

## Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council took place in the Village Hall on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2009 commencing at 7.00 pm.

The Chairman, Cllr K Bryan, presided; present were Cllrs. Mrs M Metcalfe (Vice-Chairman), M Day, S Gibbons, C Hill, Mrs J Nudds, and M Stevenson with G Russell in attendance. Also present for part of the meeting were five residents, District Cllr John Cotton and Lorraine Lindsay-Gale representing County Cllr John Howell MP.

### 1 Chairman's opening remarks and apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted from Cllr Mark Williams who had another commitment.

### 2 Guest speaker

Cynth Napper of the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum explained the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act with special reference to Dorchester-on-Thames, which she described as a 'biodiversity hotspot'. A copy of her presentation would be emailed for circulation to all councillors.

### 3 Public Participation

Frank Norman asked about the Council's survey of properties prior to the introduction of the new wheelie bin waste collection service. The Chairman confirmed that the Parish Council will be sending its comments to the District following a survey.

Laura Bristow and Nicola Friend told the Council that they are suffering the nuisance of the smoke and smell arising from inappropriate fires on adjacent property. These fires are not attended or supervised and on one occasion recently the Fire Brigade had been called. Although the Environmental Health people at SODC have been made aware of the problem no apparent action has been taken so far. The Council will bring this matter to the attention of District Cllr John Cotton when he arrives later.

### 4 Declarations of Interest

None.

### 5 Minutes of the Meeting held 11th February 2009

The Minutes as circulated were approved and signed.

### 6 Matters Arising from the Minutes

a. The Clerk said that a quote has been received from BCB for posts on the bank by St Birinus RC Church. The figure is £720 to £1,420 depending on size of posts. The Conservation officer is to be contacted when BCB's drawing of the proposed scheme has been received. If other quotes are required it was suggested that Trevor Greenaway and Tim Fisher should be approached.

b. The bike racks near the by pass bus stops have been installed and this will be mentioned in Dorchester News. It was suggested that the Council should develop plans to improve this whole area. Grants would probably be available.

c. The Clerk reported that further contact with County Highways has produced no response on repairs to the Meadside/village path or Drayton Road. The Council noted that Cllr Gibbons had written a personal letter about this matter to County Cllr John Howell MP. A reply is awaited.

d. The Co-Op has not yet been contacted about arrangements for lighting the Christmas tree. The matter will be carried forward.

- e. The Chairman and Clerk have not yet discussed the proposed contracts of employment. The matter will be carried forward.
- f. The Clerk said in order to conform with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act the village website needs modification. The SODC website is being used as a model for this purpose and the matter is in hand.
- g. The ‘hump’ behind the bus shelter on High Street has been reported to Highways and their response is awaited.
- h. The footpath from High St. alongside the Village Hall needs resurfacing. The question of damage being done by the water run off from the Village Hall roof has been raised with the Village Hall committee.
- i. The Clerk said that he understood that the work on the new High Street/Queen Street drains is due to finish by the middle of the following week and a good clean-up of the area has been promised.
- j. Cllr Stevenson said that a second set of bus time tables, covering travel to and from Abingdon, is being prepared.
- k. Cllr Mrs Metcalfe and Cllr Stevenson had attended a workshop on Rural Oxfordshire on 24<sup>th</sup> February. The presentations had been done well and they had attended two ‘break-out’ discussions; one on loneliness and the elderly, the other on the environment. Some papers arising from the workshop will be circulated.

#### 7 District Councillor's Report

District Cllr John Cotton said that the Council is now aware of the grant that it will receive from Central Government over the next three years. The award is very low but knowing well in advance what it is going to be does help the Council to plan. The management merger with The Vale has helped SODC to make savings and the introduction of the wheelie bin scheme will also result in savings. The District Council’s leisure facilities will have a new management team from Greenwich who are replacing SOLL. They intend to increase the business done by the centres and put an end to the current loss-making situation. Cllr Cotton commented upon the recent success of the Planning Enforcement Team in getting the fence at Meadside replaced by one of an acceptable height.

The Council told Cllr Cotton about the bonfire problems that had been raised earlier in the meeting and he said that he would look into the matter urgently.

