

Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 8th January 2014 commencing at 7.30 p.m. The Chairman, Cllr Margot Metcalfe, presided; present were Cllrs. Ken Bryan, Maurice Day, Sue Graney, Chris Hill, Mike Hill, Mike Kitson and Mark Stevenson with G Russell in attendance. Also present for part of the meeting were County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale, Mr Mike Powell and one resident.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted from District Cllr Marc Hiles who was away on business.

2 Declarations of interest

None

3 Public Participation

Mr Mike Powell, the Outreach Postmaster for Warborough and Brightwell cum Sotwell, said that in the summer of 2013, when the Post Office at 14 High Street was known to be closing, he had been invited by the Rector to see if he would be able to offer an alternative service and he had agreed to run an outreach post office from the Abbey Tea Room on three mornings a week. Mr Powell said that he had been very surprised when, after a period in which Dorchester residents were invited to comment upon this idea, he discovered that this suggestion had been rejected. Mr Powell said that he thought that this was because the Parish Council was opposed to the idea but the Chairman explained that the Parish Council's view was a reflection of the views of the majority of those Dorchester residents who had approached the Council. There were several who had reservations about using the Abbey Tea Room, not least because of its location and its lack of easy access for elderly and disabled clients. Many had suggested the Village Hall as a better alternative.

The Chairman explained to Mr Powell that the Village Hall is managed by a committee that is entirely independent of the Parish Council. She had already spoken to the Chairman of the Village Hall Committee about the possibility of the Hall providing space for an outreach post office and asked him to discuss this with his Committee.

Together with the Clerk, she had met Mr Robert Worley, the Field Change Advisor of the Post Office, during the summer and Mr Worley had described a very simple installation involving a phone line and electricity supply, both of which would be fitted by the Post Office, with, if possible, a lockable cupboard so that the printer could be left onsite. There would also be a table but the whole point of the service is that there is virtually no trace when it is not in operation with virtually everything being removed each time. The Parish Council believes that the Village Hall should be able to accommodate something along these lines.

Mrs Honor Juniper of Watling Lane, a Probation Board member for six years and a Magistrate for twenty-nine years, told the Council about the 'Community Payback Scheme'. The Council has already received some information about this from the Thames Valley Probation Service and this has been circulated. Mrs Juniper described the wide variety of tasks that count towards 'Community Service'. She said that she thought there were several suitable projects within the Parish. The teams, which are up to 10 in number, are made up of over 18 year olds only and come with their own supervisor. They bring their own equipment.

The Chairman said that she thought that the Hurst Water Meadow Trust might have an interest in this scheme. She asked councillors to consider what village projects would be suited to the Payback Scheme.

4 Minutes of the Meeting held 11th December 2013

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

5 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Clerk reported that the Tennis Club Committee has invited Tim Henman to perform the official opening of the new Multi Use Games Area (MUGA). This invitation has been accepted subject to final agreement on the date.

6 District Councillor's Report

None

7 County Councillor's Report

County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay Gale's report had been circulated. She said that she would be meeting the Area Highways Steward in the near future to discuss carrying out urgent repairs and that any application for funding from her 'Big Society' budget had to be submitted before the end of the month.

8 Finance:

Nat West Current Account at 30th December £33,923.71

Deposit Account at 30th December £27,800.66

The SportsCourt cheque in the sum of £34,495.80 has not been sent. The WREN grant payments are likely to be received by the middle of next week with SODC payments also expected. If these are not forthcoming by the time that payment to SportsCourts is due the Council will transfer the necessary funds from its Deposit Account.

The following cheques were approved for payment:

Thames Water (Allotments £633.35 Pavilion £152.73)	£786.08
Berinsfield Community Business (clearance work in Abbey Churchyard)	£222.00
Dorchester on Thames Village Hall (room hire)	£24.00
Geoff Willis Village Handyman (four weeks)	£340.00
G Russell salary	£523.00
	£1,895.08

Precept 2014/15

The Clerk had prepared his latest estimate of total receipts and payments in the current year and a draft budget for 2014/15 which included an increase in the Council's Precept from £40,650 to £41,450 (+1.97%). Based upon the latest information from South Oxfordshire District Council about the number of Band D Council Taxpayers in the Parish this increase amounts to £2.55 per Band D taxpayer for the year.

It was proposed by Cllr Mike Kitson and seconded by Cllr Chris Hill that the Council should set its precept at £41,450 and this was agreed unanimously.

The Council went on to discuss various ways in which other income could be increased. Allotment fees were thought to be below the rates being charged in other parts of the County – Cllr Kitson will do some research on this – and it was suggested that allotment holders who do not live in the Parish should pay more than residents.

