

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH MEETING HELD REMOTELY BY ZOOM DUE TO  
THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ON WEDNESDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2020 AT 6 P.M.**

**PRESENT:**

Col. Chris Woodhouse (Chairman)  
Mrs Lynda Woodhouse  
Mrs Diana Masters  
Mr David Masters  
Mr Keith Harris  
Mr Charles Peel  
Mrs Jenny Peel  
Mr Rob Dyer                    }  
Mrs Jackie Dyer                }     Connected  
Mr Mike Metcalf                }     from France  
Mrs Michel Metcalf            }  
Mr Mike Hall  
Mrs Sarah Hall  
Col. Peter Williams (Zoom Host)  
Councillor Belinda Rideout

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed everyone linked to the first virtual Parish Meeting held in Silton. He set out the procedure that apart from himself and Mrs Diana Masters, who would be taking the minutes and recording our decisions, everyone else will be muted until the end of the meeting at which stage there would be an opportunity to ask questions.
- 1.2 However, during the course of the meeting there would be a requirement to vote on a number of motions and at each stage he would ask for a proposer and a seconder by a show of hands and for a show of hands both for and against the motion.
- 1.3 Before starting the meeting properly The Chairman wished to remember two stalwarts of the community who had sadly died since our last meeting.

**2. Mr Edwin Harris**

- 2.1 Mr Edwin Harris died on 17 March. Edwin was a stalwart of the Parish having lived and farmed here all his life. He was a regular attendee at Parish Meetings to which he invariably gave sound advice. In addition he was a Church Warden at St Nicholas Church for 50 years, a record that is unlikely ever to be broken.

### **3. Mrs Jill Plaxton.**

3.1 Mrs Jill Plaxton died on 22 March. Although Jill and Michael never lived in Silton many parishioners will recall Michael as our local GP based at Silton Surgery and of course Michael played cricket for Silton which makes him an honoured member of the village at the very least. Jill was another stalwart of the Village and rarely missed attending any of our functions.

### **4. Apologies.**

4.1 Mrs Jill Marsden, Mrs Mandy Burroughs, Mr Mike Burroughs, Mrs Mary Anderson, Mrs Liz Marriot, Mr Peter Nugent, Mrs Daphne Nugent, Mr David Desborough and Mrs Sandra Menzies.

### **5. Election of Chairman.**

5.1 Mrs Diana Masters reported that Col. Chris Woodhouse was willing to stand for re-election if nominated. There were no other nominations/candidates and it was proposed by Mr Keith Harris, seconded by Mr David Masters and unanimously carried that Col. Woodhouse be re-elected.

### **6. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising.**

6.1 A copy of the minutes had already been emailed to all those whose email addresses were known to the Chairman. He assumed they had been read and if there were any matters arising not included on the agenda they could be discussed when the meeting was opened up for comments.

6.2 The Chairman signed the minutes as a true record.

### **7. Accounts.**

7.1 The Chairman reminded the meeting that last year, and for the second time, the Parish Meeting had certified itself exempt from having an external audit carried out.

7.2 The criteria for being able to claim exemption is that the gross income or expenditure is less than £25,000 which, as was known from the accounts in previous years and would be demonstrated again this year, is definitely the case. However, the Meeting would still be required to vote on this again this year.

