

Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 13th May 2009 following the conclusion of the Annual Parish Meeting. In the absence of the Chairman, who was unwell, the meeting was chaired by Cllr Mrs M Metcalfe (Vice-Chairman); present were Cllrs M Day, S. Gibbons, Mrs J Nudds and M Stevenson with G Russell in attendance. Also present were District Cllr John Cotton, Lorraine Lindsey-Gale for County Cllr John Howell MP and one resident.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted from Cllr Ken Bryan, who was unwell, and Cllrs Chris Hill and Mark Williams who were away.

2 Declarations of Interest

None

3 Minutes of the Meetings held 8th & 15th April 2009

The Minutes as circulated were approved and signed as a true record.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes

- a. Visit to Sutton Courtney, Reading, Maidstone & Isle of Sheppey – Cllrs C Hill and M Stevenson along with Lorraine Lindsey-Gale and the Clerk had been on this all-day visit and Cllr Stevenson said that he would write a report for Dorchester News
- b. Posts on bank by St Birinus RC Church: A photo of how the posts would look has been prepared by BCB and supplied to Dennis Debege who has undertaken to discuss the proposal with Father John and, possibly, to obtain another quote as well. We are waiting to hear their comments
- c. Village Tidy up. Only Megan Parry has so far volunteered. It was agreed that the school should not be asked to participate but perhaps members of the village carbon group would be interested and we should also ask Gill Howarth for the Abbey PCC and Helena Whalley, resident of Meadside, who is also the local CPRE organiser. Perhaps the Co-Op could be asked to sponsor the day – provide refreshments to the working party in return for a photo opportunity.
- d. Hurst Water Meadow Trust – Council representation.
This item was held over from the previous meeting and it was agreed to postpone discussion for another meeting since it is understood that the Hurst Trust is soon to hold its own meeting.
- e. Newcomers Evening (the last one was Spring 2007); the Rector is supportive and a date now needs to be agreed. The Clerk will try to find Thursday nights in September or October which do not clash with any other event and offer a choice of these dates to the Rector for first refusal.
- f. Miss Bowditch; it is thought that a PCSO has been to visit her to discuss her problems with trespass both those who enter on foot and those using mini motor-bikes
- g Visit to Dandridges Mill, East Hanney; the Clerk will email councillors to ask them to state when in June they will be available to attend. Partners are welcome.
- h. Local primary school review; Cllr Mark Stevenson attended the consultation meeting with stakeholders on 28th April and said that very few other parish councillors were present. It was an evening where general comments were requested.
- i. NERC; following Cynth Napper's presentation (a hard copy of which has been circulated) the Council will consider at its June meeting whether to sign the NERC Declaration. The electronic copy of the PowerPoint was sent round on 17th March.

Concerns having been already raised in advance of the meeting by Cllr M Williams Cllr M Stevenson agreed that signing the document is a very serious undertaking. Cllr Mrs Nudds and Cllr Day have yet to see the document and will look at it before the next meeting when it can be discussed again. The Clerk will ask what the County and District Councils have decided to do about the NERC.

j. Abbey View Meadow; it has now been seeded. More earth is needed near gate and has been requested from Drayton Construction in the first instance.. The area not so far worked will need maintenance soon. Cllr M Stevenson asked the Council to consider the uses to which the space could be put on those days – the vast majority – when it is not being used for car parking.

5 Finance:

Balance on NatWest Current Account at 30th April	£20,922.38
Balance on Reserve Account	£39,732.35
First half precept now received	£18,875.00
The following accounts were approved for payment:	
Allianz Insurance PLC renewal for year	£2,163.15
Berinsfield Community Business (grass cutting March	£525.83
Thames Water Sportsground & Pavilion	£45.49
Southern Electric Sportsground & pavilion	£41.24
ORCC annual sub	£20.00
Reading Extinguisher Services (Pavilion annual check)	£31.22
GGD Russell – Clerk’s salary	£450.11
Geoff Willis Handyman – 4weeks - (Mar. £270)	£272.50

The Clerk was given permission to buy a new edition of ‘Arnold Baker’, his copy now being 10 years old, when it is published in the next few weeks.

