

LAXTON AND MOORHOUSE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of an open village meeting at 7.00 pm and subsequent Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 23 January 2018 at The Village Hall, Laxton commencing 7.30 pm

Present: Councillors:

M. Manning (Chair)
M.Hennell
J.Godson
S. Hill
R.Hennell
J.Hill
D. Brown

In attendance at village meeting:

C. Millward (Clerk)
S.Michael (District councillor)
Sir John Starkey
Patrick Candler (CEO Sherwood Forest Trust)
Residents/Members of the public (50+)

In attendance at parish council meeting

C. Millward (Clerk)
S.Michael (District councillor)
Members of the public (x2)

	DISCUSSION AND DECISIONS	ACTION
	<p>The meeting was preceded at 7.00 pm by an open meeting at which Sir John Starkey, Laxton Visitor Centre Trustee, presented to the village the possibility of the land currently owned by The Crown Estate ("the Laxton Estate") being transferred into the collective ownership of the village.</p> <p>The village hall was full. At least 50 members of the public attended.</p> <p>Sir John Starkey's presentation focused on the following in particular:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The history, constitution and role of Laxton Visitor Centre Trust and the possible need for the trust's objects to be revised if it were to become the owner and custodian of the Laxton Estate2. The conflict between the Crown Estate's obligation to produce a 5% net return on all assets and to maintain the open field system. This conflict had been demonstrated by the recent split sale of one of the open field farms which separated the land and buildings. Concern regarding the implications of that transaction and any future similar transactions had led to the parish council raising the matter with The Crown Estate3. The Crown Estate's conclusion, having liaised with interested parties and considered these concerns, was that the Laxton Estate might better be owned elsewhere.4. The current situation was unprecedented and had arisen against background of wider changes, both structural and in outlook. Essentially, these were Brexit, the appointment of Mr Michael Gove MP as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and a shift towards sustainable agriculture.5. The overriding need for stewardship meant that another individual or institution was unlikely to be suitable. Sir John Starkey's view was that the only appropriate custodian was the Laxton community itself through a charitable trust which would	

be ideally situated to preserve, strengthen and develop the historic open field system. There would need to be a decision as to whether the Visitor Centre Trust should take ownership or whether it would be more appropriate to set up a new bespoke trust for this purpose.

6. Such a method of ownership would ensure that the village was able to control and decide how best to develop and take advantage of new opportunities to build on the community's unique heritage. These possibilities included a farm shop, the scope to develop Laxton as a retail brand, to develop the Laxton Estate as a centre of agricultural education in conjunction with Nottingham and Nottingham Trent universities, to promote the area as a visitor destination and to provide a benchmark model of sustainable farming.
7. Such a scheme, whilst exciting, would need a great deal of help and support to bring into being. There would need to be extensive consultation with the Court Leet, farmers, residents, relevant local authorities, the universities, MPs and councillors.
8. As regards finance, although the scheme would be eligible for Heritage Lottery funding, that would support development costs only but would not extend to the acquisition cost. Funding for this would need to be raised elsewhere. There would also need to be negotiation with DEFRA for a contract to deliver a sustainable farming benchmark. Both working capital and development costs not covered by a Heritage Lottery grant would need to be raised from the public.
9. The basis for the purchase from the Crown Estate would need to be established early in the process. The price is likely to prove key. Funds will need to be raised. In addition, although the estate is not loss making, investment funds will be needed for maintenance and improvement of assets comprised in the Laxton Estate, such as buildings.

An open floor question and answer and comments session followed when the following in particular were raised:

- a. Time constraints – Sir John Starkey confirmed that there were no specific time limits but, if a scheme is to succeed, it is most likely to do so by taking advantage of the current momentum as regards the Crown Estate and political and environmental changes
- b. The need for a healthy gender balance in the trust taking ownership and stewardship
- c. The limited nature of trustees' liabilities
- d. The unlikelihood of the Crown Estate giving the Laxton Estate to the community free
- e. Difficulties in making a living under the open field system which is at odds with prevailing agricultural trends
- f. The unsustainability of continuing the system as it is with farmers needing alternative incomes or farming at least two farms each to make a living
- g. The benefit to the community of having control over its future and all associated decisions
- h. The importance of incentives for young farmers and of provision for succession. Key to this was facilitating tenants' retirement.
- i. In essence, the choice would be between the village making decisions and the Crown Estate
- j. The risks of pursuing community ownership weighed against the risk and uncertainty of taking no action and allowing external agencies to determine the village's future.
- k. The extent of the interest in the project outside the village