It was also agreed that Cemetery Fees should be increased by reference to the amount by which the Clerk's salary has been increased by the national agreement between NALC and SLCC. The Clerk is to report on this at the next meeting.

Cllr Stevenson said that additional funding for the Neighbourhood Planning exercise might be received in 2014/15.

There was some concern that the new financial arrangement between the Cricket Club and the groundsman will have an impact upon the Council's grass-cutting costs. Further information will be obtained.

It was agreed that the fencing around the perimeter of the Allotments should be completed in the current financial year along with the repair of the Malthouse Lane footpath.

9. Correspondence and Other Business:

a. Sports Club Pavilion & Playground;

Cllr Mike Hill reported that the contractors have completed their work on the MUGA perimeter netting and surfacing. The courts have been marked out ready for use pending the final line-marking that will be done later in the year, probably in May. Access to the Games Area needs completing – this was not part of SportsCourts contract. It was agreed to get a quote for this work from BCB. There are some leaves that need clearing from the side netting and some litter that needs removing.

b. Footpaths;

Due to the length of time devoted to discussion of other agenda items, this matter was held over until the February meeting.

c. Cemetery /Closed Abbey Churchyard;

Due to the length of time devoted to discussion of other agenda items, this matter was held over until the February meeting.

d. Allotments;

Due to the length of time devoted to discussion of other agenda items, this matter was held over until the February meeting.

e. Letters to Chairman and Clerk

i. Graham and Louise Beland had written a detailed letter to the Clerk about highways and footpath safety and maintenance matters that are of concern to residents of Meadside. This had been copied to all Councillors and also to County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale. It was agreed to take action on many of these suggestions over the coming months.

ii. Mrs Sheila Hearnden has written to the Clerk complaining about the condition of Watling Lane and asking the Council to take action to have the surface repaired. The Council has every sympathy with the residents and other users of Watling Lane. This is an ongoing problem which the Council would be delighted to resolve.

10. Planning

a. Applications

P13/S3691/LB The Cottage 40 High Street

Replacement of two front windows (1 top and 1 bottom).

The Council agreed to recommend approval of this application.

P13/S3826/HH 4 Meadside

Erection of a two storey rear extension.

The Council agreed to recommend approval of this application.

P13/S3656/HH 39 Abingdon Road

Erection of first floor side extension.

The Council agreed that it had no strong views about this application.

b. Progress reports:

P13/S3201/FUL Overy Court, Overy; Change of use of barn from B1 (office) to C3 (dwelling), including external and internal alterations to provide 4 bedroom dwelling, with garden and car parking.

Cllr Mark Stevenson agreed to attend the Planning Committee's meeting on 15th January and to speak against the approval of this application.

P13/S3156/FUL 31 Martins Lane

Erection of new detached dwelling with integral garage.

A Land Registry search has revealed that Dr and Mrs Pritchard did purchase the drainage ditch from Amey in 1970. The Council's objection to this application is on the grounds of overdevelopment and Cllr Mark Stevenson agreed to attend the Planning Committee's meeting on 15th January and to speak against this application.

c. Neighbourhood/Community Planning Report/Bus Users Group

Due to the length of time devoted to discussion of other agenda items, this matter was held over until the February meeting

11. Speeding Surveys and other Highways matters

Due to the length of time devoted to discussion of other agenda items, this matter was held over until the February meeting

12 Pavilion Development

The Council noted that the next meeting of the Pavilion Development Group will take place on Tuesday 14th January

13 Watling Lane Maintenance

The Clerk has been told by Mark Sumner that the blocked parts of the footpath will be dealt with before the end of March. The scrub cut down by Andrew Townsend has been cleared.

14 River Thame Navigation

It was agreed that the Council should contact the Environment Agency to obtain their views about how best this should be maintained.

15 Contact with Age UK Oxfordshire

The Chairman and the Clerk will be meeting the representative of Age UK Oxfordshire tomorrow to discuss arrangements for a briefing meeting to be held after Lunch Club on Wednesday 26th February.

16. Midsomer Murders Tourism Project

The working group is to meet again on 29th January.

17 Village 'Spring-Clean' Project

The Clerk will put a notice in Dorchester News asking for volunteers.

18. Any Other Business

It was agreed that due to the Village Hall being booked on the evening of the second Wednesday in May, the Annual Parish Meeting should take place on Wednesday 30th April and that this will be followed by a brief meeting of the Council.

The Meeting closed at 10.36 p.m.