

Spreyton Parish Council Annual Meeting

28th March 2017

Introduction

Good evening and welcome to our Annual Parish Meeting. We especially welcome tonight our guest speaker, Mr Toby Russell from Devon Air Ambulance Trust, who is the Community Helipads Development Officer. Mr Russell will talk about this growing new venture for the Trust, and plans for Spreyton to have its own night-time helipad.

We are also grateful to have two of our councillors with us this evening - Devon County Councillor James McInnes, and WDBC Ward Councillor Paul Ridgers, who will talk about topical issues within their Council activities.

James McInnes was also our guest speaker at last year's Annual Parish Meeting, when he spoke about his DCC responsibilities for Children's Services, in relation to education and social care.

Chairman's Report

Parish Council

The past year for our Parish Council started tragically with the sudden death in May of one of our councillors, Martin Leonard. In his brief time on the Council, Martin

worked tirelessly on community work, being heavily involved with Spreyton School, Village Trust \ctivities, and its newsletter The Spreyton Flyer. It goes without saying, Martin is greatly missed.

We are grateful Cleave Collins subsequently joined the Council to bring us back to full numbers. Cleave needs no introduction, with his wealth of practical experience and knowledge of the parish, enabling him immediately to make an impression. Unfortunately, Cleave is unable to be here this evening, so I can say this without any embarrassment to him.

The financial position of the Parish Council remains sound, and we are giving thought to some expenditure on capital projects. A small reduction in the precept was also requested for the current year. More on this in a moment, when I hand over to our Parish Clerk, Clive Wootten, to give the Financial Report.

Now that the wind farm is operational, the forthcoming Den Brook Community Benefit Fund will also be a significant new external funding source, providing an annual allocation for our parish of some £3500 for community projects.

Examples of some capital projects under consideration include the proposed floodlit helipad joint venture with Devon Air Ambulance, self-help road safety measures,

and the possibility of a public toilet, in the vicinity of the church.

Highways

Road safety in relation to excessive traffic speed through our village has been raised again by residents. This was last examined by the Parish Council in 2013, when a joint assessment by Devon Highways and the Police showed, somewhat surprisingly, good compliance with the 30mph limit and only one recorded slight traffic incident in the previous five years.

Ideas for traffic calming were therefore discussed again with Devon Highways during a parish visit in January. Various self-help measures are possible, such as the periodic use of vehicle activated signs, but we were advised extending or lowering the 30 mph speed limit would not be justifiable in our rural situation.

Devon Highways will look into whether another traffic speed assessment can be carried out, but this may not get much priority in view of the previous outcome.

Thanks to the work of Cllr Cleave Collins, we have taken one measure to give drivers entering the village from the north more warning to moderate their speed, by moving the village sign further towards Heath.

DCC budget cuts have caused reductions in roadside maintenance work through the Parish Lengthsman

scheme. However, we have been fortunate so far, helped by constant lobbying, to have had our principal roads well maintained – examples being the extensive patching and resurfacing of the main traffic thoroughfare between Bow and Whiddon Down, and the re-structuring and resurfacing of the worst sections of Heath Lane.

Planning

Planning matters are now moving away from being heavily focused on wind turbines. The completed Den Brook Wind Farm, with its 9 x 120m blade-tip high turbines, has certainly made an impression on our parish landscape, surpassing I suspect, most resident's expectations. A further planning proposal for a single turbine near Downhayes went to Appeal last summer and was refused by the Planning Inspectorate.

As part of a Joint Local Plan being drawn up by Plymouth and South West Councils to shape the future of the area, WDBC has embarked on a series of consultations with 'stakeholders' (incl. Parish Councils and landowners), to identify sites for future housing development and environmentally important 'green sites' for protection.

Four new sites for housing development have been identified for Spreyton. These are within the village catchment, namely three plots put forward by the

landowner, along the east side of Spreyton Close, and a fourth plot proposed by SW Devon Strategic Planning, opposite Cross Meadow (unconfirmed by the landowner). The Parish Council has given feedback on these sites and its preferences.

The past year has also seen a flurry of activity under 'Prior Notification' Planning Regulations, which allow existing agricultural buildings to be converted, under strict criteria, to residential dwellings. This has resulted in a mixed bag of approvals and refusals, largely due to interpreting whether the planning application is judged to be for a 'conversion' or a 're-build'.

This fast-track permitted development is only intended to apply to existing agricultural buildings that are structurally strong enough to take the loading of the external works to provide for residential use. Some recent Appeal cases and a High Court Judgement have helped clarify this distinction.

In summary, it has been another busy and satisfying year for our Council in terms of looking after the affairs of our village and parish.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

Ken Whitaker, Chairman