

LITTON CHENEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 8th November 2016 at Litton and Thorner's Community Hall Litton Cheney

Present: W. Orchard (Chairman), Mrs K. Brooks, A. King, Dr H. Lantos, Mrs A. Spurrier and Clerk J. Firrell. Also in attendance Cllr R. Coatsworth (DCC), Cllr J. Russell (WDDC), R. Jones (Chairman of Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group), J. Stone (Beyond Events) and two local residents – Mrs B. Whillock, J. Williams.

1. **Apologies:** I. Homer, S. Kourik.

2. **Declarations of Interest:** None.

3. **Democratic Time:** The Chairman invited those attending that if they had any point they wished to raise now was the time to do so provided they stayed within a three minute time frame. James Stone of Beyond Events introduced himself to the Council as the organiser of cycle and running events in the area, several of which would involve Litton Cheney. Four events were planned for 2017 including a triathlon in June. Some discussion ensued which involved the two attending councillors as to who was kept informed of these events and the impact of postering and marking of roads. The Chairman thanked Mr Stone for making the effort to make himself known to the Parish Council. Mr Stone passed his business card to the Clerk and left the meeting. J. Williams raised the subject of the displaced grit bin in School Lane and the Chairman was able to respond that he had discussed the matter with Steven Randall who owned the adjacent field and had moved it to gain better access. As soon as the work in the field was completed the bin would be replaced. Mr Williams asked what the updated situation was with the Triangle tree. The Clerk indicated that the WDDC Arboricultural Team had inspected the tree and indicated that it was well past its best and ideally should be replaced. The necessary planning procedure to replace the tree was now underway involving the council and the Litton Cheney Social Committee who would be purchasing a new tree. Mr Williams said he believed there was more to be done regarding transparency.

4. **Neighbourhood Plan:** The Chairman brought this agenda item forward to enable the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to offer up his progress report and seek approval of the PC for the draft Terms of Reference and designated NP area without having to sit through several other possibly lengthy agenda items. The Steering Group Chairman, Richard Jones, stated that the group had already met twice since September. The group's primary purpose at this point was to identify whether there was a need for Litton Cheney to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. Once that exercise had been completed a recommendation would be made to the Parish Council to either go ahead with a plan, or stand down the committee if it was thought sufficient protection existed that would not leave Litton Cheney exposed to unwanted development. Several working groups had been created within the SG, one to develop a dialogue with WDDC, another to identify accurate demographics within the village and one to develop appropriate questions that would be incorporated within a village survey/questionnaire.

The group would report to the Parish Council but would hold public gatherings at least every six months, provide information via the village website and leaflet drops, and make

itself generally accessible to local residents ensuring a balance was maintained between vocal and silent groups ensuring all were heard within the village. It was stressed that those with personal or private agendas would not be entertained. It had been decided that the Lodgers Neighbourhood Plan would be used as a template and guide up to the point Litton Cheney decided which way it would go.

It was proposed by A. King, seconded by Mrs K. Brooks and carried unanimously that the Terms of Reference as presented to the Parish Council be approved. It was further proposed by Dr H. Lantos, seconded by A. King and carried unanimously that the Parish Boundary be designated as the Neighbourhood Plan area for the purposes of discussions with WDDC and other involved parties. The Chairman thanked Mr Jones for his detailed report and looked forward to hearing more in due course At this point Mr Jones left the meeting.

5. Approval of the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 13th September 2016: It was proposed by Mrs A. Spurrier, seconded by A. King and carried unanimously that the Minutes accurately reflected the meeting.

6. Matters Arising (not covered at this meeting): Reshaping your Councils – A collective response had been submitted by the Parish Council, as well as several individual submissions. The council had sided with option 2b which proposed that the two unitary councils would be made up of – Council 1: Bournemouth, Poole & Christchurch, Council 2: West Dorset, East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck, Weymouth & Portland. Both councils would be supported by Dorset County Council. There was much more to come on this and more meetings would be held by the principal authorities in 2017.

7. DCC/WDDC Overview: The Chairman invited Councillor Ron Coatsworth and Councillor John Russell to give their overview of happenings at DCC and WDDC. The discussion tended to home in on issues surrounding the “reshaping your councils”. Cllr Russell felt there was a need to speed things along and said he wouldn't be surprised if the “reshaping” took place in 2018. He felt that DCC would have less involvement in the future as services were devolved down the line and indeed less funding was passed on. Cllr Coatsworth was not in total agreement with this scenario but felt overall that “reshaping” was a step in the right direction but much would depend ultimately on adequate funding from central government, and the willingness of small councils to take on additional responsibility with little extra funding.

