**Dorchester Parish Council**

Due to the prevailing Government Regulations, the Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council on Wednesday 5th May 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 followed the Annual Parish Meeting and commenced at 8.15 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 four residents.

1/5. Apologies for Absence

None; all Councillors were in attendance on-line.

2/5 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.

3/5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th April 2021

Following the correcting of three typographical errors, including the date, in the final line of the Minutes from 26th April to 26th May, it was proposed by Cllr Keith Russell that the Minutes as circulated be approved as a correct record. This was seconded by Cllr Rob Ballantyne and approved unanimously.

4/5. Matters Arising from the Minutes

a. Cricket Club mower: it was agreed that the purchase of the Club’s replacement mower could be made through the Parish Council so that the VAT element of the price can be reclaimed after the Club has contributed the net cost to the Council’s funds.

b. The Parish Council will work with the newly elected County Councillor to see if it would be possible for all the affected parishes to combine in a joint campaign of action against the nuisance caused throughout the neighbourhood by a minority of clients of H Café.

c. Cllr Ballantyne and the Clerk have a further meeting planned with the County Council street lighting officer about improved illumination on the by-pass bus stop path.

5/5 Planning Applications:

P21/S1649/FUL 18 Wittenham Lane; Demolition of existing garage building and erection of new 1 bedroom, detached dwelling.

The Council had received several comments from the occupants of neighbouring properties and it was agreed that a site visit should be organised as soon as possible. The Councillors who attended that meeting agreed that an Objection to the Application should be made and this was submitted to the Planning Officer at SODC on 18th May.

P21/S1342/HH 3 Monks Close; Two storey side extension to convert garage into habitable accommodation as family outgrown current property. Plan to create kitchen / diner and gym/games room with bedroom and bathroom upstairs while widening existing driveway to current footpath to create additional off-road parking.

It was agreed that the Council has no objections to this Application.

P21/S1450/LB 13 Malthouse Lane; First floor alterations to include removal of wall and raised floor, relocation of bathroom and replacement conservation rooflight.

It was agreed that the Council has no objections to this Application.

P21/S1411/FUL Bishop Court Farm 91 High Street; Internal and external alterations to existing agricultural building and change of use to cafe. (use class E(b))

The Council agreed to respond to this Application saying that, while it has no objections to the proposal in principle, it is concerned that the introduction of a café at Bishop’s Court Farm is bound to have an impact upon the traffic flow and demand for car parking in this area of the High Street. This has not been addressed by the Applicant in the Design & Access Statement which mentions only the business that will be gained by passing walkers.

The Council also agreed to inform the District Council that it believes that insufficient notice of this Application has been served upon the neighbouring properties.

6/5. Finance: Bank Balances & Payments

Business Reserve Account 5th May 2021 £48,056.76

Current Account 5th May 2021 £35,764.92

£83,821.68

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

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental) 92.76

Tina Pratt (Play Area cleaning charges) 135.00

The Landscape Group Oxford (April grass cutting) 1,084.20

South Oxfordshire District Council (Dog waste bins Jan – Mar) 484.38

Millbrook Building Consulting (Village Hall) 1,620.00

Jenks Oxford Ltd (Cemetery trees) 804.00

Trevor Greenaway (Memorial plaque and dog bin fixing) 175.00

JRB Enterprise Ltd new dog waste bin 266.40

JRB Enterprise Ltd dog waste bags 234.24

Southern Electric (Pavilion Electricity) 84.86

Community First Oxfordshire (annual sub) 70.00

Geoff Willis (Village Handyman 3 weeks) 278.75

N Willis (Village Handyman) 140.00

G Russell (salary) 810.33

G Russell (admin J/F/M/A) 206.80

£6,486,72

The Clerk said that he will attend an on-line meeting with Unity Trust Bank on May 26th which has been organised by Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils. He will report back to the next Council meeting.

7/5. Correspondence with Chairman and/or Clerk

a. River of Life Project – Cllr Rimmer has reviewed the recent correspondence with the Earth Trust who hope that the work near Abbey View Meadow will start at the end of July.

b. The Clerk has replied to the visitor to the village who had complained about the sign in Manor Farm Road which indicates that parking is not allowed and that vehicle access to The Hurst is forbidden.

c. As Chairman of The Village Hall Trustees, Cllr Keith Russell explained that the campaign is about to start which will raise the funds needed to modernise The Hall and its facilities and restore key features of the original design by Sir George Gilbert Scott. The provision of a Parish Office is also a key element in the plan. Council Chairman, Cllr Mark Williams declared that as well as being a Trustee of the Village Hall he is a Vice President of Dorchester Abbey’s new Fund-Raising campaign team and that those responsible for the Village Hall and Abbey development projects have identified various opportunities for co-operation to their mutual benefit. They are working together as much as possible.

Cllr John Edwards proposed that in order to fund initial campaign expenses and some professional fees the sum of £10,000 should be made immediately available from the Parish Council’s ring-fenced reserve funds that have been earmarked for use by The Village Hall Trustees. This was seconded by Mike Corran and unanimously agreed.

