcolm has applied for a Grant towards the Play Equipment Fund and the application has been signed by D. Cllr Wiseman before being sent for a decision. Cllr Horner was asked to confirm the amount applied for this scheme. **Action Cllr Horner**

53. **Play Equipment:** After much discussion it was proposed that the Parish Council applied, with the support of the Play Equipment Committee, to the Lottery Fund for new play equipment to be located on the top car park. If successful, the Parish Council would own this equipment and be responsible for maintaining and insuring the new play equipment as a public facility for the parish. This recommendation was proposed by Cllr Collins and seconded by Cllr Horner, all in favour. In addition, the Clerk was asked to investigate the position on claiming back VAT on restricted funds if the grant was successful. **Action Clerk**

54. **Broadband:** Cllr Horner met with Matt Barrow, employed by Connecting Devon & Somerset, recently and he confirmed Merton is connected to a cabinet in Beaford called Beaford 2. Unfortunately, Merton would gain no benefit from the cabinet being upgraded as the maximum distance for any increased speed is 1.5km and we are roughly 3km. Phase 1 is almost complete which means 90% of residents in Devon and Somerset now have the ability to connect to superfast broadband. Phase 2 is currently out to tender and the results will be known at the end of October with completion at the end of 2017, giving a UK coverage of 95%. For Merton, this means if the village is included in Phase 2, its residents will have access to superfast broadband by the end of 2017. The feeling of the Parish Councillors is that Merton are the poor relations to other neighbouring parishes and with this in mind, Councillors will continue to pursue broadband with the help of our MP, Geoffrey Cox and will report back to the Parish Council as and when there is any news to impart.

55. **Members Reports**

- a. PCSO Sandra Brown was absent but her report stated during the period 3rd August to 3rd September Merton and Huish have had one crime which was criminal damage to a property – Vehicle under £5,000.00. During the same period, 1 call was received where a log has been generated reporting a road traffic collision.
- b. Cllr Andy Boyd reported he had access to grant money to the value of £5,000 which must be allocated by January, Cllr Horner and Andy Boyd will communicate and discuss options.
- c. Cllr Nancekivell asked Cllr Boyd about the feedback that had been promised on the A386 near Higher Lodge. Cllr Boyd reported that due to financial pressures the project was currently on hold but as soon as funds are available it will be seen to, in the meantime, Highways are monitoring daily.
- d. Cllr Wiseman was not present but had sent an email stating if anyone wants to discuss boundaries, please call.
- e. Cllr Papworth confirmed that Steve Jennings had cut down the grass on the bank on the opposite side of the pub.
- f. Cllr Collins was concerned about the hedge near Sunnyside, towards the shop/pub, on the opposite side to Grange Lane. He says the path is considerably overgrown by brambles and now covers the path in places which narrows it, making it difficult to pass. **Action Cllr Horner to speak with Clinton Devon.** Cllr Collins said there was a similar issue on the footpath opposite pub, over the years it has encroached on the pavement. **Cllr Horner to write to Cllr Wiseman and ask what our position is.**
- g. Cllr Horner announced he had approached the Sawmills regarding cutting their hedge.

56. **Clerks Report**

- a. Correspondence: There have been several items of correspondence forwarded by email since the last Clerk's report, most of which were routine newsletters. The Clerk

highlighted a number of items sent by Torridge Council, including notification of the new proposed boundaries, the new Area Advisory Groups, Connecting Devon & Somerset update and a Parish Council & Planning Information Sessions which will take place on Thursday 22nd September 2016. The email regarding new boundaries was discussed and Councillors requested the Clerk to write back to council, strongly objecting to the suggested changes due to the historical close ties Merton holds with Petrockstowe, Peters Marland and Huish. These villages have worked together for centuries. **Action Clerk** Proposed by Cllr Collins and seconded by Cllr Horner, all in favour. Finally, the Clerk reported to Councillors that the Parish Council Audit had been returned with successful results. However, the Audit did highlight the Council holds a high level of general reserves, approximately 4 times the annual precept for 2015/16. They suggest the Council reflects upon the level of general reserves required and should consider taking steps to reduce the level of reserves in future years if necessary. The matter was discussed and Councillors agreed that these funds should be reserved for possible spending on broadband connection for the Village or play equipment if other avenues of funding fail to deliver.

- b. Pay Award 2016-2018: Cllrs Papworth and Malcolm to investigate information provided by NALC and report back at next meeting. **Action Cllrs Papworth, and Malcolm**
- c. Pension Scheme: Cllrs Papworth and Malcolm to investigate information provided by the Clerk and report back at next meeting. **Action Cllrs Papworth, and Malcolm**
- d. Data Protection: Clerk to look into this further and report back at the next meeting.

57. Planning: Councillors were concerned with the construction at Taw and Torridge main garage as it appears to be larger than the plans. After discussion and a review of the plans Cllr Horner asked the Clerk to contact Torridge District Planning Department and request a copy of the final approved plans to see if the property is being built as drawn as there are concerns on height. Additionally, Cllr Brown as the Clerk if they could advise us on tolerance levels then report back to Councillors. **Action Clerk**

58. Finance

- a. Bank Balance for the Treasurers Account as of 4th August 2016 statement was £2,212.87. There are 6 new cheques which total £256.39 and one receipt of £71.16 giving us an actual balance of £2,027.64 when these items have cleared. The last statement for the Business Bank Account was 9th May 2016 which showed a balance of £16,404.23. If Steve Jennings gives an invoice should be paid straight away.
- b. Cheques for Signature:
 - i. £14.25 – Mrs S Papworth: Expenses for attending TDC Planning Workshop
 - ii. £18.00 – Mr T Horner: Expenses for attending Chairmanship Course
 - iii. £128.64 – Miss Z Tett: Expenses – stationery and mileage for Clerks Course
 - iv. £22.50 – DALC: The Good Councillors Guide booklets for Councillors
 - v. £48.00 – DALC: Clerks Course
 - vi. £30.00 – DALC Chairmanship Course
- c. Receipts: VAT Reclaim £71.16

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9:00 pm

SIGNED AS A TRUE RECORD: (Chair)

NAME:

DATE:

Next meeting will be held in The Clinton Hall, Merton on Tuesday 1st November 2016 at 7:30pm