

## Dorchester Parish Council

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the back room of the Village Hall on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023 commencing at 7.30 p.m. The Vice-Chairman, Cllr John Taylor (JT), presided with Cllrs Mike Atkinson (MA), Charlotte Garside (CG), Chris Hill (CH), Becky Waller (BW), and Mark Williams (MW) present and the Clerk, Geoff Russell (GR), in attendance. Also present for part of the meeting were County and District Cllr Robin Bennett and four residents.

### Standing Items

*In the absence of the Chairman, Cllr Mike Corran, who was on holiday, the chair for this meeting was the Vice-Chairman, Cllr John Taylor*

#### 1/8. Chairman's opening remarks

The Chairman, Cllr John Taylor, thanked all those Councillors who had helped to publicise this Council Meeting in advance, using social media to draw the attention of several residents to the matters that would be discussed during the evening.

JT proposed re-ordering the agenda moving Matters Arising to become part of Item 5 – Updates and requested AOB items from Councillors so that the meeting could focus their attention on the key items. This was agreed.

#### 2/8. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were accepted from the Chairman, Cllr Mike Corran (MC), and Cllr Jon Brydges (JB) who were both on holiday.

#### 3/8 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr. Mark Williams concerning village maintenance work that is carried out by the company with whom he works, principally grass-cutting and grounds maintenance; and Cllr Charlotte Garside on any matter concerning Bishops Court Farm where she is employed.

#### 4/8 Public Participation

A resident requested that the Council should draw the attention of County Highways to the dangers that are created at the junction of Abingdon Road with Oxford Road and High Street when cars are parked on Oxford Road so that the view of any on-coming traffic is blocked for drivers wishing to turn into High Street from Abingdon Road. **It was agreed that the Clerk would raise this matter with OCC,**

#### 5/8. Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023

After two typographical errors were corrected in Minute 8/7, the first in paragraph one where a word had been repeated in the fifth line and the second in paragraph four where the word 'put' had been omitted from the fourth line, the Minutes were approved and signed by Cllr John Taylor as Chairman of the meeting.

#### 6/8 County and District Council Reports

Reports from Cllr Robin Bennett have been received for both the County and District Councils. They will be included in the September edition of Dorchester News and published on the village website.

Oxfordshire County Council, in partnership with Oxfordshire local authorities, is looking to use government funding to provide a network of public Electric Vehicle charging across Oxfordshire, including through a Community EV 'Microhubs scheme' that would provide one or two chargers in towns and villages across the county, especially in areas that currently have limited EV charging provision. The Parish Council is already in contact with the County Council about providing this service in Bridge End, with Cllr Mike Corran (MC) leading this project.

The new Council fully supported the decision by the previous Council to locate the EV charge points in the Bridge End car park.

Cllr Bennett said that his 'Councillor priority fund' is open and is expected to be in place for the next two years. Details are available on-line.

Cllr John Taylor said that the crash barrier near the footpath underpass on the by-pass has still not been repaired following a traffic accident last year. **He has asked the Clerk to write to County Highways about this.** Cllr Bennett said that he would also take this up, along with the Parish Council's request that should traffic have to be diverted through Dorchester following another by-pass accident the authorities would try to ensure that a one-way system was introduced.

On behalf of SODC Cllr Bennett was pleased to be able to announce that funding has been awarded for a Citizens Advice Community Hub to operate in partnership with the Berin Centre. The service has received funding for 2023/24 and the following three years.

A new round of funding from the Councillor Community Grant scheme is available to help local charities and organisations. Organisations, including Parish Councils, can now apply for grants from £250 up to a maximum of £5,000. Applications must be received by Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

In addition to this funding Cllr Bennett said that more than £1m is available to help improve the rural economy across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse. Funding from the government's Rural England Prosperity Fund can be used to provide a boost to projects such as creating rural business hubs, setting up community energy schemes and diversifying farm businesses beyond agriculture.

