**Dorchester Parish Council**

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 11th March 2020 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 (part), Mike Rimmer and Keith Russell with G Russell (Clerk to the Council) in attendance. Also present for part of the meeting was District Cllr Robin Bennett.

1/3 Apologies for absence

Apologies for Absence were accepted from Cllr Viviane Quirke who was unwell and County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale.

2/3 Public Participation

No members of the public were present.

3/3 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.

4/3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th February 2020

After a typographical error in Minute 4/2 was corrected it was proposed by Cllr Chris Hill that the Minutes as circulated should be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Mike Rimmer and passed unanimously. The Chairman signed the Minute Book at a true record.

5/3 Matters Arising from the Minutes

a. The Clerk said that he is keeping in touch with the County Council’s Area Highways inspector about the failed light above the steps that lead to the by-pass bus stop on the south bound carriageway. This was logged on ‘Fix My Street back in September but has still not been repaired even though County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale has also been in contact with the relevant officer. Cllr Rob Ballantyne said that even after this light is repaired more lighting will be needed to make safe the sloping U-shaped path which is used to get to and from the bridge by those unable to use the steps. The Clerk will take this up with the officer once the light has been repaired.

b. Following the meeting of the Village Communications sub-committee with Ian Brace and Dan Duke, the Clerk has been asked to write an article about the Village website that will appear in Dorchester News April edition. Councillors are asked to write brief articles for Dorchester News twice a year which will report upon the matters for which they have been given special responsibility.

c. Cllr Hill commented that not all the events listed on the Events Facebook page are in fact village based. He felt that only local events should be mentioned. All residents would be encouraged to join the Village Facebook group.

d. Councillors were in general agreement that the Village Information Evening held on Thursday 20th February had been a success both in terms of the number of groups that had put on displays and also the number of residents who had attended. The Clerk will compile a complete list of all the groups that had supported the event and this will be published in the April edition of Dorchester News.

6/3 County Councillor’s Report

A written report by County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale has been received and circulated.

7/3 District Councillor’s Report

Copies of a report by District Cllr Robin Bennett were distributed. Cllr Bennett said that most of the money which has been applied for in order to purchase a third village defibrillator will be awarded. The exact amount will be known in a few days.

8/3 Council’s Four-Year Vision

The Clerk was asked to obtain a quotation for the painting of the exterior of the public lavatory in Bridge End. The Landscape Group Oxford has refurbished the High Street bus shelter and also two wooden benches by the old Cemetery building. These projects have been carried out as part of the Council’s programme to improve public spaces in the village.

9/3 Planning Applications:

a. P20/S0610/HH 10 Drayton Road; Alterations to existing dwelling adding a sunroom and lobby to the rear of the property and a porch and new lounge window structure to the front. The Council agreed that it has No Objections to this Application.

b. P20/S0630/HH 22 Oxford Road; Garage extension.

The Council agreed that it has No Objections to this Application but decided to include the comments made by Cllr Rob Ballantyne who said that the end of the proposed extension appears to present a blank wall to the street which will have the appearance of an inactive frontage and reduce the overall variety of the streetscape. This should be changed.

c. Allen’s Pit Application Update

Cllr Rob Ballantyne reported that Sovereign Housing has commissioned several new surveys as requested by the planning team at SODC. He said that the developers have found that the nearest access to the mains drainage system is approximately 260 metres from the site and making the connection to that system will incur a significant cost that had not previously been accounted for. He would continue to stay closely in touch with Sovereign.

10/3 . Finance:

 i. Bank Balances & Payments

NatWest Current Account balance at 28/2 £40,247.64

NatWest Reserve Account balance at 5/3 £48,028.38

 £88,276.02

It was proposed by Cllr Mike Corran that the following payments should be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Ballantyne and unanimously agreed:

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental) 92.76

Youngs Tree Services Ltd (tree by electricity equipment) 948.00

Chris Hill (Info evening & Green Gym) 75.00

Viviane Quirke (Info evening) 83.81

G F Hobbs (Recreation ground hedge cutting) 228.00

JRB Enterprise Ltd (dog waste bags) 234.24

Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (annual sub) 211.44

Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association (annual sub) 42.00

Castle Water Ltd (Allotments) 103.45

The Landscape Group Oxford (various) 3,156.00

Face North Forestry Ltd (behind Page Furlong & Drayton Road) 564.00

Geoff Willis (Village Handyman) 306.25

G Russell (salary) 775.98

G Russell (Admin J/F/M) 218.20

Castle Water (Recreation Ground) 38.83

£7,077.96

 ii. The Clerk reported that the on-line banking application has had to be put on hold while the name of a former Councillor is removed from the existing Bank Mandate. It was agreed that the current Chairman, Cllr Mark Williams, and the Clerk, Geoff Russell would be added to the list of signatories. The on-line banking application will be re-submitted as soon as the list of signatories has been updated.

iii Clerk’s Contract; it was agreed to carry this forward to the April Council meeting.

