**Dorchester Parish Council**

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the back room of the Village Hall on Wednesday 13th December 2023 commencing at 7.30 p.m. The Chairman, Cllr Mike Corran (MC) presided with Cllrs Mike Atkinson (MA); Jon Brydges (JB); Charlotte Garside (CG), Chris Hill (CH); and Becky Waller (BW) present and the Clerk, Geoff Russell (GR), in attendance. Also present for part of the meeting were four residents.

**Standing Items Part 1**

1/12. Chairman's opening remarks

2/12 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were accepted from Cllr John Taylor, who had a family commitment, and from Cllr Mark Williams, and County/District Cllr Robin Bennett, who were both unwell.

3/12 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None.

4/12 Public Participation

None.

5/12 Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held 8th November 2023

The version updated by Cllr John Taylor and circulated on 3rd December was approved and will be signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.

6/12 County and District Councils

Reports from Cllr Robin Bennett have been received for both the County and District Councils. They have been circulated to all Councillors and will be published on the village website.

**Priority Items**

7/12 Budget & Reserves

MC invited Councillors to review the spreadsheet that had been circulated in advance giving details of actual receipts and payments in recent years together with the estimated figures for the year ended 31st March 2024. The spreadsheets had been prepared by MC, JT and GR.

The Council will be asked to set the Precept for 2024/25 at its meeting on 10th January 2024. It was suggested that target reserves should be set at between six and nine months expected annual expenditure.

Cllr Becky Waller proposed that the Precept should be increased by 10% from the present £48,000, which is an average annual payment per dwelling of just under £100, This was seconded by JB and agreed. The Council believes that communication with residents to explain all its activities is important.

8/12 Recruitment of New Parish Clerk

MC said that the legal formalities of the appointment are being progressed and it was hoped that that the name of the selected candidate could soon be announced.

9/12 Tree Survey Quotation

There are three potential service providers and in January they will all be invited to submit their quotations. **The Clerk was asked to check with the Council’s insurers whether they had any standard conditions for the frequency with which these surveys are carried out.**

10/12 Donation

For several years the Parish has had the financial support of a local resident who has been paying the environment maintenance costs of five sites in public areas around the village. This person now wishes to secure this provision into the future with a cash donation. After discussion it was agreed that the Council would be pleased to accept the donation, but this is to be on the understanding that the number and location of the curated sites can be varied in future if circumstances change, and that the Council shall be free to spend the capital sum as well as the interest received on any other project that it may in future identify.

It is hoped that the donor will be able to attend the Council’s January meeting so that Councillors can express their thanks and appreciation in person for this generous gift,

**Other workstreams**

11/12 Abbey Closed Churchyard

MC reported that. Together with MW and GR, he had met Richard Tudor, the new Dorchester Abbey Fabric Coordinator. The meeting had taken place at The Abbey, which greatly assisted mutual understanding of the boundaries of the Closed Churchyard and agreement over how maintenance responsibilities are divided between the Parish Council and Dorchester Abbey PCC. These have subsequently been confirmed in writing.

**The Clerk was asked to check with the Council’s insurers that the Council’s policy contains sufficient information on this matter for all risks to be fully covered.**

12/12 What’s On Meeting Debrief

MC confirmed that the event, which had taken place in the Village Hall on 16th October, had been very well-supported and he thanked everyone who had contributed to this successful outcome. It was clear, however, that the younger members of the village community had not been present and agreed that in 2024 a special effort should be made to communicate with this group, perhaps by holding a barbecue on the Recreation Ground for example?

13/12 Affordable Housing

In the absence of JT, CH was available to answer questions about the status of the Allen’s Pit project. The results of the recent survey carried out as part of the ‘Dorchester 2030 and Beyond project are keenly awaited.

14/12 AGARs 2021/22 and 2022/23

GR reported that the report for 2021/22 had almost been completed before his recent fall. He and that both reports would be completed as soon as possible.

15/12 Book Swap Initiative

It has been suggested that the bus shelter outside 70 High Street would be a suitable venue to provide a book swap facility for the village. Several volunteers are interested and working on a detailed proposal. The bus shelter is the responsibility of the Parish Council.