It was agreed that Clerk would enquire about possibility of obtaining a higher rate of interest for Council’s Reserves from, say, the Co-Operative Bank.

6 Correspondence and Other Business:

i). Sports Club Pavilion & Playground;

Sports Club has just purchased an almost new tractor and had been in conversation with Bryans Lock Services about improved security for the tractor shed. The Clerk will ask BCB about strimming the perimeter bank near the shed and pavilion.

Cllr Mrs Metcalfe said that there had been litter in the play area the previous week.

Clerk said that the handyman had been on holiday.

Cllr Gibbons suggested that the now-redundant bark which had been under the wooden play frame could be moved to Abbey View Meadow to help level the surface. Perhaps Gilbert Hobbs could transport this at modest cost. The surplus soil from the cemetery which was gradually maken a higher and higher bank could go the same way.

ii). Footpaths;

Letter from Chris Cousins to Mrs Butcher (circulated); The Council though that this left things in a very unsatisfactory way. It was agreed that members of the carbon group could be involved as some of them want to use the path past Overy Mill as a route to school. Cllr Stevenson said that he thought that the Ramblers Association would be able to help having the stile at the Overy Lane end of the path removed. Cllr Mrs Nudds confirmed that she can remember a time when there was no stile there. Recent legislation about disabled access may help. Clarification about whether or not there is a correct standard width for a footpath would be helpful.

Location of bike rack on Drayton Road; The Clerk explained that due to the assertion by the Footpaths Officer that the new bike rack is mounted on top of a right of way the location may have to be moved. The whole Council was appalled at the prospect of this complete waste of taxpayers' money. County Cllr John Howell MP has been told about this prospect.

It was agreed that for the time being no more woodchip is needed on the village footpaths.

Cllr Mrs Nudds said the hedge alongside the footpath by the boundary wall of the Manor needs cutting back.

iii). Other letters to Chairman and Clerk

Cllr Chris Hill had given the Clerk the name of the District Council officer who may be able to help carry out air quality testing in order to provide benchmark data for future reference. Cllr Stevenson said that ideally the level of contamination present in the soil should be tested as well. The Clerk will contact SODC.

7 Planning:

a. Applications

P09/W0347 and P09/W0348/LB

Willow Tree Cottage, 2 Rotten Row; Proposed dining room and ground floor WC.

No strong views

P09/W0371

3 Wittenham Lane; First floor extension to existing bedroom

Support as the installation of a stair lift helps a resident to remain in their own home.

P09/W0374LB

Virginia Cottage, 21 High Street

Remove modern porch roof and replace with smaller arrangement. Change canopy over other door. Replace both front doors

Council commented that the application is exemplary and should be supported.

b. Other Planning matters

Council noted the following planning decision:

P09/W0141; Petit, 8 Abingdon Road; Single storey rear extension

Planning permission granted 8th April

8 Part-night street lightning

It was agreed that discussion on this topic should be deferred until the next Council meeting. If it decided that there should be some lights turned off after 12.30 a.m. until 5.30 a.m. to achieve savings in energy costs and a reduction in light pollution then the matter should be referred to the whole village for residents to comment.

9 Other Urgent Business

a. Cllr Day said that he had asked the Clerk for some payment history to assess what may be due to the Abbey under the Council's long-standing obligation to pay for Churchyard maintenance.

b. Cllr Mrs J Nudds asked if the handyman would weed under the Bridge End bike racks.

c. Cllr Mrs Metcalfe said that there are some dog owners who deposit dog mess into the litter bins rather than the special dog waste bins that the Council has provided. A note will be placed in Dorchester News.

d. Cllr Metcalfe said that there is widespread concern about the number of break-ins, both actual and attempted, in the village, The Abbey Museum had been broken into recently.

e. Cllr John Cotton said that the District Council has recently published a more detailed statement of its policy on the provision of wheelie bins. He would send the Clerk a copy. The Clerk told the Council that there had recently been a case where a brown 'wheelie bin' had been used by an intruder to gain access to a property. He would use Dorchester News to warn residents about the importance of positioning the new wheelie bins where they cannot be used to ease entry to property.

The meeting closed at 9.30 p.m.