**Dorchester Parish Council**

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 9th October 2019 commencing at 7.30 p.m. The Chairman, Cllr Mark Williams presided; present were Cllrs. Rob Ballantyne, Mike Corran, Maurice Day, Chris Hill, Viviane Quirke and Mike Rimmer with G Russell (Clerk to the Council) in attendance. Also present for part of the meeting were District Cllr. Robin Bennett and one resident.

1/10 Apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted from Cllr. Keith Russell who was on holiday and County Cllr. Lorraine Lindsay-Gale who was unwell.

2/10 Public Participation

Ian Brace said that Dorchester Abbey PCC has recently given its approval to a project which will result in improved facilities within the existing Abbey Guest House and the creation of a new building around the courtyard to the rear of the existing Tea Room. The Abbey needs more space for educational activities, up to date kitchen facilities for the Tea Room, more office and storage space and better toilet facilities for services and events. The Abbey could lose customers if these things are not addressed but gain more bookings if they are. A detailed account of the proposals will appear in November’s Dorchester News. It is hoped that the new facilities will open by Easter 2023. The estimated cost is £2.5m with £1.5m coming from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Ian Brace said that the Abbey PCC is fully aware of the plans to carry out improvements to the Village Hall and wishes to work with the Village Hall Trustees. Achieving a successful outcome for both projects will have mutual benefits and provide opportunities for joint marketing.

3/10 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr. Mark Williams concerning village maintenance work that is carried out by any company with whom he works, principally grass-cutting and grounds maintenance.

4/10 Minutes of the Meeting held on 11th September 2019

It was proposed by Cllr. Rob Ballantyne that the minutes as circulated should be approved. This was seconded by Cllr. Viviane Quirke and passed unanimously.

5/10 Matters Arising from the Minutes

i. Proposed Bishops Court Farm Footpath Diversion. The Chairman, who had not been present at the September meeting, suggested that the Council should re-consider the wording of its submission to the County Council’s Footpaths Officer. Cllr. Ballantyne suggested that the Council should tell the Officer that the two aspects of the scheme which it regards as significant are, first, the request that there should be a formal consultation before the diversion is finally approved and, secondly, that the landowner is asked not to erect any fencing along the new route. The Clerk will write to the Officer making these two points.

ii. River of Life II. The Council noted that the Exhibition of this project will take place in the Village Hall on 17th October.

iii. The Cheyney Lane resurfacing has been carried out although some residents have commented that the size of the patched areas is so great that it would look better had the full length of the path been resurfaced. This would also have given the contractors an opportunity to regrade the slope of the path so that rainwater would drain off into the grass verge. It was recognised, however, that this would have been more costly.

iv. The Council noted that the broken BT manhole cover by the High Street/Queen Street junction has now been repaired.

v. The ‘Newcomers Evening’ has been booked for the Village Hall on Thursday 20th February. There will be an early warning of this date in the December/January ‘Dorchester News’ and the Clerk will compile a list of contacts for all the village societies and special interest groups who will be invited to book table-top display space to promote their activities. All residents will be welcome to attend.

vi. The Chairman explained that the concrete anchor post for the High Street bus shelter has been replaced with a wooden anchor post which is positioned away from the entrance. The Clerk will talk again to Trevor Greenaway about the cost of refurbishing the building.

6/10 County Councillor’s Report

A written report from County Cllr. Lorraine Lindsay-Gale Lorraine had been received and circulated in advance of the meeting. Lorraine had sent her apologies for absence from the meeting due to being unwell.

7/10 District Councillor’s Report

A written report from District Cllr. Robin Bennett had been received and circulated in advance of the meeting.

Cllr. Bennett said that in response to the concerns raised by the Parish Council he has been in touch with SODC officers regarding the Dorchester public toilets. The cleaning service contract (currently with Healthmatic) is up for renewal next year. The current SODC property budget does not allow for any major improvements at the toilets and there is nothing planned on that front, although it is recognised that they provide an important service for visitors to the village.

As the Parish Council is aware, in Watlington the local parish has taken over the public toilets with annual payments from South Oxfordshire District Council. Cllr Bennett said that something similar may be negotiable at Dorchester if the parish council is interested. It was agreed that the Clerk would research this matter because improvements to these facilities is very much in line with the Council’s Four-Year Vision. It was also agreed that the Council should obtain a costing for providing a defibrillator within the Bridge End phone box and apply for funding support from Cllr. Bennett’s discretionary local grant scheme.

