**Dorchester Parish Council**

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 12th June 2019 commencing at 7.30 p.m. The Chairman, Cllr Mark Williams, presided; present were Cllrs. Rob Ballantyne (Vice -Chairman), Mike Corran, Maurice Day, Chris Hill and Mike Rimmer with G Russell (Clerk to the Council) in attendance. Also present for part of the time were District Cllr Robin Bennett and one resident.

1/6. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Viviane Quirke and Keith Russell.

2/6. Public Participation

A resident reported that the hedge in the area around the bus stop opposite Meadside needs cutting back. Cllrs Hill and Ballantyne volunteered to clear the area after which it will be added to the areas which are routinely cleared by the Council’s contractors.

3/6 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

Cllr Chris Hill re land at Waterloo and behind 13 Bridge End as before (Minute 3/3/2018); Cllr Mark Williams concerning village maintenance work that is carried out by any company with whom he works, principally grass-cutting and grounds maintenance.

4/6 Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th May 2019

After correcting the years in which council funds had been earmarked from 2018/19 and 2019/20 to 2017/18 and 2018/19 (Minute 13/5), the Minutes as circulated were approved and signed by the Chairman.

5/6 Matters Arising from the Minutes

a. Some councillors have not given the Clerk their entries for the Register of members’ interests and the Clerk asked for these forms from anyone who has not already sent them directly to the monitoring officer.

b. Repairs to the phone box in Bridge End; the Clerk reported that David Youngman will carry out these repairs during the coming month.

c. Fence at Waterloo; the Clerk has asked the SODC Enforcement Officer for a progress report about her actions following the Council’s objection.

d. Cheyney Lane surface; this has been referred to the area inspector from the FixMyStreet service and the Clerk is in direct contact with her about getting the County to pay for resurfacing, as has been done in previous years.

e. High Street bus shelter; the concrete post in the doorway is to be replaced by a wooden anchor post in one of the corners. This work is in hand.

6/6 County Councillor’s Report

County Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale has been on holiday.

7/6 . District Councillor’s Report

District Cllr Robin Bennett has received copies of the recent correspondence about measures to reduce the amount of parking on pavements. He said that this is an issue which the new District Council has already identified as needing action.

Cllr Bennett reported upon the new Council structure and appointments and explained that the new Council’s first priority is to review the emerging Local Plan. This review has no bearing on the validity or enforceability of existing Neighbourhood Development Plans. Cllr Bennett confirmed that SODC has a 5-year land supply.

He said that other priorities for the new Liberal Democrat/Green partnership are to return SODC finances to better health and to continue the co-operation with Vale of the White Horse Council. A copy of the full Report will be sent to the Clerk.

8/6 Council Vision and Division of Responsibilities

The list of councillor responsibilities was reviewed and, provisionally, is now:

Adopt A Grave: Keith Russell

Affordable Housing: Rob Ballantyne and Chris Hill

Allotments: Mike Rimmer

Car Parking: Viviane Quirke and others to be confirmed

Cemetery: Keith Russell

Christmas Tree & Firework Display: Maurice Day with others to decorate

Defibrillator Supervisor: Sue Graney\*

Earth Trust Local Stakeholder Group liaison: Mike Rimmer

Emergency Planning: Mike Corran

Expressway Action Group: Chris Hill and Mike Rimmer

Firework Display: Geoff Russell liaises with Maggie Davies of Footsteps Foundation

Flooding & Drainage: Keith Russell

Footpaths: Mark Williams

Hurst Water Meadow: Chris Hill

Land Registry: Geoff Russell

Neighbourhood Development Planning: Rob Ballantyne, Maurice Day, Mike Rimmer, Mark Williams, with Malcolm Airs\* and Richard Winslet\*

Neighbourhood Plan Alliance: vacant

Open Spaces: Maurice Day

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust/Community Care Liaison: Rob Ballantyne

Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils: Geoff Russell and one other

PAGE: Chris Hill

PCC: vacant

Playground: vacant

Responsible Financial Officer: Geoff Russell, Parish Clerk

River Users Group: Simon Broadbent

Recreation Ground & Pavilion: Chris Hill

School Governor: Val Howells\*

Street Lighting: Mark Williams

Tourism: Viviane Quirke

Transport Policy including Bus Services: Rob Ballantyne

Tree Officer: Mark Williams

Village Hall: Keith Russell

Village Website: Mark Williams who will liaise with the Clerk and Dan Duke\*

* *Non-member of the Parish Council*

The Clerk was asked to contact all the above named who are not members of the Parish Council and ask them if they are willing to serve in these roles.

The Chairman asked all Councillors to express their hopes about what the new Council could achieve during its four years in office.

Mike Rimmer said that communication between the Council and village residents needs to be improved. He thinks that the village does not look as ‘smart’ as it could and suggests that ways in which this could be improved should be researched. Rob Ballantyne agreed that communications could be improved. He said that he thinks the playground is in need of upgrading, while the facilities in the pavilion should be more inclusive. It is important to ensure that the project to provide additional affordable housing is brought to a satisfactory conclusion; there is still work to be done before this is achieved.

