

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH MEETING HELD AT SILTON
VILLAGE HALL ON TUESDAY 7 MAY 2024**

1. **Present:** Mrs Diana Masters (Chair), Mr David Masters, Col Chris Woodhouse, Mrs Lynda Woodhouse, Mrs Jill Marsden, Mrs Wendy Harris, Mrs Shirley Rice, Mrs Gillian Baker Creswell, Mr Tim Dutson, Mrs Rosie Dutson, Col Peter Williams (Chair Bourton Parish Council).

2. **Apologies.** George Harris, Mike & Michela Metcalf, Sandra Menzies, David Desborough, Rob & Bryony Harris, Keith & Sue Harris, Cllr Belinda Ridout.

3. **Election of Chairman.** (This item was chaired by Chris Woodhouse)
 - 3.1 Diana Masters has chaired Silton Parish Meeting for the last 18 months or so and was willing to stand again, if elected. No other nominations or candidates were put forward and Diana Masters was re-elected for a further year. Proposed by Jill Marsden, seconded by Lynda Woodhouse and carried unanimously.

4. **Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising.**
 - 4.1 A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2023 had already been emailed to all those whose email addresses were known. There were no comments on the minutes or matters arising that were not on the agenda and they were duly signed off as a true record.

5. Accounts.

- 5.1 The Chair informed the Meeting that last year the Parish had certified itself exempt from having an audit carried out by an external auditor.
- 5.2 The criteria for being able to claim exemption is that the Parish Meeting's gross income or expenditure is less than £25,000 per year.
- 5.3 However, the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) still has to be completed but only a Certificate of Exemption has to be submitted to the external auditors, not the whole Return.
- 5.4 If a review by the external auditors is requested the Parish Meeting will automatically incur a bill of £200 plus VAT but if it chooses to exempt itself there will no cost.
- 5.5 There are 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 the Chair.
 - b. The Annual Internal Audit Report. The audit has been carried out by Col Peter Williams who has satisfied himself that the Parish Meeting complies with the relevant financial procedures and controls. His signature is on page 4.
 - c. The Annual Governance Statement. This has been completed by the Chair but needs the Parish Meeting's approval that a sound system of internal controls is in place. This is on page 5.
 - d. The Accounting Statement. This is on page 6 and is a summary of the income and expenditure incurred by

the Parish Meeting during the last 12 months. This has been audited by Col Peter Williams and found to be correct.

- 5.6 Approval was sought for each of the 4 elements:
- a. The Certificate of Exemption. Proposed by David Masters, seconded by Jill Marsden and carried unanimously.
 - b. The Annual Internal Audit Report. Proposed by Lynda Woodhouse, seconded by Wendy Harris and carried unanimously.
 - c. The Annual Governance Statement. Proposed by Gillian Baker Creswell, seconded by Lynda Woodhouse and carried unanimously.
 - d. The Accounting Statement. Proposed by David Masters, seconded by Jill Marsden and carried unanimously.
- 5.7 A copy of the balance sheet was circulated. The Chair emphasised that the account was in a healthy state with nearly £12,500 in the bank as at 31 March and a further £790 in allotment fees having been paid in since. However, she reminded the Meeting that at the Extraordinary Meeting held in February 2023 it was agreed to provide £2,500 towards the cost of refurbishing the Village Hall outbuildings, the Wyndham Project, when this project starts. From this sum £135 has already been spent, the cost of the Permitted Development Application, which was turned down by Dorset Council.
- 5.8 Approval of the accounts was proposed by Wendy Harris, seconded by Gillian Baker Creswell and carried unanimously.

6. Risk Register.

- 6.1 This had updated by Keith Harris, Mike Hall and Chris Woodhouse on 31 March 2024. Copies had been emailed to members before the Meeting. Approval of the Risk Register was proposed by Lynda Woodhouse, seconded by Wendy Harris and carried unanimously.

7. Assets Register.

- 7.1 This had also been emailed to members before the Meeting. It includes the shelter, the telephone box, the defibrillator, the deer management High Seat and also a projector, screen and the necessary electrical connectors for the projector used for presentations.
- 7.2 The defibrillator was commissioned in May 2023 and has been registered with the SW Ambulance Service. Access can be obtained by ringing 999 which will then give you the access combination.
- 7.3 It was agreed that the combination would also be displayed in the Village Hall kitchen where it would be available to regular users of the Hall.

8. Precept.

- 8.1 Currently the Precept stands at £2800 annually, £1400 being paid to the Parish Meeting by Dorset Council every 6 months. The Precept is paid out of Council Tax charges which pays Dorset Council, Dorset Adult Social Care Precept, Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service and, among other Towns and Parishes, Silton Parish.