Cllr Bennett also reported that the environmental charity Thames21 is doing regular water quality sampling as part of its campaign to improve water quality in the River Thames and to gain bathing water status in some areas.

## **Priority Items**

### 7/8 Community-led Plan

Cllr John Taylor (JT) explained that as part of the May Parish Council election, a pledge was made to Consult with as many residents as possible to develop a consensus around the vision for '**Dorchester 2030 and Beyond**' along with the three to four priorities that the Council will pursue over its four-year term of office.

The consultative process was kicked off at the Annual Parish Meeting attended by around 80 people in the Abbey on 28th June. Since then, Cllrs Mike Corran, John Taylor and the Clerk have been working with Community First Oxfordshire (CFO), a local community development charity, to develop the questionnaire and set the reporting process. These discussion meetings are on-going and the survey will be launched in the second half of September to be completed by the end of October. The printing costs are estimated to be £800.

### 8/8 Grass-Cutting and Grounds Maintenance

Cllr Mark Williams (MW) presented the Council with a comprehensive list of the areas, including hedges and footpaths, which receive grounds maintenance attention together with maps confirming their exact locations.

In addition to showing areas maintained by the Council's contractors, this summary included the places looked after by volunteers operating within the programme known as 'Greendots'. The Council agreed that Greendots should be allocated a budget of £1,500 to finance their purchases in the current financial year. Greendots invoices would be processed through the Council's ordinary accounts.

Cllr Robin Bennett said that he might be able to find some grant aid from one of his Council's 'Green Funds'.

BW explained that it had come to her attention that Jenks of Oxford have failed to complete the tree maintenance work contracted by Dorchester Parish Council in 2020 with the last invoice paid in November 2022,

Jenks have moved their operational base from Queenford Farm, Dorchester to Bloxham and due to their failure to complete the contract it was decided it would be cancelled. **Action: Clerk to write to Jenks to terminate their tree maintenance contract.**

Together with tree work in the Recreation Ground, Cemetery and Closed Abbey Churchyard, grass-cutting and grounds maintenance works account for a significant part of the Council's annual expenditure, and it was agreed that later this year the Council will request tenders from a number of local suppliers for the various maintenance services. Jenks will not be invited to tender.

As a preliminary to the exercise the Council will commission a survey of all the trees which stand on its property, starting with a review of the recommendations of the survey which was carried out in 2018 and the work that has actually been done. It was agreed that the survey should include the trees in Dorchester Abbey's Cloister Garden and the Parochial Church Council would be provided with a copy.

The 2018 survey was done by Sarah Venners and it was agreed that she, along with a couple of other expert surveyors will be asked to tender for the 2023 survey. **Action: Clerk to request tenders from 3 local expert tree surveyors for consideration at the October PC meeting.**

#### 9/8 SODC Team Tidy Visit

Several councillors had responded to the invitation to suggest tasks for the District Council's team tidy visit in September and there was complete agreement that the most urgent problem is the 'scruffy state' of the bridge into the village. In fact, it was agreed that leaving this task until the second half of September is too long to wait as it is becoming increasingly difficult to walk across the bridge. There are several events taking place in the Abbey before that time. BW agreed to organise a volunteer bridge clean up morning on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> August. This will be an excellent pilot to assess the willingness of villagers to come forward and tidy up the village where the local authorities, OCC and SODC, are struggling with their lack of resources.

JT mentioned that Whitchurch, with a similar population to Dorchester, have developed a team of around 20 guardians, representing both individuals and groups of people, to keep their village tidy. This may be an idea to follow up if improving the village's appearance becomes a priority.

Cllr Chris Hill (CH) volunteered to remove the weeds from the traffic island at the junction of Abingdon Road and High Street.