- 7.3 The Chairman explained that although we wished to exempt ourselves from an external audit it was still necessary to complete an Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) but it would only be necessary to submit the Certificate of Exemption to the external auditors not the whole Return. The advantage of this is that if we request a limited assurance review by the external auditors we will automatically incur a bill for £200 plus VAT but if we choose to exempt ourselves it will cost us nothing.
- 7.4 There are essentially 4 elements to the accounts that have to be voted on:
- a. The Certificate of Exemption on page 3 which has to be agreed by the Meeting and signed by both the Chairman and by the Responsible Financial Officer, Mr Rob Dyer, who had already signed the original document.
  - b. The Annual Internal Audit Report. This had been carried out by Col. Peter Williams who had satisfied himself that we comply with the relevant financial procedures and controls. He had signed the original document on page 4 to this effect.
  - c. The Annual Governance Statement on Page 5 had been completed by the Chairman but needed the Meeting's approval that a sound system of internal control is in place.
  - d. The Accounting Statement on page 6 was a summary of the income and expenditure incurred by the Parish during the last 12 months. This had been audited by Col. Peter Williams, found to be correct, and agreed by Mr Rob Dyer.
- 7.5 A copy of the accounts had been circulated. The Chairman reported that there was some £9,500 in the bank. Income was very similar to last year but with the addition of a £150 fee for the use of the field and shelter for a wedding. Expenditure was also similar to last year, the only major expense being the purchase of grass seed for the field.
- 7.6 Comments on the accounts would be invited later in the meeting but at this stage approval was required for each of the 4 elements in para 7.4:
- a. The Certificate of Exemption. Agreement was proposed by Mr Charles Peel, seconded by Mr Mike Metcalf and carried to exempt the Parish from an external audit
  - b. The Annual Internal Audit report. Agreement was proposed by Mr. Keith Harris, seconded by Mrs Jackie Dyer and carried unanimously.
  - c. The Annual Governance Statement. Agreement was proposed by Mr. David Masters, seconded by Mr. Mike Metcalf and carried unanimously.
  - d. The Accounting Statement. Agreement was proposed by Mr Charles Peel, seconded by Mrs Jackie Dyer and carried unanimously.

## **8. Election of Responsible Financial Officer.**

8.1 Mr Rob Dyer was willing to stand for re-election if nominated. There were no other nominations/candidates and it was proposed by Mr David Masters, seconded by Mr Keith Harris and unanimously agreed that Mr Rob Dyer be re-elected.

## **9. Risk Assessment.**

9.1 This had been updated by Mr Keith Harris, Mr Tom Trouton and the Chairman on 31st March 2020, with the only change being the removal of the risk posed by the pond in the field as the pond had now been filled in. Agreement was proposed by Mrs Michela Metcalf, seconded by Mr Rob Dyer and agreed unanimously.

## **10. Assets Register.**

10.1 This had been circulated by email. It included the shelter and the telephone box and also a projector, screen and the necessary electrical connectors for the projector which had already been used for a presentation by Col. John Blashford Snell. As shown in the accounts there had been no changes since last year. Any comments were to be taken at the end of the meeting.

## **11. Precept.**

11.1 The Chairman reported that the precept currently stands at £2,600 annually, £1,300 paid every 6 months. The last increase, of £200 per year, was approved at the AGM four years ago in 2016.

11.2 As could be seen from the accounts, annual payments are made to the Village Hall of £1,000, to the PCC of £900 for the upkeep of the church yard and some £300 to the insurance company. There is not therefore a great deal left at the end of each year, approximately £400. However, in view of the healthy account balance the Chairman did not propose to recommend an increase this year. Agreement was proposed by Mr Charles Peel, seconded by Mr. Mike Metcalf and carried unanimously.

## **12. Planning applications and correspondence.**

12.1 There had been only been one planning application since the last meeting and that was to rebuild Valhalla/Silvermead. The original plan had been

rejected by Dorset Council but the subsequent plan had been approved in March this year.

### **13. Highways Matters.**

- 13.1 The Chairman had spoken to the Highways representative, Mr Roger Bell, about the state of Waterloo Lane. Considerable damage was caused to the road by Wessex Water whilst upgrading the sewage works.
- 13.2 The Chairman reported that some repairs to the junction of the road and the entrance to the sewage farm had been carried out but little else. He would check what still needed to be done and speak to Highways again.

### **14. Village Hall Field.**

- 14.1 The Chairman reminded the meeting that last year the decision had been taken to plough up the field, level it, put in more drainage and re-sow it.
- 14.2 It had been hoped to have the field ready for use in the Spring but due to the very heavy rain experienced in January and February the field gates were locked and the field put off limits until it dried out. However, in March the country was locked down because of the corona virus pandemic and the field gates remained locked.
- 14.3 He reported that this had resulted in the loss of considerable income, notably the VE Day party that was to have been held on 8 May and the Bourton Bash that would have been held later in August. However, this had worked wonders for the field which is now looking very healthy indeed. As the lockdown restrictions have started to ease the dog exercising regime has resumed and Tai Chi classes have started in the field.

