**Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council**

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 14th March 2018 commencing at 7.30 pm. The Chairman, Cllr Chris Hill presided; present were Cllrs. Rob Ballantyne, Maurice Day, Viviane Quirke, Mike Rimmer, Keith Russell and Mark Williams (Vice-Chairman) with G Russell in attendance. Also present for part of the meeting were County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale, District Cllr John Cotton and one resident

 1/3 Apologies For Absence

Apologies were accepted from Cllr Oliver Margison who had work commitments.

 2/3 Public Participation

Mrs Susan Jupp told the Council that she thinks the proposed extension to the cottage at 52 Watling Lane is completely out of proportion to both the existing building and also to the size of the plot; if built, it would result in loss of light to the neighbouring property.

The proposal to create a door directly onto Watling Lane is potentially dangerous from a road safety point of view. Since the property fronts onto the lowest point of the Lane, where rainwater tends to gather, the new door also increases the risk of internal flooding. If the size of the property is increased as suggested in the application, the result would be the loss of one of the few remaining small ‘affordable’ properties in the village. For all of these reasons the application should be recommended for refusal.

 3/3 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

The Chairman said that although he has no pecuniary interest in the outcome, he does live very close to the land known as ‘Waterloo’ which the Parish Council is seeking to register in its name, and also to the parties who are contesting the Council’s claim, namely Father John Osman, the Roman Catholic Parish Priest (next door) and Mr. and Mrs. Watson of 13 Bridge End (three properties away) who have erected a fence around part of the land that has been claimed by the Parish.

Cllr Hill said he would prefer not to take part in the Parish Council’s discussions of this matter in order that he can be involved as an independent witness who could give evidence about the public access to the land and the maintenance of the trees, river bank etc. that has been organised and paid for by the Parish Council over many decades. The Parish Council believes that this indicates that this area was never part of the Davey Estate.

 4/3 Minutes of the Meetings held on 7th and 14th February 2018

The Minutes of the Special Meeting which had been held on 7th February were approved as circulated and signed by the Chairman.

There were two amendments to the Minutes which had been circulated for the Meeting held on 14th February: para 14/2 was corrected to show that the Chairman had talked about a document that is being drawn up by village groups including the Hurst Water Meadow Trust, the Abbey and the Historical Society, while Minute 11/2 was corrected after Cllr Mike Rimmer pointed out that ‘BCP’ should read ‘BCB’ in the long paragraph. After these corrections were made it was proposed by Cllr Keith Russell that the minutes should be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Williams and passed unanimously. The Chairman signed the minute book.

 5/3 Matters Arising from the Minutes

i. The Clerk confirm that a Declaration of Interests has now been completed by Cllr Maurice Day.

ii. Cllr Margison has told the Clerk that he is unable to accept nomination as a School governor because of pressure of work.

iii. The surveyor from Scottish and Southern Electricity has inspected the tree behind 43 Martins Lane. He removed some ivy and then assessed the remaining work recommended by Jenks as of low priority. It has been confirmed, however, that SSE has a maintenance team to cover this sort of work and the Clerk now has the contact details. A copy of the Jenks report will be sent to the team contact.

iv. It was not known whether the Allotments Society is still expecting the Parish Council to purchase a replacement mower or has made other arrangements.

 6/3 County Councillor's Report

The monthly Report from County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale has been sent to each councillor and there is a paper copy in the folder for circulation. Cllr Lindsay-Gale was asked to discover what progress has been made with the projects submitted to Keith Stenning in October 2017: improving visibility at the junction of Henley Road and Dorchester by-pass; creating a drop kerb by the Abbey Rose Walk entrance; repairs to the drain near the Water Treatment Plant in Henley Road; and repairs to several granite setts in the High Street.

Councillors commented that by using Glyphosate the weeds at the by-pass junction could be brought under control and that the regular flooding of Henley Road near the Water Treatment works is a real road safety problem which needs attention.

Cllr Ballantyne drew Cllr Lindsay-Gale’s attention to a letter from Going Forward Buses which states that a possible County Council change of policy over payments for journeys made by bus pass holders could render the present service uneconomic.

On 6th March the Clerk had attended a meeting at County Hall organised by the Oxfordshire Branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks. This had promised better communication between the County and Parish Councils, starting with some face to face meetings probably commencing in May.