The Clerk will compile a schedule of the other suggestions, and this will be sent to SODC in advance as requested. **Action: Clerk to provide feedback on SODC's agreed works.**

#### 10/8 Bypass Motor Bike Noise

Cllr Mike Atkinson (MA) reported that the Speedwatch arrangements cannot be applied to the problems on the A4074 because they are only relevant within a speed limit of 40mph or less. In addition to making contact with neighbouring parish councils that have similar problems to Dorchester, MA has made a direct approach to the Community Speedwatch Co-Ordinator at Thames Valley Police and is hopeful that there will be further progress to report in September.

### **Other workstreams**

#### 11/8 Affordable Housing

Cllr Chris Hill (CH) reported that the delay in the Allens Pit affordable housing project has potentially been removed by Hastoe Housing becoming the 'registered provider' in place of Sovereign Housing. A development manager from Hastoe has expressed an interest in making a personal presentation to Dorchester residents. It was agreed that he should be invited to attend the Village Information Evening in October.

#### 12/8 Play Area & Recreation Ground

Cllrs Charlotte Garside (CG) and Becky Waller (BW) have recently met with Rob Ballantyne who had been managing this project for the 2019/2023 Council. Following this review it has been agreed to extend the play area towards Drayton Road so a swing for use by wheelchair users can be installed. This will be available to adults and children alike. It is believed that there is no comparable facility in the area. The equipment will be lockable.

In addition to the equipment in the play area it was agreed that new fitness equipment will be positioned in the area between the tennis court and the play area fence. These proposals have been sent to the Tennis Club for comment.

The Council has applied to SODC for a grant from SODC's 'Everyone Active' Scheme to assist with the purchase of two 3/4 sized football goal posts and a decision is expected soon.

The Council is keen to follow up the initiatives in the 'Everyone Active' and 'Active Oxfordshire' projects such as walking trails including the setting of routes that are accessible for wheelchair users.

The Clerk reported that the RoSPA inspector's annual visit to the Play Area and MUGA has not yet taken place. The reports will be circulated as soon as they are received.

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#### 13/8. Neighbourhood Plan Quinquennial Review

Cllr Mark Williams (MW) confirmed that he is hoping to carry out a technical review with the assistance of SODC. Cllr Bennett said that a new edition of the South & Vale neighbourhood planning document would be issued this autumn. He suggested that MW should discuss this with the Council's officer Ricardo Rios and this was agreed.

#### 14/8 Councillor Training

The Clerk had compiled and circulated a summary of training events offered by both the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) and by the National Association also. Most of these are available online. Cllr Chris Hill said that he would like to attend a course in the New Year, but other councillors wanted confirmation about the timing and duration of the courses offered by OALC. **The Clerk will circulate this information within the next few days.**

#### 15/8 Accounts and Audit

The Clerk reported that he had just received a visit by Kevin Rose, the Council's internal auditor, and the next AGAR would be submitted at the Council's September meeting.

The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the Clerk will be meeting on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> August to discuss internal accounting reporting, budgeting and the setting of reserves.

JT said it was his intention to provide a Finance Report to the council once he had a full understanding of the numbers,

#### 16/8 Information Meeting, Monday 16<sup>th</sup> October, Village Hall

Following discussion about how to make attendance at this event appeal to the maximum number of residents it was agreed to change the title to "What's on in Dorchester" and to have the longer opening hours of 18.00-21.00.

This is the first such meeting to be held in the village since the pandemic. It will provide the platform for all clubs, societies, charities and groups to share their activities and for all residents to learn about what is happening in the village as well as explore the opportunities to get involved with one of the groups. A number of suggestions for additional invitees were provided to the Clerk. All groups are very welcome, and bookings will be handled by the Clerk.

#### 17/8 Census Data

The Clerk and councillors will continue to try and find village information from earlier census reports.

#### 18/8 Other workstream Updates

Oxfordshire County Council have indicated that they will be moving forward with further consultation on 20 mph in the centre of the village although currently there is no clear implementation timetable. Cllr Mike Corran (MC) will continue to lead for the Council on these projects.

#### 19/8 Planning Applications:

a. P23/S2302/HH 97 Abingdon Road; Front porch extension. Carport extension. Roof canopy extension. Single storey rear extension. The house is on a large plot and there have been no comments from immediate neighbours.