### **15. Allotments.**

- 15.1 The Annual Allotment Meeting had to be cancelled in March due to the corona virus pandemic but it was still intended that the Annual Inspection would be held later in the year on a date still to be confirmed but probably in early September.
- 15.2 There are now 44 plots in total and presently all bar one was rented out at £10 per plot per year. As could be seen from the accounts more than £500 in rental fees had been taken last year and Mr Tom Trouton had been busy extracting this year's fees, some £430. However, Mr Trouton had just moved from the village and although willing to continue as allotment warden for the

time being, ideally someone from the village was needed to take over from him. The Chairman asked if there were any volunteers.

- 15.3 The Chairman expressed his thanks once again to Mr Keith Harris for cutting the grass and the hedges and for all the work he carries out to keep the allotments looking as good as they do.

## **16. Footpaths.**

- 16.1 The Chairman reported that during the lockdown many more people than normal had been using the footpaths to exercise and keep fit. When problems with access had been encountered he had recommended that walkers take secateurs out with them and cut away the offending brambles and nettles.
- 16.2 However, he was aware of two footpaths that needed rather more drastic action and he had reported these to the Dorset Rangers for their attention. These were the footpath leading to the Doctor's Surgery from the road under the A303 and the footpath that connects Fantley Lane on both sides of the A303. He had not yet heard when they will be cleared but would inform the Parish when they were.

## **17. Himalayan Balsam.**

- 17.1 The Chairman reported that this is now in flower and the first concerted Balsam Bash had taken place on 1<sup>st</sup> August. There had been 13 volunteers from Silton, Bourton and Milton, a fantastic turn out and they had collected and burned at least 30 bags of the dreaded weed.
- 17.2 He would look at the river line in a couple of weeks' time to see if any had been missed so it could be collected before it seeded. In the meantime he asked those whose property includes the banks of the river to keep an eye out for any resurgence and to either remove it or let him know if they could not do it themselves.

## **18. Commonwealth Day**

- 18.1 This had been celebrated on 9<sup>th</sup> March and in common with all the other celebrants across the Commonwealth the Flag was raised at 10.00 a.m. that morning on the church tower. The Chairman had read out the message from HM The Queen and the Rev Allen Walker read out the Commonwealth Affirmation. With the permission of the PCC everyone then retired into the

church out of the wind and celebrated with a glass of bubbles and coffee. Some 20 people had attended the service.

- 18.2 He pointed out that there were pictures of the ceremony on the Village website. This had been a particularly memorable occasion as it was the last gathering in the village before lockdown.

## **19. Broadband.**

- 19.1 The Chairman reported that Wessex Internet fibre cable had been laid to Manor Farm. It then ran behind the houses in Church Road, and then on to Feltham Farm and West Bourton. At present the last house in Church Road that will be able to access the fibre is that of Mr and Mrs Bernie Hall. At present there were no plans to extend the cable further down the road to Dunns Lane or to the Village Hall and beyond, presumably because there has been insufficient interest expressed in doing so. However, Mr Keith Harris has said that he intends to explore the possibility of connecting the Village Hall as that could prove to be a valuable asset for the Village in the future.
- 19.2 The Chairman understood that Wessex Internet have put in a connection for every house adjacent to the cable whether it has been asked for or not so it is available in the future. It is hoped to have the system live in a couple of weeks.

## **20. Clinical Commissioning Group Consultation.**

- 20.1 The Chairman reported that there was nothing further to report about the future of the Westminster Memorial Hospital in Shaftesbury.

## **21. Parish Website.**

- 21.1 The Chairman reminded the meeting that the web site is now up and running and that it was looking very good and would prove to be very useful. It was hoped that much more information would be able to be put on it in the future.
- 21.2 Mr Mike Metcalf is the web master and all requests and queries should be directed to him at [admin@siltonvillage.co.uk](mailto:admin@siltonvillage.co.uk). The Chairman thanked Mr. Metcalf for the huge amount of work and resources he had expended on the web site to make it look so good. However, it was recognised that in the interest of continuing compliance a professional person may be needed to check the site in the future.

