

Dorchester Parish Council

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the back room of the Village Hall on Wednesday 6th September 2023 commencing at 7.30 p.m. The Chairman, Cllr Mike Corran presided with Cllrs Mike Atkinson (MA); Jon Brydges (JB); Chris Hill (CH); John Taylor (JT), Vice-Chairman; Becky Waller (BW); and Mark Williams (MW) present with the Clerk, Geoff Russell (GR), in attendance. Also present for part of the meeting were County and District Cllr Robin Bennett and three residents.

Standing Items

1/9. Chairman's opening remarks

The Chairman, Cllr Mike Corran, thanked all members of the Council for the work that had been done on several projects since the previous meeting.

2/9 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were accepted from Cllr Charlotte Garside (CG) who was on holiday.

3/9 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.

4/9.. Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held 9th August 2023

The Minutes as circulated were approved and signed by the Chairman, Cllr Mike Corran, as a true and accurate record.

5/9 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 October edition of Dorchester News and published on the village website.

The Clerk will be added to the distribution list for information relating to the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme. Information about Cllr Bennett's Biodiversity Grant has been passed on to specialist village groups.

BW said that 22 volunteers had worked on clearing Dorchester Bridge. The District Council's Tidy Team's annual visit is expected for three days later this month and is expected to concentrate on removing weeds from gutters and on cobbles and, if they have time, around the by-pass bus stops.

Priority Items

6/9 Dorchester in 2030 and beyond

Arrangements have been made for the distribution of the survey and the return of completed paper copies via The Co-Op. Plans for publicity are in place to maximise village participation in the survey and **MC asked all Councillors to assist with this activity**. In addition to the paper copies, the survey can be accessed online. A full-page advertisement is planned for Dorchester News.

The survey ends on 31st October and the analysis of the returns is expected to take Communityfirst Oxfordshire (CFO) until the end of the year. MC confirmed that an application has been made to SODC which will hopefully produce a grant of £800 towards the costs of this project.

7/9 What's On in Dorchester Event, 16th October

The Clerk reported that most village groups have already confirmed their attendance with the full list being kept up to date on Windows 'Teams'. **MA is assisting with the**

organisation of the evening and JB has been asked to develop publicity materials including an advertisement in Dorchester News.

8/9 Landscape Evidence Survey

Details of access to the Landscape Conservation Hub have been circulated to Councillors and to village residents using Facebook. The Council encourages individuals to take part in the consultation which will close at the end of September.

Other workstreams

9/9 Affordable Housing Allens Pit

CH said that Eddie Bacon of Hastoe Housing will be invited to attend the Village Information Evening in October. For the landowners Jason Winterbourne, having been set a new budget, is in talks with the potential builder.

10/9 Play Area & Recreation Ground

The signs explaining access to the MUGA have now been prominently displayed. SODC has approved the grant of £1,000 under the 'Everyone Active 2023-24' programme towards the purchase of two 3/4 size football goals which will be installed on the Recreation Ground at the beginning of October.

The RoSPA inspector's annual visit to the Play Area and MUGA has still not taken place but is expected within the next two weeks.

The Clerk will share some information about the play area with a village resident who has specialist knowledge of this matter. It is hoped that it will be possible to find a small group of local residents who will take on the role of play area inspectors. Training is available if required.

11/9 Councillor Training

Information about on-line courses is now being circulated regularly. Advance bookings should be made through the Clerk.

12/9 AGAR for approval

Carried forward to October meeting.

13/9 Bypass Motor Bike Noise

A joint meeting of local council representatives, including at least one person from Dorchester PC, and the police will be held soon. There have been reports about police activity to solve this problem including drone observations of the A4074. MA commented that some riders are setting up their bikes to maximise the noise which they produce. This in itself is illegal.

14/9 20 mph limit introduction

MC has been in contact with OCC about the boundaries of the new speed limit area. These have not yet been agreed. Some residents would like to have Dorchester Bridge included within the area although there is concern about the signs that will need to be displayed on the bridge given that it is a Listed Building.

15/9 EV Charging points

MC said that he has confirmed to the County Council that Dorchester Parish Council is interested in learning more about OCC's EV Microhubs Scheme.

16/9 New PC IT System and Website

In advance of this meeting JB had invited Councillors to look at the new Parish Council website at www.dorchesteronthames-pc.gov.uk and the feedback was very

positive. JB encouraged everyone to spread awareness of the site and the newsletter which would provide a monthly report about village life, residents' achievements and Parish Council initiatives, and provide a platform for opinions.

This leaves the established website www.dorchesteronthames.co.uk with the opportunity to concentrate on non-Parish Council news and general village matters. JB said that in the very near future the Council must establish the governance that would apply to the websites – something that Dorchester Abbey is also considering at the moment. JB suggested that the subject is discussed at the October meeting.

