

Chillaton Newsletter

No. 7: 27th February 2013

Village Shop

There will be a public meeting at Marystow Church Hall on Tuesday 5th March at 7.30pm, to learn the latest position about efforts to set up a community shop and to hear local residents' views about the current application to change the use of the ground floor of Preston House [the former village shop] from retail to residential.

Two of the three Chillaton parish councillors have now declared a 'personal interest' in the planning application. An 'interest' can be financial where, for example, a councillor owns shares in a company bidding for a Council contract. Or, it can be personal where, for example, a councillor is a member of a pressure group lobbying for something that the Council is about to consider. When this happens, it is often the case that councillors either have to, or choose to, take no part in the Council's decision on the issue.

Therefore, the application for change of use will now be considered by the full Parish Council, rather than by a Sub-Committee of the three Chillaton councillors. The Parish Council meets on the 6th March and West Devon Borough Council has agreed to receive the Parish Council's comments after the original deadline of 28th February.

One of the two parish councillors declaring an interest is Howard Asbridge and a statement from him is set out below:

I have been informed that several Chillaton residents feel that I have a personal interest in this application, as they believe I am a friend of the applicants. The latest guidance issued by West Devon Borough Council, after the Localism Act 2011 changed the law on this matter, suggests that I may not actually have a personal interest, under the current rules.

If I did have a personal interest, then having declared it, I would still be able to take part in any debate on the application and vote on it at a Parish Council meeting. However, the new legislation does not alter previous long-standing advice, that when others think you have a conflict of interest, it is better to declare one that may not exist, rather than bring one's local council into disrepute.

For this reason, I have decided to 'declare a personal interest' in this matter and will leave the Parish Council meeting while the planning application is being considered.

Parish Councillor Ray Brewer will also declare a personal interest, because of his membership of the Village Hub Steering Group. Ray has decided to exercise his right to speak and vote on this issue. I feel that although our category of interest is the same, our circumstances are different and I understand his decision.

Once a councillor has decided to declare an interest, he or she should avoid being able to influence those Councillors who are still able to vote. Therefore, I will not be attending the public meeting on 5th March, as Amanda Westcott, Ray and other parish councillors will be present.

I do hope that during the meeting various key issues are addressed, including:

The availability of finance to purchase Preston House, should it be for sale.

The degree of interest formally expressed by any potential user of the shop premises.

The actual additional cost to any prospective user of the premises as a shop, were the use of the ground floor to have already been changed to residential.

*Howard Asbridge
26th February 2013*

If you know someone who needs some help to access the website or to join the mailing list and you aren't able to assist them, please let us know who they are and we will try to help.

Also, if you know anyone who you think would like to receive a copy of this newsletter by hand, then let us know by using the contact page and we will endeavour to get a copy to them.