## **22. 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day.**

- 22.1 The Chairman reported that regrettably the planned activities for this anniversary had to be cancelled due to the corona virus pandemic as had the planned celebrations of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VJ Day on 15<sup>th</sup> August.
- 22.2 As a heads up though he said that the next national celebration along these lines will take place in June 2022 to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Anniversary.

## **23. Dorset Parish & Town Council Climate Emergency Advice Seminar**

- 23.1 The Chairman had attended this meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November last year and had circulated a report on the meeting the following week. He reminded the meeting that in May last year Dorset Council had declared a Climate Emergency and started putting in place a number of measures to enable itself to be declared carbon free by 2050. He asked Cllr Belinda Ridout to update the meeting on this at the end of the meeting.

## **24. Impact of Corona Virus Pandemic**

- 24.1 The Chairman reported that almost immediately the initial lockdown was announced a number of parishioners had sprung into action to ensure, so far as possible, that the more vulnerable members of our community were not forgotten or disadvantaged.
- 24.2 Information from a wide variety of sources was put together and distributed to all homes in the village. Fortunately more than 50% have email access which helped enormously but some do not.
- 24.3 He thought it would be invidious to single out any one person who really went out of their way to help the village community as a whole but he did so anyway. Mrs Jackie Dyer had been tireless in collecting prescriptions, shopping, running errands and delivering information to those who were not able to leave home during the pandemic.
- 24.4 He was very aware that others had helped also but it was Jackie Dyer who had taken the initiative and started the whole ball rolling and on behalf of the village he wanted to thank her and have our thanks recorded in the minutes.



## **25. Local Government Matters.**

- 25.1 The Chairman asked Cllr Belinda Ridout to give an update on Dorset Council matters before opening up for comments from the floor and Any Other Business.
- 25.2 Cllr Ridout referred to her Report that had already been circulated, in particular to the scary amount of work that had to be done on the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy. She said that public participation was important. Mr David Masters thanked her for all her hard work on the public's collective behalf.
- 25.3 Both her report and that from Councillor David Walsh, the portfolio holder for Planning were tabled.

## **26. Any Other Business and comments from the Floor**

- 26.1 Mr Metcalf said that a professional person was needed to achieve the required web site compliance by the end of September, with many pages of criteria to do with GDPR, handicaps, hearing issues, etc. on the website. Cllr Ridout said that she would look into whether there were any grants available. Mr Mike Hall thought that his business might be able to help as he employed a number of programmers. He would look at the document to see what the cost might be. The Chairman thanked both Mr. Metcalf and Mr Hall.
- 26.2 Mr Hall reported that the Wessex Internet line was in his house but he had had to sign up with his current provider for 24 months and could not cancel this without incurring penalties. Connection to Wessex Internet would be £1,500/household or £3,500 for a business but there was a grant available for 12 months with a cut off for application in September, payable direct to Wessex Internet. Cllr Ridout would look into this and report back.
- 26.3 Col. Peter Williams, on behalf of the PCC and the congregation of St Nicholas Church, thanked the Meeting for the grant for the churchyard. He also thanked Mrs Sue Harris for organising the working party earlier in the year that carried out so much work in the church yard. The church and church yard are visited regularly throughout the year and both are looking very good at present and this was much appreciated.
- 26.4 Mr Keith Harris expressed his gratitude for the grant to the Village Hall.
- 26.5 With regard to the condition of Waterloo Lane, Mr Harris informed the Meeting that he believed the road was collapsing even before work started

on the sewage works. He recalled that repairs had been carried out on the road possibly as many as three times already, but in a rather botched fashion.

26.6 Mr David Masters on behalf of the meeting wished to record grateful thanks to the Chairman for all he does, and commented that everything works so well in the village.

The meeting closed at 6.54 p.m.