Chris Hill agreed about the importance of the affordable housing project and that the role of the Parish Council in achieving this result should be widely communicated. He would like the Council to try to encourage more residents to become involved with village activities as volunteers. In recent years several village groups have ceased their activities because there has been a lack of new organisers coming forward.

Mike Corran agreed that parts of the village look scruffy and said that dirty signage, including bus stops/shelters, and unkempt grass verges should receive attention, while some areas would benefit if bike racks were installed. Maurice Day said that some footpaths should be improved, especially the one from Drayton Road to The Hurst. The Clerk said that it might be possible to obtain grant aid for some of these projects and added that the regular inspection of Council assets, from buildings to benches, is one of his priorities, with regular maintenance taking place whenever necessary.

The Chairman said he hoped that it will be possible to have significant improvements to both the Village Hall and the Pavilion during the life of this Council. He will talk to the Rector to see if the Council and the Parochial Church Council could work more closely together for their mutual benefit.

9/6 . Planning:

i. Applications:

P19/S1746/FUL 41 Abingdon Road

Demolition of existing bungalow and erection of a two-storey family home with basement level.

Details of this new application have only just been received and it was agreed that more study of the proposals is required before a decision can be made. It was agreed to ask for an extension to the consultation period and to discuss it at the July meeting.

P19/S1601/FUL & P19/S1602/LB 3A Queen Street; Change of use of premises from office to residential to provide two-bedroom dwelling. Internal alterations to include re-opening of blocked up doorway; infilling of existing doorway; creation of new stud wall and door to create bathroom; removal of existing internal door (all at first floor).

Cllr Rob Ballantyne proposed that the Council should object to this application. It does not cover the parking requirements and this is contrary to Dorchester’s Neighbourhood Development Plan, paragraph DOT11. This was seconded by Cllr Chris Hill and unanimously agreed.

P19/S1350/FUL Village Hall, 7 Queen Street; Proposed alterations, front and rear extension and refurbishment.

The Council noted that some residents have expressed some concern about the height of the proposed gable roof and also the materials used. It was also questioned whether the two doors for the Clerk’s office would have a significant impact upon the layout of the desk, storage units and so on and reduce the quality of the office space.

Overall, however, the Council was fully supportive of the Application being approved with Chris Hill proposing that the design should be considered as one that is sensitive to a very important building which provides much-needed facilities and essential services to the village. This motion was seconded by Mike Corran and passed unanimously.

P19/S1442/HH 33 Martins Lane; Demolish front conservatory and flat roof bay window. Proposed ground floor extensions and first floor extension. External alterations including new windows/doors and alterations to existing.

It was unanimously agreed that there were no objections to this Application.

P19/S1663/DIS Discharge of Conditions: The White Hart Hotel, 22-26 High Street

The Council noted that County Council Highways has recommended a holding objection because there appears to be a reduction in the number of parking spaces from 25 (the approved number) to 23 and a change in the way in which these spaces are accessed and egressed.

The Parish Council looks forward to the boundary wall being completely restored as promised by the hotel proprietor.

ii. Belcher Court Discharge of Conditions re Cemetery Access Road

The Clerk had circulated an email from Michelle Briggs, Development Manager of SOHA dated 15th May in which she confirmed that the surface of the access road would be completely resurfaced at the developer’s expense. It is not yet known when this resurfacing work will be done, and the Chairman said that he has asked for a quotation to cover the cost of tidying the Herringcote side of the road.

iii. Affordable Housing

Rob Ballantyne and Chris Hill reported that their meeting with Sovereign has led to the architect being asked to take into account the comments which have been made by Oliver Margison and Malcolm Airs.

10/6 Finance:

i. Bank Balances & Payments

Current Account balance at 30/5 £43,931.72

Reserve Account balance at 5/6 £47,956.58

 £91,888.30

It was proposed by Cllr Mike Rimmer and seconded by Cllr Mike Corran that the following payments should be approved. This was carried unanimously.

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental) 92.76

Oxfordshire County Council (Flyer June 4th invoice) 112.50

Landscape Group Oxford (May grass cutting) 1,869.18

Town and Country Memorials Ltd (cemetery plaques for Cobb) 529.20

Trevor Greenaway (fixing plaques) 150.00

Phil Greenaway (war memorial plants) 45.90

Sarah Venners (tree survey) 295.00

Interior Design Services (Telephone box; materials for repair) 160.00

Geoff Willis (Village Handyman 5 weeks) 367.50

G Russell (salary) 549.65

 £4,171.69

ii Annual Return

The Annual Return was approved for signature by the Chairman and the Clerk and then submission to the External Auditors, Moore Stephens. The due date is 1st July. The Clerk emphasised the importance of displaying the data in due course within the Parish Council section of the village website.

iii Internal Audit Comments including Risk Management

Kevin Rose, the internal auditor, has recommended that the Council purchase Local Council Risk System (LCRS) Software produced by a company called DMH Solutions Ltd which has a large number of risks pre-loaded. The cost for Parish Councils is £112.00 plus VAT and this was approved.

