**Dorchester Parish Council**

Due to the prevailing Government Regulations, the Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council on Wednesday 10th March 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 five residents.

1/3. Apologies for Absence

None; all Parish Councillors were present.

2/3. 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; Cllr Chris Hill in matters concerning the Hurst Water Meadow of which he is a Trustee and Cllr. Keith Russell concerning Planning Application P21/S0405 which is for development on a property near to his home.

3/3. Public Participation

a. Village School IT equipment

Jo Staples, the new Headteacher, and Vicki Rhodes, a parent, gave more details about the campaign to raise £12,500 to purchase IT equipment, preferably iPads, with technical support. The equipment will be additional to that which is currently provided through the School’s core-funding and is expected to have a useful life of about 5 years. After such a period this type of equipment might have become standard kit.

In addition to requesting a contribution from the Parish Council, the School has directed its appeal to the County and District Councils, local residents and local businesses.

The Parish Council agreed to provide an immediate donation of £2,000 with a further payment of £2,000 to be made as matched funding. Jo Staples and Vicki Rhodes confirmed that fund-raising events such as the ‘School Walk’ would definitely go ahead.

b. Hurst Water Meadow Scrapes

Richard Farrant and Shammy Puri from The Hurst Water Meadow Trust told the Council about the Trust’s project for ecological enhancement. This will follow as a result of the creation of ‘scrapes’ in the Meadow into which when the River Thame is high it will be able to overflow. These areas will not have a permanent water presence but will remain wet for longer periods. The high quality of the water will improve the aquatic biodiversity of the area.

It is planned that work to create the scrapes will take place this summer at the same time as the ‘River of Life II’ project and should take around five days. It is anticipated that during this time contractor’s vehicles will be parked in Manor Farm Road but this will be confirmed.

Excavated materials will be recycled within The Hurst Water Meadow and many paths will be raised and strengthened making them much less likely to flood and better able to cope with the wear and tear of traffic, for example from the vehicles of disabled persons.

Richard Farrant confirmed that at their meeting on 11th March the Hurst Trustees are to discuss making the application to the County Council for the permissive path linking Henley Road to Blue Bridge being officially registered as a Public Right of Way.

c. River of Life II Project

Rebecca Chiazzese, Project Manager for River of Life II, confirmed that the on-site work is expected to run from 23rd July until 25th August. The Contractors will need to use Abbey View Meadow during this period. Rebecca has informed the Abbey that this space will not be available for event parking during this period. All lorry movements will be directed away from the village. It is expected that during the busiest week there will be 27 lorry movements. Shammy Puri told the meeting that it is estimated that the contract value of this project is £1.8 million. A programme for communicating information about River of Life II to village residents and visitors is being drafted.

4/3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 10th February 2021

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

The Chairman will sign all the Minutes which have been approved during the past year at the earliest opportunity.

5/3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

a. District Cllr Robin Bennett has confirmed a grant of £1,250 for the by-pass bus stop path solar-powered light. Cllr Rob Ballantyne and the Chairman will sign the letter of acceptance and return the form to SODC.

b. The Clerk said that no-one has expressed any interest in running the Village Fireworks Display on 5th November and so the provisional booking will not be confirmed.

c. Terry Buckley has confirmed to the Clerk that he is in discussion with his neighbours to agree a new location for the dog waste bin near 45 Watling Lane.

d. The Council noted that the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the Village War Memorial would fall on 16th October 2021.

6/3. Planning Application:

P21/S0405/FUL 37 Martins Lane; Demolition of existing bungalow and detached garage. Construction of a replacement two storey dwelling with associated external works.

It was agreed that the Council has no objection to the proposed replacement of the existing bungalow but it is considered essential that the existing provision of off-street parking is retained.

P19/S4508/HUL Land at Allens Pit, Abingdon Road.

No decision has been made.

7/3. 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 encouraged councillors to look at the County Council’s new Transport Blueprint which is out for consultation until the end of March.

8/3. 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. Cllr Rob Ballantyne asked District Cllr Robin Bennett about the status of the District Council’s Design Guide. Cllr Bennett said that this is being drafted and would soon be available for consultation.

9/3. Council’s Four-Year Vision

a. Village Hall update

The appointment of a quantity surveyor is imminent. This will be followed by the production of project costings after which it will be possible to set a target for fund raising and to establish the fund-raising programme.

b. Sports Pavilion and Play Area Update

The visit by the representative from Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association will take place this month. His comments and suggestions will be reported at the next Council meeting along with comments received from residents via social media.

