**HILTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES of the meeting of the Parish Council held on Tuesday 2nd November 2021 at the Fox Inn, Lower Ansty, Dorset, DT2 7PN**

**PRESENT:** Cllrs Justine McGuiness (JMcG) (Chairman) Catherine Langham (CL) Shulla Jaques (SJ) Rodney Northover (RN) Marion Walbridge (MW); in addition, Unitary Councillor Jill Haynes (JH), Clive Jones (CJ) George Sotiriadis (GS) attended by Zoom

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Two members of the public and Mr. David Green, Clerk (DG)

1. **WELCOME & APOLOGIES:** The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS:** The minutes of the previous Parish Council meeting held on the 7th September 2021 were agreed and signed the Chairman.
3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** Cllrs Langham & Northover in relation to Hawkes Field Farm.
4. **MATTERS ARISING:**

**4.1. Telephone Box**

The Chairman noted that the telephone box has now been repainted and thanked Marc for his excellent work. ‘Information’ signs will be ordered shortly and gold leaf will be applied to the top of the box; cork tiles will be installed inside for displaying posters and an encased map will be fitted on the exterior of the box.

**4.2 Ash die-back**

The Chairman noted that a new ash-die back map had been recently produced by CJ. This will be added to the Facebook page.

**4.3 Post Box**

The Chairman confirmed that she had made a forceful complaint to the Post Office concerning their failure for over a year to repair the door of the Victorian post box located on what is a listed and locally significant building.

**4.4 Speed Survey**

SJ reported that the speed survey equipment had been installed in several locations and results are awaited; this will be followed up.

**4.5 Old Brewery Hall refurbishment**

The Chairman thanked the Village Hall committee for their work in repainting and refurbishing the hall.

1. **UNITARY COUNCILLORS REPORT**:

JH has been allocated a new portfolio of ‘Corporate Development and Transformation’.

Dorset Council is in the process of discussed budgets and how best to address the £ 22 million funding shortfall. Much of this has arisen in Adult Social Care (ASC) with patients being more rapidly discharged from hospital which has put pressure on services.

A ‘spend to save’ initiative has produced some cost savings with children’s services with the acquisition of St Mary’s School near Shaftesbury.

The Council is working on a ‘hedge to hedge’ initiative to improve the co-ordination of utility services working along the county’s roads.

It was noted that Dorset has some of the highest Council Tax charges in the country, primarily due to town ‘add ins’, and because of high police and fire service costs.

JH has not seen the Local Plan report for the North Dorset area but there will be briefings for councillors in the spring before the review is conducted.

1. **OPEN FORUM:**

It was noted that the new committee is now in place at the Old Brewery Hall and the management of the facility had improved after a period of stagnation. The Badminton Club though has ceased due to an absence of willing participants and very few younger players. The requirement for CRB checks had been an obstacle to attracting anyone to run the youth section and work commitments appeared to be dissuading others. GS and MW will discuss with the committee if the Parish Council can assist.

The issue of a possible car sharing scheme was raised. The Chairman noted that the issue of Community Transport had been looked at the past but the demand was limited, though she thought that informal arrangements were not uncommon.

The issue of overgrown and missing road signs was raised – photos of locations will be submitted for referral to the Community Highways Officer.

1. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS, DECISIONS & ISSUES**

**7.1 Application No: P/CLE/2021/02893 Hawkes Field Farm Hillside Hilton DT11 0DN - Certificate of Lawfulness to use land and buildings for parking of heavy goods vehicles and vans Hawkes Field**

A representative of the applicant attended the meeting and explained that equestrian activity at the site had commenced in 2009 and this involved the parking of one large vehicle on the site and several smaller vehicles (3.5 tone vans), which were not considered to be heavy goods vehicles; in addition there were visiting vehicles such as farriers and straw suppliers; she explained that the textile recycling business also now operates from the site and involves the parking of one large vehicle at the premises for textile collection, plus several smaller vehicles.