	<p>Dr Candler addressed the meeting briefly and :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Pledged the support and expertise of his organisation ii. Referred to his organisation's record of success in raising funds to support rural communities iii. Emphasised his belief that Laxton was a valuable national resource ideally placed to pioneer a brand new way of owning, farming and administering land. <p>Sir John Starkey concluded by outlining the next stage which was to enlist support, including financial, professional, governmental and political and to quantify the value of the Laxton Estate with a view to establishing that the proposed scheme of ownership was viable. He asked all present to indicate, on a show of hands, whether the village supported taking the scheme to this next stage. The majority of those present voted in favour of going forward.</p>	
LMPC/1/18	Apologies for absence: There were no absences. Councillor Pringle's apologies were noted.	
LMPC/2/18	<p>Declarations of interest: The chair declared an interest as a member of the sports field committee in item 11 (Property matters – Sports field) and an interest as member of the village hall committee in items 12 a i (Planning applications 17/02309/LBC and 13 b (Village environment – Village hall refurbishment project).</p> <p>There were no other declarations of interest, direct or indirect, in any items of business on the agenda.</p>	
LMPC/3/18	Dispensations: None required.	
LMPC/4/18	<p>10 Minutes public speaking: The following matters were raised:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The new LED streetlights do not cast light widely enough creating dangerous dark areas on the pavement. The clerk will notify NCC b. Currently, the 30 mph speed limits at the Kneesall Road, Bar Road and Moorhouse entrances to the village begin within the built up area rather than at its edge. The clerk will contact NCC Highways to ask for these speed limits to be extended beyond the first houses in the village to ensure that traffic is travelling at an appropriate speed on entering the village itself c. The absence of an asset register from the website. The clerk confirmed that the requirement extended only to public land. After discussion it was agreed that the fixed asset schedule which forms the basis for the Annual Return would be published on the website in any event. It was agreed that, given the audited system of approving and recording payments and the publication of payments over £100 on the website, the minuting of individual items was not required. 	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
LMPC/5/18	Minutes of the parish council meeting held on 21 November 2017: The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2017 were agreed as a true record and signed by the chair.	
LMPC/6/18	<p>Matters arising: Concern was expressed at a delay in circulating the papers. All present recognized the importance of circulating them as quickly as possible. Where documents are also electronic, the clerk will circulate them by email as well as paper.</p> <p>There were no other matters arising.</p>	Clerk
LMPC/7/	Reports from district and county councillors:	

<p>18</p>	<p>Councillor Michael reported that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Old School House, which is currently empty, is not the subject of a planning application and is being marketed for sale 2. For conservation reasons, Bar Farm House is now under the planning department's jurisdiction. Works required by Environmental Health have been completed. 	
<p>LMPC/8/18</p>	<p>Reports from councillors: The clerk will report the following matters identified by councillors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Deep potholes across the straight section of Kneesall Road b. Flooding of the road in rain at Brockilow Bridge and at Kneesall crossroads. She will also raise concerns that the road at the Bridge is insufficiently wide for agricultural vehicles c. Overgrowth on the footpath outside Smithy Farm which needs to be cut back. <p>Mr S Hill had attended the recent SNG meeting at which fly tipping, increasing fuel theft and hare coursing were discussed. Councillor Michael will chase NSDC regarding the removal of oil cans dumped in the parish.</p>	<p>Clerk Clerk Clerk Clerk SM</p>
<p>LMPC/9/18</p>	<p>Approve equality and diversity policy: Approved.</p>	
<p>LMPC/10/18</p>	<p>Financial Matters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Financial position as at 31 December 2017: Councillors considered and noted the clerk's report showing the precise financial position at 31 December 2017 (incorporating the 2017-18 budget figures). b. 2018-19 insurance arrangements: Councillors reviewed the renewal documentation. Councillors decided to enter into the 2018-19 insurance contract with Zurich. c. Accounts for payment: The council unanimously approved nine payments totalling £751.12. d. Appointment of internal auditor: The clerk will continue her enquiries of other clerks. e. To consider the financial information provided by the Clerk and NSDC's letter regarding 2018/19 precept estimates and to agree the precept for the year ending 31 March 2019: Councillors considered the financial information provided by the clerk. Councillors unanimously decided to retain the precept at £4600 but with the re-allocation of the £550 budgeted for the village hall to the capital project budget, the village hall now benefiting from substantial grant funds for its refurbishment which, in turn, would significantly reduce its costs. The provision of a capital budget will allow the council to begin to build funds for other enhancements to the parish. 	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>LMPC/11/18</p>	<p>Property matters including sports field and responsibility for sports field rent: Having declared an interest at LMPC/2/18 above (Declaration of interest), the chair withdrew from the meeting for this item and the next (Planning). The clerk reminded councillors of all minuted references to the sports field rent she had identified and of the contents of the chair's email dated 5 December 2017, sent in his capacity as a member of the sports field committee, which confirmed that there were no committee minutes recording the position.</p> <p>Councillors discussed the history of the sports field and its use by the community. They felt that the monies currently being used to fund the rent might now be more appropriately applied for the benefit of the village community more widely. However, they recognised that a decision to end the interim arrangement entirely and revert to the</p>	

