**Dorchester Parish Council**

Due to the prevailing Government Regulations, the Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council on Wednesday 9th December 2020 was held remotely via Zoom in accordance with the guidance published by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and circulated to councillors in April. The Meeting commenced at 7.30 p.m. The Chairman, Cllr Mark Williams, presided with Cllrs. Rob Ballantyne (Vice-Chairman), Mike Corran, Maurice Day, Chris Hill, Mike Rimmer and Keith Russell together with G Russell (Clerk to the Council) all of whom had both visual and audio access. They were joined for part of the meeting by County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale, District Cllr Robin Bennett and one resident.

1/12. Apologies for absence

None; all Parish Councillors were present.

2/12. Public Participation

None.

3/12 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, and Cllr Chris Hill in connection with Planning Application P20/S3769/HH for 11 Bridge End because he is a near neighbour.

4/12 Parish Council Vacancy

John Edwards of Abingdon Road has expressed an interest in this opportunity and attended the meeting as an observer.

5/12 Minutes of the Meeting held on 11th November 2020

Following the correction of two typing errors in the text of the Minutes which had been circulated in advance of the meeting it was proposed by Cllr Mike Corran that the revised version should be approved and signed as an accurate account. This motion was seconded by Cllr Rob Ballantyne and approved unanimously.

6/12 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters which were not covered in the agenda for the meeting.

7/12 Update on measures to care for residents during crisis

The Clerk confirmed that a one-page summary of the latest Government regulations has been displayed upon the Village notice boards. Continued use of the tennis courts and children’s play area is permitted. It was agreed that this item can be dropped from the agenda unless there is a dramatic change or development in the prevailing situation.

8/12 Planning Applications:

P20/S3769/HH 11 Bridge End Amended: One and half storey side extension.

The Council considered the amendment but agreed that it would not change its previously expressed view that the Application should be refused.

P20/S4467/FUL, & P20/S4469/LB Bishops Court Farm Conversion of farm buildings to residential use. The Council agreed that it had No Objections to these Applications.

P19/S4508/FUL Development at Allens Pit; additional ecological surveys and reports were received on 3rd December. It was reported that the Decision on this application is not expected until after Christmas but in anticipation of approval being received Stuart Roberts of Sovereign Housing is in contact with Keith Ives to see if there is any possibility of sharing the ground source heat facility that Keith is developing nearby. District Cllr Robin Bennett will see if this would be eligible for grant aid.

P19/S1350/FUL Village Hall, Queen Street; front and rear extensions. Planning permission was granted on 2nd December. As Village Hall Trustees Keith Russell and Mark Williams will be holding a development meeting in the near future with architect Oliver Margison.

9/12 County Councillor’s Report

The County Councillor’s written report has been circulated. It will be published in Dorchester News and available to read via a link in the village website. The Village Hall in Clifton Hampden is expected to be the local COVID vaccination centre over the coming months.

The County Council has agreed to support all villages who wish to introduce 20 mph speed limits by making the application process easier and therefore less expensive than it was.

County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale said that at present the County’s preferred site for new gravel extraction is in the area of Berinsfield, Drayton St Leonard, Stadhampton and Chiselhampton. However, the local target allocation of gravel to be removed is being challenged and so the whole plan will be re-examined in March. County Council elections are due to be held in May and this could mean a further delay before the final site decision.

10/12 District Councillor’s Report

The District Councillor’s written report has been circulated. It will be published in Dorchester News and available to read via a link in the village website.

District Cllr Robin Bennett said that South Oxfordshire District Council’s meeting about the Local Plan would take place the following day, 10th December.

He will keep the Parish Council informed about opportunities for grant aid. He said that there could be circumstances in which Community Infrastructure Levy funds attributable to Berinsfield development could be applied to developments in Dorchester – pavilion improvements for example.

11/12 Council’s Four-Year Vision

The Village Handyman has cleaned the ancient milestone next to the Abbey churchyard wall. This will be the subject of an article to be written by Malcolm Airs and published in Dorchester News.

The Clerk has made direct contact with the County Council Area Highways Inspector and the repairs to granite setts will be made in the New Year.

The District Council has confirmed that it will replace some damaged street name signs.

12/12 Finance: Bank Balances & Payments

NatWest Current Account balance at 11th December 45,319.52

NatWest Reserve Account balance at 4th December 48,054.77

£93,374.29

Receipt of a VAT repayment claim for £5,833.71 is expected this month.

It was proposed by Cllr Keith Russell that the following payments should be made. This was seconded by Cllr Chris Hill and passed unanimously.

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental) 92.76

The Landscape Group Oxford (Winter work at Cemetery) 696.00

The Landscape Group Oxford (entry to Rec opp Plough House) 848.64

Denis Froud (Pest control quarterly payment) 805.00

B & T Tuckwell (Christmas Tree) 120.00

JRB Enterprise Ltd (Dog waste bags) 234.24

Tina Pratt (play area cleansing) 100.00

Geoff Willis (Village Handyman 4 weeks) 340.50

G Russell (salary) 810.33

Keevill Heritage Ltd (Village Hall Archaeology Evaluation) 1,160.00

£5,207.47

It was agreed that the increase in the Annual Precept for 2021/22 should be approximately 2.5% (this year it was 2.53%). The Clerk confirmed that the amount of money received via CIL is unchanged at £7,441.

