

Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 14th January 2015 commencing at 7.30 p.m. The Chairman, Cllr Margot Metcalfe, presided (up to and including Item 10); present were Cllrs. Ken Bryan, Maurice Day, Sue Graney, Chris Hill (Vice-Chairman) and Mark Stevenson, with G Russell in attendance. Also present were two residents.

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks and Apologies for absence

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the New Year. She explained that, due to family illness, she would be unable to stay for the whole meeting and would hand over to the Vice Chairman, Cllr Chris Hill, when it was time for her to leave. Apologies for absence were accepted from Cllr Mike Hill, who was on holiday, and both County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale and District Cllr Marc Hiles.

2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3. Public Participation

Val Howells and John Craven, both resident in Abingdon Road, said that they were attending the meeting because they were interested in becoming members of the Parish Council either by being co-opted to fill the present vacancy or by standing for election in May. The Chairman said that they were both very welcome and, contrary to normal practice, would be allowed to ask questions as the meeting progressed.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held 10th December 2014

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

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes

- a. The Council noted that Permission had been granted for P14/S3495 4 Meadside; single story extension to form front porch and utility room.
- b. The Council was pleased to learn of the decision by the District Council's Planning Committee on 17th December which had refused permission to application P14/S3105/FUL for 25 Bridge End and the adjoining development site on Wittenham Lane. The Chairman thanked Cllr Mark Stevenson, who had represented the Council at the Committee Meeting, and congratulated him on his exemplary presentation.
- c. Father John has been informed of the County Council's views about ways to prevent cars parking on the grass verge outside St Birinus in Bridge End. There is nothing further to report at this stage.
- d. The Clerk will contact Sue Ryder in Nettlebed to arrange a date for a visit.
- e. Grass-cutting; a quotation from one alternative contractor to BCB is expected in the next few days but two other possible contractors (Windmill Landscapes and Continental Landscapes) had declined to quote. It is not thought worth contacting Scion Estates (the contractor before BCB) since the company has been taken over and is no longer locally managed. The Clerk will try to find at least one more alternative.
- f. The Clerk is still to contact SODC about the public lavatories in Bridge End.
- g. Efforts will be made to contact residents who may need help with transport to attend the Neighbourhood Planning Meeting in the Village Hall on 31st January.

h. Complaint Handling; the Chairman's draft letter had been circulated to all councillors. It was proposed by Cllr Mark Stevenson and seconded by Cllr Chris Hill that this should be approved and this motion was passed unanimously.

6. District Councillor's Report

The Council noted that Cllr Marc Hiles had sent his apologies for absence and had also confirmed that he will not be seeking re-election in May.

7. County Councillor's Report

County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale has agreed that her monthly reports should be published on the Village website.

Cllr Stevenson said that the County Councillor's Report had mentioned two consultation topics upon which there is still time for Parish Councillors to express their views. The Clerk will circulate the details of Care Home Fees For April 2015 upon which comments will be accepted up to 8th February and the Oxfordshire's Children And Young People's Plan upon which comments will be accepted up to 20th February.

Referring to the Report's comments about cuts to the County Council's budget, the Chairman said that these cuts can have a direct impact upon the Parish Council's costs and gave footpath maintenance as an example of something which the Parish may have to take over more and more.

Cllr Stevenson said that he has written to County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale expressing his concern about the special procedure being introduced for the approval of projects involving fracking and asked if this was something upon which the Parish Council would also wish to express its views.

8. Finance: Bank balances & payments

Natwest Reserve Account 28th November £47,820.16

Natwest Current Account 30th December £45,320.40

Only one MUGA grant is still outstanding. With £3,348.28 received in December the balance due is around £700.

The following cheques were approved for payment:

M & M Skip Hire Ltd (Allotments)	£246.00
Total Pest Control (quarterly charge, Abbey View)	£66.00
Berinsfield Community Business (sundry maintenance)	£413.40
Communicorp (annual sub to Local Councils Update)	£100.00
Dorchester Village Hall (room hire)	£43.00
Dorchester Village Hall (annual phone and broadband charges)	£559.94
Thames Water (Allotments £471.98; Sportsground £80.73)	£552.71
Dorchester Abbey PCC (room hire)	£20.00
Sue Graney (Christmas tree decorations)	£25.74
Printinco (re NP Consultation meeting paid by Chris Smith)	£117.60
Printinco (re NP Consultation meeting paid by Sue Graney)	£116.50
Geoff Willis (4 weeks)	£367.50
G Russell (revised salary plus £100 payment)	£638.82
Liz Howlett (legal fees in connection with complaint)	<u>£1,100.00</u>
	£4,367.21

The Council noted that the Parish Council would be making the planning applications for the Gilbert Scott Memorial and approved the payment of fees amounting to approximately £200.