#### 8 County Councillor's Report

Lorraine Lindsay-Gale, representing County Cllr John Howell MP, said that the Audit Commission has awarded the County Council 3 stars out of a possible 4 – the one weakness had been in Children’s services – while the Fire Service has been recognised as the best in the country. Lorraine is in weekly contact with County Cllr Howell and she was asked if he could get some action taken on the various Highways matters that are outstanding. The Council would also like to be told about the status of the kissing gate installation at Overy.

#### 9 Finance:

The balance on NatWest Current Account at 28th February was £8,889.75

The following accounts were approved for payment:

Southern Electric	£61.59
Total Pest Control	£172.50
Jenks Oxford Ltd (emergency tree work)	£143.75
Franklins Solicitors (lease legal fees)	£445.50
Headley Brothers (NALC magazine sub)	£13.50
Thames Water (cemetery)	£86.30

GGD Russell – Clerk’s salary	£450.11
Geoff Willis Handyman – 4 weeks - (Feb. £225)	£270.00
Downend and Benning Partnership Ltd (fastenings for sign)	£8.05

10 Correspondence and Other Business:

i). Sports Club Pavilion & Playground;

The Clerk reported on the visit by the area manager of Wicksteed Leisure. David Owen had made suggestions for correcting the squeaking on both the see-saw and the cradle swing. This advice has been passed to Cllr Gibbons. Mr Owen said the timber climbing frame could be repaired but that it was really now at the end of its useful life. His recommendation was that it should be taken down rather than patched up. It was agreed to accept this recommendation. The work will be done by volunteers and the Clerk will report the situation in Dorchester News, explaining that there is still a shortfall in the funding required for the replacement equipment. Cllr Gibbons said that further grant applications have been made and he hopes that the required target will be reached soon, possibly as early as May.

ii). Footpaths;

The Clerk has obtained 6 anti-dog fouling notices free of charge from SODC. Cllr Stevenson has already put one up and the others will be positioned around the village. The Clerk will use Dorchester News to inform residents that SODC can and will prosecute the people who act in this unneighbourly way.

Cllr Mrs Nudds asked that the plants overgrowing in Malthouse Lane should be cut back and it was agreed that now the floods have gone the underpass should be tidied up. First priority, however, is to use the tree shavings that have been freely provided by Jenks and others to cover the footpaths where mud is a real nuisance.

iii). Cemetery;

IJP has told the Clerk that it will replace the tiles from the old gatehouse buildings before the end of March. There will be a small charge for labour and materials.

The future of waste collection from the cemetery bins is now uncertain. If a commercial waste collection service is required after June the cost is likely to be approximately £500 per year.

Mrs Lammer has asked the Council for approval to erect a monument in the shape of a cross. There are a number of monuments in that style which have become unstable over the years and the Clerk will ask Howard Chadwick to confirm that modern construction and fixing techniques have produced a much more stable and longer-lasting product.

iv). Allotments

Nothing to report

v). Other letters to Chairman and Clerk

i. The Clerk told the Council about the possibility of obtaining funding so that the Village Hall could be provided with internet access, a computer and projection facilities so that Council meetings could take advantage of electronic rather than paper-based presentations. After discussion the Council agreed not to pursue this project. The village hall was not thought to be a suitable or secure location for such equipment.

ii. Cllr Mrs Metcalfe told the Council that she had received a letter from Susan Bowditch complaining about the orientation board near Days Lock. It was agreed that Cllr Mrs Metcalfe should respond to this letter on behalf of the Council and the Hidden Britain project team.

iii. The Clerk said that several residents have complained to him about the amount of litter in the village. It was agreed that with all the road works over the last few

weeks the village was not looking very good and the subject of putting that right should be discussed at the next Council meeting.

iv. Several people have asked the Clerk when the Carbon Group's notice board on the Village Hall would be taken down. Cllr Stevenson explained the state of his negotiations with the Village Hall committee. He said that he still hoped that there could be a compromise. The design of the notice board had been illustrated in advance in Dorchester News and there are many residents who like the design.

v. The Council noted the closure of the Oakley Wood Recycling site for refurbishment over the next three months. Notices will be placed upon the village board.

## 11 Planning:

### a. Applications

P09/W0085 20 Abingdon Road

Detached garage with glass house

The Council had no strong views but noted that the location of the proposed development is well in front of the existing building line.

