**Dorchester Parish Council**

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held on Wednesday 9th February 2022 in the back room of the Village Hall commencing 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 present and with G Russell (Council Clerk) in attendance. Also present for part of the meeting was one resident and County and District Councillor Robin Bennett.

1/2. Apologies for absence

None; all Councillors were present

2/2. Public Participation

A resident of Watling Lane told the Council that the new owner of Bishop’s Court Farm has decided that although maintaining the hedge along Watling Lane in the area opposite numbers 9, 11 and 13 was undertaken by the previous owner, Miss Bowditch, this is not something that he regards as being his responsibility. The County Council’s Countryside Access Officer has advised that local residents should be prepared to take on this work. Some of them will do so but getting the job started needs outside help. The Clerk will contact Gilbert Hobbs, who cuts the Recreation Ground hedge, to ask if he can help.

3/2. 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.

4/2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th January 2022

Cllr Mike Rimmer had pointed out some typos on the circulated draft and these have already been corrected. The Minutes incorporating these amendments were unanimously approved and signed by the Chairman.

5/2. Matters Arising from the Minutes

a. The Clerk hopes to arrange a meeting with Simon Escreet to discuss Land Registry issues before the end of February, but Simon has been in hospital and so his availability is not yet known.

b. The ‘Living Lightly in Dorchester’ project is looking to see if anyone would be interested in taking it over. Megan Parry has offered to get involved. There will be an article in the March edition of Dorchester News.

6/2 County Council & District Council Reports

County and District Cllr Robin Bennett’s reports had been circulated before the meeting

Councillors were reminded that the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) document and supporting strategies for freight, active travel and innovation were approved by Cabinet on 19 October for public consultation. The consultation started on 5 January 2022 and will run until 16 March 2022. The approved documents are on-line. Cllr Bennett recommended that these should be reviewed.

The District Council had invited consultation on its draft Joint Design Guide. There had been some technical issues accessing the website and so the consultation period had been extended Tuesday 15th March.

The County Council has set aside £8 million to assist parishes who wish to introduce 20 mph speed limits (for more see Agenda Item 13/2 below).

Cllr Bennett asked if the Parish Council would consider installing more cycle racks, perhaps outside the Co-Op, and he suggested that this need not be expensive. Cllr Bennett said that the District Council is also keen that parishes should plant more trees.

7/2 Planning:

a. Applications;

P19/S4508/FUL Allens Pit Housing Project; The project costs have greatly increased during the lengthy planning process and the viability/affordability of the scheme is now uncertain. It is believed that the District Council may have some available support funding and further information has been requested.

P20/S4467/FUL and P20/S4469/LB (as amended) Bishop’s Court Farm; Conversion of farm buildings to residential use and creation of new vehicular access to site from Abingdon Road.

Residents have been invited to view and comment upon the overall master plan for the Farm by attending an onsite exhibition which opened on 8th February and is expected to remain available for several weeks. The Parish Council regards the traffic impact appraisal report by County Highways as being essential information before these applications are determined.

P22/S0272/HH 48 Watling Lane; Ground floor and loft extension to side, change of existing roof, new attached store/workshop with proposed garden studio.

The Parish Council’s response was agreed as follows:

“This Application is for quite a large proposed extension. In the absence of a Design and Access Statement, the Council finds it difficult to understand the Aim and Objective of the design or the proposed arrangements for parking and access.

“The proposed Garden Room appears to be located on the roadside boundary of the property, and to turn its back to the lane. Watling Lane is a principal pedestrian access route to the village from the Thames and the Thames Path. The Council believes that the blank facade would have a deleterious effect on the appearance of the approach to the historic Dorchester Conservation Area, whose boundary is immediately adjacent to the property.”

P22/S0246/LB / P22/S0266/LB / P22/S0265/HH / P22/S0125/FUL / P22/S0123/FUL / P21/S4380/FUL 91 High Street; Various applications about alterations to replacement orangery previously approved under P20/S1748/HH & P20/S1750/LB; Electrical substation and carport with charging points for electric farm vehicles; Retrospective planning to replace existing barn; and Relocation of agricultural barns.

The Council had no wish to make any comments on these Applications.

b. Enforcement;

It was noted that a new Planning Enforcement Guide has been issued by SODC. More details are available on the District Council’s website.

8/2. . Finance:

NatWest Business Reserve Account 12th January 2022 £48,060.40

NatWest Current Account 9th February 2022 £7,015.62

Unpresented Credit (Allotment rents) £1,130.00

 £56,206.02

Unity trust bank balance £470.00

 Total £56,676.02

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

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental) 92.76

Going Forward Buses CIC (January flyer) 50.00

CPRE (annual subscription) 36.00

Southern Electric (Pavilion) 224.68

Castle Water (annual Cemetery water rate) 117.23

JRB Enterprise Ltd (dog waste bags) 234.24

South Oxfordshire District Council (dog bin service) 968.76

Society of Local Council Clerks (annual subscription) 144.00

Andrew Clements (hedging plants and first aid kit) 52.38

Survey Monkey (fee for research into 20 mph speed limit) 99.00

Geoff Willis (Village Handyman 4 weeks) 306.25

G Russell (salary) 810.33

 £3,135.63

b. New Accounting Software from Scribe; The annual fee and set up costs of £918.00 have been paid as agreed. The system start date will be backdated to 1st April 2021 so the accounts for the whole of 2021/22 will be produced using Scribe.