Draft Accounts to 31st December 2014

The Clerk reported that Total Receipts to the end of December come to £65,176.95 including £3067.50 Burial Fees and £1010 parking fees and both are likely to increase by at least £1,000 by the end of March.

Total Payments to end of December (net of VAT) total £38,733.39. Even after allowing for pavilion roof repairs of £5,000 and purchases of new litter bins, cemetery and village notice boards, defibrillators, some further footpath improvements and miscellaneous purchases the Council's total net payments in 2014/15 are unlikely to be as high as its receipts.

The Council's bank balances at the start of the year were in excess of £63,000 including earmarked funds of £7,000.

Precept for 2015/16

The Current precept is £41,450 and an increase of 1.99% (the maximum increase for District and County Councils without holding a referendum) would therefore be £800. The Clerk said that in 2015/16 the Council Tax Reduction Grant should be at least £1,000 while the budgeted cost of a contested election for a parish of this size is £2,000.

It was unanimously agreed that the precept should be increased to £42,280.

9. Correspondence and Other Business:

a. Sports Club Pavilion & Playground;

The Clerk will be meeting on site with Mark Bristow so that he can produce a specification for repairs to the pavilion roof against which contractors will be asked to quote.

The Parish Council has been asked to allow the archaeology field school use of the showers from 28th June to 10th July. Subject to the Sports Club having no objection, it was agreed to approve this in return for a payment of £300, the same as in 2014.

b. Footpaths;

BCB has given a quote of £160 to finish clearance of Watling Lane; this has been accepted. BCB will be asked to quote to clear the area behind the Orientation Board at the Drayton Road end of the footpath to The Hurst.

Geoff Willis is cleaning the bus shelters on the by-pass.

Moles on Green at Bridge End; Total Pest Control has recommended ways of clearing the moles from The Green but local residents have said that they would prefer that the moles are neither trapped nor gassed and so no action will be taken.

c. Cemetery /Closed Abbey Churchyard;

The Council considered a request by the Hurley family to plant a memorial tree in the line of trees near the grave space of Abel Thomas Hurley-Smyth. This was approved.

d. Allotments;

The Council has agreed to hire a skip for one week commencing 9th February at the cost of £205 plus VAT. This was approved. It may be possible to put the arisings from the PayBack team's clearance work in Watling Lane into the same skip.

The Clerk will ask Mark Townson about the progress with repairing the central area which puddles after heavy rain.

e. Letters to Chairman and Clerk

i. Miss Susan Bowditch has written to the Council about the 'rare footpath sign' to Day's Lock which is located opposite 50 Watling Lane. Miss Bowditch says that if

the Parish Council agrees to have this restored she will pay 50% of the cost. She suggests Didcot Metalwork Services (DMS) to do the job. The Council agreed to refer this matter to Mark Sumner, the County Council Footpaths Officer.

ii. The County Council has asked if the Parish Council would review its existing Community Emergency Plan and identify any need for change. Cllr Chris Hill said that he would do this. The contact information held by the County is still correct.

iii. The Council has been approached by the Oil Buying Club, a new venture that aims to help people in rural areas who heat their homes using heating oil. Cllr Sue Graney said that she knows about this organisation and recommended that the Council should agree to the Club's request to help make Dorchester residents aware of its service. This could be done via Dorchester News and the Village website.

10. Planning

a. Applications

P15/S0010/FUL 60 Watling Lane

Demolition of existing dwelling. Erection of 2x2 bedroom semi-detached dwellings. Paper copies of this application had only just been received and it was suggested that the planning officer be asked if the consultation period could be extended.

Although in principle the Council welcomes the development of 2 bedroom properties within the Parish, this specific proposal has raised concerns about the roof height of the new dwellings and the capacity of the existing sewerage system. If the Application is approved the Council would like the planning officer to consider including a condition which restricted the possibility that the dwelling could be extended further.

(Cllr Mrs Margot Metcalfe left the meeting at this point; the chair was taken by Cllr Chris Hill)

P14/S3866/LDP Windrush 39 Abingdon Road;

Erection of garden store to side of property

The Council noted this application upon which it had not been invited to comment.

b. Neighbourhood Development/Community Planning Report/Bus Users Group

Display panels have been purchased at a cost of £441.40 plus VAT and printing costs so far incurred are £214.50 plus VAT. This expenditure is coming from the £5,000 grant received from SODC. Cllr Mark Stevenson is organising posters and a house-to-house leaflet distribution.