11/3 Correspondence with Chairman and/or Clerk

a. The Clerk has received a letter from some residents in the High Street expressing their concern that one of the neighbouring public houses might be staging late-night parties in its grounds. The Council confirmed that no such parties would be allowed without special permission from the District Council, which is the local licensing authority, and that such permission would not be granted without prior consultation. Given the present public health concerns this is not an urgent matter. The Clerk will respond to the residents in due course.

b. The Council has been notified by County Cllr Yvonne Constance that there is to be more funding for local bus services. In this area there is to be a reinstatement of a broadly two hourly bus service (formerly T2) between Abingdon, Berinsfield and Cowley, and a new Sunday service on route X38 between Wallingford and Henley. It is planned that, given some developer funds, this service will be extended to and from Oxford.

c. In response to several communications about the Coronavirus it was agreed that the Parish Council should frequently update the village website and village noticeboards to communicate with residents and support the local initiatives to set up support groups to assist with local shopping, collection of prescriptions etc. Cllr Mike Corran will compile the text for a leaflet to be inserted in Dorchester News and distributed to every resident.

12/3 Annual Parish Meeting

It has been agreed that the Annual Parish Meeting will take place on Wednesday 8th April followed by a brief meeting of the Parish Council to discuss its regular monthly business.

13/3 . Village Maintenance including Volunteer Projects

Richard Anderson has told the Clerk about his arrangement to renew the boundary fence between his property and the path alongside the Cemetery, now that the thick hedgerow has been removed as part of the project to widen the public path.

The excessive growth of ivy upon the electricity pole by the School has been brought to the attention of the electricity distribution company who have agreed to cut the ivy actually on the pole so that it dies off. The Headteacher has been informed about this plan.

The team from Wallingford Green Gym has recently been working in the village. They are due back again in August.

There has been some fly-tipping near the bridge on Drayton Road. SODC is aware.

14/3 VE Day Commemoration 8th May

Some residents are planning a celebration in the Village Hall and Cllr Chris Hill is in contact with a group who may be able to revive the Dorchester branch of the Royal British Legion.

Details of commemorative mugs and other memorabilia have been received along with designs for a special metal bench. The Council decided not to purchase any of these items.

15/3 River of Life II Project: Use of Abbey View Meadow

The final version of the Licence which grants access to the project working party and its equipment is still awaited.

16/3. Land Registration

Roger Taylor of Wellers Hedleys is reviewing the files for the land upon which the Village War Memorial is located and also the land at Bridge End adjacent to the River Thame.

Mr Taylor’s advice regarding the War Memorial is that a ‘Statement of Truth’ be prepared that shows the Council has always considered that it owned the site and the War Memorial rather than merely maintaining it. The Clerk will seek assistance from members of the Dorchester Historical Society and the Museum team in order to draft this statement.

The property adjacent to the open space known as ‘Waterloo’ has recently changed hands and the Clerk was asked to make himself known to the new residents as soon as possible.

17/3 Speedwatch Survey

The Village Handyman, Geoff Willis, has recently cleaned all the 30 mph repeater signs in the village. Speed checks as carried out in 2016 have been arranged for the end of April.

18/3 Community Emergency Planning – County Survey

Cllr Mike Corran has sent a copy of the amended emergency plan to the Clerk so that the missing names and contact details can be added. Once completed it was suggested that it is not only submitted to the County Council but also that a note of its availability for reference should be posted upon the Village website.

The Chairman said that there are several bags of winter salt in store at the premises at Queenford Farm formerly occupied by BCB. Cllr Hill said that he would try to find alternative storage within the village.

19/3 Routine Reports:

a. Sports Pavilion Recreation Ground & Playground;

Trevor Greenaway has said that he is unable to take on the repair work that is required at the Pavilion. Alternative contractors will be invited to quote. Quotes will also be invited from contractors who can strengthen the surface of the access to the area used for event parking.

b. Footpaths;

The tree reduction behind 43 Martins Lane took place on 18th February as arranged.

Andrew Clements and a team of volunteers have carried out a lot of clearing adjacent to the Page Furlong and Drayton Road corner followed by new planting.

c. Cemetery/Closed Churchyard;

It is hoped that Trevor Greenaway will replace the tiles that have fallen from the roof of the old buildings. The Council noted that the boundary fence between the Cemetery and 2 Page Furlong has fallen down but this has been re-erected without any damage being caused.

Cllr Keith Russell said that the Cemetery/Closed Churchyard and Recreation Ground are all free of any mole damage.

d. Allotments

Cllr Chris Hill said that he has been invited to join the Committee of the Allotments Society. He reported that the building work at 64 Watling Lane has caused damage on the Allotments and asked the Clerk to look up the exchange of emails between the owners and the Council. He said that part of the perimeter fence needs repair. He would write a specification.

20/3 Any Other Urgent Matters

a. Cllr Chris Hill said that Val Howells should be congratulated for raising all the funds needed for the improvements to the playground at the Village School. A celebration is planned for the morning of Sunday 3rd May.

b. Cllr Rob Ballantyne said he was concerned that there is no news about when the promised work to refurbish the Co-Op will be carried out. He would try to find out what plans are firmly in place and said that he hoped a post office counter could be included.

c. The Chairman asked for confirmation that Dorchester bridge had not been damaged by the tree that fell in the recent storm. The Clerk will contact the County officer.

The Meeting closed at 9.26 p.m.