**Dorchester Parish Council**

Due to the prevailing Government Regulations, the Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council on Wednesday 10th February 2021 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 2020. The Meeting commenced at 7.30 p.m. The Chairman, Cllr Mark Williams, presided with Cllrs. Rob Ballantyne (Vice-Chairman), Mike Corran, Maurice Day, John Edwards, Chris Hill, Mike Rimmer and Keith Russell together with G Russell (Clerk to the Council). They were joined for part of the meeting by County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale, District Cllr Robin Bennett and two residents.

1/2. Apologies for absence

None; all Parish Councillors were present.

2/2. 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 Mike Corran regarding the Council’s new banking arrangements.

3/2. Public Participation

Keith Ives reported that despite recent frequent and heavy rainfall, significant progress has been made on several public rights of way across Bishop’s Court Farm, both by widening them and also laying surfaces that will cope better with wet weather. River flooding has caused some work to be postponed, however. A delay in receiving Land Registry confirmation of the change in ownership has caused the County Council to pause the processing of documenting these changes in their Definitive Records and slowed down Keith’s Thames Path grant applications. The space for the proposed community garden has been cleared and work on the design is now awaited. Keith reports a general improvement in visitor behaviour, although some dog owners still do not keep their animals under proper control. Around 750 lambs are expected in the coming months. Dorchester News is to be used to promote observance of the Countryside Code. Further information about all aspects of the Farm can be obtained from the website <https://bishopscourtfarm.com> The invoice to the Parish Council to cover the donation towards the cost of pathway improvements will be prepared.

Terry Buckley updated the Council about his plan to move the dog waste bin and glove dispenser from their current location off Watling Lane. He was asked to discuss this matter with his neighbours in the hope that agreement for this plan could be achieved.

4/2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th January 2021

It was proposed by Cllr Mike Rimmer that the Minutes as circulated be approved as a correct record. This was seconded by Cllr Chris Hill and approved unanimously.

5/2. Matters Arising from the Minutes

a. There was discussion about whether a separate meeting is required to discuss John Taylor’s suggestion of an Asset Register and Review of Risk and the wider implications that this has raised for the Village’s Neighbourhood Development Plan. It was agreed that with the help of District Cllr Robin Bennett advice should be requested from Ricardo Rias of SODC, the officer who had been closely involved with the development of the original NDP.

It was agreed that the involvement of village residents in the process is desirable. The time frame for the whole process needs further discussion.

b. The Clerk reported that the official registration of the ‘permissive’ footpath to Blue Bridge from Henley Road looks likely to receive the support of the landowner, the Hurst Water Meadow Trust. A meeting of Trustees is due to be held in March.

c. The Council noted that planning permission for the proposed development at Allens Pit has still not been received. It is understood that when it does happen it will be able to take advantage of heat and drainage facilities that have been installed in the neighbouring site.

d. The proposed Speed Survey has been postponed due to the COVID crisis.

e. The Clerk will prepare a notice for Dorchester News seeking an organising group for the Village Fireworks Display on Friday 5th November.

f. Cllr Rob Ballantyne has submitted an application for a District Councillor grant towards the cost of new lighting over the pathway from the Drayton Road bridge that connects with the southbound by-pass bus stop

6/2. Update on measures to care for residents during crisis.

It seems that no special arrangements by the Parish Council are required for the transport of residents to the local vaccination centres.

7/2 Planning Applications:

P20/S4467/FUL (Amendment); Bishops Court Farm 91 High Street amplified by Archaeological Investigation received 1st February 2021.

The Council noted that a resident of Dorchester High Street has commented about the increase in traffic using the entrance to Bishop’s Court Farm. Keith Ives explained that creating a new entrance for the Farm adjacent to 31 Abingdon Road is still part of his plan.

The Council had no comment upon the amendment arising from the archaeology findings.

P21/S0078/FUL Site adjacent to no 51 Abingdon Road; Change of use from farmland to residential to create four terraced 2-bed units with allocated parking.

The provision of more village properties with two bedrooms is very much in line with the Neighbourhood Development Plan and District Cllr Robin Bennett said that the Planning Officer has assured him that the proposed development would not create a precedent. The development costs are relatively high due to the high specification of the ecological facilities which take into account the fact that this site is the highest point of Abingdon Road.

It was unanimously agreed that Cllr Rob Ballantyne should draft the Council’s comments in support of this Application.

P21/S0313/HH 3 Haven Close; Proposed single storey extensions and raise roof of existing car port to provide first floor ancillary accommodation alterations.

The Council noted that there have been concerned comments from a neighbour but agreed that it would make no objection to the proposed development because it has no strong views.

P21/S0191/HH 45 Watling Lane; Single-storey side extension and alterations to residential dwelling. (Cllr Chris Hill said that since he knows the Applicant, he would take no part in the following discussion). The Council agreed that it would make no objection to the proposed development because it has no strong views.