It was noted that the Vehicles Operators licences, produced as evidence of continuous use of the premises to park heavy goods vehicles, in fact showed Sandhills Farm, Holwell, as the ‘operating centre’. The applicant’s representative, when asked to explain this said that the situation had been ‘complex’. The applicants representative when asked what would happen if vehicles could not be kept on the premises said that the business would have to close.

It was also noted that a large van is frequently parked at the road entrance to the premises overnight which looks very out of place. The applicant’s representative said this was only occasional for delivery purposes for stock to be taken to Reading or Milton Keynes and the vehicle was parked by the road to prevent light disturbance to residents and horses when the van leaves very early in the morning.

It was also noted that the application concerned premises in the centre of the AONB which had caused considerable disquiet to local residents.

The Clerk noted that the application does not appear to be supported by the evidence presented in the application and that this would have to be considered by the case officer. The Council agreed to raise an Objection to the application and the Clerk would respond to the comment’s deadline of 3rd November.

In relation the Certificate of Lawfulness application P/CLE/2021/01369 – to continue the use of the former equestrian storage & office building and its curtilage as a dwelling – the Clerk confirmed that has been refused by the planning officer. The applicant’s representative advised that this application had only been made because they had been asked to submit this by Dorset Council.

1. **COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES UPDATE**

**8.1 Queens Platinum Jubilee event**

The Chairman reported that over 50 people had attended the meeting to discuss arrangements for the Queens Platinum Jubilee weekend. It had been agreed will be three activity ‘hubs’:

1. Hilton Church – there will be a flower festival and a music event
2. Old Brewery Hall – there will an exhibition celebrating the 70-years of the Queens reign
3. The Green at Melcombe Bingham – marquee events

In addition to this there will some lunches, garden events and the Fox will be holding a ‘Race Day’. There may also be a beacon lighting event at Bulbarrow. The Chairman said the weekend will aim to involve the whole community including Melcombe Horsey parish.

The event will require the purchase of some flags and hire of exhibition stands to be funded from Parish Council reserves.

1. **BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR 2022/2023**

The Clerk has proposed that the precept be raised by £ 162 from £ 5,450 to £ 5,612 for 2022-2023. The Clerk explained that there are considerable inflationary pressures in the economy and the Parish Council is not immune to these. The effect of setting this budget on Band D Council Tax would be an increase of 91 pence for the year.

It was agreed that an incremental pay increase for the Clerk should be back-dated.

1. **FINANCIAL REPORT:**

**13.1 Finance report:**

The Clerk reported that the bank balance stood at £ 13,824.92, the general reserve at £ 11,396.42 and that the finances were generally in good order, the precept instalment having been received. A contribution of £ 193.75 towards the cost of the village speed survey had been given by Melcombe Bingham parish.

**13.2 Retrospective payments authorised:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Amount** | **Payee** | **Reason** |
| 08/09/2021 | **£ 50.00** | H & A Church (clock) | Grant |
| 08/09/2021 | **£ 37.45** | David Green | Expenses |
| 3009/2021 | **£ 231.60** | David Green | Pay Sept 2021 |
| 12/10/2021 | **£ 166.20** | HMRC - PAYE | PAYE |

**13.3 Grant Application**

A grant application by Hilton PCC was considered. This related to proposed expenditure of £ 2,150 relating to new lighting and an upgraded power supply provision, the annual cost of the churchyard gardener and the repair of the church roof alarm.

It was noted that no supporting financial information had been provided in relation the application, although the Parish Council understands that the PCC does have substantive reserves. CL explained that these are really retained for emergency repairs and would not ordinarily by used for new expenditures such as new lighting.

It was agreed that the PCC should be asked to provide documentary confirmation of the level of their reserves and to explain how the cost of the proposed expenditures would be met if the Parish Council agreed to a partial grant towards some of these costs, with a matching grant being a possibility.

It was noted that Hilton Church is a widely used community facility and is not only a place of religious worship; CL noted that the church organises many fund-raising events in order to meet the annual diocese charge.