8/10 Council’s Four-Year Vision

The main objective is to achieve improved facilities at the Village Hall, the Sports Pavilion and the Play Area. The Council will welcome and support the initiatives of residents which are intended to improve the general appearance of village roads, paths and open spaces and, indeed, will encourage such activities.

The Council also feels that there is room for improvement in its communications with residents. Cllr. Mike Rimmer has made a study of the methods adopted by other parish councils in South Oxfordshire and reports several examples of good practice. It was agreed that the Clerk should arrange a meeting on this topic to which Ian Brace and Dan Duke would be invited as well as those with a special interest in social media and how to use technology to communicate with all those at a local level. This meeting will make recommendations to the Council about what should be done to achieve a more connected community.

9/10 Planning:

i. Application:

P19/S2887/HH Overy Paddock, Overy

Reinstatement of original roof height to create first floor habitable living space with a balcony to the rear elevation. Replacement of bi-folding door to rear elevation. Associated facade works and internal remodelling.

The Council agreed that it had No Objections to this Application.

ii. Affordable Housing Project Naming Competition

Six residents have contacted the Clerk and between them they have put forward 15 suggestions. These have been considered by Cllrs Chris Hill and Rob Ballantyne and from their short list the Council selected ‘Allens Corner’ and ‘Hawkes Corner’ as the names that the Parish Council will suggest to Sovereign Housing, the developer, and South Oxfordshire District Council, the planning authority who will make the final decision. It is anticipated that a planning application for the development will be submitted in the next few weeks.

10/10. Finance:

i. Bank Balances & Payment

Current Account balance at 30/9 £46,142.59

Reserve Account balance at 5/9 £47,980.50

£94,123.09

Bank Reconciliation at 30th September

Allowing for cheques not yet presented the combined bank balance was £91,938.26

The following payments were approved:

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental) 92.76

Oxfordshire County Council (Flyer September) 150.00

CPRE (subscription) 36.00

A Bosse (pavilion electrics) 348.00

JRB Enterprise Ltd (dog waste bags) 234.24

The Landscape Group Oxford (September grass cutting) 1,114.20

Town & Country Memorials Ltd (cemetery plaque) 117.60

Nihon Kohden UK Ltd (defibrillator parts) 357.90

Lister Wilder (strimmer part) 7.79

Bryan Lock Services Ltd (extra padlock keys) 18.00

Castle Water Ltd (Allotments) 103.45

Castle Water Ltd (Sportsground) 38.83

Neil Willis (Village Handyman) 105.00

Geoff Willis (Village Handyman) 227.50

City of Oxford Silver Band (Remembrance Day) 125.00

G Russell (salary) 549.65

G Russell (re M & M Skip Hire for Allotments) 264.00

3.889.92

A letter to NatWest Bank plc to cancel lost cheque number 3518 to Solid Art Ltd for bench repairs dated 14th August in the sum of £540 was signed by Cllrs Chris Hill and Mike Rimmer.

ii Project Ringfencing

The Clerk’s estimate is that by the end of March 2020 the Council will have cash in the bank of £89,000, which includes VAT which is currently being reclaimed.

It is Council policy that a year’s precept should be retained as ‘working capital’ which means that up to £45,000 could be set aside as ‘earmarked funds’. The Council agreed the following allocation: £30,000 for Village Hall improvements with immediate effect; £10,000 for Pavilion improvements to be set aside for two years; and £5,000 to start the fund which is needed to pay for improvements to the Play Area.

The Clerk will confirm to the Council what CIL payments have been received.

11/10 Correspondence with Chairman and/or Clerk

a. The Council noted that Sue Graney is expecting to be moving from the village by the end of November. Cllr. Viviane Quirke is to take over from Sue as the person in charge of the village defibrillators.

b. An email report dated 8th October from Vicki Rhodes on behalf of the village Speedwatch team had been circulated to all councillors for information. The group wish to attend a future meeting of the Parish Council and discuss proposals for future action to deter excessive speed in the village and it was agreed that there is an opportunity to do this at the Council meeting on 13th November.

c. Val Howells has reported that the total amount raised to pay for the School’s Appeal has reached £11,500. She is awaiting a decision from the Co-Op to see if her application for a Community funding grant has been successful. Together with Paul King she is beginning to hold meetings with potential contractors.

