

LITTON CHENEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Litton Cheney Parish Council held on 7:30pm on Tuesday 10 September 2024 At Litton and Thorner's Community Hall

6:30pm- 7:30pm

The Council invited Rural Housing Enabler Jacqui Cuff to give a presentation:

Cllr Orchard introduced Jacqui Cuff (JC) and explained that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) had introduced the potential of houses on 'rural exception sites' - sites where planning would not normally be granted but where exceptions would be made for affordable houses where a local need had been identified. The Parish Council or local community leaders were usually responsible for highlighting the housing need and leading on the project.

JC had been appointed in March as the Dorset representative of a national network of Rural Housing Enablers who hoped to assist communities to boost their supply of affordable and social housing in rural areas. Rural communities had been struggling because of the scarcity and affordability of housing, particularly since the global pandemic.

Younger working families were often displaced by not being able to buy in their preferred home area, and a trend had been noticed where younger families had consistently moved to larger towns where housing was cheaper. The dynamics of rural communities in Dorset was changing.

Older folk in larger houses often wished to downsize but were unable to do so in their preferred village/area due to lack of suitable housing stock.

These changes were being exacerbated by the loss of rural transport, shops, pubs and community centres.

JC explained that a rural exception site could be accessed in several ways and described the process she had been through as part of Buckland Newton CLT, who built 10 homes, 5 of which were shared ownership and 5 rented. It was a long process to get the correct provision and permission in place, but they had found that Buckland Newton were able to keep their post office and pub open once a younger family demographic had moved in. Buckland Newton CLT had taken out a loan to finance the build and were due to finish paying it off, meaning the village was now in possession of a £3.6 million asset, with 10 homes that would remain affordable in perpetuity. Magna Housing were involved as 'rent collectors' but otherwise the administration and ongoing maintenance of the site fell to a group of volunteer trustees.

JC explained as an independent rural housing enabler employed by Dorset Community Action but integrated into the Housing Team and Dorset Council, that her aim was to replicate the success of Buckland Newton CLT as many times as possible in Dorset's rural communities, wherever a housing need was identified. Each village and each situation would be different and require sensitive design and planning to account for local practicalities and histories.

Should any parishioner wish to discuss rural exception sites, land donation, CLT's, neighbourhood planning, community development orders and affordable housing JC encouraged them to get in touch as Rural Housing Enablers were able to negotiate on the parish's behalf.

It was possible to run a CLT with a voluntary board as at Buckland Newton, but there was also the option to engage a third-party housing provider to administer the leases once the houses were available, depending on the village's volunteer capacity and appetite for the project. JC explained that it could be 'hands on' or 'hands off' with the right planning in place.

JC explained that the Dorset Housing Register existed to help people and families who had household earnings less than £60k and encouraged all those in housing need to register and note family connections to villages and areas even when no housing was available there, as it would help build pressure to create/provide social housing. JC noted that the waiting time for applications to join the housing register was 9 weeks.

JC recommended a housing needs survey be undertaken to establish if there was a need in Litton Cheney and explained that prior surveys in 2004 and 2018 had suggested there was, however if no current housing need was identified no further action was necessary.

JC explained that as of September 2024 there were 5 households on the register in housing need in Litton Cheney and 16 who had named Litton Cheney as their preferred area with just 3 semi-detached houses due to come onto the market as 'affordable' (30% under market value) housing and no social housing.

JC invited parishioners to ask questions:

Do you also deal with housing groups which are a mix of private and social housing?

JC: That depends entirely on what the community want. Shared housing, first homes, social housing, affordable housing, what used to be affordable is no longer affordable. There is strong evidence that suggests social housing is what is needed. Anything is possible and rural housing enablers are also lobbying at national level for rural housing to better reflect their communities.

Is Buckland Newton CLT run by the PC or volunteers? How many people are needed?

