

## Dorchester Parish Council

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the back room of the Village Hall on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 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), John Taylor (Vice-Chairman) (JT) 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 eleven residents.

### 1/7. Chairman's opening remarks

The Chairman commented upon the new format of the Minutes of the previous month's meeting which had reported **Agreed Actions** in bold type along with the initials of the person(s) who had been made responsible for those actions, From this evening's meeting the Council's **Decisions** would be recorded in a similar way.

### 2/7. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were accepted from Cllr Becky Waller (BW) who had a prior commitment.

### 3/7 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; and Cllr Charlotte Garside on any matter concerning Bishops Court Farm where she is employed.

### 4/7 Public Participation

A resident requested that Councillors should be aware that there are several places in the village where the free mobility of wheelchair users is compromised. This is a problem that could be overcome in many places because it is frequently caused by pavements and paths being narrowed, for example by parked cars and plant growth being allowed to overhang public areas. A greater awareness of the need to avoid such actions would reduce the problem.

### 5/7. Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023

After the words 'and pavilion' were added at the end of the first paragraph of the section headed **Budget Briefing** in Minute 8/7, it was agreed that the final version of the Minutes as circulated were a true and correct record and the Chairman was authorised to sign the written copy. **The Clerk confirmed that it is his intention to meet the Council's request that he should produce draft minutes no later than seven days after a meeting.**

### 6/7. Matters arising not covered by the Agenda

- i. **Action carried forward: Clerk to compile and circulate a summary of the training events- both on-line and in person - that have been sent to councillors over the previous weeks. Action: Clerk to propose a budget to cover the cost of taking advantage of these opportunities for approval at the next meeting.**
- ii. The Chairman confirmed that he has been in contact with Adrian Brooks about His funding request for the **Henge Project** in 2023/24 and has explained that the Council wishes to have more information about the benefits that come to Dorchester.
- iii. The Clerk confirmed that on behalf of the Parish Council he has sent a greetings card to Phil and Sally Greenaway to convey the Council's gratitude for their outstanding service over many years in looking after the Village **War Memorial**.

The Council was pleased to note that Stu and Hayley Poole have taken over these duties on a voluntary basis.

#### 7/7 County and District Council Reports

Reports from Cllr Robin Bennett have been received for both the County and District Councils. Since there will be no edition of Dorchester News until the end of August, he mentioned some of the main topics. The new District Council office building in Didcot is moving towards the planning application stage, The project is part of the regeneration of the area close to the station. The District Council is in the early stages of developing an Affordable Housing joint venture with the Government and Cllr Bennett is involved. Another planning development involves helping to improve the rural economy through the government's Rural England Prosperity Fund. More information is available online. Details of the Planning Surgeries for town and parish councils are also included in the report.

Discussion about County Council business was dominated by the recent tragic death of a Dorchester resident in a collision close to the junction of Henley Road and the A4074. The subsequent diversion of all by-pass traffic through Dorchester had resulted in damage to a residence in the narrowest part of the High Street. The Council discussed several aspects of road safety including ways in which road layouts could be improved and whether there is an opportunity to arrange an alternative routing for diverted traffic so that Dorchester High Street is only used in one direction. **Action: The Clerk will raise these matters with County Council Highways officers and the Police.**

#### 8/7. Priority Items

##### **Play Area & Recreation Ground**

In the absence of Cllr Becky Waller, Cllr John Taylor reported that good progress is being made with the company Sovereign Play and its team led by Richard Pennington. The range of equipment now includes a special swing for wheelchair users in a space created by extending the play area. **Decision: The council supported the recommendation from Councillor Becky Waller that, in line with the grant proposals, the plan is to improve the facilities for all segments of the community (Under 12s / teenagers / adults / those with disabilities) and this included spending c£16k on the disabled adult swing to show we are an inclusive village recognising local villager needs, Footsteps and the John Masefield home.** It was noted that the annual play area and MUGA inspection are due to be carried out by the RoSPA inspector in July. Following the retirement of the Village Handyman in February regular play area inspections by a Parish Council representative have not been taking place. Arrangements for weekly inspections should be re-instated as soon as possible. A check list is available. **This matter should be discussed again at the August meeting Action the Clerk.**

Cllr Taylor proposed that the Council should go ahead with the purchase of a pair of football goal net which have been costed at £882 plus VAT. **Decision: It was agreed to go ahead with this purchase. The Clerk will be the main contact between the Council and Sportsafe, the supplier.**

The wording for the notice that will be shown on the new display board by the gate of the permanently open MUGA needs to be agreed. **Action: the Clerk will try to get this agreed before the August Council meeting.**

##### **Annual Parish Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

The Chairman, Cllr Mike Corran summarised the report which he had circulated to all councillors on 30<sup>th</sup> June in which he had listed the written comments which had been handed in by the approximately 75 residents who had attended the Meeting. He told the Council that together with Cllr John Taylor and the Clerk he would be discussing

this feedback with Lisa Stead of CommunityFirstOxfordshire (CFO) at an online meeting on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> July. This would concentrate upon developing ways of communicating with all village residents and getting their reactions to the ideas that had been put forward at the Parish Meeting, in the hope that as a result of this process a 'community led plan' for Dorchester in 2030 and beyond could be developed. As a result of this meeting Lisa will be able to produce an estimate of the costs that will be incurred by involving CFO in this development.