16/12 Funding Requests

1. CAB. The Council has received a request for a donation from Oxfordshire South & Vale Citizens Advice, a group which has regularly received the Council’s support in previous years. It was agreed to donate £250 and to publicise the group’s service to village residents.
2. Tennis Courts; On behalf of Dorchester Tennis Club, the Council was asked to make a contribution towards the maintenance of the courts, which are now 10 years old. In principle this was agreed but the Council’s exact commitment requires further discussion.

17/12 Playground Update

The main contractor’s work is now complete but there are tasks to be completed by others and a lot of equipment to be removed.

The fitness classes have been very well-received and attracted attention from operators of similar facilities in South and Vale Districts who have expressed interest in providing a similar service.

18/12 Motorbike Noise

MA has approached several neighbouring parish councils with the intention of trying to have a co-ordinated programme of prevention in place by Spring 2024. He is trying to find more information about measures taken in Meon Valley, Hampshire, where it is understood the local councils had been suffering a similar problem until a ‘noise camera’ was set up and proved very helpful.

19/12 Transformation Plan update

20/12 Orientation Signs

GR confirmed that the introduction of these signs is a priority for his last few weeks in office.

**Planning Applications:**

The Council notedP23/S3061 LDP 7 Jemmetts Close Solar Panels. Comments have not been invited.

21/12 Finances

Balances

NatWest Reserve Account 8th November 2023 £32,635,89

NatWest Current Account 8th November 2023 £21,394.42

Unity Trust Bank 13th December 2023 356.00

£54,386,31

It was proposed by BW that the following payments be approved. This was seconded by CH and agreed by the Council.

**Admin:**

Highfield Trees (Christmas Trees x 2) 700.00

City of Oxford Silver Band 150.00

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental) 116.76

Michael Lynes Ltd (bar for Chairman’s chain) 33.90

Geoff Russell Clerk’s Salary October and December 1,811.78

CPRE annual subscription (pd by GR credit card) 60.00

Going Forward Buses (Dorchester Flyer) 50.00

Shield Maintenance (traffic cones) 113.76

Parish Council Election Costs 1,792,68

£4828.88

**Sports Ground & Pavilion**

SSE (Pavilion Electricity Supply) 331.04

Castle Water (Water and Wastewater Pavilion & Rec) 43,80

Deborah Finlay (Exercise classes November) 90.00

Dorchester Cricket Club (annual grass cutting) 1,200.00

£1664.84

**General Village Maintenance**

The Landscape Group Oxford (sundry hedge & path work) 2.280.00

Face North Forestry (Abbey Closed Churchyard) 660.00

Trevor Greenaway (sundry tasks including leaves on bridge) 300.00

£3240.00

**Dog Waste**

Shield Maintenance (Dog bin services) 108.79

Shield Maintenance (Dog waste bags) 181,99

£290.78

£10024,50

Clerk’s Salary Award

The Council noted and approved the recent agreement between NALC and SLCC which has been back dated to the beginning of April 2023 at £1 per hour, which is £54 per month. This will be paid from January 2024

**22/12 Any Other Urgent Matters**

Village School

BW said that the Village School would like the Council to support a fund-raising event in 2024. Further details would be available soon.

CG said that she would be interested to have some information about taking on the role of being the Parish Council’s representative on the School’s governing body.

New Website

JB confirmed that the Parish Council’s new policy documents are all on the new website. He said that he would circulate councillors and the clerk with a spreadsheet showing his availability to assist colleagues to take advantage of the IT services that the Council now offers through Teams ad Office 365. The Parish Council Notices in Dorchester News will need updating to explain the new range of information services.

Dorchester Waterworks

CH is investigating what impact substantial rainfall will have on the Dorchester Waterworks and the measures that Thames Water has in place to deal with any problems.

Village 20 mph Speed Limit

MC said that he expected the County Council to give its approval to the proposed scheme within the next 24 hours/

Village Survey – Dorchester 2030 and Beyond

MC said that he was hoping to have the headline figures CFO before Christmas.

Meeting closed at 9.29 p.m.