**Dorchester Parish Council**

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held on Wednesday 9th March 2022 in the back room of the Village Hall commencing at 7.30 p.m. The Chairman, Cllr Mark Williams, presided with Cllrs Maurice Day, Chris Hill and Mike Rimmer present and with G Russell (Council Clerk) in attendance. Also present for part of the meeting were two residents and County and District Councillor Robin Bennett.

1/3. Apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted from Cllrs Rob Ballantyne, Mike Corran, John Edwards, and Keith Russell.

2/3. Public Participation

Both residents said that they were attending the meeting to listen to the Parish Council’s discussion about the planning applications for Bishop’s Court Farm. They had previously contacted the Council by email to express their concerns.

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

4/3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th January 2022

It was proposed by Cllr Chris Hill that the Minutes as circulated should be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Mike Rimmer and passed unanimously. The Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

5/3. 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 his availability is not yet known. It was agreed that to begin with he would be asked to concentrate on matters concerning the registration of the land between 13 and 15 Bridge End known as ‘Waterloo’ and the War Memorial at the junction of High Street and Watling Lane.

6/3 County Council & District Council Reports

County and District Cllr Robin Bennett’s reports had been circulated before the meeting and also supplied to Dorchester News and the Village website.

7/3 Planning:

P19/S4508/FUL Allens Pit Housing Project; Cllrs Rob Ballantyne and Chris Hill are still waiting to discover from Sovereign Housing about whether this project is still viable.

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

In the continued absence of the traffic impact survey, it was agreed that Cllr Chris Hill should draft for approval the Council’s recommendation that these Applications should be refused.

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 Council noted that the Application has been amended and the garden studio suggestion has been dropped. This had been the Council’s main problem with this application.

P22/S0734/FUL & P22/S0735/LB Bishop Court Farm, 93 High Street. Conversion of redundant granary to farm office with internal and external modifications. The Council noted that a copy of the ‘pre-application advice’ relating to this Application now appears on the Planning website. This raises several problem areas including highways planning. The Council noted that the Application includes a car park with 53 spaces.

Since the planning officers have already raised so many matters of concern, parish councillors agreed that matters could be left with the District Council team.

P21/S5128/HH 36 Martins Lane. New roof to provide living space; porch on front of property; rear extension to fill in small courtyard; pitched roof on existing extension.

The Council decided that it had no response to make about this Application.

P22/S0594/HH White Lodge 31, Abingdon Road; single storey rear extension

The Council decided that it had no response to make about this Application.

Planning Enquiry: New Stable Buildings at Bishop’s Court Farm

Several residents have been asking whether planning approval should have been requested for the new stable buildings at the Farm. It is understood that this matter has been raised with the District Council’s Planning team.

8/3. Finance:

a. Bank Balances & Payments;

NatWest Business Reserve Account 4th March 2022 £48,060.77

NatWest Current Account 9th March 2022 £13,582.41

£61,643.18

Unity trust bank balance £482.00

Total £62,125.18

The Council noted receipt of a VAT Refund of £8,052.42 for 2020/21

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

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental) 92.76

Going Forward Buses CIC (February flyer) 50.00

OALC (annual subscription) 217.89

Oxfordshire PFA annual subscription 45.00

M&M Skip Hire for Allotments 294.00

Jenks Oxford Ltd routine programmed tree work 1,044.00

The Landscape Group Oxford (clearance ground works, in Cemetery

and surrounding area) 1,134.00

Geoff Willis (Village Handyman 4 weeks) 315.00

G Russell (salary) 851.72

G Russell (backpay) 455.29

£4,499.66

b. Accounts

The Clerk confirmed that he is now using the new Accounting Software from Scribe to prepare the accounts for 2021/22.