- 8.2 The Chair reminded the Meeting that annual payments are made to the Village Hall of £1000, to the PCC £1000 towards the upkeep of the church yard and from this year onwards more than £400 for the Parish insurance premium. As a result there is very little left at the end of each year, less than £400 for all other expenses.
- 8.3 After a lengthy discussion it was agreed that the Precept for next year should be increased to £3,000. Proposed by David Masters, seconded by Lynda Woodhouse and carried unanimously.

9. Planning applications and correspondence.

- 9.1 Since the last meeting the Chair had received three applications for planning permission.
- 9.2 **One.** At the Parish Meeting held on 14 November 2023, Mrs Denham, the owner of Stroud Paddock barn was present to argue the case for her application to convert her barn into holiday accommodation. The Parish Meeting opposed this application but Dorset Council subsequently approved it.
- 9.3 However, a Preliminary Bat Survey has confirmed that Stroud Paddock Barn has bats in residence so the outcome of this application is by no means certain.
- 9.4 **Two.** The Parish Meeting received an application to build an additional barn to store grain and agricultural machinery just off Fantley Lane below the allotments. This application was not opposed.
- 9.5 **Three.** The Parish Meeting received an application for a change of use to the Annex at Stroud Cottage to enable it

to be rented out commercially. This application was not opposed.

10. Highways Matters

10.1 There was nothing of note to report.

11. 80th Anniversary of D Day 6 June 2024

11.1 The Chair reminded the Meeting of the preparations in hand in the village to celebrate this anniversary. This will be part of a National programme to celebrate the 80th anniversary of D-Day. Beacons will be lit throughout the UK and the Commonwealth and Silton will join them.

11.2 All beacons are to be lit at the same time, 9.15pm, but as the following day is not a bank holiday there will probably not be quite as many children as there were at the Coronation celebrations last May.

11.3 The bar will open at 6.30pm and the BBQ at 7.00pm. which will give everyone plenty of time to enjoy themselves before the beacon is lit by a special guest.

11.4 Members were asked that if they wish to attend the celebration to let Jackie Dyer know numbers by 27 May to inform the catering requirements. Jackie can be contacted by email on jack27.dyer@gmail.com

11.5 The Parish Meeting Insurance brokers have confirmed that the Parish insurance policy covers it for legal liability in the event that it is held legally liable or negligent for any incident that occurs at the beacon party

12. Village Hall

12.1 The Chair updated the Meeting on progress to date

12.2 There are three parallel strands of work:

- a. **One.** David Masters is leading on Strand 1 getting a new 50-year lease agreed with the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF). To achieve this the PCC needed to pass a resolution to seek a new 50-year lease and get this approved by the DBF. This was confirmed at their APC meeting held on 18 April.
- b. The Village Hall Committee also needed to resolve to accept a new 50-year lease. This was confirmed at the Village Hall AGM held on 29 April.
- c. The cost of this new lease will be £750 plus VAT, almost all legal fees, although David Masters is seeking to reduce this sum if possible.
- d. **Two.** Peter Williams, assisted by Mike Burroughs, is leading on Strand 2, seeking planning permission for a change of use of the outbuildings, changing them from dilapidated storerooms to a usable meeting room with secure storage space. He submitted a Permitted Development Enquiry to Dorset Council in April 2023 but this was turned down and he is now required to submit a full planning application.
- e. To do this he has engaged the services of an architect, Stephen Way, to provide the detailed drawings, make the planning application on the Parish Meeting's behalf, liaise with the required structural engineer and obtain building regulation approval.
- f. However, in recent years the conversion of all old buildings, such as the Village Hall sheds, have come

under increasing scrutiny with regards to wildlife and biodiversity and all planning applications now have to be accompanied by a Bat Survey Report and a Biodiversity Plan.

- g. Peter Williams therefore contacted ABR Ecology who carried out a Preliminary Bat Roost Survey on 9 Feb and bat droppings were discovered in the outbuildings. These were sent away for analysis and they appear to support a roost for the greater horseshoe bat one of the rarest species of bats in the UK.
- h. The next step is to carry out three surveys carried out when bats are active, between May and August and only once these have been completed can he submit the planning application which has to be accompanied by a Dorset Natural Environmental Team Biodiversity Plan Certificate of Approval.
- i. This is not inexpensive. Stephen Way's bill will be £1300 but this does not include the cost of the Structural Engineer or the bill to submit the application to Dorset Council. The cost of the three bat surveys will be just over £2000 and in addition there will be the cost of any mitigation measures that have to put in place.
- j. **Three.** Chris Woodhouse, assisted by David Desborough, is leading on Strand 3, writing the Business Case and exploring how to raise the money required for the project, possibly upwards of £120,000. A draft of the Business Case was discussed by the Wyndham Project Steering Group at a meeting held on 30 Jan and it was decided to pause any further work on

it until the planning application had been submitted and the Dorset Council decision known.