Mr Rose has also suggested that there should be improved record-keeping of the Council’s assets. There are various software options, some including mapping services, which will be evaluated over the next few months.

The auditor is satisfied with the book-keeping process, presently carried out on Excel spreadsheets. It was agreed that this should be retained for the current year but with the addition of bank reconciliations being presented to the Council each quarter.

The signatories to the NatWest accounts will continue to be Cllrs Hill, Rimmer and Russell and internet banking facilities will be arranged with dual approval retained.

The Council will review The National Association of Local Council’s Model Financial Regulations (2016 version) and adopt these as soon as possible.

iv. Budget setting including Project Ringfencing

The Council noted that if planning permission for the extension and refurbishment of the village hall is granted, the Parish Council will be asked to provide significant funding. The Council already has a number of projects for which funds have to be ringfenced and budgets need to be established so that planning can proceed. The Clerk was asked to produce a statement of budgeted receipts and payments for 2019/20 which would be reviewed at the July meeting.

v Parish Clerk Contract;

The Clerk reported that his actual hours of work in the four weeks since 8th May totalled 47. Keeping these records will continue, pending agreement on the Clerk’s new job description and contract of employment to replace his original letter of appointment dated 12th February 1998.

11/6 Correspondence with Chairman and/or Clerk

a. The Clerk reported that PCSO Sarah Jones has scheduled a ‘Have your say’ Meeting starting at 10.00 a.m. for 20th June outside the Co-Op. This has been advertised on Village notice boards.

b. The AGM of Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) will take place in Burford on Monday 1st July. Two places with voting rights are available.

c. The AGM of the Oxfordshire branch of CPRE will take place on the afternoon of Saturday 6th July at Shipton-on-Cherwell starting at 2.30 p.m.

12/6 . Arrangements for ‘Newcomers’ Evening

The date of this meeting will be determined by the publication date of the next full Electoral Register, the document which the Clerk will use to identify all those who have moved to the village since the previous meeting of newcomers (October 2016).

13/6 Village Maintenance

a. It was agreed to invite quotations to ‘lift and reduce’ the acer on the corner of High Street/ Drayton Road.

b. Sarah Venners has reported that in her opinion there are three trees along the path that runs between Drayton Road and the Hurst which require attention. Her written report is awaited. Quotations for this work need to be obtained.

c. There has been no response from residents to the request for suggestions of a replacement tree on the Oxford Road boundary of the Recreation Ground.

The Chairman said that he seen publicity from RHS Chelsea which described a new Dutch-elm-disease-resistant tree. He has made further enquiries and been advised that the suppliers have been overwhelmed by the amount of interest shown. This is not the time of year for new tree-planting so a decision can be postponed for a few weeks.

14/6 Routine Reports:

a. Sports Pavilion & Playground;

This season there have been problems with damage caused by rabbits, and this is being monitored by the Clerk with the Cricket Club and Denis Froud Pest Control.

Following the comments made earlier in the meeting by Cllr Ballantyne, it was suggested that the Council should try to create a working party comprising some councillors but mostly parents with a direct interest in the provision of play facilities, along the lines of the successful fund-raising/project teams of previous years. The brief would include the provision of inclusive play equipment and benches.

b. Footpaths;

The next visit of Wallingford Green Gym is confirmed as Tuesday 2nd July. Areas for their members’ involvement include the bus stop opposite Meadside and the path towards the by-pass and Shillingford; the boundary verge of the path alongside the Cemetery, particular at the Herringcote end; and the access path toward the by-pass bus stops off Drayton Road.

The Clerk was asked to make enquiries about who has responsibility for cutting grass and other vegetation along the paths that cross Bishops Court Farm, especially along the path leading from the end of Wittenham Lane to the pill box.

c. Cemetery/Closed Churchyard;

The Council noted that there has been some correspondence between Andrew Clements and both Cllrs Chris Hill and Mark Williams concerning the management of perimeter areas surrounding the area for burial plots in the Cemetery. This will include the provision of some spoil areas for the recycling of materials collected by family members from graves and a more traditional method of grass-cutting, including the use of scythes, in order to promote wildlife diversity.

d. Allotments

Charlotte Bennett has sent a report on her Allotment Management training day and a copy of this is being circulated to all councillors.

15/6 Any Other Urgent Matters

Councillors noted that any submissions for Dorchester News July/August edition must be with the editor by late Friday 14th June. Cllr Ballantyne suggested that the Council should write to Steph Forman to congratulate her together with her colleagues for the success of the recent Dorchester Festival. The Chairman will write to Professor Malcolm Airs to congratulate him upon his recent award of the OBE. These tributes will be included in the Parish Council Notices sent to Dorchester News.

Meeting closed at 10.02 p.m.