17/9 Clerk's job description and contract of employment

The Council is using the services of an HR Consultant who has been recommended by OALC. Chris Moses of Personnel Advice and Solutions Ltd has almost completed his appraisal which will inform the job description for the new parish clerk. It was agreed that a working group comprising MC, JT and MW would manage the process with all decisions being confirmed by the Council. It was hoped advertising the vacancy could commence soon after the Council's October meeting. GR has agreed to assist this group.

18/9 PC Meetings and timings

After a discussion which considered other options both as to a different day of the week and alternative locations, it was agreed that for the time being the Parish Council monthly meeting should continue to be held on the second Wednesday of the month in the back room of the Village Hall.

19/9 Planning Applications:

P23/S2799/FU Queenford Farm Storage Building

Demolishing a very large woodchip containment area built by Jenks Oxford with concrete posts and infill on 3 sides and replacing it with a unit to be used to store machinery by a local agricultural contractor.

It was agreed to support this Application.

P23/S1908/HH, 2 Queen Street Dorchester-on-Thames

Reduce the height of the proposed garage, omit a side dormer window and to reduce the footprint by bringing the shower room inside the main garage block.

It was agreed that the Council would leave this matter to the Conservation Officer.

20/9 Finance: Bank Balances & Payments

NatWest Reserve Account 6 th September 2023	£32,515.01
NatWest Current Account 9 th August 2023	£16,912.29
Unity Trust Bank 31 st August 2023	<u>374.00</u>
	£49,801,30

It was proposed by MA and seconded by CH that the following payments be approved:

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental)	116.76
The Landscape Group Oxford (August grass/ some footpaths and Meadside bus stop)	1,599,66
Venners Arboriculture (site visit 30 th August)	95.00
Tom Cottrell Landscapes (Drayton Road trees as quoted)	1,800.00
Face North Forestry (Closed churchyard damaged yew tree)	90.00
Shield Maintenance (General waste bin services)	181.99
Shield Maintenance (Dog bin services)	108.79
Going Forward Buses (Dorchester Flyer August)	50.00
Castle Water (Recreation Ground & Pavilion)	9.46

Data Systems Management LLP website hosting and management	629,99
Moore East Midlands (Audit charge)	96.00
CPRE annual membership fee	60.00
Les Tyler (Cemetery work)	100.00
Wix.COM (via GR) new website hosting	144.00
G Russell (salary)	905.89
Berry Clean – bus stop cleaning	<u>70.00</u>
Total	£6,057.54

21/9 Future Financial Reporting and Management

Following a meeting with Mike Corran and John Taylor on 25th August **the Clerk is making some changes to the ways in which financial information is presented to the Council** and this will be reflected in the accounts for the six months to 30th September 2023. The objective is to give councillors more details than they see in the accounts as currently presented.

Another new feature will be to report on the Council's cash position with a break down showing forward commitments separately from general reserves.

The data will thereafter be updated quarterly and include comparisons between budgeted performance and actual performance.

It has also been agreed that thoughts about receipts and payments in 2024/25 should begin in October. The Council must set the Precept for the next financial year no later than at its meeting in January.

Any Other Urgent Matters

22/9 Contractors Performances ((Trees/Grounds/Pest Control/ Dog Bins etc)

The Clerk will collect the contracts, terms and conditions, and insurance status for each of the Council's contractors. With this data in place a representative from the Council can be asked to check that the contractor's performance is in line with its contractual obligations, which should be a key consideration before payment of invoices is approved.

23/9 Recreation & Play Area: other matters.

- i. The very popular cradle swing is reported to be damaged and an inspection will be carried out as soon as possible.
- ii. Installation of the new Exercise Equipment is expected in early October.
- iii. The Football pitch is suffering from increasing activity by rabbits. **This will be reported to the Council's contractor Denis Froud.**
- iv. Dorchester Cricket Team has been promoted to its highest place in the Cherwell League for many years. **The Chairman will send the Council's congratulations to the team captain.** It is felt that this promotion makes the need for pavilion improvements even more urgent. Fund-raising plans include the idea of a car boot sale on the Recreation Ground next Spring, and this was approved.
- v. **The Clerk will contact Gigaclear to learn the status of the proposal for a hi-speed IT connection to the Pavilion.**

24/9 Governance

BW raised concern that governance needed to be considered, after six months of the new council. Draft documents have been prepared for discussion.

25/9 Highways General

The Clerk confirmed that he has sent messages to the County Council about by-pass barrier repair and the safety of junction where Abingdon Road meets Oxford Road

and High Street. He has been assured that repairs to broken granite setts in the High Street on schedule for FixMyStreet attention.

26/9 Concerns about Public safety near the by-pass bus stops

The Council has received a letter from a young female resident expressing her anxiety about walking to and from these bus stops. The Council greatly regrets this situation and will try to work with all interested parties to rectify the situation.

27/9 Dorchester News

MC said that he would be delighted to hear from any councillor who would like to write the Parish Council column in Dorchester News on an occasional basis.

Meeting closed at 9.35 p.m.