Cllr Mike Atkinson expressed a particular interest in communicating with the residents who had not attended the Parish Meeting particular younger members of the community whose family commitments made it difficult for them to attend an evening meeting or whose natural inclination would be against attending such a meeting and need to be involved in a different way.

The Council noted that CFO could also assist with the scheduled 'refresh' of the Village's Neighbourhood Development Plan. There has already been liaison with the District Council's Planning team and outside financial support is available. Cllr Mark Williams said that, as before, it is essential that the exercise is run by a steering committee which involves residents who are not councillors. Previous contributors will be given the opportunity to be involved again, along with recently arrived residents who are thought to have a special interest in these matters. Cllr John Taylor said that he would like to be involved in this integrated process. It was **Decided that Cllrs Chris Hill and Mark Williams should both continue to play a leading part in this exercise.** Cllr Hill said that he would like river water quality to be included.

A resident asked about the status of the introduction of a 20mph speed limit in the village. Cllr Corran said that there is unlikely to be any progress on this until next year. The 20 mph limit is unlikely to extend to Abingdon and Henley Roads, the previous council had discussed working with OCC to install speed signs, part funded by the PC, but it is currently unclear whether OCC would still support this given the focus on 20pmh and this is not a matter which has been discussed by the Council since the May election.

#### **Footpaths & Hedgerows**

Cllr Mark Williams reported that he has had contact with Andrew Clements of 'Green Dots' and the team from Wallingford Green Gym, who have been carrying out grounds maintenance work in Dorchester for several years, as well as with The Landscape Group Oxford, the Council's main contractors. The result is a comprehensive mapping and listing of sites throughout the village with the maintenance tasks specified and responsible people named. This has resulted in such things as 'No-mow' areas being recorded and will assist in the setting of a budget for the Green Dots. This is an ongoing process with further data required. **Action Cllr Mark Williams and Clerk**

Cllr Jon Brydges said that this is also a subject of interest for the new Village website. A resident drew the Council's attention to the state of the hedge that borders the route between the Allotments and Samian Way. It was thought that in previous years the cutting of this hedge has been arranged through Ed Metcalfe and the Allotments Society. **Action: further enquiries to be made by Cllr Mark Williams.**

#### **Dorchester By-pass Motorbike Noise**

The Council had received a paper written by Cllr Becky Waller in which she had said that the most effective way of getting the Authorities to take action is to collect evidence which demonstrates the problems that are being experienced as a result of the high speeds and extremely loud noise which come as a result of the irresponsible behaviour of a few people. It is thought that within the village there are people who would be willing to carry out these surveys given the appropriate equipment. The council agreed to seek to continue to work with other impacted councils and to also be sensitive to the interests of H-Café and the majority of law abiding motorbike users.

**Action: Cllr Mike Atkinson will make further enquiries while the Clerk will contact neighbouring parish councils to see what actions they may be willing to support**

## **9/7. Other Workstreams**

### **Affordable Housing**

Cllr Chris Hill reported that it appears that the problems which have prevented development at Allens Pit seem to be resolved. The District Council has announced that it wishes to be a housing provider, but it has also agreed to co-operate with the Hastoe Group from Essex. Hastoe is no longer relying on receiving documents from Sovereign. It is understood that ownership of the properties will remain with the housing association so they will be available for future occupation by different families.

Cllr John Taylor confirmed that in a wider context he is taking an interest in 'community-led housing'. **Action: The Clerk was asked to provide an account of the history of developments at Belcher Court.**

The offer from Yolandi Evans of LAPD Architects to attend a Parish Council meeting to share the pre-application work that has been carried out for the site along Abingdon Road which belongs to Bishops Court Farm remains open.

### **Digital strategy**

Cllr Jon Brydges confirmed that an application has been made to register a new domain name ending: .gov.uk and that the Parish Council now has a licence for Microsoft Office 365 with 9 users, each one of whom would be able to have a parish council hosted email address. He offered to provide training in the use of this software.

The Clerk confirmed that advice on setting up the new governance which would inform the Council's Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy is available through Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) and produced a template document for further discussion that had been sourced from the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC),

### **Accounts and Audit**

The Clerk reported that he has arranged for Kevin Rose ACMA, who has been the Council's Internal Auditor since 2011, to review the AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return) on 25<sup>th</sup> July. The AGAR together with the Internal Auditor's report will be presented for signature by the Chairman and Clerk (as Responsible Financial Officer) at the Council meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> August.

The Council will be reviewing the purposes for which it is holding reserves over the next few months, but the Clerk pointed out that there is CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money that needs to be spent in the current year amounting to £3,884. Additional CIL receipts which are confirmed to date total £11,761.