Status of Capital Projects: It was agreed that the extension to the Village Hall should take priority, but Cllr Chris Hill was asked to assist with development plans for the Pavilion, with reference to the planning application for a small extension that had been approved in 2015, and Cllr Rob Ballantyne was asked to take a special interest in developing plans for re-development of the Play Area with, possibly, space for adult exercise equipment too.

13/12 Correspondence with Chairman and/or Clerk

a. The Council has received a letter regarding the access from Watling Lane to the properties that front on to the Allotments. The Council granted a right of way to one of these properties back in 2004, an agreement which shares responsibility for road maintenance between the Parish Council and the homeowner. It was agreed that an onsite meeting should be held to study the situation at first hand. The Clerk will make these arrangements.

b. The District Council has asked for Parish Council approval to place an extra sign marking the location of 19 and 21 Martin’s Lane. This sign would be positioned upon the wall adjacent to the Parish Council’s access to the Cemetery. Councillors had no objection.

c. Several Oxfordshire parishes have asked if Dorchester Parish Council would support the ‘Twenty’s Plenty’ campaign to introduce a speed limit of 20 mph in village centres throughout Oxfordshire. The Council agreed not to get involved in such a general campaign.

14/12 Village Maintenance including winter arrangements

a. The County Council has installed a new winter salt bin at Bridge End near the phone box. All existing salt bins in the village are full although the salt is from previous years but the salt spreader and a snow shovel, previously stored at The George are missing. It was agreed that these should be replaced. The Clerk will try Lister Wilders at Crowmarsh.

b. It was agreed to accept the quotation from Nick Keighley of Face North Forestry for £840 to carry out tree work in and around Page Furlong and the Cemetery area. Several members of Wallingford Green Gym had worked in this area on 8th December.

15/12 Bishops Court Farm Footpaths

The Council agreed that it would make a contribution of £10,000 including VAT towards the cost of carrying out the recent footpath improvements following the receipt of confirmation that the new routes and widths will be officially recorded in the Definitive Statements of the County Council. It was reported that Keith Ives will be writing a formal letter to the Council on this matter in due course, but it is understood that there is still a complication about the route of a diagonal path in the field between Dyke Hills and the River Thames.

The Council agreed that future contributions may be made as part of a matched-funding campaign if the funds will be used for widening ‘the COVID path’.

It was reported by Cllr Mike Corran that in a recent meeting Keith Ives had told him that he was also applying for grants to improve the Thames Path. The Parish Council will continue to liaise with FODLWOS on the matter of the village green applications as well as these paths.

16/12 Arrangements for Christmas

The Village Christmas Tree has been put up and decorated. The Council expressed its thanks to the team of volunteers and to Cllr Chris Hill for once again organising the project.

17/12 . Lighting of path leading to By-pass bus stop

Cllr Rob Ballantyne and the Clerk have had two site meetings with potential suppliers and received quotations with slightly different specifications and prices varying between £1,900 and £3,000. The possibility of grant-aid has been raised with District Cllr Robin Bennett and the Clerk will contact the County Council to keep the officers informed.

18/12 Future of Public Conveniences in Bridge End

Following the Clerk’s conversation with Catrin Mathias, SODC Property Manager there is a possibility of the land/building being made over to the Parish Council along with a capital grant. The actual sums of money involved are yet to be determined.

The Council is not keen to take on this extra responsibility but will look closely at the figures when these are available. It was agreed that retaining the facility is very important.

19/12 Routine Reports:

a. Sports Pavilion, Recreation Ground & Playground; The Clerk reported that applying anti-climb paint around the flat roof area of the Pavilion will cost £600 and warning signs will be required. It was agreed to have this work done.

A resident has lodged a serious complaint about dog fouling on the Recreation Ground. This is by no means the only example of dog fouling being a nuisance in the village. It was agreed to purchase more cans of coloured chalk spray since these have been shown to reduce the problem although not for use in either the Abbey Churchyard or Cemetery. Keith Ives will be informed that this is being done.

b. Footpaths; Some residents have asked the Parish Council to spread wood chippings over muddy surfaces, but this is something that the County Council is strongly against. Their professional advice is that although woodchip seems to solve the problem, in the long run it delays the drying out of the path surface. The Parish Council agreed to take this advice.

c. Cemetery/Abbey Closed Churchyard;

Councillors are asked to report if there is any increase in mole activity in the coming weeks.

d. Allotments; Rents amounting to £1,105 have been received.

20/12 Any Other Urgent Matters

The Council noted that following the recent passing of Marsh Pratley, the owner of Dorchester Fisheries, the future use of Orchid Lake is uncertain.

There being no further business the Meeting closed at 9.45 p.m.