

**MINUTES OF SILTON PARISH MEETING HELD AT 6.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY 3RD MAY IN
THE VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Mrs Jackie Dyer (Chairman), Mrs Lynda Woodhouse, Mr Chris Woodhouse, Mrs Shirley Rice, Mrs Diana Masters, Mr David Masters, Mrs Sue Harris, Mr Keith Harris, Mr David Desborough, Mrs Jill Marsden, Mrs Sandra Menzies (part time).

1. Introduction.

1.1 The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Silton Parish Meeting AGM.

2. Apologies.

2.1 Mr Peter Nugent, Mrs Daphne Nugent, Mrs Michela Metcalf, Mr. Mike Metcalf, Mr Mike Hall, Mrs Sarah Hall, Mr Bernie Hall, Col. Peter Williams (Councillor), Mrs Belinda Ridout (County Councillor)

3. Election of Chairman.

3.1 Diana Masters, taking the minutes, said that as everyone would know Jackie Dyer had ably chaired the Parish Meeting for the last 12 months but the first item at the AGM, as always, is to elect a Chair for the next 12 months. Fortunately, Jackie Dyer was willing to stand for re-election if nominated. There were no other nominations/candidates and it was proposed by Chris Woodhouse, seconded by Jill Marsden and unanimously agreed that she be Chairman for the ensuing year.

4. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising.

4.1 A copy of the minutes had been emailed to all those whose email addresses were known and it was assumed that those present had all had the opportunity to read them.

4.2 There were no comments and the Chairman signed the minutes as a true record.

5. Accounts.

5.1 The Chairman reported that for the fourth time the Parish had been certified as exempt from having an audit carried out by an external auditor last year.

5.2 The criteria for being able to claim exemption is that the Parish gross income or expenditure is less than £25,000 which, as could be seen from the accounts in the current and previous years, is definitely the case for Silton.

5.3 However, the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) still has to be completed but only a Certificate of Exemption to the external auditors and not the whole Return has to be submitted.

- 5.4 If a review by the external auditors is requested the Parish will automatically incur a bill for £200 plus VAT but if we chose to be exempted there would be no cost.
- 5.5 There were essentially 4 elements to the accounts to be voted on:
- a. The Certificate of Exemption on page 3 of the AGAR which has to be agreed by the Meeting and signed by the Chairman.
 - b. The Annual Internal Audit Report. The audit has been carried out by Cllr Peter Williams who has satisfied himself that we comply with the relevant financial procedures and controls. His signature is on page 4 of the AGAR.
 - c. The Annual Governance Statement. This has been completed by the Chairman but needs approval that a sound system of internal control is in place. This is on page 5 of the AGAR.
 - d. The Accounting Statement. This is on page 6 of the AGAR and is a summary of the income and expenditure incurred by the Parish during the last 12 months. This has been audited by Cllr Peter Williams and found to be correct.
- 5.6 Approval was then sought for each of the 4 elements in para 5.5:
- a. The Certificate of Exemption – Mr Charles Peel proposed, Mr Chris Woodhouse seconded and it was unanimously agreed.
 - b. The Annual Internal Audit report – Mr Charles Peel proposed, Mr Chris Woodhouse seconded and it was unanimously agreed.
 - c. The Annual Governance Statement – Mr Charles Peel proposed, Mr Chris Woodhouse seconded and it was unanimously agreed.
 - d. The Accounting Statement – Mr Charles Peel proposed, Mr Chris Woodhouse seconded and it was unanimously agreed.
- 5.7 Copies of the accounts had been circulated and it was pointed out that there was slightly more than £10,000 in the bank. Income was a little up on last year largely due to the increase in fees for dog walking and the early payment of allotment fees.
- 5.8 Expenditure had been similar to last year but the Chairman drew attention to a number of items: £85 towards the cost of two oak trees planted on 14th March as part of the Queen’s Green Canopy, £180 paid to the PCC of St Nicholas Church towards the cost of storm damage in the churchyard caused by Storm Eunice and £50.40 paid to repair the handrails on the steps leading to the Doctor’s Surgery.

6. Election of Responsible Financial Officer.

- 6.1 Last year Bernie Hall was elected to this post but since then we have been informed by the external auditors that **“since there is no requirement for Parish Meetings to have a clerk or an RFO (the Chair is the proper officer), the AGAR forms were simplified some years ago”**.
- 6.2 The Chairman took issue with the comment “several years ago” as Bernie Hall was required to sign last year’s forms but she actually agreed that it seemed rather unnecessary for such a complex set of rules to apply to such a small account.
- 6.3 In consequence she had informed Bernie Hall that the post no longer exists for Parish Meetings and had thanked him on everyone’s behalf for what he had done for the Parish in the last 12 months or so.