12/10/ Fireworks Display Saturday 2nd November

The Clerk confirmed that Maggie Davies of Footsteps, the leading organiser of this year’s event, has been put in contact with Dave Rippington of Dorchester Cricket Club to discuss the location of the bonfire and sundry other matters. Maggie reports that she needs more helpers. On behalf of the Parish Council the Clerk will do whatever he can to help.

13/10 . Village Maintenance including Volunteer Projects

Andrew Clements has been in regular contact with the Council, especially the Chairman and Cllr Chris Hill, and is keeping everyone informed of the activities of the working parties that he has organised in and around the cemetery and the path behind Page Furlong.

The Clerk said that he has written to SOHA about the height and positioning of the relatively new wooden fence at Meadside between numbers 13 and 20 and has received a reply saying that this was a ‘like-for-like’ replacement. He is researching the availability of photographs which will demonstrate that this is not correct.

14 Remembrance Sunday 11th November

Cllr Chris Hill reported upon his understanding of the arrangements that have been made for the service at Dorchester’s war memorial now that the village no longer has its own branch of the Royal British Legion. In fact, it seems that there will be very little difference this year except that the Parish Council wreath will be placed by the new Council Chairman, Cllr Mark Williams.

The Council’s donation to the Royal British Legion will be agreed at the November Council meeting. In 2018 it was £100.

As yet it is not known what arrangements have been made with the Rector for the village school to mark Remembrance Day on Monday 11th November.

It has not yet been decided where the rowan tree commemorating 1918 should go. Cllr Quirke is taking care of this.

15 Routine Reports:

a. Sports Pavilion Recreation Ground & Playground;

The Clerk said that he has been told that the hedge around the tennis courts needs cutting; this is the side facing the courts which is hard to reach other than with hand-held devices.

b. Footpaths;

Representatives from Wallingford Green Gym had visited the village on 8th October – their last visit of 2019 – and widened part of the Drayton Road/Hurst footpath. They had also done clearance work in the ditch within the cemetery.

The Clerk is in contact with Southern Electric about arranging for the electricity supply to be cut off while work on the tree near the transformer is carried out. It has been agreed that this tree should be reduced in height rather than removed completely.

Winter maintenance tasks were agreed as follows:

At the Cemetery end of the path from Martins Lane: keep the same width all the way to the gate;

On the path alongside the Cemetery both sides to be cut back and on the Anderson’s side the cutting should be right back level with the exiting fence posts;

Beyond the Cemetery building some extra work is required this winter because there are some sycamores growing from graves which need to be removed;

Work along the boundary of the Cemetery with Drayton Road will be as in previous years.

Footpath re-topping is required but this is estimated to cost £2,000 for the cemetery path and £1,600 for Malthouse Lane. This only needs doing every four years and the work can be held over until 2020/21.

Outside 76 High Street there is an area which needs tidying but at the moment it is not clear whether this is highways land or private property.

c. Cemetery/Closed Churchyard; in the absence of Cllr. Keith Russell, discussion of the ‘Adopt A Grave’ project was postponed until the November meeting.

d. Allotments

A skip has been hired and is currently on site. The idea of planting an orchard of apple trees is still in development. The next stage will be a presentation to the Parish Council, but this is just the beginning of what may be a lengthy approval process.

16/10 Any Other Urgent Matters

a. Cllr. Maurice Day will once again co-ordinate arrangements for the delivery of the Village Christmas Tree by the Earth Trust

b. Cllr. Mike Corran reported that he is communicating with County Council officers over the unreliability of the solar-powered streetlamp on the far side of the bridge over the by-pass.

c. Cllr. Chris Hill said that he has recently attended a committee meeting of PAGE where it was reported that the County Council’s cabinet is recommending future gravel extraction sites which are outside the area covered by PAGE.

d. Cllr. Viviane Quirke said that she believes that the grass, weeds and other plants that are growing in the central reservation of Dorchester by-pass (A4074), especially at the junction with Henley Road, have reached heights which are dangerous because they obscure the view of oncoming traffic especially motor bikes.

The meeting closed at 9.43 p.m.