

Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 10th December 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 and Mark Stevenson, with G Russell in attendance. Also present for part of the meeting was one resident.

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks and Apologies for absence

There were no apologies; all Parish Councillors were present. The Chairman thanked everyone who had been involved with preparing, erecting and decorating the Parish Christmas Tree, re-introduced this year using battery-powered illuminations for the first time. Many residents had said how pleased they were with this display.

2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3. Public Participation

Vlasta Fordova of 23 Bridge End raised the on-going matter of P14/S3105/FUL 25 Bridge End which will now be determined at the District Council's Planning Committee on 17th December. The Chairman assured her that the Parish Council will be represented at the Committee Meeting and will use its allocation of 5 minutes to recommend that the application be refused. All other speakers who oppose the application will be limited to five minutes in total between them Vlasta said that she intends to attend the Planning Committee and that other residents may also do so. Vlasta said that she and her family were delighted that the Parish Council had arranged for a Christmas Tree this year.

4. Minutes of the Meetings held 12th and 19th November 2014

The Minutes were approved as true records of the meetings after the word 'expect' was replaced by 'expert' in Minute 12 of 12/11/2014 and 'is' by 'in' in Minute 3 para 2 of 19/11/2014.

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes

- a. Cones along grass bank outside St Birinus RC Church; the Highways Representative has said that the County Council may agree to wooden posts being placed in such a way that car parking along the grass bank is stopped but there would need to be thorough checks upon what services may lie below ground. Records show that there is a gas pipe in this area. The County would be unable to provide any funding. Cllr Mark Stevenson said that he would pass on this information to Father John.
- b. Village Fête 2015; Cllr Sue Graney said that most parents of pre-school children are already involved with the organisation of this year's Dorchester Festival but it may be possible for a group to organise a Village Fête in 2016.
- c. Overy bridge; Mark Sumner, Footpaths Officer, has promised action within four months. He has told the Clerk that the bridge is not considered to be dangerous.
- d. Sue Ryder, Nettlebed; the Clerk said that he would organise a visit in the New Year for any councillors who were interested.

6. District Councillor's Report

Councillor Marc Hiles has not been in recent contact.

7. County Councillor's Report

County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay Gale had sent a written report which had been circulated to all members. It was agreed that if Cllr Lindsay Gale is agreeable, her report could be displayed on the Village website.

8. Finance: Bank balances & payments

Natwest Reserve Account 28th November £47,820.16

Natwest Current Account 28th November £47,288.43

The MUGA grants were still outstanding and there is an offer from the Tennis Club to pay immediately any outstanding balance on the loan.

The following payments were approved:

Berinsfield Community Business (Malthouse Lane re-surface) £4,260.00

The Earth Trust (Christmas Tree) £102.00

Jenks Oxford (Abbey Churchyard) £384.00

Howard Chadwick (refund of overpayment) £210.00

Total Pest Control (quarterly charge) £234.00

Neil Willis (Handyman) £52.50

Geoff Willis (4 weeks) £306.25

G Russell (Mary Tame plaque) £45.00

G Russell salary £528.25

£6,122.00

Appeals for funding have been received from Oxfordshire CAB and the Friends of Benson Library. It was agreed to donate £120 to Oxfordshire CAB (an increase of £20 since 2013) but that since most residents of Dorchester use the Berinsfield Library or the mobile service it would not be appropriate to contribute to Benson.

The Clerk presented draft Receipts and Payments Accounts for the period ended 30th November. Total receipts had been £65,176.95 (including burial fees of £3,067.50 and parking fees of £1,010). Total payments were £36,987.99

It was agreed that for the January meeting the figures would be updated to the end of December 2014. The costs involved with providing car parking facilities would be analysed to ensure that they were at least covered by the fees charged.

Budget for 2015/16

It is anticipated that there will be a small decrease in the Council Tax Reduction Grant. It was agreed that the Council should provide for another payment of £1,000 towards the cost of the PAGE Campaign; an allowance of £10,000 is required for footpath improvements; all the orientation boards within the Parish need updating. Parish Clerk Remuneration; the Council noted that following a recent national review by NALC and SLCC the Clerk is entitled to a one-off payment of £100 and a 2% pay increase with effect from 1st January 2015. the Council has previously agreed to accept the results of the periodic reviews and the increase was approved.

Grass –cutting contract review; quotations have been requested from three potential contractors, one of whom has already made a site visit. BCB has also been asked to re-quote for grass-cutting and the general maintenance tasks that it carries out during the winter months – hedge cutting, ditch clearing etc

The Council will be required to set the Precept for 2015/16 at its January meeting.