It was agreed that no comment is required.

b. P23/S2263/HH and P23/S2264/LB 2 Queen Street; Replacement summerhouse.

The property is a Listed Building in the conservation area. SODC's Conservation Officer comments that there are no heritage objections and recommend approval with conditions. Archaeological monitoring and recording action (watching brief) has been requested.

It was agreed that no comment is required.

c. P23/S2280/LB 2 Queen Street; Revamped paintwork

The property is a Listed Building in the conservation area. SODC's Conservation Officer recommends approval and is supportive of the project.

It was agreed that no comment is required.

#### 20/8 Finance: Bank Balances & Payments

NatWest Reserve Account 9 <sup>th</sup> August 2023	£48,457.33
NatWest Current Account 9 <sup>th</sup> August 2023	<u>£22,470.67</u>
	£70,928.00

It was proposed by Cllr Becky Waller that the following payments should be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Chris Hill and approved unanimously.

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental)	116.76
The Landscape Group Oxford (July grass and hedges)	2,187.66
Shield Maintenance (General waste bin services)	181.99
Shield Maintenance (Dog bin services)	108.79
Shield Maintenance (Traffic cones)	113.76
Going Forward Buses (Dorchester Flyer July)	50.00
JRB Enterprises (dog waste bags)	255.84
Dorchester Village Hall (Telephone and Broadband costs)	574.00
Agey Bosse (Pavilion electrics)	455.00
SSE Pavilion April – July	311,71
IAC Audit & Consultancy (Internal Audit charge)	354,00
Les Tyler (Cemetery work)	100.00
Data Protection Fee renewal (Via GR)	40.00
Fasthosts .gov.uk domain registration (via GR)	130.60
G Russell (salary)	<u>905.89</u>
Total	£5886.00

#### 21/8 New Domain Name

The Council welcomed the news that the Council has successfully registered the name [www.dorchesteronthames-pc.gov.uk](http://www.dorchesteronthames-pc.gov.uk)

#### 22/8 Council Meeting Dates and Venues

After recent discussion the only practical option is to hold meetings in the back room of the Village Hall on either the second Wednesday of the month as per recent practice when Tango dancing takes place in the main room or on the first Tuesday of the month when Yoga takes place in the main room. Cllr Bennett confirmed that changing the date would be acceptable.

It was agreed that a final decision will be made at the September meeting when MC will be present.

23/8 Bridge End Public Lavatory building repairs

Cllr Chris Hill confirmed that he has inspected the damaged area and the repair has been done/

24/8 Junior Council

Cllr Mike Atkinson confirmed that this project is a work in progress.

24/8 Closure of Abingdon Road

The Council has been informed that through traffic will not be able to use Abingdon Road for the period 14<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> August while sewer connection work is carried out. The alternative route for vehicles will be marked.

24/8 Football Pitch

Dorchester Football Club has been awarded a grant from the Football Foundation to improve the football pitch on the Recreation Ground. The pitch was ranked as poor in an assessment that was carried out and gets very muddy in the winter. With the benefit of the grant and using some of its own money, the Football Club intends to spend about £3,200 on employing a contractor to carry out aerating, weed killing, seeding and fertilising of the pitch each year, for the next four years.

These works will benefit both the Football and Cricket clubs, as well as casual users of the Recreation Ground, although there will be times when people are asked to keep off the pitch while a treatment is in progress.

The Parish Council has been asked to continue to control the rabbits that dig holes in the Recreation ground, which are a hazard to all users.

25/8 Bishop's Court Farm

Cllr Becky Waller (BW) reported that 5km of hedges are to be planted on Bishop's Court Farm this year especially in the area from Wittenham Lane and around the Dyke Hills while it is planned to plant 100 willow trees along the River Thames. The work will involve voluntary work including from children at the village school.

Meeting closed at 9.30 p.m.