**Dorchester Parish Council**

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held on Wednesday 13th April 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, 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 were five residents.

1/4. Apologies For Absence

Apologies were accepted from County and District Cllr Robin Bennett who was on holiday.

2/4. Public Participation

Some residents asked for clarification about the Parish Council’s role in the Planning Process. A specific query was whether the Council should be proactive in generating local interest and arranging discussions with residents about potential development plans or simply confine its role to being a statutory consultee when an application is submitted to the planning authority.

The Council’s Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) provides guidance on some proposals, but it was agreed that to remain relevant the NDP needs updating every few years.

Cllrs Rob Ballantyne and Chris Hill were asked to look at the proposals for Bishop’s Court Farm in the light of the current NDP. They will prepare the review over the next few weeks.

3/4. 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. It was also noted that Cllr Williams lives close to the proposed new vehicular access to Bishop’s Court Farm.

4/4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th March 2022

After some typing errors had been corrected in the version that was circulated in advance of the meeting, it was proposed by Cllr Mike Rimmer that the Minutes should be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Chris Hill and passed unanimously. The Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

5/4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Bike Rack outside Co-op; the Clerk reported that the management of the Co-Op would prefer that the proposed bike rack is placed to the left of the Village noticeboard and not close to the entrance leading to the upstairs flat. He will discuss this with the County’s Highways’ officer on Tuesday 26th April.

The Clerk’s planned meeting with Simon Escreet is hopefully to be followed in the near future by site visits to ‘Waterloo’ and the area around the War Memorial.

There has been further comment from some residents about the problems caused to wheelchair users when some drivers park their vehicles in such a way that pavements are blocked. Some photographs of this inconsiderate behaviour have been sent by some residents to the Neighbourhood Policing Team. The Police have suggested that contact should also be made with the Oxfordshire County Council online reporting system since they have recently taken on a large proportion of parking complaints across the district. The details will be given to the editor of Dorchester News for publication.

6/4 County Council & District Council Reports

Robin’s reports have both been circulated and also supplied to Dorchester News and the Village website.

7/4. Planning Applications:

P22/S1059/FUL Bishop Court Farm 93 High Street

Retrospective change of use of land to equestrian; to include formation of an outdoor horse exercise area bounded with treated timber post and railed fence.

The Council is concerned that work had been carried out without the appropriate permission but has no objection in principle to the proposed change of use. The Planning Officer will be asked to ensure that the impact on the Conservation Area is fully considered before the Application is decided.

P22/S0771/HH 2 Oxford Road; Dropped kerb and creation of driveway.

The Council agreed that it has no comments upon this Application.

P22/S1090/HH 7 Wittenham Lane, Single storey front and rear extensions and raise roof of existing garage and P22/S1092/HH 7 Wittenham Lane, Two and single storey rear extension and raise roof of existing garage

After hearing from some of the residents living nearby, the Council agreed to tell the Planning Officer that the appropriate Notices about these Planning Applications had not been displayed on the site. The Council therefore requests that the Consultation Period should be extended to allow time for all the neighbours to be made aware of the Applications and submit their comments. The Parish Council would also request that the Conservation Officer should be specifically included as a Consultee.

The proposed work would have a major impact upon the immediate neighbours and the Council believes that no building work should commence unless a plan for its execution and timing has been agreed with them in advance.

The Council noted that the work covered by Application P22/S1092 would result in a substantial increase in the size of the property and would probably increase the demand for parking spaces. The Planning Officer is asked to consider if this would be overdevelopment.

Planning Matters In Progress:

Bishop’s Court Farm; to assist the traffic impact survey at Bishop’s Court Farm the Council has agreed to share some of the data which came from the most recent village traffic speed survey conducted by the County Council.

Allens Pit Housing Project; P19/S4508/FUL; Cllr Chris Hill reported that he has been told by joint landowner Jason Winterbourne that the project’s viability is being re-evaluated by Sovereign Housing. It may be necessary to request some assistance from the District Council.