The Clerk drew the Council's attention to the range of grants that are available through the District Council including the Everyone Active grant scheme which may assist with the purchase of the football goal nets on the Recreation Ground.

**Councillor John Taylor suggested that the Council should agree an annual budget with allocation for key budget lines in order that the council can review and approve allocated budgets to guide decision making on funding requests.**

**Action: Clerk.**

### **Village Information Meeting**

After reviewing the available options, it was **Decided that the Meeting will take place on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> October. Action: The Clerk will send details to all the prospective exhibitors and arrange publicity.**

## **10/7. Planning Applications:**

P23/S2143/LB Bridge End House High Street OX10 7JT  
 Variation of condition 2 (Approved drawings) on application reference number  
 P20/S1754/LB (Proposed extension and alterations to include re-cladding of existing  
 dwelling) - to convert rear storeroom to provide a tea point to the bedroom suite  
 located in the garage extension and two windows added to the south elevation.  
 P23/S1908/HH & P23/S1909/LB 2 Queen Street OX10 7HR  
 Remodelling works to garage block.  
 The Council agreed that it had no comments to make on these Applications.

**11/7. Finance: Bank Balances & Payments**

NatWest Reserve Account 12 <sup>th</sup> July 2023	£48,402.89
NatWest Current Account 12 <sup>th</sup> July 2023	<u>£28,536.17</u>
	£76,939.06

It was proposed by Cllr Chris Hill that the following payments should be approved.  
 This was seconded by Cllr Jon Brydges and unanimously agreed.

Q Transport (Oxford) Ltd (Container rental)	116.76
Southern Electric (Pavilion)	422.12
The Landscape Group Oxford (June grass cutting)	1,149.66
Shield Maintenance (General waste bin services)	181.99
Shield Maintenance (Dog bin services)	108.79
Shield Maintenance (Pressure washing of Play Area)	437.69
M&M Skip Hire (Allotments)	318.00
Shaw & Sons (Cemetery Grant Book)	153.60
Behind Closed Doors (emergency repair to Pavilion shutter)	396.00
Dorchester Abbey (Hire charge for Annual Parish Meeting)	54.00
Denis Froud Pest Control (6 months April to October)	1,610.00
RES Systems Limited (Pavilion Fire Extinguisher)	57.54
Trevor Greenaway (some maintenance tasks)	60.00
Microsoft Office 365 Licence	635.04
G Russell sundry purchases	36.43
G Russell (salary)	<u>905.89</u>
Total	6,643.51

**Action carried forward: The Clerk said that he will arrange for Cllr Mike Corran to be added to the list of approved NatWest signatories and notify the Bank about former councillors whose names should be removed.**

**12/7. Other Urgent Matters**

**a. Carried forward from June**

i. Cllr Mike Atkinson said that he will work on plans to improve communication between the Parish Council and teenaged residents which may possibly result in a proposal for a 'Junior Council'. This will include making contact with youth groups in surrounding villages especially Berinsfield.

ii. The Chairman will continue to review the Council's existing Governance documents including Standing Orders.

**b. Updated and New Items**

i. Following the survey of all councillors regarding their views on council meeting locations, frequency and timing, **the Chairman will circulate a summary of all the opinions that have been expressed with his suggestions for further action.**

ii. Cllr John Brydges reported that staff from the Co-Op branch in the High Street have recently been tidying up the area outside the shop and that he would carry out the repairs that are needed to the bench that commemorates the service of former Parish Council Chairman Mike Smith. The Council expressed its appreciation.

iii. The quote received from Jenks Oxford to fell three dead or dying sycamore trees along the boundary of the Recreation Ground with Oxford Road is well in excess of £1,000. In accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations **the Clerk will obtain two additional quotations for this work.**

iv. Some repairs are required to the fabric of the public lavatories in Bridge End and this has been reported to the District Council. **Cllr Chris Hill will monitor the situation to ensure that the work is done.**

v. The Oxfordshire Museums Service Curator of Archaeology has recently informed the Council about a 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century silver bodkin which was found in the parish of Dorchester. The bodkin is to be acquired by The Abbey Museum. There is no requirement for the Parish Council to make a financial contribution.

vi The Clerk confirmed that the final drone shots that are required for the new editions of the Orientation Boards will be taken in the near future, and he is aiming for publication by the end of August.

vii The registration of The Fleur de Lys as an Asset of Community Value is due for its 5-year review. Before the Council expresses its opinion as to whether renewal of this registration should be pursued **the Chairman will discuss the matter with the new owner. Mr Keith Ives.**

viii. The District Council Waste Team has said that Dorchester is scheduled for its annual visit from 21 – 25 September when the streets crews will litter pick, sweep and de-weed footpaths and roads. **Before the next meeting councillors are invited to contact the Clerk with their suggestions of locations which should receive this special attention.**

ix. Councillors were asked to note that CFO will be holding a Conference at Chesterton Village Hall on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September from 10.00 until 14.00 to which councillors would be welcome to attend.

Meeting closed at 9.44 p.m.