

Litton Cheney Parish Council

Minutes of the Village Assembly on 9 May 2017 at Litton and Thorner's Community Hall

Present: Bill Orchard (Chairman), Hugh Lantos, Andrew King, Kathryn Brooks, John Firrell (Clerk), Maggie Walsh (new Clerk), District Cllr John Russell and 45 local residents.

1. **Apologies:** Bella Spurrier, Steve Kourik

2. **Chairman's View**

Bill Orchard invited those present to remain for the Parish Council meeting that follows the assembly for an update on a number of ongoing parish matters.

The Precept had increased by 94.8% from last year but this was from a low base and it was still lower than adjacent parishes. The increase was necessary partly because John Firrell had taken only a nominal salary as Parish Clerk but he would shortly step down and his replacement would have to be paid the going rate. The rise was also in anticipation of devolution of responsibilities from County/District Council to Parish Councils. The precept may need to increase sharply for the next few years to cover these costs in case the Government caps parish councils as they have done unitary authorities. Preliminary discussions about possible shared services had commenced between Litton Cheney Parish Council, other Bride Valley Parish Councils and Bridport Town Council. Chairman Bill also used the occasion to introduce new Parish Clerk Maggie Walsh who would be taking over from John Firrell shortly.

Bus service 210 would cease at the end of July as Dorset County Council would stop subsidising village buses to focus on main routes. Parish Councillors had discussed the issue with Damory and its parent company who were clear that they considered the route not to be commercially viable. It would not be known if there might be an alternative service until the outcome of the current tender process was known. The Parish Council is represented on the WATAG (Western Area Transport Action Group) pressure group looking at ways to maintain village bus services and was also exploring a community run bus service (Dorset Plus) with other councils but this needed further work.

The Parish Council were maintaining pressure to ensure HGVs' keep to preferred routes. This was particularly relevant to transport heading to and from Ashley Chase Estates often via Hines Mead Lane.

The Chairman appealed again to local residents to get involved. He anticipated there could be a forthcoming vacancy for a Parish Councillor later in the year.

West Dorset District Council had now changed its approach on how the views of Parish Councils were counted on planning matters. When the Parish and District Councils planners are at variance on a planning decision, there would now be a meeting between the case officer and the district councillor to discuss whether it should be passed to the Planning Committee.

The village now had superfast broadband. A new proposed telecommunications mast was likely to be approved under permitted development, providing mobile phone reception.

Finally, the Chairman thanked John Firrell, who would shortly stand down as a "model" Parish Clerk after 9 years, and presented him on behalf of the Parish Council with a case of wine. John said he had thoroughly enjoyed his time as Clerk but felt it was time for someone else to have a go: he thanked the Parish Councillors for their constant support and, somewhat tongue in cheek, James Williams whose "interest" in parish council matters had assisted in moving the Council to become more transparent.

3. **Neighbourhood Plan**

Richard Jones, Chairman of Litton Cheney Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group gave an update on the outcome of the recent village survey. Approximately 30% of those surveyed had responded, 59% of whom felt a plan was unnecessary. The Parish Council would take these results into account when deciding what action to take. Richard thanked his colleagues on the steering group.

4. **Creating a "revitalised" Village Playground**

Andrew King gave an update on the work of the sub-committee. New goals and nets had been acquired. After approaching a number of contractors about boundary fencing and additional playground equipment and seating, he would be proposing that the Dorset County Landscape Team be appointed to implement the improvements, including upgrading existing equipment and providing refurbished equipment from Damers School, which is in the process of moving to Poundbury. The cost would be £16,000, to be met from a combination of S106 funds, donations already received, fund-raising events and a lottery grant. Some preliminary works could be carried out in the short term but substantive works could not commence until after the summer holidays without affecting the lottery grant. James Williams proposed that funding be provided for new goal posts, basketball nets, and tennis court marking. In response the Chairman stated that there was a finite amount of money available which currently would be targeted at the play equipment area.

Dorset County Council had been given the grass cutting contract this year. The issue of dogs fouling the playing field arose again. The Parish Council would be reviewing the no dogs situation, and possibly allowing dogs on a leash access, but it would call for all dogs owners to comply with the rules if they are changed. There was already a public notice at the entrance and villagers were again urged to pick up after their dogs and take it home. Unless someone would like to volunteer as dog warden (courses are available) there was little else the Parish Council could do, unless residents were prepared to "police" the area and name offenders.

5. **Open Floor**

This was an opportunity for local residents to raise matters they wished to bring to the attention of the Parish Council and/or other residents. Affordable housing was discussed - the Parish Council would decide how to proceed now the result of the Neighbourhood Plan consultation was known.

James Williams suggested funds might be available for improving rights of way and signage. It was suggested he might like to be involved in bidding for funding. David Jones enquired as to who was responsible for footpaths in the parish. Madeleine Hickling who was at this meeting is the Parish Footpaths Officer but Steve Kourik is the first point of contact for the Parish Council.

Vicky Thomas asked if it would be possible to have Parish Councillors' photos on the website as she was relatively new to the village.

A number of other matters arose: Parish Councillor attendance at village café; publication of planning applications on notice boards, maintenance of verges and Magna Green.

Freddie Spicer thanked the Chairman, all Parish Councillors and Clerk for their efforts on behalf of the village.

After informing local residents that a separate planning meeting would be held on 18 May regarding the Charity Farm planning application, the Chairman closed the meeting, at which point most local residents left.

J. Firrell/M. Walsh
Retiring Clerk/Incoming Clerk