8/4. Finance: Bank Balances and Payments

NatWest Business Reserve Account 13th April 2022 £48,061.80

NatWest Current Account 13th April 2022 £30,571.37

£78,633.17

Unity trust bank balance £464.00

Total £79,097.17

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

Going Forward Buses CIC (March flyer) 50.00

G F Hobbs (Recreation Ground and Watling Lane hedgecutting) 564.00

The Landscape Group Oxford (March grass cutting) 711.30

JRB Enterprise Ltd (dog waste bags) 234.24

SODC (Dog bin emptying service 1/1 – 31/3) 968.76

Denis Froud Pest Control (July quarter) 895.00

IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd (Internal audit) 342.00

Village Hall Committee (refund of BT annual broadband service) 820.08

Nick Forman (Jubilee picnic bench for Play Area) 195.00

Geoff Willis (Village Handyman 5 weeks) 369.25

G Russell (salary) 851.72

G Russell (Admin October to March) 398.90

£6,492.03

Dog Waste Collection Service

The Clerk reported that The Shield Group is now providing dog waste bin services to several towns and parishes in Oxfordshire. He has requested references from the Clerks at Benson, Chalgrove, Didcot and Watlington, all of which have been very satisfactory. He said that a significant amount of money, probably in excess of £2,000 per year – could be saved by switching our service provider from Biffa to The Shield Group. It was agreed that this should be done as soon as possible.

9/4. Chairman and/or Clerk Correspondence

a. The Council has been sent details of P22/S0960/FUL which relates to a Solar Farm project at Burcot Farm. This would have an impact upon several surrounding villages including Clifton Hampden and Nuneham Courtenay. The Council noted that the Consultation period ends on Friday 22nd April. It was agreed that the Council as a whole would not take part, but individual councillors could submit their opinions if they wished to do so.

b. The Council noted that a large mobile home has been parked in Martins Lane while some building work on the adjacent property is being carried out.

10/4. Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

Although a few village residents have indicated an interest in organising street parties with their immediate neighbours to celebrate HM The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee on Sunday 5th June, there has been no enthusiasm for a single, central village event.

The Parish Council has therefore agreed to join forces with the Abbey wardens and their team of helpers and will support the Party that is to be held in the Cloister Gardens.

It was also agreed to include the new picnic bench in the Play Area as one of the purchases that would be identified as being part of the Jubilee Celebrations.

11/4. Village Maintenance

At the beginning of April Andrew Clements had submitted a detailed report about the ‘Green DoTs’ autumn / winter program of conservation work and the Group’s plans for a spring / summer program of wildflower and weed management. The highlights were:

* we've planted 328 trees / hedge shrubs in various locations. This includes 8 Oxfordshire varieties of apple trees. This will be a contribution towards the Queens Green Canopy project.
* completed the initial phase of rejuvenating the hedge by the fishing lake. We had planned to do this over 2 years but have managed to do it in 1.
* on average we had 10 volunteers on Mondays working on this project, including 3 from WGG. Volunteers from the Angling Society have also contributed greatly to the project.
* we trained 4 volunteers in how to lay hedges, which means there are now 6 of us in our group who can lay hedges
* trimmed the car park hedges and gapped up where necessary. The hedges are rejuvenating.
* managed scrub in lane behind Page Furlong and cemetery ditch
* in the Autumn we planted 2,700 bulbs and 500 plug plants in various locations.

Andrew concluded by saying that contractors and volunteers need guidance from the Council on the issue of tidiness versus untidiness, with the latter being of greater benefit to wildlife.

12/4. Village Traffic Controls

Cllr Mike Corran is in contact with the County Council’s team on a regular basis. There are many schemes for new 20 mph zones being considered throughout Oxfordshire.

13/4. Development Projects:

Play Area; Cllr Rob Ballantyne will circulate a report based upon the recommendations received from the School.

Pavilion; the Clerk is in contact with representatives from both the Cricket and Football Clubs and hoping that a team will be appointed to advise upon the improvements required.

14/4. Routine Reports:

Carried forward to May meeting.

15/4. Any Other Urgent Matters

a. At the Clerk’s request it was agreed that the July meeting would be held on 6th July.

b. Cllr Mike Corran is attending the meetings about providing assistance to Ukrainian refugees while other councillors are members of the local email group.

The Clerk said that in order to be better briefed upon this matter he would attend the next Abbey meeting on Tuesday 26th April.

The Meeting closed at 9.49 p.m.