

Combe Raleigh Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 9 January 2025

Present:

Mr T Dezell – Chair

Mrs S Sexton – Vice Chair

Mrs J Wardle – Clerk

Together with 10 local government electors of the Parish:

Mrs V Moran

Mr D Jackson

Mr B Churchill

Mr C Kemp

Mrs C Kemp

Mr J Brabrook

Mr M Moran

Mrs R Mapleston

Mr I Downs

Mrs E Downs

The Chair welcomed those attending on a very cold evening and wished them a belated Happy New Year.

66/2025 Apologies for Absence

Cllr I Chubb

Cllr Y Levine

Cllr C Brown

Mrs K Churchill

Mrs C Lazarus

Mr C Padget

Mrs C Padget

Mrs J Horne

Mr A Joules

Mrs M Joules

Mrs G Compton

Mrs L Clarke

Mr M Horne

Mr J Palmer

Mrs Å Bylander

Mr R Sexton

Mrs V Brabrook

Mrs H Trim

Mr S Thompson

Mrs C Thompson

Mrs G Jackson

67/2025 Minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 27 November 2024

a) Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 November 2024, which had previously been circulated, were proposed by V Moran and seconded by J Brabrook to be an accurate record of the Meeting. They were approved by the majority of those present.

68/2025 Matters arising

a) Edwards Close - the Chair reported that land purchase adjacent to Edwards Close is not possible. As a result, the current plan (subject to spend approval from EDDC) is that the Parish Meeting will fund thinning the existing hedge to widen the road and then replant hedging in behind to replace the original width. In addition, the opposite ditch would be filled with re-enforced concrete to the road level. It was suggested that the ditch repair be conducted in two stages: with hardcore of suitable diameter being added in the winter and then the concrete being added in drier months after the hardcore had bedded in. It is proposed that the CIL amount of £3,820 would be assigned to this project and topped up by Reserves if required.

Resolution: to approve the proposed works to improve the road width at Edwards Close subject to agreement from EDDC to allow the use of CIL money and to extend the deadline for CIL spend. Proposed by V Moran; seconded by B Churchill; and agreed unanimously by those present. *Action: meeting to be arranged with EDDC representatives (CIL Advisor, Monitoring Officer; District Councillor) to agree use of CIL money – see also Action at Minute 72b/2025.*

b) Church Flag Replacement – it was reported that both flags on the church are now beyond repair and need replacement. Given the current lack of Powers to make grants, the matter was put in abeyance.

69/2025 Reports by County Councillors and District Councillors

a) The reports from Cllrs Chubb and Levine had been previously circulated. Any questions could be saved for the next meeting or, if urgent, forwarded now to the Clerk who would pass on to the relevant person.

70/2025 Planning

- a) EDDC Planning Update meeting @ Blackdown House 18 Nov 2024. The Chair outlined the key points which related to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and how it's applied. CIL is applied mainly to new developments and is set by EDDC. Examples in Combe Raleigh: St Nicholas Rise; development of three properties at Kennels; proposed new property at Cory Hill (subject to appeal). CIL is passed to the local community for infrastructure projects within a time limit. Further planning seminars about the planning application process may be held in the summer subject to merger/devolution talks.
- b) Delegated Planning Powers – a recent planning application for an Agricultural Pole Barn required a single item Parish Meeting. It had been suggested to the Chair that similar items have not in the past resulted in a meeting. Given the existence of the Planning Committee, which makes recommendations to the Parish Meeting regarding applications, the Chair suggested that, if appropriate, the Committee may on rare occasions approve an application without having a Parish Meeting albeit they would seek approval from the parishioners by email.

71/2025 Financial report

- a) The Clerk noted that as both new accounts (Lloyds Bank and Skipton Building Society) are now operational, the reserves of £18k will be transferred to the interest-earning Skipton account.

Resolution: to retrospectively approve the payment of £142.19 to D Jackson for flower troughs noting this was from a DCC Locality Budget grant. Proposed R Mapleston; seconded Cl Kemp; approved unanimously by those present.

Resolution: to approve the Financial Report. Proposed by I Downs; seconded by S Sexton; approved unanimously by those present.

72/2025 Parish Meeting Powers – update

- a) In summary, the current situation is:

(i) Following discussion at Parish Meetings (PM) earlier in 2024, advice was sought from DALC on the Powers available to the PM to spend money including awarding grants under s137. The advice received (NALC Legal Topic Note 3) explained the limited number of statutory functions and Powers of a PM. NALC suggested that the PM apply to EDDC for an order (under s109 of the 1972 Act) to confer the function(s) of a Parish Council on the PM. NALC have confirmed that granting these functions would not change the status as a PM.

(ii) EDDC was first contacted in Jul 2024 about this and the final list of Powers requested was sent to them on 3 Oct 2024 for consideration at the 4 Dec 2024 Council meeting. A few days before the Council meeting, the EDDC Legal Team sent this:

"... we are unclear at the moment about the wider range of powers that you have requested. There are not many examples available of powers being conferred on Parish Meetings and all that we have found are only conferring one specific power needed for a very particular purpose. Conferring multiple powers feels a little more akin to becoming a Parish Council without being subject to the same framework of duties and democratic process etc that a Parish Council would have. We will need to take some more time to consider the further additional powers, and they will therefore not be able to be included in the report for the December Council meeting..."

(iii) NALC legal advice is that s109 gives a discretionary power to district councils to confer any functions of a parish council on a parish meeting but how they apply their discretion is their decision.

(iv) DALC have also confirmed that spending CIL money would also be contingent on obtaining the necessary Powers (inc s137).