9. Correspondence and Other Business:

a. Sports Club Pavilion & Playground;

Two roofing contractors have given their quotations for carrying our repairs to the Pavilion Roof. It is, however, hard to compare them because of differences in their recommendations about the nature of the work that is required. Further research is required.

b. Footpaths;

The Community Pay-Back Team have told the Clerk that they believe that they have now completed all the village maintenance tasks that they can do, given the limitations of their equipment and the restrictions on the areas where they can work. They will be thanked for their assistance. There is a possibility that they could carry out more projects in the future so lines of communication will be kept open.

c. Cemetery /Closed Abbey Churchyard;

Nothing to report

d. Allotments;

The Society will be asked if they need a skip to be hired during the winter season. The Council has been asked to approve the new name for the Allotment space – ‘The Hempcroft Allotments’ – and some changes to the Rules. The Clerk will confirm the details of these changes so that they can be considered at the next meeting.

e. Letters to Chairman and Clerk

The Chairman and the Clerk had both been informed by the Corrys of 54 High Street that the public lavatories in Bridge End are in need of refurbishment. This is agreed but the responsibility for the facilities is the District’s rather than the Parish Council’s. The Clerk was asked to contact the District Council to say that the public lavatories are not of a standard that should be provided in an area which receives a large number of visitors, including tourists.

10. Planning

a. Application

P14/S3495/HH 4 Meadside

Single story extension to form front porch and utility room

The Council agreed that it had no strong views about this application and is content that the matter should be dealt with by the planning officer.

b. Neighbourhood/Community Planning Report/Bus Users Group

The Planning Group is meeting on 11th December. There will be a public consultation meeting at the end of January. The Council recommended that the Planning Group should investigate ways in which residents lacking mobility could be provided with transport to facilitate their participation on this important day.

c. SODC Planning Committee 17th December 2014 P14/S3105/FUL 25 Bridge End

The Council will attend this meeting to recommend that the Application be refused. Cllr Mark Stevenson will represent the Council and will be supported by other councillors, including the Chairman.

d. P14/S3110/HH 47 Watling Lane; the District Council has approved these plans against the recommendations of the Parish Council. The Clerk wrote to Cllr Marc Hiles on two occasions asking that the plans be referred to the Planning Committee but this was not done.

11. Parish Council Vacancy

The Clerk reported that so far three residents have expressed an interest. The vacancy will be advertised on village notice boards and the village website with all interested parties invited to attend the January Council meeting.

12. Parish Council Communications including publication of addresses

The village website now carries an on-line version of Dorchester News which means that advertisers in Dorchester News are getting extra advertising coverage at no extra charge. Cllr Sue Graney will research if and how the websites of other villages have commercial sponsorship.

13. Handling Complaints; Panel findings and experience gained (*The Council agreed that no members of the public should be present during discussion of this matter*)

The written records of the Panel's proceedings and conclusions have been circulated to all councillors for comment and approval. The Council unanimously agreed with the Panel's conclusions. The text of the letter to be sent to Mr Ashley Smith, the complainant, was agreed. A copy of this letter will be sent to Liz Howlett who has been advising the Council. It was agreed that a paper copy of the letter should be delivered to Mr Smith's property in Wittenham Lane

The Council noted that the whole process of dealing with this complaint had taken a considerable amount of time and agreed that the complaints procedure should now be reviewed to ensure that the schedule of timings is realistic.

It was agreed that the Clerk's email signature should include a note giving details of the Council's office opening hours. All Councillors should have some training, possibly from Liz Howlett, in matters such as the Freedom of Information Act and the correct way of interacting with members of the public when acting in an official capacity. The Chairman thanked Councillors for the support which she had been given during recent weeks while Cllr Ken Bryan, speaking on behalf of the Council, thanked Cllr Mrs Metcalfe for all the extra time and effort that she had given to this task under very difficult and sometimes unpleasant circumstances.

14. Model Standing Orders/Freedom of Information Policy

Copies of these documents have been circulated. It was agreed that more time needs to be allowed so that the wording can be thoroughly reviewed.

15. Registration of Parish Land

This item was carried forward to the January meeting.

16. Result of Parking Survey

A public meeting will be arranged in the New Year

17. IT Classes for Residents

The Council agreed to delegate these arrangements to the Chairman and the Clerk, Cllr Chris Hill volunteered to join the panel of mentors.

18. Defibrillator

It was agreed that the Council should proceed with the purchase of a defibrillator to be installed on the High Street side of the main entrance to The White Hart. The Council agreed that this should be followed by the installation of a defibrillator at the Pavilion, as long as a suitable location could be agreed.

19 Gilbert Scott Memorial Project

There was a meeting of the Steering Group on 25th November. Malcolm Airs is assisting with preparing the applications for planning permission and listed building consent with a view that these should be submitted to SODC early in the New Year.

20. Any Other Business

It was agreed that Cllr Chris Hill should represent the Parish Council at the Festival of Readings and Carols on Sunday 21st December.

The Meeting closed at 10.50 p.m.