- k. The Chair reminded the Meeting that they had approved a grant of £2,500 towards the cost of the project in Feb 23 of which only £135 has been spent to date. In addition, SOFOS has approved a grant of £15,000 towards the project and has agreed to pay the bills arising from the bat surveys from this grant.
- l. In addition to these two sums a further £41,000 has been pledged by donors towards the cost of the project but the Chair was not at liberty at present to identify the donors.
- m. The shortfall in funds at present seems to be approx. £60,000. However, the Meeting was reminded that when the Village Hall was last refurbished and the new kitchen and loos were built in 2004/5 the architect's estimate for the work involved came to £193,000 but the actual bill was less than £90,000. This shortfall was largely due to the good offices of Manor Farm, their machinery and plant and a great deal of self help and she anticipated being able to call on this help again.
- n. However, it is important that the full cost of the project is provided to potential donors as their contributions are often expressed as a percentage of the whole bill.
- o. **Four.** The Chair informed the Meeting that the Village Hall should shortly have WiFi installed by Wessex Internet at a cost of £1 per month.

13. Village Hall Field

- 13.1 The Chair informed the Meeting that about the only activity that had taken place on the field since the last

meeting was dog walking which charges regular dog walkers £20 a year for those who do not live in the village. (£10 for Blue Badge holders). Village residents are obviously not charged to use their own field. This activity had raised over £250 for the Parish in the last year.

14. Allotments.

- 14.1 The Annual Allotment Meeting was held on 6 April and was attended by about 30 plot holders. It was far and away the best meeting of allotment holders for several years.
- 14.2 The Parish has 44 plots in total and presently all are rented out at £20 per plot per year.
- 14.3 Fees are still being collected but so far £790 has been banked with more to come.
- 14.4 The Chair thanked Keith Harris for all the work he does at the allotments, cutting the grass and the hedges and for keeping them so well looked after.

15. Footpaths

- 15.1 The Chair informed the Meeting that the footpath leading to the Doctor's Surgery will shortly need clearing once again and the rails leading up from the road need repairing. Last year the footpath was cleared in July but no repairs were carried out on the railings. They are now in danger of collapsing in places so will need to be repaired shortly.

16. Himalayan Balsam

- 16.1 The Chair reminded the Meeting that this plant will come into flower again in July/August and will need tackling

once again if the Parish is to keep on top of it. Rather more balsam was collected last year than in previous years so more work will be needed if it is to be eliminated. Further details will be circulated nearer the time when the next “balsam bash” will take place.

17. Commonwealth Day

- 17.1 This was celebrated on Mon 11 March and was attended by some 20 parishioners. The Chair read out the King’s message to the Commonwealth and Col Peter Williams read out the Commonwealth Affirmation on behalf of the PCC. The flag was then raised by Geoff Hacker on the church tower and was flown all day.
- 17.2 Following the raising of the flag those attending moved into the church for a glass of bubbles to seal the event.

18. Dorset Council Matters.

- 18.1 Belinda Ridout’s Ward Report for April had been circulated recently. There were no comments on the Report but the Meeting congratulated her on being re-elected.

19. Any Other Business

- 19.1 **Valedictory Marian & Hugh Honnywill.** On 31 April, Marian Honnywill handed over her post as Secretary of the Village Hall committee, a post she had held for many years. The Meeting was reminded that between 2010 and 2014 Marian also held the position of Chair of Siltan Parish Meeting a post Hugh had also held between 1994 and 1996.

- 19.1.1 Although Marian and Hugh no longer live in Silton the Village owed them a huge debt of gratitude for all their hard work in making the village such a pleasant place to live and work in, something they had contributed to for so many years.
- 19.1.2 This seemed an appropriate opportunity therefore to say thank you on behalf of the Village for all their hard work and this was enthusiastically supported by the Meeting.
- 19.1.3 **Plant Sale.** Chris Woodhouse reminded the Meeting that the Plant Sale would take place on Saturday 11 May between 1000-1200. Setting up would take place on Friday afternoon starting at 1400.
- 19.1.4 Col Peter Williams thanked the Parish Meeting for their contribution towards the upkeep of the churchyard.
- 19.1.5 **Dunns Lane.** Gillian Baker Creswell informed the Meeting that the road near the ford needed repairing.
- 19.1.6 **Waterloo Lane.** Wendy Harris informed the Meeting that Waterloo Lane would be closed for the next 2 days for repairs.
- 19.1.7 **The Definitive Map.** Tim Dutson asked about the lack of signs on the footpath running behind Taylor Hayes. This is footpath N70/10 which runs from Church Road links up with N70/11 having crossed Grimsey Lane and leads to Feltham Farm. The details are on the Definitive Map on the Dorsetforyou website.
- 19.2 There being no other business the meeting closed at 7.15pm