The Clerk has arranged for initial training and set up courses on 17th and 22nd February with a personal account manager introduced for direct assistance.

c. New Banking Arrangements; All signatories are now registered for on-line access by the bank with the Clerk registered for administration only. The next step is to set up on-line payments for all the Council’s suppliers.

d. Annual Governance and Accountability Return: After the two year break due to COVID, Kevin Rose of IAC Audit & Accountancy has agreed to be re-appointed as the Council’s Internal Auditor, a post that he has held for many years. His basic fees will be £385 for a day and £285 for a half day plus VAT. He can start immediately so the full Return will be ready for the March meeting. Following a proposal from Cllr Rob Ballantyne seconded by Cllr Chris Hill, the Council approved this appointment.

The Clerk confirmed that the Council’s VAT claim for 2020/21 has been submitted.

9/2. Chairman and/or Clerk Correspondence

a. The Council has received a briefing about ‘Operation London Bridge’. This is the procedure that will follow the death of the Monarch. This information has been shared with the Abbey Wardens.

b. There is an opportunity to book the regular supplier for a Village Fireworks Display on Saturday 5th November. The Parish Council is trying to find a Village group who would take on the responsibility for organising this event because it offers fund-raising potential.

10/2 Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

Two residents have volunteered to assist the Parish Council with organising a street party or similar on the Jubilee weekend of 2nd – 5th June. There will be an appeal for more suggestions and helpers in the March edition of Dorchester News and the Council will contact Dorchester Abbey PCC to see what celebrations are being discussed in and around The Abbey.

The Parish Council has received details of a tree planting proposal from the Royal British Legion and agreed to purchase the required commemorative plaque.

Other suggestions for marking the Jubilee include the purchase of commemorative outdoor items such as a street bench; a picnic table in the Children’s Play Area; and some furniture for the terrace at the Abbey Tea Room.

11/2. Proposal for Scouts Aqua Camp June 17-19

Following the Clerk’s site meeting a traffic direction plan has been developed for the Recreation Ground. Dorchester Cricket Club has been consulted and is happy with the proposal.

Friday 17th June is likely to be an Oxfordshire Schools Festival of Voices concert date so Abbey View will be kept exclusively for the use of Abbey visitors.

The traffic plans will be reviewed nearer the time so that the prevailing weather conditions can be taken into account.

12/2. Village Maintenance

a. Abbey View Meadow. Cllrs Edwards and Rimmer have looked at the field. It is re-establishing well but will not be used for event car parking until, possibly, March.

Cllrs Chris Hill and Mike Corran have discussed various projects with Andrew Clements. The Village is continuing to receive regular visits from members of the Wallingford Green Gym and the assistance of these volunteers is greatly appreciated. Andrew Clements has arranged for some notices to be displayed in the area around the Cemetery which explain to residents what is being achieved by the ‘Greendot’ maintenance activities and these are also being reported in Dorchester News.

13/2. Village Traffic Controls

Following the Clerk’s contact with the OCC officer, Jon Beale, a detailed application for an area with a 20 mph limit will be submitted. This will be endorsed by County Cllr Robin Bennett. The exact boundaries for the newly designated area have not yet been finalised.

14/2. Development Projects: Village Hall; Play Area and Pavilion

Cllr Ballantyne has arranged to have a meeting with the Village School Head Teacher to discuss ideas for improving the Play Area. He has already had a meeting with a potential fund-raising adviser.

15/2. The 2022 Annual Parish Meeting.

It was agreed that this meeting would take place on Wednesday 11th May. It will be followed by the monthly Parish Council meeting. It was agreed to invite a representative of Gigaclear to address the Annual Meeting.

16/2 Routine Reports:

a. Sports Pavilion, Recreation Ground & Playground; carried forward.

b. Footpaths including measures to reduce dog fouling;

Another increase in the price for emptying dog waste bins is expected. The Clerk will have the details at the March meeting.

c. Cemetery/Closed Churchyard; carried forward.

d. Allotments;

The repair for the water meter manhole cover has been arranged.

17/2 Any Other Urgent Matters

a. A few residents have asked if the Council would hold a ‘Newcomers/Information Evening’ this year. The last one was held in February 2020. This was agreed for early 2023.

b. Cllr Chris Hill asked for a review of the woodland area between the path which joins the Oxford Road with Berinsfield and the A4074. The land is unregistered, but it is accessible to all. Andrew Clements has prepared some suggestions for maintenance work. It was agreed that the Council’s specialist adviser, Sarah Venners, should be asked for her opinion following a site visit before the March Council meeting.

c. Cllr John Edwards reported that a fishing tackle company has expressed interest in purchasing Orchid Lake, Abingdon Road. He would keep the Council informed if there are further developments.

Meeting closed at 9.40 p.m.