Following the Oxfordshire Clerks meeting with SLCC at Banbury last week it has been suggested the transfer of the Council’s banking arrangements should be put on hold until the end of April to allow NatWest to make desired changes in account admin. This was agreed.

c. Annual Governance and Accountability Return; Following the Internal Auditor’s visit on 1st March the Clerk presented the completed 2019/2020 AGAR. This was signed by the Chairman and by the Clerk for immediate submission. The Return for 2020/2021can now be progressed with the Internal Auditor for signature in May.

d. Clerk’s Salary.

After just over two years since the previous agreement, the National Joint Council for Local Government Services has settled the new rates of pay to Council Clerks, backdated to 1st April 2021 with Employers encouraged to implement this award as soon as possible. The increase in Scale Rates is 1.75%. which, together with the annual increment based upon years of service, means that the Clerk’s monthly salary payment is now £851.72. This was agreed.

e. Village Handyman hourly rates of pay.

It was agreed that with effect from 1st April 2022 the rate would be set at £9.50 per hour.

f. Dog Waste Collection contract

The Clerk drew the Council’s attention to the several increases in charges for dog bin emptying that have been imposed by the District Council since April 2019. The annual cost is now ten times greater than it was three years ago. A much less costly alternative service is offered by The Shield Group, but it was thought to be prudent to allow other councils to try this out first.

9/3. Chairman and/or Clerk Correspondence

a. The Council have been asked if it can give approval for the planning of a commemorative tree for the RBL on the triangular area of grass located at the junction of Tenpenny and Watling Lane. The landowner is not known and the Clerk will investigate.

b. The Council has received another complaint about the problems caused by cars parking on pavements, especially when causing obstructions for wheelchair users. It was agreed that in addition to discussing this problem with the Police Community Support Officers, the Council would publicise the matter in ‘Dorchester News’.

c. The Council has been invited to the CPRE’s Oxford Green Belt meeting on 5th April.

d. The Council has been approached by a resident who has expressed an interest in purchasing an area of land on the edge of the Allotments. After some discussion, councillors agreed that none of this land is available for sale.

e. The Council has again been asked to consider hosting a Village Fireworks display in November, but it was agreed that this suggestion would be declined.

10/3. Platinum Jubilee Celebrations Weekend

Honor Juniper has contacted the Council offering to help with the organisation of these Celebrations as indeed has Val Howells. No other volunteers have been forthcoming, however, and it has been suggested that the Parish Council should join forces with Dorchester Abbey and promote a bring-you-own picnic in the Cloister Gardens. Councillors agreed that this idea should be developed.

11/3. Village Maintenance

The Council’s arboricultural advisor, Sarah Venners, has reported on the potential for landscape enhancements at the unregistered area of land near the A4074 at the top of Oxford Road. Since the Parish Council has no direct responsibility for managing this land, it was agreed that no further action should be taken.

Following a site visit, the council’s contractor, Gilbert Hobbs, will cut back the perimeter hedge opposite 9,11 and 13 Watling Lane tomorrow, weather permitting. For animal welfare reasons, the farm manager has been informed that this work will be taking place.

12/3 Village Traffic Controls

The detailed proposals for the implementation of the proposed 20 mph speed limit that have been prepared by Cllr Mike Corran are being considered by Oxfordshire County Council.

13/3. Development Projects: Village Hall; Play Area and Pavilion

Rob Ballantyne reports having had a good and productive meeting with the Village School which will greatly assist with the planning of improvements in and around the Play Area.

14/3. Routine Reports:

a. Sports Pavilion, Recreation Ground & Playground;

The Council noted that The Landscape Group Oxford has indicated that it will be increasing its grass-cutting prices for 2022 by 5%.

b. Footpaths;

carry forward

c. Cemetery/Closed Churchyard;

carry forward

d. Allotments.

The repair to the water meter manhole cover has been done.

15/3. Any Other Urgent Matters

Cllr Maurice Day told the Council that with effect from this year, he no longer wishes to be involved in the purchase and provision of the Village Christmas Tree.

The Meeting closed at 9.20 p.m.