P21/S0168/HH, Overy Barn, Overy; Below ground outdoor swimming pool, surrounding patio and garden store. The Council agreed that it would make no objection to the proposed development because it has no strong views.

8/2. County Councillor’s Report

The County Councillor’s written report and her update have been circulated. They will be published in Dorchester News and available to read via a link in the village website. County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale said that her allocation of County Councillor grant-funding for the current year has now been committed. The new grant period begins in April.

9/2. 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 it was hoped that the collection of garden waste bins would begin again very soon.

10/2. Council’s Four-Year Vision

a. Village Hall;

There will be a Meeting of Trustees in approximately two weeks and this would be followed by a meeting of the Management Committee and the Annual Meeting; all of these on-line. The appointment of a quantity surveyor is the next step in the programme to improve the facility.

b. Sports Pavilion;

Development advice has been requested from Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association.

c. Play Area Update

Advice has been requested from Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association. The Clerk will draft a notice for Dorchester News in an attempt to recruit a working group of parents and grandparents who will assist and advise the Parish Council in planning improvements. Neighbouring parishes such as Warborough and Crowmarsh have recently improved their facilities and it is hoped to learn from their experience.

11/2. Finance: Bank Balances & Payments

NatWest Current Account balance at 10th February 36,068.68

NatWest Reserve Account balance at 10th February 48,055.56

 £84,124.24

It was proposed by Cllr Mike Rimmer that the following payments should be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Keith Russell and approved unanimously:

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental) 92.76

The Landscape Group Oxford (green waste removal) 384.00

Denis Froud Pest Control quarterly invoice 805.00

JRB Enterprise Ltd (dog waste bags) 234.24

SODC Dog Bin Emptying October – December 484.38

Dorchester Village Hall (cleaning charges brought forward) 90.00

Society of Local Council Clerks annual subscription 144.00

Geoff Willis (Village Handyman 5 weeks) 288.75

G Russell (salary) 810.33

 £3,333.46

The Clerk reported that he had been informed by a representative of TSB that despite the promotional activity by NatWest over the last several months, Parish Councils are not eligible to take advantage of the Business Banking Switch offer which closes on 28th February. Cllr Mike Corran said that he would make some enquiries about this and contact the Clerk if any further action could be taken. If not there will be renewed investigation of alternative banks.

12/2. Correspondence with Chairman and/or Clerk

a. Some fund-raising posters have been received and displayed on Parish notice boards in connection with the Village School IT equipment appeal.

b. An updated schedule for the River of Life Project has been received. The matter will be discussed at the Council’s March meeting.

c The Council has been contacted by several residents about the dangerous condition of the fencing along the boundary of the ‘Demesne Field’. This is a problem because the usual path is muddy and dangerous. Some people are seeking alternative routes which puts them at risk of being injured by random lengths of old barbed wire. Andrew Clements is in contact with the landowner about this matter.

13/2. Village Maintenance including winter arrangements

There has been an exchange of opinions about plans for future maintenance of the Cemetery and surrounding area. Some people like a formal presentation while others would prefer that attempts are made to encourage ‘wilding’. The topic requires further detailed discussions, probably best conducted on site, although there is no disagreement that all graves should be kept neat and tidy.

14/2 . Routine Reports:

a. Sports Pavilion, Recreation Ground & Playground;

The Clerk is in contact with Aplins about the need for a minor repair to the climbing frame and with Haines Signs about better signage during the COVID crisis.

A sign on the Pavilion Defibrillator needs updating.

b. Footpaths including measures to reduce dog fouling;

The new signs saying that horses should not use the footpath from Drayton Road to the top of Manor Farm Road would be installed on 11th February and carry the words ‘by order of the Parish Council’. Some cans of chalk spray have been distributed by the Clerk to councillors and some dog walkers.

c. Cemetery/Closed Churchyard;

The felled cherry trees in the new portion of the Cemetery are to be replaced. Jenks has supplied a price list of several trees that are available from Wyevale Nurseries and has quoted prices for the planting of the selected trees depending upon their size. The Council noted that at least two of the trees were in memory of past residents. Cllr Chris Hill is looking after the memorial sign for a tree in the name of Brian Madden.

d Allotments

There has been a suggestion that extra space for parking/turning could be provided on land that is not suitable for allotment use. Some ground works are required to make the chosen area fit for purpose and quotations have been requested. Controlling the use to which this area will be put is a key consideration. What enforcement powers are available to the Parish Council if required?

15/2 Any Other Urgent Matters

a. The Clerk asked if any Councillor could confirm when Meadside’s Centenary is due.

b. It is understood that County Council elections will be held on Thursday 6th May.

The Meeting closed at 9.25 p.m.