Cllr Stevenson confirmed that he has regular contact with the Berinsfield NDP Group. Berinsfield, which is classed as a 'larger village', is looking at 109 new dwellings but site options have not yet been finalised.

The District Council has scheduled a Green Belt Community Assessment Event for 15th January which Cllr Stevenson will attend with other members of the Neighbourhood Development Planning Group.

11. Parish Council Vacancy

Two further expressions of interest have been received this evening which makes four in total. The vacancy will be filled by co-option at the beginning of the Council's February meeting.

Two councillors have indicated that they may not be standing for re-election in May.

12. Parish Council Communications including publication of addresses

Councillors can be listed on the Village website and Parish notice boards with an email address using the dorchesteronthames.co.uk domain. The list of key councillor responsibilities should also be displayed, updated annually after each Annual Parish

Council Meeting. Photographs of individual councillors were taken in June and retained by the Clerk who will supply them for use on the website as required. Village businesses will be given the option of a listing on the Parish website. The Clerk has contacted the Estates manager of the Co-Op regarding replacement of the notice board (and the provision of a small bike-rack). Approval is awaited.

13. Handling Complaint; Panel findings and experience gained

The Council's letter to the complainant was sent after the December Council meeting. There has been no response to date.

Dealing with this matter took rather longer than had been anticipated by the Panel, whose members will now meet to discuss the need for revisions to the process. Councillors are to be trained in these matters including Freedom of Information requests. The Chairman will be asked to progress this matter with Liz Howlett.

14. Model Standing Orders/Freedom of Information Policy

It was agreed to defer this matter until the next meeting. The documents for discussion were circulated in two separate emails on 3rd December

15. Registration of Parish Land

It was agreed to defer this matter until the next meeting.

16. Result of Parking Survey

The date for a public meeting to discuss the findings of this survey is to be agreed. The meeting will be asked to consider what measures should be taken to resolve problems that have been identified. It may be a topic for inclusion in the agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting.

17. IT Classes for Residents

This matter has now been delegated to the Chairman and Clerk.

18. Defibrillator

The Defibrillator has been ordered. No wiring will be required because the model that has been ordered has a battery with a four year life. The Council agreed that, should funds be available, a defibrillator should be ordered for installation at the Pavilion on the Recreation Ground. The Sports Club would be asked for its agreement and also for its advice on whether the installation should be inside the Pavilion or on the wall facing the pitch, which would have the advantage of providing access 24/7 but expose the unit to the risk of being vandalised.

19. Gilbert Scott Memorial Project

The Council noted that the application for planning approval is in progress. The Parish Council will pay the fee which is thought to be around £200.

Repairs to the phone box are to be carried out at the Parish Council's expense as agreed with BT in 2012 when ownership of the box was transferred. The cost of repairs is now estimated to be approximately £1,000 which means that the Council must obtain three estimates for carrying out the work.

20. Any Other Business

i. It was agreed that the date for the Annual Parish Meeting would be fixed at the February Council meeting.

- ii. Cllr Ken Bryan reported that some trees have seeded themselves on to Dorchester Bridge and need to be removed. They are hard to get at and should be reported to County Highways.
- iii. Cllr Sue Graney said that the footway between 2 and 4 Abingdon Road is so overgrown with vegetation that pedestrians are forced to walk in the road. She asked that this should be reported to County Highways.
- iv. Cllr Sue Graney suggested that the Parish Council should take the lead in organising a Village Fireworks Display on Friday 6th November. She volunteered to prepare a feasibility study and a risk assessment for submission to the Parish Council at its February meeting.
- v. Cllr Mark Stevenson said that the Government has announced that housing developments of under 10 properties will no longer be compelled to include a set number of affordable homes. This means, he said, that in Dorchester the only way of getting new affordable homes would be via an exception site. Cllr Stevenson said that he has been approached by the owners and would-be developers of 'Allens Pit' – the land adjacent to 55 Abingdon Road – to help them with their plans for this site. Cllr Stevenson asked for the Parish Council's approval to start having discussions with SODC about the site. A rural exception site can only be progressed if it has the Parish Council's approval. The Parish Council agreed that Cllr Stevenson should take this proposal forward.

The Meeting closed at 10.24