P09/W0141 8, Abingdon Road

Single storey rear extension

The Council noted the lack of a design statement and felt in general that the applicant had provided less information than it would have liked. The Council decided that it had received insufficient information to make a decision one way or the other.

### b. Other Planning matters

The Council noted the following decision:

P08/W1351 Peppers Plot 71 Watling Lane Erection of a conservatory.

Planning permission granted 4th March

## SODC Core Strategy.

SODC has published their draft Core Strategy Preferred Options Consultation Paper which will play a major role in shaping the future of the district over the next 20 years. The strategy will identify where significant areas of housing and employment growth will take place in the district up until 2026. The Parish Council has been invited to comment and will discuss the matter in depth at the April meeting.

## 12 New wheelie bin waste collection service

Cllr Mark Stevenson and the Clerk had attended one of the District Council's briefing meetings and it was clear that much effort and expense has been put into explaining the new scheme to local residents. That said, there are still some questions about the service to those non-domestic properties which currently take advantage of the black sack/green box approach. This includes the Abbey and the surrounding properties like the Museum and the Tea Room.; the Village Hall, the recreation ground/play area and the Cemetery. Clarification of these points will be sought. There will be a survey of all households where the introduction of wheeled bins would not be practical and those in need of assistance with the bins will be encouraged to apply.

## 13 Consultation about street light savings

The Council has received details of all the street lights in the Parish from the County Highways department with the suggestion that energy could be saved with little or no additional hazards if some of these lights could be switched off every night from, say, 12.30 a.m. until – 5.30.a.m.

This matter will be discussed at the next Council meeting.

14 Car parking provision

The discussion paper prepared by Cllr Mrs Metcalfe had been copied to all as had the Clerk's draft of parking instructions when the Recreation Ground is closed. It was agreed that to these should be added, "Take note of any coned areas."

Further discussion will take place at the April meeting.

15 Proposed incinerator – status of consultation

The Clerk reported that the Environment Agency has confirmed that the Application for an Environmental permit has been made. The EA has sent a CD (received today) and the information is also available on the internet. The period for consultation ends on 17th April so the matter will be on the agenda at the next meeting.

The Council declined to make any contribution towards the cost of the public meeting held a few weeks earlier by the Sutton Courtenay anti-incinerator campaign, feeling that this would not be an appropriate use of Parish Council funds.

'Alternatives to landfill' – the County's briefing document will be placed in the folder for circulation.

16 Hurst Water Meadow Trust – Council representation

It was agreed that the Council would like to continue with the arrangement for one member of the board of trustees to be a parish councillor and that this councillor should in the first instance be suggested by the Council. As at present, the councillor/trustee will be expected to keep the Council informed about the activities of the Trust but would not be permitted to take part in any council vote that involved the granting of Council funds to or for the benefit of the Trust.

17 Oxford Flood Risk Management – Consultation paper

Hard copies of the proposals have been provided; the consultation period runs to 12th May. The Council has been invited to the exhibition at Oxford Town Hall on Saturday 28th March. Cllr Hill took a copy of the papers.

18 River Thames Alliance Marketing Partnership

Following her attendance at a briefing meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> February Cllr Mrs Metcalfe had prepared a report which suggested that the Parish Council should, along with other interested parties in the village, join RTAMP, probably as a 'Level Two' member which would cost just over £200 per year. The Council agreed to discuss this, together with other ways of promoting the village leaflet at its April meeting. Cllr Mrs Metcalfe said that the Rector has asked if she would also become involved in the Diocesan Tourism project.

19 Other Urgent Business

- a. It was agreed that there would be no outside speaker at the Annual Parish Meeting.
- b. Details of how to commission, design and make a decorative sign, very popular in the villages of many other counties, had been discovered by Cllr Day and will be circulated.
- c. It was agreed that the suggestion of holding a Village Newcomers Evening would be investigated, possibly on a date in September.
- d. Cllr Stevenson reported that there is a group looking into the feasibility of hydro-electricity generation at Day's Lock. Grant funding could be obtained to develop a business plan if the project is considered technically possible.

e. The Clerk said that Edward Reily Collins has invited members of the Parish Council and others to visit the development at Dandridge's Mill, East Hanney, where there are several interesting ideas about 'sustainable' living.

Meeting closed at 10.32 p.m.