JC: Buckland Newton CLT is run by a team of 8 volunteers, all from the community, and 2 representatives who are from the development itself, so that they can input and feedback their experiences as residents. We haven't advertised, volunteers are recruited from the community by word of mouth, and we've attracted a wide mix of people. The most time-consuming part was initially setting up the CLT as it was one of the first.

What age group are your volunteers at Buckland CLT?

JC: We have a mix of those looking to become residents, current resident, young working people and retirees. We make good use of our parish magazine and Facebook to keep community engagement up.

How long start to finish did the CLT take to set up?

JC: The process from the decision to do it, to the first residents moving in, ran from 2007-2011. It was a long process particularly with planning as the project had initially been envisaged as a straw bale build but had to be reconfigured when that became prohibitively expensive. It is possible for it to take much less time, but expectations should be managed- it is not yet a simple process.

What sort of housing did you build at Buckland Newton CLT?

JC: We built Code 4 energy efficient houses- there is a 4-bed end of terrace, 2 beds and 3 bed houses. We planned them as lifetime homes, and each can be made accessible with a lift if required in the future. 1 home is detached, the rest are in terraces or semi-detached.

Are you 100% reliant on a landowner to donate land?

JC: Exception sites have to be affordable houses and landowners with land on the outskirts of villages sometimes hold onto their land in the hopes that regulations from government may change to allow full market value speculative developments on them. It is hoped that national government will leave decisions around this to local government who are best placed to guide the process. Dorset Council have a target of 15000 homes to build in the next 5 years though, so they will be looking for sites.

Does the CLT take on all repairs in their properties?

JC: Communal things like gutters we do, and we are responsible for maintenance for the whole site but shared owners have responsibility for their own houses. They pay a percentage based on the percentage of the house that they own.

If the houses remain affordable, could you explain the £3.5 million asset figure?

JC: £3.5m is the value of asset to the community should the CLT no longer be able to continue and need to sell the development. The residents themselves either buy a shared ownership- the value of which is calculated at 80% of market value and then they purchase a percentage of that, or they rent at 80% of

market value. Because there is an identified housing need, reassessing the value is unlikely, and the valuation is open market for insurance purposes.

What happens if there is change to the value of the properties?

JC: Whenever a shared ownership property is 'sold' it is revalued by a RICS advisor and then whomever buys it buys at the new value. The outgoing 'seller' will make an increase and will get the extra. The maximum ownership is 80% and on rural exception sites there is never a 'right to buy', so the property will always remain part of the CLT. For S106 properties/schemes, there may be opportunity to buy which adds a further complication.

There are other considerations apart from cost- how to keep a housing scheme local, to address local need. Local connections can be an issue and one that takes time to unravel- how much control does the community have when one of the locals leave.

Could you explain how the project was financed?

JC: We were lucky enough to qualify for several grants that helped although they did add constraints and conditions that we must still abide by, but the build was financed with a mortgage. The CLT does not have many outgoings apart from the mortgage payment, communal maintenance and reactive repairs. The rent from the rental properties and the rent on the non-owned portion of each shared ownership house pays the mortgage, which is due to complete in December 2024.

Cllr Orchard thanked JC for sharing her time and expertise with the village and commented that there was a lot to consider.

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

Also in attendance: Dorset Councillor Sally Holland and 6 parishioners.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies received and accepted from Cllr Price.

2. Declarations of interest

None recorded.

3. Democratic time

A parishioner P1 raised a concern over the spraying of the vineyard adjacent to the village. Previously the vineyard had alerted homeowners when they would be spraying but this was no longer consistently happening. P1 was concerned about the content of the spray and its effects on health and wellbeing.

Cllr Firrell agreed to go to the vineyard and query the content of the spraying, and request the vineyard contact adjacent homeowners to forewarn them when spraying would occur. **JF**

A parishioner P2 Raised a concern over the lack of capacity in the school car park and the subsequent parking down Main Street. Cllr Firrell confirmed that Thorner's School had 101 children enrolled- the most for 20 years. There was no capacity to increase capacity in the school or LATCH car parks. JF: 101 children in the school most in 20 yrs. Cllr Holland added that some children were travelling to Thorner's from Bridport and Abbotsbury.