10/3. Finance: Bank Balances & Payments

NatWest Current Account balance at 10th March 33,134.60

NatWest Reserve Account balance at 10th march 48,055.56

 £81,190.53

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

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental) 92.76

JRB Enterprise Ltd (dog waste bags) 234.24

Tina Pratt (Play Area cleaning charges) 85.00

Communicorp (Clerks magazine annual subscription) 100.00

Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association (annual subscription) 42.00

Geoff Willis (Village Handyman 4 weeks) 332.50

G Russell (salary) 810.33

 £1,696.83

Future Banking Arrangements

Unity Trust Bank is holding a meeting for Clerks in week commencing 22nd March which the Clerk will try to attend. Another possibility is The Co-operative Bank which is known to require dual approval of on line payments and has been used by the Village Hall Management Committee for several years.

11/3. Correspondence with Chairman and/or Clerk

a. Due to the continued COVID-19 travelling and working restrictions the Speeding Survey has been postponed. Some information has recently been received from Cllr Robin Bennett suggesting that the process for introducing a 20 m.p.h. speed limit in village centres will not be as expensive or as complicated as the Council had previously understood.

b. The faulty light above the steps to the by-pass bus stop has been repaired. Other matters reported by residents to the Clerk include the need for repairs to some bridge brickwork (Gillian Johnson); a flooding problem outside 7 & 8 Martins Lane reported by Sue Popham; and the faulty street light at the corner of High Street and Queen Street reported by Dawn Dudley.

12/3 Asset Register and Risk Management

Several comments have been exchanged between councillors via email and Ricardo Rios has also given some advice. Ricardo, who is familiar with Dorchester as a result of his work in helping to develop the Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan, will now be asked to explain how the new SODC Plan impacts Dorchester’s NDP Review, especially in regard to ‘infilling’.

It was agreed that a comprehensive list of assets should be compiled using everyone’s suggestions. Following the Council’s approval of this list a further document should be prepared which ranks the listed assets in terms of their significance to the Parish and the wellbeing of its residents and then goes on to describe the steps (if any) which can be taken by the Parish Council to safeguard each one of them in future.

13/3. Village Maintenance

Andrew Clements was given Council approval to plant an oak tree at the place in the Recreation Ground where the elm tree was recently felled. Andrew has been in contact with Mr Blundell about the broken fencing along the boundary of the Demesne Field with the public footpath and is waiting for his reply.

14/3. Routine Reports:

a. Sports Pavilion, Recreation Ground & Playground;

The new signage for the play area is larger and has a more robust specification so it will both be more visible and last longer.

The location wording on the Pavilion defibrillator sign has been re-written

b. Footpaths including measures to reduce dog fouling;

The Council noted that some residents have objected to the presence of the new signs against horses being taken along the public footpath but is sure that displaying these signs is the right thing to do.

Dan Haines is producing some weather-proof signs to display on the footpath diversions across Bishop’s Court Farm.

It was agreed that more gravel will be ordered from TLGO and placed upon the path to the Allotments where it passes 7 Rotten Row

c. Cemetery/Closed Churchyard;

The Council approved the refund of some grave reservation fees to some former village residents who have changed their plans about burial and cremation.

The replacements for the felled cherry trees are to be organised. Cllr Chris Hill is in contact with Simon Madden who represents one of the affected families/

The large tree in the grave of Anthony Harman needs to be removed so that the ashes of his widow Sheila can be interred.

The request from some Page Furlong residents for branches from a horse chestnut that grow over their garden to be removed has been referred to the District Council’s tree officer whose permission is required before any such work can be done.

d. Allotments

There has been an increase in the occupancy rate which is putting more pressure on the available parking spaces. The Clerk will try to discover if the Council has any powers that would allow parking to be subject to controls rather than continuing as an informal matter.

Estimates from 2 contractors for creating extra parking/turning space close to 47 Watling Lane are both in excess of £1,000 so a third estimate is required. The Council noted that while this work is being done the repair of the access roadway could be undertaken at the same time, possibly more cheaply than if it’s done as a separate job.

15/3 Any Other Urgent Matters

The Council noted some discussion about arrangements for the Annual Parish Meeting, which is usually held in May prior to the monthly Council meeting. It was cancelled last year due to lockdown. The matter is being discussed by HM Government and a decision is expected soon.

Meeting closed at 10.03