8/5 . Arrangements for Future Meetings of the Council

Wednesday23rd June has been advertised as the next Council meeting, but it had become apparent that postposing the meeting until this date would make no difference to the prevailing Government rules under which the meeting would take place. It was therefore agreed that the normal meeting date of 9th June would be confirmed for the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council. At this meeting the election of the Chairman and Vice-chairman for 2021/22 will take place.

9/5. Village Maintenance

A meeting with the regular gravedigger at Dorchester cemetery has been held and the location of grave spoil mounds for the next few years has been agreed.

10/5. Routine Reports:

a Sports Pavilion, Recreation Ground & Playground

The routine Playground inspection is expected in July.

b. Footpaths including measures to reduce dog fouling;

The new dog waste bin has been installed on Watling Lane and a different location is now needed for the redundant bin on the Allotments.

c. Cemetery/Closed Churchyard;

The two signs which display the Parish Council contact details are in need of replacement. Haines Signs have been asked to carry out this work.

d Allotments.

Nothing to report.

11/5 Any Other Urgent Matters

Cllr. John Edwards will organise an online meeting at which Councillors will be asked to help with the creation of a schedule of Village Assets and their Risk Assessment.

The Meeting closed at 21.45.

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

5/5. Matters Arising from the Minutes

a. Cllr Rob Ballantyne said that the County Council’s street lighting specialist will be invited to a site meeting at the by-pass bus stop, following which further quotations will be invited. The aim is to have the installation in place before the end of October.

b. The Clerk will arrange for a new style of dog waste bin to be tested along Watling Lane in the hope that it will better retain the unpleasant smell coming from the contents. If this is successful a new location for the existing bin needs to be agreed.

c. The Clerk confirmed that the River of Life Project Communications officer has been given the copy deadlines for Dorchester News. The written agreement between the Parish Council and the Earth Trust is being prepared for final approval and signature.

6/4. Planning Application:

P21/S0732/LB The Thatched Cottage, 4 High Street; Internal alterations to relocate the kitchen from the existing extension into the original cottage. Removal of one non original partition from the previously consented extension, and erection of one new partition within the existing extension. Regularisation for repairs made to a collapsed ceiling in one of the first-floor bedrooms.

The Council had no strong views about this Application and the Clerk was instructed to inform the Planning Officer that she should determine the matter based upon the advice that she receives from the Conservation Officer.

P19/S4508/FUL Land at Allens Pit, Abingdon Road;

The Application is shown as being ‘under consideration’. District Cllr Robin Bennett said that he understands that the S106 Agreement is still being drafted. Stuart Roberts has now left Sovereign Housing and the project is now being managed by Sarah Comer.

Proposed Burcot Farm Solar Park; Cllr Chris Hill has attended an on-line consultation meeting about this proposal and will keep the Parish Council informed of its progress.

7/4 . County Councillor’s Report

The County Councillor’s written report and update have been circulated. Because of the forthcoming Council elections this will not be published in the May edition of Dorchester News which will be distributed just a few days before polling on 6th May.

8/4. District Councillor’s Report

The District Councillor’s written report and update have been circulated. District Cllr Bennett said that in mid-May Parish Councils will be offered the latest information about recording Assets of Community Value and that coping with Climate Change will be an agenda item at the forthcoming Town and Parish Forums

9/4. Council’s Four-Year Vision

a. Village Hall update

The appointments of both a quantity surveyor and a fund-raising expert are confirmed. The expected project cost is £600,000 including professional fees. The Parish Council has pledged £30,000 funding of which £10,000 will have to be spent before it is known whether the project will go ahead.

b. Sports Pavilion and Play Area Update

Following comments received from Andrew Parsons, OPFA Community Development Officer, after his recent site visit, the Council believes that it should give greater priority to planning the development of the Play Area although it is agreed that the Sports Pavilion needs a thorough clean followed by redecorating.

In addition to the repair of the rope ladder which has been ordered, the surface of the Play Area needs work to remove several trip hazards. The supply of additional seating for parents should be considered along with the provision of a table. It is felt that some additional equipment could be installed near the old bench in the corner of the field just outside the fenced play area and that this equipment could include devices for adult use. There will be no extension of the play area towards the tennis courts.

The Council will try to get feedback from village residents about these ideas along with suggestions about making improvements to the facilities in the sports pavilion. There are some potential sources of grant aid for all these projects and these need to be researched.

10/4. Finance: Bank Balances & Payments

NatWest Current Account balance at 14th April 41,200.59

NatWest Reserve Account balance at 14th April 48,056.36

£89,256.95

The Clerk confirmed that the first half precept payment of £22,250 was received on 8th April.

