

LITTON CHENEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Litton Cheney Parish Council held on 7:30pm on Tuesday 12 November 2024 At Litton and Thorner's Community Hall

Present: Cllr Bill Orchard (Chair), Cllr Quentin Blacke, Cllr John Firrell, Cllr Andy King, Cllr Rob Matthews, Lucy Beasley (Clerk) Debbie Hollings (Clerk designate)

Also in attendance: Dorset Councillor Sally Holland and 3 parishioners.

1. Apologies for absence

None received

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Democratic time

3 parishioners were present.

4. Approval of Minutes of Parish Council meetings held on Tuesday 10 September 2024

Proposed by Cllr Firrell, seconded by Cllr Blacke and agreed to be a true record.

5. Matters arising from the Minutes not part of this Agenda.

None.

**6. Dorset Council overview - Ward Councillor for Chesil Bank: Cllr Sally Holland
Government Budget**

As a local authority, the budget has important implications for us, our work, and the people of Dorset.

DC cautiously welcome the news of investment in local government, special educational needs provision, school buildings, roads (fixing potholes) and an extension of the Household Support Fund. We now need to wait for the detail of what this means for us in Dorset which we expect will come in late December. DCs financial position is extremely challenging, and it is likely we will still need to make difficult decisions through our budget setting process for next financial year if we are to achieve a balanced budget. The full details of the autumn budget and the impact on our financial position will be understood when the government announces the Local Government Settlement in late December.

The draft Council Plan for 2024-2029 has been published

The Council Plan sets out our vision and priorities for the next 5 years. It is the strategic business plan for the council outlining out the outcomes that all directorate and service strategies/plans will contribute to. The content has been created over several months by an internal team. They have made sure that input from members, partners, and colleagues from across the council plus feedback from our communities via the Big Conversation engagement activity, is represented.

PCs have been sent information, and there is more detail in the online draft Council Plan documents.

Priorities

- Provide high quality housing
- Grow our economy
- Communities for all
- Respond to the climate and nature crisis
- Key elements of the draft plan are a new vision (see below) and the above 4 new priorities.
- A New Vision
- Working together to create a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable Dorset for current and future generations.

The next step for the plan is consideration at the Joint Overview committee on 29 October. It will go for final approval at the full Council meeting on 5 December.

Planning permissions comments - clarification

Need for Parishes to be clear on their support (or not) of Planning Applications. Options are to: Support, Object, Comment. Each of the options of "Support" or "Object" should ideally include material planning considerations/reasons why the PC option to support/object was the chosen option.

Not Objecting and/or not submitting a comment is akin to providing an unsubstantiated neutral opinion. In such a case the Planning Officers decision (whether it is to refuse or approve) will never not be in agreement with the Parish Council (because the Parish Council effectively have declared themselves not to have a view).

Recently, in another part of Dorset, a Town Council provided a view of "no objections". They thought this was akin to "support". When the Planning officer refused the application this "no objection" was not sufficient to trigger the need for the Scheme of Delegation and thus the application was not open to be considered for review at committee.

7. Clerk's/RFO's report:

- BDO Audit complete
- Changes to Lloyds banking account type- movement from Treasurer's account to Community account.
- To consider a change of bank account.
- To note a bank fee of £6 per month from January 2025
After discussion it was agreed Clerk to investigate interest rates with Unity Trust and propose an offset figure for discussion/agreement in January **LB**
- To approve a £50 donation to 'Candles on the Hill'/Thorners School.
Proposed Cllr Firrell, seconded Cllr King and unanimously agreed.
- To note £51.80 Remembrance Wreath (Lady Haig Poppy Factory)
Proposed Cllr Orchard, seconded Cllr Price and unanimously agreed.
- To consider providing £550 financial assistance for the upkeep of St Mary's churchyard. It was noted that this was an annual contribution to the churchyard. The church had experienced larger outgoings hence the 10% increase on 2023/2024. Proposed Cllr Firrell, seconded Cllr King and unanimously agreed.
- To note payment of £138.60 for annual playground inspection report.
Proposed Cllr Orchard, seconded Cllr Firrell and unanimously agreed.
- To note Clerk's pay agreement to be backdated to April: £112.56
Proposed Cllr Price, seconded Cllr Blacke and unanimously agreed.
- Approval of invoices for payment (appended to this agenda)
Proposed Cllr Firrell, seconded Cllr Matthews and unanimously agreed.
- Approval of Schedule of Regular Payments (appended to this agenda)
Proposed Cllr Matthews, seconded Cllr Price and unanimously agreed.
- To consider budget and precept calculations for 2025/2026
Cllr Orchard asked the Council to consider if it was reasonable to request the precept at projected budget level or increase it beyond. The budget for 2025/26 stood at £12000, equating to £56 per household in Council Tax group D. The Council noted that lack of funding in Dorset Council in the coming years may mean more tasks are devolved to PC level. DAPTC and BLAP were both advising moderate precept increases.