The Council agreed to monitor the situation as it unfolded and investigate any possible solutions to the parking issues at the school.

4. Approval of minutes of Parish Council meetings held on Tuesday 09 July 2024

Proposed Cllr Orchard, Seconded Cllr Matthews and unanimously agreed to be a true record.

5. Matters arising since previous meeting not part of this Agenda

None

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

Cllr Holland gave apologies for being unable to attend the previous meeting.

Cllr Holland reviewed 'The Big Conversation' action points and noted that there were still opportunities to participate in person in Weymouth and Sherborne.

Cllr Holland advised that Dorset MP Ed Morello was hoping to start surgeries in September and now had an office manager in place to attend to emails.

The Council were reminded of the upcoming road closures in Abbotsbury and Portesham.

7. Clerk's/RFO's report including:

- BDO Audit complete- awaiting paperwork
- Approval of invoices for payment: Proposed BO seconded JF and agreed.
- Approval of Schedule of Regular Payments: Proposed BO seconded JF and agreed.
- It was noted that historically LCPC had approved a donation of £50 to Thorner's School to put towards candles for Abbotsbury's "Candles on the Hill" event. The request had not yet been made but the council considered that this should be approved in advance of the request in order not to delay their purchase. **BO** to action.

8. Councillors' Portfolios:

- **Planning: Cllr Orchard**

- P/FUL/2024/04325 Demolish existing dwelling and construct 2no. semi-detached replacement dwellings: White Thorne Cottage Main Street Litton Cheney

Cllr Orchard explained that in prior discussions the Council had recognised that the existing cottage didn't add much to the fabric of the village and although the proposal was modern in concept it probably represented an improvement to the streetscape. Concerns over parking arrangements, particularly during busy school times were raised but overall the Council supported the proposal.

Decision: To Support the application, with a comment outlining parking concern. Proposed Cllr Orchard Seconded Cllr Blacke and agreed.

- P/HOU/2024/04634 Installation of an air source heat pump 2 Garden Close, Litton Cheney

A councillor raised a concern over the potential for noise at the property. The applicant was present and explained the system to the Council, who were satisfied that noise could be mitigated should the application be successful.

Decision: To support the application with no comment. Proposed Cllr Orchard, seconded Cllr Firrell and agreed.

- P/FUL/2024/03908 (Adjacent Parish) Erect agricultural storage shed, and to create an access track from Looke Lane.

Cllr Firrell explained that this application was for an address in adjacent parish Puncknowle, although the applicant's business was in Litton Cheney. A previous application to develop the site had not been approved and the current application was a smaller scheme.

Councillors raised concerns over the flood and inundation the plot of land endured each winter and noted that the proposed 80 trees for coppice and firewood may be hard to establish and difficult to maintain. The Council also felt that given the previous larger proposal, should this smaller proposal be approved, it may be a gateway to a larger scale scheme and felt this would not be appropriate.

Overall the Council felt that whilst they were in full support of the business and applicant, they were not able to support the proposal as submitted.

Decision: Proposal to comment with concerns (Neither support nor oppose) Proposed Cllr Orchard, Seconded Cllr Firrell: 3 For, 0 Against 2 Abstain. Passed by quorum.

- **Highways/Transport: Cllr Price**

Cllr Orchard summarised a written report from Cllr Price. Initial informal discussions with Dorset Council around removal of the bollards had not been successful- The Council resolved to send a formal request to Dorset Council setting out the reasons for requesting removal of the bollards. **LB** to draft.