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

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental) 92.76

Tina Pratt (Play Area cleaning charges) 104.00

The Landscape Group Oxford (March grass cutting) 711.30

Dorchester on Thames Cricket Club (grass cutting 2019 and 2020) 1,500.00

G F Hobbs (Recreation Ground perimeter hedge annual cut) 264.00

Arb Guys (Cemetery tree-grinding and grave returfing) 450.00

Town & Country Memorials Ltd (memorial plaque) 134.54

South Oxfordshire District Council (Cemetery Business Rates) 247.34

Data Systems Management LLP (annual renewal website firewall etc) 71.99

Geoff Willis (Village Handyman 5 weeks) 393.75

G Russell (Payment for Allotment Skip Hire to M&M 288.00

G Russell (salary) 810.33

Dennis Froud Pest Control (July Quarter) 805.00

£5,873.01

The Council has received an application for funding from Oxfordshire South & Vale Citizens Advice Bureau who report that in the year 2019/2020 37 residents of Dorchester-on-Thames have been assisted. The Council’s last donation to the Bureau was £300 in January 2020. It was unanimously agreed that the same amount should be given this year.

Future Banking Arrangements

The Clerk was unable to attend the online meeting with Unity Trust Bank organised by the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils in March but has been given contact details of a bank manager by the OALC office in Wallingford. He will follow these up and will report to the next Council meeting.

11/4. Correspondence with Chairman and/or Clerk

a. There have been complaints from village residents about the dangerous riding and the excessive noise created by some members of the large group of bikers which holds its meetings at the H Café by the Berinsfield roundabout on the A4074. The Clerk has contacted Berinsfield Parish Council to see if any joint initiative is possible. It was suggested that contact should also be made with the Parish Councils at Burcot and Warborough.

b. Dorchester Cricket Club has asked if the Parish Council could assist with the purchase of a new mower – the Club’s current mower was purchased in 2008 and is no longer serviceable. Councillors asked for more details about what is required.

12/4 Arrangements for future Meetings of the Council

It was agreed that the Annual Parish Meeting will be held on-line on 5th May and this will be followed by the May meeting of the Parish Council. It seems likely that these will be the last official meetings that the Council will be allowed to hold ‘remotely’.

It was agreed that the June Council meeting would be postponed until 23rd June so that it falls after the current ‘lockdown’ is supposed to have ended.

13/4 Asset Register and Risk Management

Several councillors have contributed suggestions for assets to be included in the Register and Cllr John Edwards is producing a master copy.

It was agreed that an informal meeting should be held on-line in May at which the list would be reviewed with priorities set for further attention. It could be that this becomes part of the Council’s review of its Neighbourhood Development Plan and therefore that the Plan’s ‘chapter-writers’ should be involved.

14/4. Village Maintenance

a. Following recent correspondence with Andrew Clements and Susan Bowditch it was agreed that the strip of ground around the newly planted holly hedge alongside the boundary fence with Page Furlong properties would be left for maintenance by Miss Bowditch and her assistants. It was emphasised that the Council requires this area of the Cemetery to be neatly presented, although it is understood that care must be taken when the daffodils are in flower.

b. The Clerk reported that following a recent visit by the OCC Highways Inspector Mark Pearce several areas of damaged road, paths and paving are to be repaired within next 28 days with particular attention being giving to repair of the granite setts. The Clerk said that he would talk to Mark Pearce about making his next priority the road repairs in Bridge End especially around The Green.

15/4 Re-introduction of Village Bus Service

The Council agreed with a proposal from Cllr Rob Ballantyne that there should be a contribution of £50 per month to Going Forward Buses, a local community interest company based in Goring, for a trial period of six months in support of the service which it has started to run with effect from 9th April. This replaces the ‘Dorchester Flyer’ which ended last year due to the COVID crisis, with the added advantage that tickets can be purchased on board the bus, rather than only in advance, and also that Bus Passes are accepted.

16/4 War Memorial Centenary 16th October

Cllr Chris Hill, who is Chairman of the Dorchester branch of the Royal British Legion, said that the arrangements for marking this Centenary are in the early stages.

17/4. Routine Reports:

a. Sports Pavilion, Recreation Ground & Playground;

The Council noted that the supply and fitting of the replacement for the rope ladder for climbing frame will cost around £530. This work has been booked through S J Aplin Playgrounds Ltd, one of the Council’s regular play area contractors.

b. Footpaths including measures to reduce dog fouling;

The Council has plenty of chalk spray cans in stock. These will be distributed.

c. Cemetery/Closed Churchyard;

The request from a resident for the trimming of overhanging branches from a horse chestnut in the Cemetery has been rejected by the SODC tree officer.

The Clerk has arranged for Les Tyler to discuss the disposal of earth from newly dug graves with the Chairman and Cllr Chris Hill. The meeting will take place in the Cemetery on Monday 18th April.

Cllr Chris Hill reported that the Parish Council noticeboard at the Drayton Road entrance to the Cemetery needs replacement due to rotten timber.

d Allotments.

Research being carried out by the Clerk about Parish Council’s powers to regulate parking have produced a lead to Watlington Parish Council which he will follow up.

18/4 Any Other Urgent Matters

Cllr Chris Hill said that he would attend the meeting that has been organised with Cllr Jo Robb, the River Thames ‘champion’ of SODC, which has been scheduled for 26th May.

The Meeting closed at 9.42 p.m.