

South Hams District Council

The District Councillor report from Cllr Steele (copy previously circulated) was noted.

The following queries/questions were raised:

- When the District Council carry out the works on the trees along the River Erme, could they please also tackle the bamboo in the 'snail garden', off Harford Road car park
- When will the District Council be discussing the planning application for Palladium – the final application has not yet been submitted
- With regard to the Freeport for this area, members were reminded that the decision to sign up was made in March, by the previous District Council administration, and to pull out now would incur penalties

23/066

PUBLIC SECTION:

A member of the public passed around a photo of the view up the Erme to the Ivy Bridge from the 1980's, then a second photo of the view as it is now where the Ivy Bridge is hidden behind tree growth. She was pleased to hear that the District Council have plans to cut back the trees.

Members were advised that the newly appointed tree officer had suggested that work should be carried out in the summer due to the extra danger to workers when the river is in flood. However a window of no rain in the catchment area for 2 days should enable the work to go ahead safely. The request for this work has been chased for the last 4 years.

23/067

APOLOGIES: Apologies were received from Cllrs K Pringle who was working, A Rea who was away and S Hladkij who had a family bereavement – a condolence card will be sent from the council.

23/068

INTERESTS TO BE DECLARED: In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Members were invited to declare any personal or disclosable pecuniary interests. No interests were declared.

23/069

MINUTES: The minutes of the meeting of the Town Council held on 18th September 2023 (copy previously circulated) were received.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th September 2023 are confirmed as a correct record, and are accepted.

23/070

COMMITTEE MINUTES: The Minutes of the following meetings were noted:

- i. Approved Planning & Infrastructure Committee – 11th September 2023
- ii. Draft Watermark Committee – 26th September 2023
- iii. Draft Planning & Infrastructure Committee – 16th October 2023

iv. Draft Policy & Resources Committee – 16th October 2023

23/071 **TOWN MAYOR'S & DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR'S INTERESTS:** The functions and activities attended by the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor for the period 13th September 2023 to 24th October 2023 (previously circulated) were noted.

23/072 **COMMITTEE VACANCIES:** Cllr Cao confirmed that she was happy to become a member of the Watermark Committee and the Parks and Open Spaces Committee. Cllr Austen volunteered to become a member of the Planning and Infrastructure Committee, which also currently has a vacancy.

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm Cllr Cao as a member of the Watermark Committee and the Parks and Open Spaces Committee and to confirm Cllr Austen as a member of the Planning and Infrastructure Committee.

23/073 **WHITE RIBBON DAY:** The report (copy previously circulated) was considered.

It was **RESOLVED** to support the NALC White Ribbon initiative and record a short video after the meeting.

The Town Council will also take a more proactive role, for example displaying posters on toilet doors in The Watermark signposting people to where they could get help.

23/074 **SHDC CORPORATE STRATEGY CONSULTATION:** Members considered the previously circulated draft SHDC Corporate Strategy document for comment.

RESOLVED that the Town Clerk is delegated to create a response based on the following comments:

We are pleased with the strategy overall, and in particular the following points:

- How it tackles climate and housing
- The ambition set out for community services is good
- Implementing double council tax for second homes
- Lifelong learning
- Safeguarding of community assets and working with community groups
- Would like to see a commitment to partnership working with groups, forming a long-term strategy to see what support is required and help with finding funding so that community groups can plan for the future better
- The idea of solar panels over car parks, perhaps could provide a safe space for children during the evenings – more detail on the solar panel idea is required
- Pleased to see that the voluntary sector is valued so highly

General comments:

- The document is not easy to read or understand, as it is full of jargon
 - It is suggested that as the Council Climate Scores have now been released, SHDC look at areas where they could improve climate and biodiversity, to feed into the Corporate Strategy
- Members were reminded that they may also complete the consultation on the Strategy document as individuals.

23/075

CHRISTMAS DAY – MEAL AND/OR HAMPERS: The report (copy previously circulated) was considered.