- **Playground/ Playing Field/Allotments: Cllr King**

Cllr King confirmed that things were going well with the playground, allotments and field, and that quotes for new swings and surface under the swings were coming in, to be included in the November meeting for consideration. **AK LB**

- **Countryside Matters/Footpaths/Rights of Way: Cllr Blacke**

Cllr Blacke reported that a project to raise funds for a broken bridge between Litton and Chilcombe was going well, with several pledges. Cllr Blacke had the pledges and a craftsman ready to be instructed but after an initially positive meeting with Stuart Semple ranger at DC was struggling to get the 'go ahead' from him. Cllr Holland agreed to get in touch with Stuart Semple to find out what was planned. **QB SH**

Cllr Blacke noted that electric fencing had been placed across several footpaths in the area and loosely covered with a feed bag instead of a gate or breaker handle to allow pedestrian access. Reports had been made to Dorset Council, but no remedy had been made. Cllr Blacke to follow up. **QB**

The bench fund had now placed or refurbished six benches in the village, the most recent being in the sports field and a new placement in the Snicket. It was considered that any remaining 'Bench Fund' money should be kept as such for maintenance or put towards the bridge at Chilcombe.

The little bridge between Litton and Long Bredy was damaged but after a report had been repaired.

A report had been received of a very deep broken manhole in a field. Cllr Firrell to follow up. **JF**

Bella Spurrier and Cllr Blacke planned to work together on a directory of local landowners. **QB**

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

Cllr Firrell intended that a further litter pick be scheduled later in the year when the greenery had died down, and noted an independent litter picker had been seen operating near the village- thank you to the mystery litter-picker.

A DAPTC area meeting was due, and Cllr Firrell planned to attend.

BLAP had been active - LCPC had responded to 'The Big Conversation' and on the consultation on National Planning Policy Framework. A BLAP Parish Liaison meeting with MP Edward Morello was set for 03 October, Cllrs Firrell and Orchard planned to attend.

- **Telecommunications/IT: Cllr Matthews**

Cllr Matthews confirmed that the 'full fibre' rollout continued in the area albeit sporadically, and suggested residents check on Openreach's website for availability at their specific address.

Further road closures to enable Openreach work were planned and being shared in village groups.

Cllr Matthews suggested parishioners visit www.fast.com to assess their current internet speed and what improvements Full Fibre might bring.

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

10. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- Replacement of signage at Whiteway, Hinds Mead Lane, Garden Close, School Lane and Paddocks.

Cllr Firrell had met with a painter and carpenter and advised a rough estimate of £700 to refurbish the four signs. To be discussed at November meeting. **LB**

Cllr Firrell also noted that the school swimming pool required repairs and had advised the headmaster that if necessary he could approach the Parish Council for part-funding from CIL funds. To be discussed at November meeting. **LB**

A parishioner asked if the all-weather footpath discussed at the July meeting could be considered for CIL funding. Cllr Blacke explained the minute from the previous meeting and agreed to look into costs and landowner amenity and bring to November meeting for discussion. **LB QB**

11. Date of next meeting:

The next meeting of the Parish Council was confirmed as Tuesday 12 November.

12. Meeting closed 21:09

Report 04 September 2024	
Parish funds	Total
Balance brought forward as at 1 April	£36,773.32
Income to date	£5,710.80
Expenditure to date	£7,054.58
Parish funds as at above date*	£35,429.54
* Of which the following is held in reserves or CIL	
Earmarked reserves	£ 13,750
CIL	£ 17,242
Playground (ringfenced)	£ 100
Community Bench Fund (ringfenced)	£ 677
Total reserves/CIL held	£31,768.82
Approved spend since last reported/meeting	
Grant to LATCH, RSN membership, clerk's wage, annual charity donations as agreed	£6,085.50
	£6,085.50
Income since last reported/meeting	
Allotment Fees	£135.00
Interest	£34.54
Interest	£33.11
	£169.54
Invoices/Payments for approval at time of publishing agenda	
R Randall: Parish Bench repair	£161.52
R Randall: Parish Noticeboard repair	£207.19
To note: ICO fee (data protection)	£35.00
Scheduled: Clerk's wage (336x14.5 /12= 406pcm X 2)	£812.00
	£1,215.71