 7/3 District Councillor's Report

District Cllr John Cotton said that this year the tax raised by South Oxfordshire District Council had been increased but SODC is still one of the lowest taxed districts in the country. Cllr Cotton explained the huge change that has taken place in financing Local Authorities in recent years. Central government had once supplied 50% of the funds but now the government expects to receive funds from district councils.

Submission of the SODC Local Plan has been delayed because of continued uncertainty over the future availability of the site at Chalgrove. A recent statement from the Government suggested there will be increased protection for Green Belt areas. The recently approved housing deal has dropped Oxfordshire’s required land supply to three years. Cllr Cotton said that individual councillors will continue to have funds which can be awarded to small projects and he commended the launch of the District Council’s new lottery scheme which is another source of funding for local endeavours.

 8/3 Planning:

i. Application:

P18/S0670/HH 52 Watling Lane; Internal alterations and rear extension to an existing dwelling and the construction of a detached single bay garage.

This property is listed in the Neighbourhood Development Plan as a designated heritage asset and any work which is carried out there will have an impact upon the Conservation Area. It was agreed that the proposed front door is dangerous, and that the Application would result in overdevelopment of a building of local interest. It was proposed by Cllr Rob Ballantyne that the Application be recommended for refusal. This was seconded by Cllr Maurice Day and unanimously approved. The Chairman said that he would co-ordinate the preparation of the Council’s submission to the Planning Officer.

The Clerk was asked to make enquiries concerning the impact that these planning issues are having upon the current occupant of the building.

ii. Neighbourhood Development Plan Referendum

The Council noted that there had been a well-attended drop-in Q&A session in the Village Hall on the previous evening. Voting on the Referendum will take place on 15th March with declaration of the result expected in the Village Hall at around 10.30. Many councillors said that they would attend the count which commences immediately after the polls shut at 10.00 p.m.

9/3 Affordable Housing / Housing Needs Survey

The Chairman and Cllr Ballantyne have met with both the Sovereign and South Oxfordshire Housing Associations and assess Sovereign as being the keener of the two, Both Associations say that they would pay for the Housing Needs Survey. Site visits will be arranged to view the recent work by both Associations and, possibly, additional associations also. The Chairman will draft and circulate some sample questionnaires. The Council is not sure about who makes the final decision as to which Association should be picked; is it the Parish Council or the site developer? It will seek advice on this point, probably from SODC.

10/3 Land Registration: ‘Waterloo’ application and Village Hall correction

The Land Registry has turned down the Waterloo application but the Council has been invited to re-apply with the new information at its disposal. Regarding the enclosure of the land behind 13 Bridge End, the Diocese says matters are still with their solicitors. The Diocesan surveyor has now been sent a scanned copy of the Land Registry map from 2015 which the Council has received from the former occupants Mr and Mrs Baker.

Village Hall Registration: how the address of 18 Abingdon Road was used is a mystery - the original registration documents were sent to 5/7 High Street. It is not a matter of great importance, however, as the regulations allow for three different addresses per property to be retained on the Land Registry file.

The plan which appears not to show the patio was prepared by the Land Registry. The Parish Council has the original Conveyance document which shows it correctly and the Land Registry will have this pointed out to them.

11/3 Finance:

NatWest Current Account balance at 28/2 £50,069.02

NatWest Reserve Account balance at 5/03 £47,878.94

 £ 97,947.96

The following payments were approved:

Trevor Greenaway (Pavilion roof) 175.00

Oxfordshire County Council (Dorchester Flyer) 168.00

Chris Hill NDP Printing 423.40

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental 2 months) 155.16

Berinsfield Community Business (Recreation Ground) 210.00

OALC annual subscription 192.26

Geoff Willis (Village Handyman) 332.50

G Russell (salary) 538.82

G Russell (admin J/F/M) 423.00

 2618.14

These payments were unanimously approved but with abstentions by Cllr Chris Hill and by Cllr Mark Williams, who is a director of Berinsfield Community Business.

The Clerk said that the ‘earmarking’ of funds must be agreed so that the amounts can be announced at the Annual Parish Meeting on 9th May.