	<p>original position would have financial implications for the committee. They discussed a transitional arrangement and decided to seek reimbursement of 50% of the rents payable in March 2018 and September 2018 with a view to seeking reimbursement in full from 2019. The clerk will make a formal request for reimbursement of half the rent due in March will follow at the appropriate time.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>LMPC/12/18</p>	<p>Planning matters:</p> <p>a. Applications:</p> <p>i. 17/02309/LBC Internal alterations and improvements, new external doors and fabric repairs. Replacement of existing roof coverings. Laxton Village Hall High Street Laxton: Councillors considered the application and unanimously decided to support the proposal. They noted that at least two neighbours had not received notification of the application. The clerk will clarify the position as regards notifying neighbours with NSDC. The chair returned to the meeting.</p> <p>ii. 17/02302/LBC Full refurbishment of the Grade II Listed property (internal and external) Brockilow Farm Laxton Road, Kneesall: Councillors considered the application and unanimously decided to support the proposal.</p> <p>b. To note planning decisions by NSDC:</p> <p>i. 17/01585/FUL Proposed change of use of land and buildings formerly in agricultural use to residential. Conversion of attached building to residential annexe and relocation of adjacent barrel roofed barn for use in connection with the existing dwelling- Approval noted</p> <p>ii. 17/01772/FUL Householder application for construction of single storey side and rear extension and demolition of a uPVC porch and the construction of an Orangery. Twitchill Farm House Cross Hill Laxton - Approval noted</p> <p>c. Compliance: No issues raised</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>LMPC/13/18</p>	<p>Village development including The Crown's long term strategy:</p> <p>All councillors had been present at the preceding open meeting. They discussed the outcome of the meeting. They agreed that this new and radical system of ownership would allow the whole community to preserve, develop and capitalise on Laxton's unique farming heritage and that this is a hugely exciting opportunity not only to preserve what this community has now but for the whole community to thrive and prosper for the long term.</p> <p>Councillors unanimously decided to support and pursue to the next stage the possibility of the ownership and control of Laxton passing from the Crown Estate to the village itself.</p>	
<p>LMPC/14/18</p>	<p>Village environment and appearance, including:</p> <p>a. Location of and access to community resilience container: Mr R Hennell confirmed that the containers are situated at Corner Farm and at Holme View. They are left unlocked for swift access. There was discussion as to whether the second container should be re-located from Holme View so that open access is available. It was agreed that Mr S Hill and Mr J Hill will explore the options for a location at the top end of the village.</p> <p>b. Village Hall refurbishment project: The planning application had been discussed and decided at LMPC/12 a i above. The chair confirmed that the village hall was likely to be closed for a period of six months whilst the works were completed. This is scheduled for 1 April 2018 at present but may be delayed because of various legalities.</p> <p>c. Brown information road signs: Absence of ready funding noted. Deferred indefinitely pending developments in relation to</p>	<p>SH/JH</p>

	<p>the village's future ownership.</p> <p>d. Moorhouse – Village fingerpost including LIS funding application: Councillors noted that the LIS grant criteria in relation to village signs had changed since their November 2017 meeting with monies having since been set aside and the removal of the requirement for any match funding. Councillors considered the quote obtained by Mr S Hill from Malcolm Lane & Son which totalled approximately £1500 plus VAT. They decided to apply for LIS funding one fingerpost with a contribution from the council of £750 made up of £200 already donated by Laxton History Group, £350 grant from councillor Pringle and £200 funded by council from general reserves. They authorised the clerk and Mr S Hill to undertake all necessary steps in relation to the application.</p> <p>e. Permissive access – Land surrounding cricket pitch: Councillors noted that the existing permissive access provides the only view of Castle Mound. It was agreed that this should be preserved if the landowner is agreeable. The chair will make an initial approach to the landowner.</p>	<p>Clerk/ SH</p> <p>Chair</p>
LMPC/15/18	Service faults: See LMPC/18/18 above (Reports from councillors).	
LMPC/16/18	Correspondence: Item a NCC – Mill Field finger post replacement – The clerk will let NCC know to contact Mr R Hennell for access. All other items of correspondence noted together with the opportunity to purchase lamppost poppies for this year's Remembrance. It was agreed that the clerk should order twelve poppies.	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
LMPC/17/18	<p>10 Minutes public speaking time: The clerk will make enquiries of NCC as to the footpath cutting schedule.</p> <p>She will also report:</p> <p>a. Surface damage and poor drainage caused by root growth on the footpath which runs from Main Street opposite The Dovecote to church grounds</p> <p>b. Overhanging/surface vegetation leaving the path surface in a poor condition and covered with detritus which makes it dangerous to walk on the path which runs from the corner of the church grounds to join Chapel Lane.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
LMPC/18/18	Agenda items for next meeting: As above.	
LMPC/19/18	Date of next meeting: 27 March 2018 at Laxton Visitor Centre	

The meeting closed at 10.05 pm.