It was noted that Litton's 'Premier Crew' did a lot for the village as volunteers but could not reasonably be expected to take on more tasks, and external contractors may be needed.

A suggestion of a 10-15% increase was discussed. Cllr Firrell explained that any increase would need to be accounted for from current reserve and CIL levels were over

100% of the precept. An increase with no defined budget lines may not be considered fair to parishioners. To be reviewed and confirmed at January's PC meeting.

- To approve purchase of Christmas tree up to £75.
The council noted the kind gift of a tree in 2023 but accepted the need to purchase one in 2024. The possibility of having a living tree either potted or permanent in the future would be discussed in 2025.
Proposed Cllr Matthews, seconded Cllr Orchard and unanimously agreed. Cllr Firrell to take forward. **JF**

8. Councillors' Portfolios:

8.1 Planning: Cllr Orchard

No further planning applications had been received.

Decisions: Whitethorn Cottage application had been refused partly due to its location (entry to the village) and also implications related to conservation and AONB.

Councillors praised the correct application of planning policy by the officer.

Councillors discussed tree work in the village and at what juncture was it appropriate to make comments to the tree officer.

All parishioners present raised concern over considerable loss of hedgerows in the village.

Kowhai planning application in School Lane was awaiting decision.

Heat-pump application had been withdrawn in order to enter into discussions with Dorset Council. The applicant had been given conflicting advice on heat pump noise levels by different branches of Dorset Council.

It was noted that no Housing Association had come forward to manage the three new supposedly part rented/part owned homes in Bride Place, and Dorset Council had given permission for the developer to sell them as "discounted" affordable homes to local buyers, and which were currently on the market with O'Connell's in the Litton Cheney area. If no interest to local buyers, they would be advertised nationwide.

Cllr Price noted that a meeting on the Parks Farm (Cheese factory) planning enforcement case had gone ahead at county Hall involving all interested parties and broad agreement on principles to move the matter forward to a conclusion had been reached. The Council thanked Cllr Price for his continued tenacity in pursuing a resolution.

8.2 Highways/Transport: Cllr Price

Road closures were noted on the A35, Litton Lane and one in Long Bredy for tree removal.

The council raised a concern that HGV traffic normally going through LB would be re-routed through the village en route to Ashley Chase. Cllr Price had liaised with the ACE manager who had advised they would attempt to keep large traffic movements to a minimum during that time to avoid disruption.

Road conditions: Cllr Price explained that the current CHO would be carrying out a camera survey on the drainage issue in Main St. This hopefully would provide sufficient information to see what work was required to provide a permanent solution.

Bollards outside of Mill House- formal and personal requests for removal had initially been turned down, however, CHM Dawn Heath had now agreed the bollards could be removed if the cost of removal was met by the village. Cllr Price will follow up. **AP**

Bollards had been installed at the access to Charity Farm to protect the verges, but it was hoped that an alternative access to Charity Farm may mean they can be removed in time.

HGVs The problem of HGVs striking Beech House was ongoing. Police were aware but unable to act without a number plate information. The owner planned to set up CCTV, and it was hoped that Highways would soon introduce a weight limit at the top of Whiteway which would stop HGV traffic attempting that turn and coming down Whiteway.

8.3 Playground/ Playing Field/Allotments: Cllr King

Allotments: There were 4 people on the waiting list for a plot, and 2 leaving at the end of the year. Everything was working as normal and the grass cut as usual by Dorset Council. Quotes to check competitiveness would be sought in due course and brought to January meeting.

Playing field: The annual inspection report had been received. It mainly outlined low maintenance small tasks. Cllr King proposed setting up a weekly or monthly village taskforce to tackle the small repairs and maintenance. Cllr King will lead and run the group.
AK

Moles: The suggestion in the report was that moles should be removed. It was noted that the moles seemed to prefer the playground to the playing field. Moles were not protected and could be trapped, however the council felt they would like to use humane deterrents. Cllr Blacke to send Cllr King details of a mole deterrent system. Turf and matting would need to be removed and re-laid in some areas following mole upheaval.