12/3 Speedwatch

The Clerk reported that the Council’s insurers have confirmed that volunteers acting under Parish Council supervision are included within the Council’s Public Liability cover and had seen no problem in the Council signing the Thames Valley Police Indemnity document. It was agreed that this document should be signed and returned to the Police so that the initial training of the volunteers could begin.

The Clerk said that he was circulating information from two suppliers of roadside speed warning signs. He has asked the local Police Community Support Officers to comment upon what permissions are required from Police and Highways before such things can be displayed.

13/3 Correspondence with Chairman and/or Clerk

i. The Chairman confirmed that he has been invited to comment on behalf of the Parish Council on the Dyke Hills Scheduled Monument Consent Application.

ii. Mobile Post Office Service; although a firm start date has not yet been announced the Council has been informed that a weekly mobile post office service will soon be starting in Dorchester

iii. The Clerk reported that Masons Funfair has asked for permission to use the Recreation Ground on the weekend of 19th/20th May. The Cricket Club has said that they have matches on both these days. The Fair would be interested in using the Recreation Ground next season, but the Cricket Club is worried about the damage that may result and is very much against the idea. The Clerk suggested that Masons should consider using Abbey View Meadow but the Fair, having carried out a site visit, says that it is not a suitable location.

iv The Clerk has been asked to refer the road-markings at the By-Pass / Henley Road junction for a safety assessment by County Highways and he confirmed that he will do this.

14/3 Oxford/Cambridge Expressway

The Chairman said that the activities of the Action Group can be followed on line at <http://www.cuddesdonanddenton.org/news-archive/884-oxford-cambridge-expressway-action-group-formed>

15/3 PAGE Report

John Taylor is not available to attend the Annual Parish Meeting on 9th May and so PAGE will be represented by Rob Marsh.

16/3 Village Mapping and other software systems

Village webmaster Dan Duke and the Clerk are looking at various mapping software packages including Parish-Online and Pear Technology with ‘Fix My Street’ a possibility. Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale was asked to enquire whether the County Council is able to arrange for member parish councils to take advantage of its association with ‘Fix My Street’.

Some mapping ability is included in other software systems tailor-made for Parish Councils such as Rialtas, Advantedge Solutions and Scribe. After reviewing these packages, the Clerk aims to make a recommendation early in the new Council Financial Year which begins in April

17/3 Village Hall Development

Cllr Mark Williams is a Trustee of the Village Hall along with Cllrs Maurice Day and Keith Russell and the Clerk, Geoffrey Russell. Under the terms of the Trust Deed the Parish Council is the ‘Custodian Trustee’. Cllr Williams, who is also the Honorary Treasurer of the Village Hall, explained that in order to prepare the proposed Village Hall Development Plan, it was necessary to realise that, before applications for grant aid could be made, the governance of the Village Hall must be reviewed and, where necessary, modernised. He has obtained legal advice which states that the existing Trust Deed is out of date.

The necessary ‘Deed of Variation’ will not change the ‘spirit’ of the current charitable status which will be retained, but the Parish Council must give up its right to be appointed a Trustee. It was proposed and formally agreed by the Chairman that Dorchester on Thames Parish Council is willing to relinquish the requirement that it should always be required to act as a Trustee but that it retains the right to be made a trustee if the need arises.

18/3 Commemorating 1918

Following the paper that was presented to the Council by Cllr Russell at its previous meeting, Cllr Viviane Quirke confirmed that she is interested in becoming involved with this project. She would contact both the Rector and the Historical Society in order to explore the idea of setting up some joint venture activities and to see if there are any projects which the Parish Council might wish to finance.

19/3 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The Clerk said that a ‘toolkit for parish councils’ is being supplied through the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils and the Council’s internal auditor, Kevin Rose, has confirmed that he can act as our independent Data Protection Officer for £70 per year.

20/3 Routine Reports:

a. Sports activities, Pavilion & Playground; Trevor Greenaway has cleared leaves from the gutters and downpipes and moss from the Pavilion roof.

b. Footpaths; Four more dog waste bag dispensers have been ordered and for fitting during April.

c Cemetery/Closed Churchyard; It was agreed that with effect from the beginning of April control of the moles in the Abbey Churchyard should be paid for on a quarterly contact just like other parts of the village. The cost has been set at £145 per quarter.

d. Allotments

Nothing to report.

21/3 Any Other Urgent Matters

None

The Meeting closed at 10.30 p.m.