The Town Clerk advised that we do not have anyone with a food hygiene qualification who is available to cook. There is also a requirement for someone (a councillor) to take responsibility for the Watermark building during the event, and no-one has as yet been identified. The Methodist Church advised that their building could also be used to host, however we would still need to find someone to cook. She went on to recommend that, for these reasons, for this year we do not organise a lunch event but provide hampers to be delivered on Christmas Day to those who are alone, then look at this again next summer.

Cllr Weeks advised that her So-Social group would be happy to work with the council again this year to help provide hampers to those who were alone at Christmas. The Town Clerk commented that this is a great demonstration of a community group working with the Town Council for the benefit of the community.

It was **RESOLVED** to provide hampers, as in previous years, to be delivered on Christmas Day 2023.

23/076

ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE ABOVE CONTRACT – VERGE GRASS CUTTING: The report (copy previously circulated) was considered.

The Town Clerk advised that the town council's contractor makes 4 cuts as per the agreement with DCC. The September cut is not late enough for the final cut as grass is still growing. The contractor has provided quotes for a final cut on the worst affected areas, on the full lengths of Cornwood Road and Woolcombe Lane. The cost to cut just the visibility splays, as per contract, would be £370 plus VAT however this would still leave large areas of long grass. To cut the whole verges on these two roads would cost £414 plus VAT each. She recommended that as this year funds are available, the verges on the full lengths of these roads should be cut.

A query was raised over the number of cuts funded by Devon County Council, and the Town Clerk understood that they used to fund 6 cuts per year but this was reduced, due to funding issues. Unfortunately, Devon County Council only offer and fund a 1 year contract at a time.

A 3 year contract would mean we could negotiate a better deal with a contractor.

The Town Clerk advised that the contract is to cut and leave, however because of the low number of cuts per year, the grass becomes so long, it forms a thatch when cut. This looks untidy and is difficult to maintain going forward.

A member asked if we could find out how often other towns cut their verges and asked what could be done to increase the number of cuts, would the precept be increased?

It was also suggested that we should take advice from those who know what the best schedule would be to encourage pollinators.

It was felt that it should be clear to residents what they can expect, and be clear as to who is responsible for what.

It was **RESOLVED** to carry out an additional cut of the full length of Woolcombe Lane and Cornwood Road at a cost of £414 plus VAT per road.

23/077

RIVER ERME JOINT PARISH & TOWN COUNCIL GROUP: The report (copy previously circulated) was considered, together with the request to agree commitment of £200 towards admin support to continue the work of the Group.

Ideally the Group would like a Town or Parish Clerk to carry out the work, however if no-one comes forward, the role would be advertised more widely. It is understood that Modbury Town Council would take the lead on employment of this role.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree expenditure of £200 from Climate Action – Events/Initiatives budget towards admin support to continue the work of the River Erme Joint Parish & Town Council group to try to improve the health of the River Erme.

23/078

UPDATES AND INFORMATION: Updates on Councillor, Officer and Community activity (copy previously circulated) were considered.

A query was raised over what the Chamber of Commerce's position is on the Palladium planning application as it is not clear from their minutes, and a statement was made by a member that it is also not clear what is happening with the application. Members were advised that it is not our place to query the content of the Chamber of Commerce minutes as they are for our information, and with regard to the current status of the Palladium application, if the planning application is amended or resubmitted it will come back to the Planning and Infrastructure Committee for comment.

The next Chamber of Commerce meeting is on 23 January, all are welcome to attend.

With regard to the Freeport briefing presentation, a query was raised on how bad the penalties would be, should SHDC pull out. Members were advised that the District Council has signed a contract in law and should they pull out, would be breaking that contract and potentially using public money to pay any resulting fines. It was also felt that the slides did not give a lot of information and it is hoped that more detail would be provided.

The meeting closed at 8.57pm.

Signed: Date: 11 December 2023