7. Risk Assessment.

- 7.1 This had been updated by Keith Harris, Mike Hall and Chris Woodhouse on 31st March and copies had been circulated by email. It was proposed by Charles Peel, seconded by Sandra Menzies and unanimously accepted.

8. Assets Register.

- 8.1 This had also been emailed to everyone. It included the shelter and the telephone box and also a projector, screen and the necessary electrical connectors for the projector as used for a presentation by John Blashford Snell. As seen in the accounts there have been no changes since last year.
- 8.2 It was noted that currently the value of the phone box is just £1, the price paid for it. However, the actual value of these boxes is known to be between £2-3K and several have been stolen in the past. The Chairman had resolved to speak to the insurance company to get a more realistic valuation of the phone box and adjust our insurance cover accordingly
- 8.3 David Desborough suggested that the telephone box be sold and the money given to charity, but this was not taken up.

9. Precept.

- 9.1 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 Annual Meeting 6 years ago in 2016.
- 9.2 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. It was proposed by Charles Peel, seconded by Chris Woodhouse and unanimously agreed to leave the precept at £2,600 for the ensuing year.

10. Planning applications and correspondence.

- 10.1 1. Notification for information purposes only had been received of a proposal for a change of use of Verland's Barn and its conversion into a single Class 3 dwelling. It was not a planning application but a request for a legal determination of the Council as to whether or not Prior Approval is required for the proposal. The only Silton residents who might have been impacted by this application, Keith and Sue Harris, have no objections.
- 10.2 2. A planning application had been received to erect a single ground floor and rear first floor extension to Fitz Farm. Such an application impacts on no-one else in the village and the Parish has not opposed it.
- 10.3 3. An application had been received to build a grain store in the field just off Fantley Lane, below the Allotments. Once again the Parish has not opposed this application as it impacts nobody else in the village.
- 10.4 4. Mike and Sarah Hall had submitted an application to erect a two-storey extension and a detached garage/office at Silton Mews. This proposal has now been withdrawn and their plans for this development are under discussion with Dorset Council Planning Department.
- 10.5 5. An application had been received to close off the entrance to the field opposite Fitz Farm and improve the entrance to the field on Church Road. The Parish did not oppose this application which has now been granted.
- 10.6 6. An application had been received to erect a cover for the feed and loafing yard for the cows at Feltham Farm. This was not opposed by the Parish and Dorset Council determined that prior approval was not required.
- 10.7 7. An application had been received to erect an agricultural storage building at Lower Silton. Dorset Council had considered this application and determined that prior approval was not required subject to the works commencing within 5 years from the 25th May 2021.
- 10.8 8. An application had just been received for a proposal to build a shelter, very similar to our own, in the field to the North of the Village Hall field adjacent to the A303. It was thought to be unlikely that it could be seen, let alone be an inconvenience, and there was therefore no opposition to this application.
- 10.9 9. Whilst not strictly anything to do with Silton Parish, it had been well known that there had been a proposal to build 43 mobile homes in the field opposite the Plant World Garden Centre in Milton on Stour. This had raised

a storm of protest and the Chairman hoped that everyone had taken the opportunity to comment on this proposal before the deadline of 10th April.

11. Highways Matters

- 11.1 Many local people had been affected by the frequent closures recently of Church Road by Openreach. Generally several days or weeks' notice of such closures would be made but there had been a couple of occasions recently where there had been no notice at all.
- 11.2 Chris Woodhouse had spoken to the Community Highways Officer about this and asked that Openreach be told to be a great deal more customer focussed in future.

12. HM Platinum Jubilee

- 12.1 Preparations in the village were well in hand to celebrate HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee on Thursday 2nd June, the first day of a 4-day Bank Holiday.
- 12.2 Fliers had been emailed to everyone in March and were available in the church and from any of the committee members. A bar and BBQ will open at 7.00pm at Manor Farm and a fire beacon will be lit at 9.45pm at the same time as many thousands of others across the country and the Commonwealth.
- 12.3 The beacon will be lit by one of the pupils from Milton on Stour Primary School. The Head Teacher had very kindly agreed to hold a competition at the school, the winner of which will have the privilege of lighting the beacon.
- 12.4 Applications to attend the event have gone hi-tech and could be submitted online via the Silton Parish web site. A Facebook page has also been set up to answer any queries. The Chairman urged those who wish to attend the beacon party to complete the form on the Parish web site as soon as possible so there would be an idea of how many to catering for.