8. Finance Report: The Clerk/RFO offered up the following – Funds as of 7th November stood at £7203.66. Income since Sept - £1824.61, made up of Interest for Oct - £0.11p, Precept £1800.00, Local Govt Grant £24.50. Expenditure since Sept - £387.40, made up of Land Registry Fee £40.00, Lengthsman £120.00, Clerk £173.00, Leaflet Printing £4.40 and BV Scouts £50.00. Invoices requiring approval for payment – Lengthsman (Sept & Oct) £120.00, R. Randall (Hedge trimming and ditch clearing) £396.00 (incl Vat), LATCH (Hire of Hall for NP SG) £16.00. Proposed by Mrs K. Brooks, seconded by Mrs A. Spurrier and carried unanimously that the invoices be approved for payment.

St Mary's PCC had requested financial assistance towards the upkeep of the churchyard. The PCC had incurred additional expense this year due to the need to replace the steel container that securely houses the ride-on mower and maintenance equipment. Last year the PC contributed £500.00. After some discussion it was proposed by Mrs A. Spurrier, seconded by Dr H. Lantos and carried unanimously that financial assistance of £500.00 be given to the PCC. The Chairman wished it to be made known to the PCC and others that future contributions may not be as generous due to financial constraints placed on the PC.

Notwithstanding, it would be the PC's intent to give support to village organisations such as St Mary's first and foremost.

As mentioned in the minutes relating to September's meeting, BDO, the external auditor, had now completed the audit for 2015/16 and had signed off the PC's accounts, noting that for the future that the annual review of risk assessments be both carried out and minuted in the fiscal year it related to. Although the review was carried out in late March 2016 (after the PC's March meeting), it was not minuted until May 2016. The Parish Council accepted the observation. Due to the low financial turnover there was no charge levied for the external audit.

Budget Projections – It was intended to debate this matter more fully at the January meeting so as to determine the amount of the village precept for 2017/18. To this end draft projections would be made available to councillors and placed on the village website for public viewing. The Chairman had been made aware that the Clerk/RFO (J. Firrell) intended after eight years' service to stand down at the Parish Council Annual Meeting in May 2017. This in itself would mean a considerable increase in the salary paid to the new incumbent. Presently, at the present clerk's insistence, the salary was maintained at the 2008 level (£692.00) when he was first appointed. Since then the national salary level had moved up (but not paid) to £1004.29p but this was based on the original set hours for the Clerk who has since taken on the task of Responsible Finance Officer. Taking account of other local parish councils of a similar size such as Puncknowle/Swyre/West Bexington, Shipton Gorge and Lodors where the clerk's salary ranges from £1686 to £4000, this in itself will justify a need to increase the precept considerably.

For information, local precepts are currently - £6506 (Shipton Gorge), £7842 (Puncknowle/Swyre/WB), £8094 (Lodors) and £3600 (Litton Cheney). It was felt that there would be a need to increase the precept for 2017/18 significantly, given that it had for various reasons been kept at an artificially low level for several years. Another factor was the expectancy that local authorities would devolve services down the line giving the opportunity for parish councils to carry out jobs themselves with either voluntary labour, outside contractors or council services. A difficult financial path lay ahead for all councils.

The Clerk/RFO informed the Parish Council that J. Williams had exercised his democratic right to view the council's audited accounts and this he had done on 18th October.

9. Councillors Portfolios: Highways/Transport (Chairman – W. Orchard); The subject evolved mainly around potholes and expected road closures, and issues were being progressed as necessary. A further Travel Plan meeting would be held involving Long Bredy PC, Ashley Chase Estates and Dorset Highways towards the end of November when the impact of the new chilled storage unit at ACE would be discussed.

Playground/Playing Field/Allotments (A. King); Further progress had been made on the playground project. A survey involving Thorner's school had been carried out asking questions involving use of the playground if it was upgraded. Of the 59 surveys sent out, 23 were returned with a hefty 95% indicating they would definitely use the playground when completed. Estimates had been sought from three fencing contractors, the idea being to encircle the play area to prevent dogs encroaching, and to further identify what indeed was the playground area. Two estimates had so far been submitted – Brights £4400 & Milne £2400. It was felt that both estimates would provide adequate fencing but more work was required and the working group would hold further meetings to decide the optimum monetary amount required to provide an acceptable playground layout, and therefore what fund-raising was required, and this would be submitted in time for January's

meeting. The hedge between the playing field and allotments would be trimmed rather than layered.