(v) On 18 Dec 2024, the Clerk spoke with a lawyer working for the EDDC Monitoring Officer (MO). Neither EDDC nor, it would appear, DALC have much/any experience of this. The concern appears to be that our request is asking for too many Powers without the democratic processes and controls that a Parish Council would have. The MO has asked the lawyer to get more information on other PMs including what Powers they have and how they spend their Precept and CIL. There is no timescale for completion of this work. (After-meeting note: the Clerk has identified four other PMs in Devon and is trying get information from them.)

(vi) No further update has been forthcoming from EDDC.

b) The meeting agreed that, whilst recognising that EDDC staff may have other priorities, the importance of this matter to Combe Raleigh where the Parish Meeting (a direct democracy governed by each resident on the Electoral Register) is significant: any planned activity to spend money to improve community life is effectively paralysed awaiting a decision from EDDC which has no timescale. Comment was made that a relatively large number of Electors usually participate in the democratic process and attend Parish Meetings to make discuss matters and to vote on decisions. There was a strong view that a two-pronged approach to EDDC should be made: directly to the Chief Executive expressing concerns, and at a working level with EDDC officers and District Councillors. **Resolution: to write to the EDDC Chief Executive, and to arrange a meeting with EDDC representatives.** Proposed V Moran; seconded S Sexton; approved unanimously by those present. *Action: Chair to write to EDDC Chief Executive; and meeting to be arranged with EDDC representatives (CIL Advisor, Monitoring Officer; District Councillor) to agree way forward wrt Powers including use of CIL money – see also Action at Minute 68a/2025.*

73/2025 Budget and Precept for 2025/2026

a) The Clerk outlined the proposed budget for FY25/26 which, given the current lack of Powers, covered only legitimate admin costs for the Parish Meeting totaling £1190. The Clerk then outlined three options for the Precept:

- Option A: £0 'Precept Holiday' – all legitimate admin costs (i.e. Clerk salary, insurance, Annual Meeting refreshments, Village Hall hire, DALC subscription) (c£1190) being met from funds already held.
- Option B: Precept including only legitimate admin costs = c£1190 which results in a Band D property charge of £1190/109.84 (Tax Base) = £10.83pa. This increases to £21.67 for a Band H property.
- Option C: nominal sum of £100 to keep the Precept payment 'open' = c£0.91pa for Band D. All legitimate admin costs (i.e. Clerk salary, insurance, Annual Meeting refreshments, Village Hall hire, DALC subscription) (c£1190) being met from funds already held.

Following a discussion, vote was held on the three options: A – 0 votes; B – 0 votes; C – 13 votes. *Action: Clerk to notify EDDC that a FY25/26 Precept of £100 is required.*

b) The point was raised, and agreed, that the costs associated with the Raleigh Rag and the village website are also legitimate admin costs as they are the channels through which Parish Meeting communicates Local Government and village matters. After-meeting note: unfortunately, as there are specific Powers (s142) to cover these activities, the case will have to be made to EDDC.

74/2025 Combe Raleigh Logo Designs

a) Five options for the Parish Meeting logo depicting Harold, the cockerel on the church weathervane, have been kindly prepared by G Belben. These will be included in the Feb 2025 Raleigh Rag and Electors asked to vote on their preference.

75/2025 Issues reported on Clapper Lane and Combe Woods

a) Rough sleeper in Combe Woods - the Vice Chair told the meeting that she had spoken with the EDDC Case Worker and various homeless charities about the rough sleeper in Combe Woods owned by the National Trust. The Case Worker advised that the gentleman is known to them and the local Police. He said that the gentleman does not want help or support, and the advice is not to approach him. Any issues of concern should be reported to the local police on 111 (use 999 in the event of an emergency). *Action: Chair to write to the National Trust asking what action they intend to take given the regular usage of the woods by walkers and families from Honiton and the surrounding area.*

b) Reports of dogs loose – there have been various reports of two large black dogs chasing vehicles along the lane near Combe Woods. The concern is not only for vehicles swerving to avoid hitting the dogs, but also for cyclist and horse riders who may be dismounted, and pedestrians who may be distressed by the dogs. *Action: Chair to write to the possible owner of the dogs expressing the concerns of users of the lane.*

c) Reports of cattle loose – there have been various reports of cattle loose on Clapper Lane posing a danger to all road users. *Action: Chair to write to the possible owner of the cattle expressing the concerns of users of the lane.*

76/2025 Raleigh Rag

a) D Jackson told the meeting that there is still a need to recruit some help and new blood in the preparation and distribution of the Raleigh Rag. A further request for support will be made in the next edition of the Rag.

77/2025 Questions, items for the next meeting agenda, and general village information

a) The Vice Chair provided an update on the current situation at Honiton Surgery following significant water damage of the premises over the weekend of 28 Dec 2024. Patients with appointments are being contacted first and locations rearranged. The surgery can be contacted by telephone between 0800-1200. A repeat prescription service is operational. There has been no compromise of patient confidentiality. The latest situation is given on the website <https://www.honitonsurgery.nhs.uk> and Facebook page.

b) There will be a Quiz Night organized by the Village Hall Committee on Friday 24 Jan 2025. Contact Kay Churchill kay.churchill@btconnect.com to book a table for your team of six.

c) The next Parish Meeting is provisionally booked for Thursday 6 Mar 2025. The Annual Parish Meeting is planned for Tuesday 13 May 2025.

78/2025 There being no other business the Meeting closed at 2035 hours.

Tony Dezell - Chair