

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
OF BUCKLAND BREWER PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 29th SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 7:30 AT
BUCKLAND BREWER SCHOOL

Members Present: Mrs Barbara Babb, Miss Rosie Beer, Mrs Marie Douglas, Mr Andrew Hewitt, Mr George Heywood, Mr Jim Lowe and Mr David Watson.

Also in attendance Gina Finch, Headteacher of The Flying Start Federation. Trevor Cope, Hon. Alderman of East Devon Council and Cllr. Robin Julian

Parish Clerk: Patrick Blossie

KEY: Actions are shown in bold blue type Decisions are shown in bold red type

345. Apologies for Absence Trevor Mills, Shirley Tilley and Cllr. Alison Boyle

346. Declarations of Interest It was agreed that Barbara Babb and George Heywood should declare an interest in view of a covenant on the school field but that they should be permitted to take part in the debate. In the circumstances it was felt appropriate that Barbara should not chair the meeting. Jim Lowe took over as Chair.

347. Public Participation None

348. Buckland & Parkham Schools, Atlantic Coast Co-operative Trust Consultation: The Chair thanked Gina for attending the meeting and she introduced Trevor Cope, who had some experience of establishing foundation schools and was supporting The Flying Start Federation with their proposals. Gina explained that she and the school governors were looking for longevity for the Federation and were concerned that the government's present drive towards academy schools could be a threat to small schools like theirs. The Federation has allowed both schools to flourish and roll numbers are rising, but the number of pupils on the roll is the key element of the funding formula, making smaller schools less viable than larger ones. The governors feel that they want to retain control of the Federations future development and partnership arrangements. The option presented by the Atlantic Coast Charitable Trust would enable them to retain the school's identity and a great deal of autonomy within a cooperative partnership. The alternative would be for the Federation to be absorbed within a multi-academy trust where its small size and relatively poor resources could make it vulnerable to closure. Trevor Cope gave the example of 'Harris Carpets' and 'Reach' academy trusts which had resulted in 'orphaned' schools. A cooperative like the Atlantic Coast Charitable Trust would, instead, be a part of the community, retaining village schools as vital parts of their communities. Barbara Babb noted that the public meetings, although attended by quite few parents, seemed to be supportive. In response to a question from the Clerk, Gina explained that there was no risk that the school governors could be overruled by the charity trustees in the event of any conflicts. Gina also explained that the Federation would still buy in many of the support services that it currently gets from DCC, like HR, payroll and health & safety in the same way that it does now, They would still be maintained schools. However, the cooperative partnership arrangement would provide economies of scale (such as buying in cheaper training services) and a wider pool of support, skill and teaching resources when needed. The Trust is obliged to retain the freehold of the school and its assets for educational purposes only and it could not sell the school. Only the governors could make that decision. In those terms, the schools would probably be more secure than under the present arrangements. George Heywood asked about the admissions policy. Gina said that the current policy would continue but it is DCCs statutory responsibility to maintain sufficient school places. David Watson asked what would happen

if the Federation was forced to become an academy. Gina said that they would be in a stronger position to ensure that such an academy could be run on cooperative principles. Rosie Beer asked if the staff would be protected by TUPE legislation, which Gina confirmed would be the case. Marie Douglas asked about the potential size of the Trust and whether it could get so big that some of its benefits could be lost. Gina and Trevor explained that the inherent object of the partnership was to retain close links with the community and that this would ensure that it could not outgrow its initial purpose. They felt that there was no 'optimal' size but that they are now "virtually there". Jim Lowe asked about the accountability of the Charitable Trust. Gina explained that the parish council would need to contact the Governors. Jim also asked about the school field and whether any progress had been made in drawing up a lease. Gina said that her administrator, Bridget had been dealing with the matter and would follow it up. Clr Robin Julian said that he was in favour of the Federation's proposals and that he would be trying to encourage similar arrangements throughout the county. The Chair thanked Gina and Trevor who left the meeting at this point.

It was agreed unanimously that the Parish Council supported the Federation's proposal and completed most of the consultation questionnaire. The Clerk was asked to draft a suitable response for question 5 and to write to Gina Finch to thank her for attending the meeting and for her excellent presentation. It was suggested that, to forge a stronger link between the two organisations, the Parish Council should ask whether a parish councillor could be co-opted as a school governor.

349. Planning

- a. Application: 1/0110/2016/FUL, The Stable, Little Tythecott, Submerged double garage with home office and workshop and store above This application had been called in and was due to be discussed at the next Plans Committee on 4th October. It was agreed that Barbara Babb would attend the meeting on behalf of the Parish Council.

350. Late Items The Clerk explained that a number of items had arisen since the agenda for this meeting was advertised that required attention before the next scheduled meeting:

- a. S106 consultation, Land at Southwood Meadow This item had been discussed at the last meeting but the Council had chosen to make no comment because it had objected to the application. The Clerk explained that this request by the Planning Department had no regard to whether the Parish Council supported the scheme or not, but that it gave the Council an opportunity to influence the level and use of S106 monies, not only for this particular scheme, but also to establish a 'wish list' that could be used in future negotiations on other applications. **It was agreed to add the item to the next agenda for further discussion.**
- b. DALC Conference Four places had been booked for the DALC Conference on 11th October but the Clerk explained that he would not be able to attend.
- c. TDC Standards Committee Applications had been invited for non-elected representatives on Torridge Council's Standards Committee. The closing date is 12th October. Andrew Hewitt offered to apply for the post of Parish Council representative.
- d. DCC Highways Contract An ex-councillor from Holsworthy had written seeking support for her complaint about the appointment of a new highways contractor with effect from 2017. Members could see no merit in her argument and agreed to take no action.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9:10 pm.

Date of Next Meeting:

Parish Council: Wednesday 12th October 2016 (Buckland Brewer School, 7:30pm)

Signed as a true record:

Chairman: **Date:**