1. **HIGHWAYS & RIGHTS OF WAY:**

**11.1 Grit Bin**

RN reported that the grit bin had been installed. The Clerk advised that this bin has been classified as a ‘community’ rather than a ‘strategic’ bin and therefore would not be filled free of charge. The Clerk will arrange for a salt delivery to RN for distribution around the parish.

**11.2 Signage at the Ford**

It was noted that several vehicles had recently become stuck in the ford and the suggestion had been made for the signage to be improved to dissuade people from using this route.

The Clerk advised that signage at the ford at Devils Brook had been checked by the Community Highways Officer and had been found to be satisfactory. Dorset Highways have said that they would not give permission for any additional signage at this location.

It was noted that users of the ford do so at their own risk and should be more vigilant before proceeding to cross. It was agreed that this issue should be closed.

**12. CORRESPONDENCE:**

The Clerk had received correspondence which had been circulated, and specifically mentioned:

1. **20/10/2021 – email Dorset Local Access recruitment –** relating to the recruitment of volunteers for a rights of way/open spaces forum.
2. **27/10/2021 – email Dorset Council Comms –** concerning local parish interest in the possible installation of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points. It was noted that this should be kept under consideration, if for example, there was a request for an EV charging point at the Village Hall. The Clerk noted that it was likely that in a rural area such as Hilton it is likely that interested householders are likely to require their own installation for which there are HM Government grants of £350 towards the cost available. CJ noted that the costs of installing EV points on commercial sites are not inconsequential.
3. **27/10/2021 –** **email from the DAPTC and reply by Dorset Council** – these concerned Local Plan consultation, Neighbourhood Plans and provided confirmation that Dorset Council will no longer send ‘neighbour notification’ letters for planning applications, unless these are required by legislation.
4. **ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA:**

Budget 2022/23 finalisation and precept request

Speed Survey progress

Queens Platinum Jubilee event progress

1. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING –** Tuesday 4th January 2022 at the Fox Inn, Lower Ansty.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 20.40

Signed ………………………….…...…...……(Chairman) Date ……….………………………

**Report to the Parish Council October 2021**

**Jill Haynes, Chalk Valleys Ward**

Dear Councillors

This will be a brief report this month as I have been given a new portfolio role and have been frantically meeting people and reading up in order to get up to speed. I am very pleased to have been given the area of Corporate Development and Transformation. This includes the Broadband superfast and gigabit roll out. HR for the whole council, performance management and most particularly the oversight of the spend to save schemes that will make a big difference to the quality of service that the council provides to the public. I will provide an update on those next month.

We are currently, like the towns and parishes, moving into the budget setting process for 22/23. The council has come out of the pandemic with a considerable overspend not covered by Government funding. We will be holding two all day workshops with officers and all councillors to discuss how we close the £22M current gap. We do have plans for the medium term which will make a big difference going forward but there still needs to be reductions to resolve the short-term deficit.

The budget does seem to have helped a bit and certainly we were expecting further cuts to our funding which now do not look like happening. We will probably be taking the two percent inflationary council tax rise and will be debating the additional one percent for Adult Social Care. We have considerable pressure in that area at the moment and some £14M of the overspend comes from ASC. This is due to a number of factors: Not enough people to do the work and hence a rapid rise in the price we are having to pay both for care at home and in care homes. In Dorset a very large number of people who pay for their own care and quite frankly a lot of greed larger care home businesses putting up the prices which everyone has to pay as there is no alternative. Finally, to create the perfect storm the hospitals needing to get people out of hospital much sooner than they normally would do to try to catch up on the operation backlog and so those coming out into Council care need more care and cost more. More on that budget setting process next month too.

Lastly, I would like to say a massive thank you to all those who went out yesterday in the terrible storm and flooding to help people in their neighbourhood. It came with such force there was little anyone could do at the time to stop damage just try to keep the water running and clear the trees. It’s horrible for those poor people who had water in the house let’s hope for some better days to help with the drying out. It is import to let the council know if you did get flooded as this will allow us to use the data to work with other agencies to try to work up schemes of work to stop it happening in future.