Superfast Broadband/Mobile Phone Matters (Dr H. Lantos); Not much to add regarding SFB although the service received in terms of speed and reception appeared to vary considerably amongst those who have subscribed to it. In the absence of S. Kourik, it was noted that EE would shortly be informed of various properties in the village that might be acceptable as “relay masts”. EE had been asked to provide an image of how St Mary's church tower would look if a mini mast was installed so that the diocese could offer an opinion. The Clerk mentioned that BT had applied to WDDC to have the telephone kiosk removed and had placed a poster in the kiosk. The Clerk had contacted WDDC objecting to its removal as had been done on several occasions in the past due mainly to a lack of mobile coverage and had yet to receive a response.

Footpaths/RoW/Lengthsman (W. Orchard on behalf of S. Kourik). The outstanding issues regarding public footpaths were likely to remain unresolved for a while due to the departure of Jill Exton from DCC. The Lengthsman continued to carry out a number of jobs throughout the village. Councillors and residents were encouraged to raise jobs that they felt need attention to either S. Kourik or the Clerk.

Agricultural Liaison (Mrs A. Spurrier). No outstanding issues but there would be some possible disruption within Watery Lane on Friday 11th November when a diseased ash tree was being removed from The Old Rectory.

Risk Assessment/Transparency (Mrs K. Brooks). A further risk assessment review would be carried out prior to the end of the fiscal year in 2017. There were a few outstanding issues on transparency and it was agreed that this would be an agenda item for January's meeting so that the matter could be put to bed once and for all.

10. Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils AGM: The Clerk had attended this meeting on Saturday 5th November at County Hall. It was a well-attended event with over 50 councils represented. Apart from the routine business of an AGM, a number of resolutions were put forward by various councils which if voted through at this meeting would be passed onto the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), and possibly Central Government. Resolution 1 (Chideock PC) – That the Dept for Transport amend the relevant Act to include a mandatory maximum speed limit of 20 mph on all single track highways with no footpaths. Voted down due to disagreement on speed. Resolution 2 (Chideock PC) – That AONB's be included as a statutory consultee on planning applications in all areas that are within or adjoining an AONB. Carried. Resolution 3 (Purbeck Area Committee) – That NALC changes the legislation to ensure that the Right to Buy is removed from Rural Exception Sites. Passed unanimously. Resolution 4 (Purbeck AC) – That DAPTC requests NALC to seek legislation that requires cycling events of all types involving 10 or more cyclists to be licensed by the local authority. Passed unanimously. Resolution 5 (Purbeck AC) – That local authorities should inform parish and town councils of any national consultation in a location specific to their area when they become a consultee. Passed. Resolution 6 (Wareham St Martin PC) – To allow parish and town councils to once again become statutory consultees for any licences being specifically applied for in their areas. Passed. Resolution 7 (Blandford Forum TC) – That Town Councils to have legal powers to split the roles of Chairman of Council and Mayor of the Town. Passed.

11. Dog Control: This matter has returned to the agenda as recently a sheep was badly

mauled by a dog/dogs to the point of having to be put down. The culprit and owner were sadly not identified. Loose dogs and irresponsible owners plus dog mess generally is the bane of every council's life. What can be done? The Chairman invited Cllrs Mrs A. Spurrier, Dr H. Lantos and A. King to delve into current legislation, control mechanisms available to councils and by-laws and provide information and possible recommendations that can be discussed at the January meeting.

12. Planning Matters Pending & Outcomes: Pending – The Orchard (Tree Works), 3 Garden Close (Tree Works). Outcomes – The Old Post Office (Approved), The Court House (Approved). The Clerk indicated that changes were being made to how one makes a comment on a planning application on the Dorset for You website and there is now a need to register in the first instance before commenting. Planning procedures generally are becoming more digitally based with less hard copies circulating.

13. Correspondence: Correspondence from a local resident regarding the telephone kiosk had been dealt with under Councillors Portfolios. Dr H. Lantos noted the letter recently received by the PC from the WDDC's Local Plan Team Leader that the Local Plan was undergoing a review to ensure sufficient land supply was available for the foreseeable future. There appeared to be no plan at the moment to “develop” areas outside of the district's main towns, other than Crossways.

14. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 10th January 2017, 7.30 pm.

15. There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.25 pm.

J. Firrell
Parish Clerk.