Replacement of rubber mats. It was noted that the current mats needed to be swept once a week and could be slippery. Replacement options:

Like-for-like mats -can be self-installed. Slippery, shorter life.	£180+VAT parts only no labour
Grass matting -allows grass to come through. Less slippery. Professional installation preferred	£300+VAT parts only
Rubber Resin Mulch -professional installation preferred -safe and easy to maintain	£610 +VAT parts only
Wet Pour Soft Rubber -safe and non-slip -Very tricky to DIY	£630+VAT parts only

No options guarantee being effective against mole movements.

Cllr King expressed a preference for Rubber Resin or Wetpour but explained it was important to move the moles on first.

Proposal to allow AK to consider expenditure on options up to £750 and come to January's meeting with an action plan based on the above.

Proposed Cllr Firrell, seconded Cllr Orchard and unanimously agreed. **AK**

8.4 Countryside Matters/Footpaths/Rights of Way: Cllr Blacke

Cllr Blacke stated that several reports for repairs to stiles and access issues to PROW had been submitted and followed up with Dorset Council.

Cllr Blacke agreed to follow up with Maize farmers following the maize harvest to reinstate pathways. **QB**

Cllr Price and Cllr Blacke to investigate the renewal of faded Public Foot and Bridlepath signs around the village. **AP QB**

Damaged Bridge: conversations were ongoing with ranger Stuart Semple. Funds had been fully allocated for the year, however there may be other funding available to repair the bridge. Chilcombe and Shipton Gorge PC's to be asked to contribute if the bridge was to be funded by the Parish Council. LB to put Cllr Blacke in touch with relevant parties. **LB QB.**

8.5 Village Fabric/ Maintenance/ DAPTC/BLAP/Administration and Probity: Cllr Firrell

Cllr Firrell reported that a village litter pick was imminent. The Triangle was also due to be tidied up and rose bushes pruned ready for the arrival of a Christmas tree.

Cllr Firrell welcomed new Clerk Debbie Hollings to the meeting and introduced everyone.

A meeting had taken place between councillors and two farmers/landowners about dog fouling due to 2 cows and possibly their calves becoming infected as a result of dog owners failing to pick up after their dog.

Cllr Firrell proposed an additional two litter bins be purchased for the village (mixed use bins like the one by the bus shelter). A contract would be sought with Dorset Council for installation, fortnightly emptying in winter and weekly in summer. Suggested locations were: near the pub and School Lane. Local farmer, Richard Cuzens, had offered to provide an additional bin which he would service. Litton Lakes provide a bin on the footpath from the camp site to the pub. Exact locations would need to be agreed with DC.

Proposal for two Bins: £700 total first year, £315 PA thereafter. Two bins contracted with Dorset Council for possible installation and service.

Proposed Cllr Firrell, seconded Cllr Matthews and unanimously agreed. **JF** to take forward.

The Dorset Council Dog Warden had provided 5 'Bag it, bin It' signs to be placed. More signs may be needed to reinforce the message. Several Councillors provided quotes for more signage, cost TBC at January meeting.

Bride Valley Flood Plan: This valley wide project had been on hold. The council asked new Clerk, Debbie Hollings, to revisit it in the New Year, liaising with other Clerks in the valley. **DH**.

8.6 Telecommunications/IT: Cllr Matthews

Cllr Matthews noted that since the prior meeting in September work on Openreach's Full Fibre installation work had slowed, although more residents were taking up their offer, and work continued around Baglake.

9. Planning Applications – No further applications at time of meeting

10. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

10.1 Proposal to spend £378+VAT to refresh/replace traditional signage at Whiteway, Hinds Mead Lane, Garden Close, Chalk Pit Lane and The Paddocks.

Proposed Cllr Firrell, seconded Cllr Blacke and unanimously agreed.

10.2 Proposal to match fund £3500 saved by the school as a donation to Thorner's school for swimming pool repairs (estimated at £8500 total).

Litton Cheney Trust had agreed to make up the remainder.

Proposed Cllr Matthews, seconded Cllr Price and unanimously agreed.

10.3 To discuss potential costings for an all-weather footpath between School Lane and the village.

Cllr Orchard advised that rough estimates were around £9850 for the 250m span. Cllr Orchard to contact landowners to gauge response to the suggestion before exploring further. The need to discuss with landowners and permission to change course of footpath was noted. There was a general feeling amongst councillors that this was not the best use of CIL funds. **BO**

10.4 To discuss costings for a replacement bridge on the footpath in Chilcombe

See 8.4.

11. Date of next meeting: The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on Tuesday 14 January 2025

At this meeting, the swapping of chairman/vice-chairman roles would be confirmed, and future succession discussed. The Chairman and councillors thanked Clerk Lucy for her all too short time on the council and wished her well for the future.

12. Meeting closed 21:55.

Lucy Beasley, Parish Clerk