**EAST CHINNOCK PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Extra Ordinary East Chinnock Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 16th October, 2019 starting at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

**Present** Chairman Cllr. Paul Taylor

Councillors Mike Bussell, John Cox, Debbie Taylor and Dave Tuck

Officer Maureen Randell

Also Present Nick Weber, Viv Tierney, Keith Greensalde, Karen Greenslade, Andy Gliddon,

Pat Lock, Nigel Davis, Annette Spurrell and Steve Hitchcock

**158/19 Apologies for absence:** Cllr Reeve

**159/19 Fireworks:** Cllr Taylor said that this meeting had been called to discuss concerns raised by a local farmer about the distress caused to his animals by the council firework display. He said that the council had spoken to their insurers and looked at various websites for guidance. The Insurers had said that so long as the policy conditions were then the event was covered. He read out the conditions and confirmed that the event’s organisation was in accordance with them. The Health & Safety Executive website didn’t mention animals being mainly concerned with the safety of the spectators and participants. The National Farmers Union site advised that it was important to let farmers know beforehand so that they could take the necessary precautions to protect their animals. The British Veterinary Association’s site said that advance notice should be given so that the local community could put plans in place for their animals. The RSPCA site mainly dealt with small animals. ROSPA’s site made no mention of animals and was mainly about firework safety. The British Horse Society’s site had many suggestions for horses including stabling them with a radio playing, moving them to an alternative site or asking the Vet about calming remedies. It also had the following advice – “Make sure that you have adequate third party liability insurance. If your horse is frightened and escapes, causing an accident, then you could be held liable for compensation.”. The government website made no mention of animals and was concerned with who could buy fireworks and the times they could be set off. In addition the Animal Welfare Act of 2006 states that it is an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal but the onus was on the animal owner to ensure their welfare. It was noted that both the RSPCA and the BVA were calling on fireworks to be limited to 97 decibels. The consensus of all websites was that it is up to the owners to take whatever precautions they could to minimise the distress to their animals and if they escaped and caused damage it would appear to be the responsibility of them or their insurer.

Cllr Taylor said that he felt that the council complied with all the advice and invited comment from Mr Greenslade who said that whilst the fireworks had always been problematic they had increased in volume in recent years. Also they were previously shielded by trees and since the setting off site was moved the noise had increased. He said he moved his animals as far away as he could but was unable to move the cattle off site because of government movement restrictions. He had previously moved the horses to a friend’s farm but his horses had fought with his friend’s so that was no longer an option. The Vet had previously tranquilized the horses but the tranquilizer had not taken effect until after the display as horses are able to fight the effects of the tranquilization so it is difficult to judge timing the dose. He and his wife had to stay up all night with the horses as distressed horses could be prone to colic. He said that he felt that he had done all he could to overcome the problems caused by the fireworks. He said that the British Veterinary Association also states that it is not just bangs that affect horses; because of their acute hearing the whiz and whir can cause distress as well. Mrs Greensalde said that the fireworks echo around the valley compounding the problem. Mr Greenslade said that last year had been particularly bad as the in calf heifers had also been distressed. He said it was up to the council to minimise the risk to his animals. He said he was not against bonfire and firework displays but the organisers needed to consider the effects on the animals and their owners. He said that he had identified it as a problem earlier in the year and had mentioned the problem to members of the entertainments committee previously. Cllr Taylor said that unfortunately there had been a lack of communication as the first he had heard of the problem was from Mr. Greenslade’s recent email. He asked if the cows could be housed but Mrs Greenslade said that there was insufficient housing for all of them. In addition one of the horses was elderly and had difficulty travelling which made it awkward to move. Andy Gliddon said that unfortunately last year the wind was blowing from the NE which was the opposite to the normal direction for this time of year and it therefore blew the sound towards the animals rather than away. He said that he was trying to arrange to move the firework setting off area further away this year to try and alleviate the situation. Mrs Greenslade said that it was difficult to hold the horses if they took fright and felt that the council were only thinking of themselves. Cllr Taylor said that they had followed all the guidelines from the various bodies. Mr Greenslade said that there had recently been a case in Devon where a firework display had been banned because it was too close to animals. Nick Weber said could the fireworks be moved further away. Andy Gliddon said that they proposed to move them as far as they could this year but they had to take into account other properties as well. Mr Greenslade asked if the council had considered alternative locations such as the Feoffes field. Cllr Cox said that this was currently rented out so could not be used. In addition there would be problems with the access. Mrs Greenslade said there would still be problems with the echo effect. Pat Lock had written to the manufacturer that supplied the fireworks to ask about quieter fireworks and been told that this was possible. Cllr Taylor proposed that the council buy some quieter fireworks and move the setting off site as far away as they could. He said that he sympathised with the farmer and hoped that this would help the situation. Nick Weber said that he would be happy to help the Greenslades on the night and could record the noise levels. He said that for future years the council should investigate the possibility of moving to an alternative site. Cllr Bussell said that this was a problem in many areas. His concern was that the current site was easily accessible for the villagers and if it was moved to a less accessible location people might choose to have displays at home instead which could prolong the distress of the animals as they could be on different days and at different times. Cllr Taylor said that he would visit the Greenslades after the event and see if the changes proposed had helped. He asked them if they were happy with changes and Mr Greenslade said that he could not be happy if he thought his animals might be distressed. He said that the rapidity of the bangs in the first and last fireworks had been a real problem. Cllr Taylor said that the bonfire and fireworks were a major event in the village and any profits were used for the benefit of the village. He felt that the council had done all they could offering to move the setting off point as far away as possible and buying quieter fireworks. Nick Weber asked if the Greenslades could be told if the council managed to get quieter fireworks and this was agreed. Cllr Taylor said that he felt the matter had been thoroughly discussed and thanked everyone for attending.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.15pm

Signed ………………………............… (Chair) Date…………………

Copies of these minutes can be found on the Parish website at www.ecparishcouncil.net