13. Village Hall Field

- 13.1 Some 2 years ago the decision was taken to plough up the field, level it, put in more drainage and re-sow it.
- 13.2 It had been planned to have the field ready for use in 2021 but because of the Corona Virus pandemic it had hardly been used at all since it was re-sown. As a result it is now in very good shape and is more than ready for use.
- 13.3 About the only activity that had taken place on the field in the last 12 months was dog walking which is now run on a much more structured system. Charges for regular dog walkers are £20 a year (£10 for Blue Badge holders) for those who do not live in the village. Village residents are not charged to

use their own field. As could be seen from the accounts this had raised £280 for the Parish in the last year.

- 13.4 The Chairman recorded her thanks to Nicky Waltham Weekes who had done so much to set up the dog walking programme, and who collects the fees for this on behalf of the Parish. She also acts as field warden to ensure the field is used properly.

14. Allotments.

- 14.1 The Annual Allotment Meeting had been held on 26th March and was attended by about 20 plot holders.
- 14.2 There are 44 plots in total and presently all are rented out at £10 per plot per year. As seen in the accounts more than £405 had been taken in rental fees last year and another £405 had just been added to the account for this year's fees. The slight discrepancy between the number of plots and fees collected was due to some of the plots only being rented out as half plots due to their size.
- 14.3 In discussion with both Kevin Lane, the Allotment Warden, and Chris Woodhouse the Chairman believed that consideration should be given to increasing the fees next year. Many allotments in the area charge between £20 and £45 a year. Her proposal would be more modest than that and she was recommending that with effect from 1st April 2023 the fees should be doubled to £20 per plot. There were no objections to this proposal.
- 14.4 The Chairman expressed her thanks as always to 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.

15. Footpaths

- 15.1 Some local residents were aware that part of the fence line at the top of the steps leading to the Doctor's Surgery fell down several months ago. As the Chairman had mentioned earlier, this has now been repaired by the "Three Musketeers": Bernie Paul, Dave Gater and Chris Woodhouse at a cost of just £50.40.

16. Himalayan Balsam

- 16.1 This would be coming into flower again in July/August and would need tackling once more to keep on top of it. The Chairman said that she will circulate further details of the "balsam bashing" programme nearer the time. There had not been a huge amount last year which seemed to suggest that the programme was showing some success.

17. Commonwealth Day

- 17.1 This was celebrated on Monday 14th March and was attended by some 20 parishioners. The Chairman had read out the Queen's message to the Commonwealth and Peter Williams read out the Commonwealth Affirmation on behalf of the PCC. The flag was then raised by Geoff Hacker and was flown all day.
- 17.2 Following the raising of the flag those attending moved to the Village Hall field where two oak trees were planted. The Chairman planted one to commemorate the life of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh on behalf of the Parish and Sue Harris planted one to celebrate HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and our contribution to Her Majesty's Green Canopy on behalf of the Village. The trees had been obtained by Mike Hall's son at a discount, and were being watered regularly.
- 17.3 A glass of bubbles was then raised by all in the Village Hall to seal the event.

18. Broadband

- 18.1 There was nothing further to report at present.

19. Parish Website.

- 19.1 Mike Hall provided an update. The website now was showing the Commonwealth Day and Queen's Jubilee tree planting. There had been 492 visits to the website with a slight spike in April likely to be due to the Queen's Jubilee Beacon Lighting registration but numbers of visits had recently dropped off. 30% of the visits had been from USA. The Platinum Jubilee and Village Hall and Events pages had the majority of the visits. He said that he was always open to suggestions for further content if required.

20. Local Government Matters.

- 20.1 Cllr Rideout had been unable to attend the meeting but her updated report for April had been circulated recently.

21. Any Other Business

- 21.1 It was reported that the Bourton and Silton Charities Trust have offered £800 towards the cost of a defibrillator. Michael Metcalf had done much research on the matter and ascertained that the cost would be in the region of £1,760 with a small installation cost. Batteries and pads would need to be replaced every 2-5 years. It would be locked but an access code would be available to renters of the Village Hall and village residents. It would be located on the wall of the proposed extension to the Village Hall. There would be a 10-week delivery time. Eve Wynn, who is in charge of the Bourton defibrillator

and the Bourton Clerk, would be willing to brief everyone on how it worked, and Sue Harris reported that Jess Twiston Davis at the doctor's surgery would also give a talk on its use.

- 21.2 The "A Team" comprising Peter Williams, Bernie Paul, Mike Hall, Dave Gater, Ollie Hall, Keith Harris and George Harris had recently tackled Mrs Smart's garden at the Village Hall Cottage. Some good photographs had been taken before and after by Peter Williams.
- 21.3 A vote of thanks was given by David Masters to the Chairman and to Chris Woodhouse for all the work they do on behalf of the village.

There being no more business, the meeting closed at 6.35 p.m.