

# Mere Town Council

*TOWN CLERK - MRS. L. C. WOOD*

**Minutes of a meeting of the Town Council held on Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018 at 7.30 p.m. in The Andy Young Pavilion, Springfield Road, Mere, BA12 6EW**

**Present:** Councillors John Jordan (Chairman), Mrs. K. Symonds (Vice-Chairman), A. Colman, P. Coward, R. Coward, C. Hazzard, R. Hill, A. Mead, E. Mitchell, B. Norris, R. Sims & Mrs. L. Traves.

Also 7 members of public + 1 press

*Due to GDPR it is now considered good practice not to identify members of the public by name within these Minutes.*

## **Public Session**

*The Chairman will convene the Town Council meeting after the public session (please note that members of the public are no longer permitted to speak unless invited to do so by the Chairman).*

A resident of The Lynch raised concerns about the temporary road closures in Pettridge Lane and Boar Street asking where the diversions were going to be, whether there would be any diversion signage and what would happen if any of the properties along The Lynch were damaged by vehicles using The Lynch as a diversion route. A resident of Pettridge Lane said that he had received a notice which gave details of the official diversionary route and also said that there will be a person on duty during the closure to supervise traffic - it was assumed that this notice was sent to all residents in Pettridge Lane. The Clerk pointed out that the Town Council had merely received copies of the notice and that the enquiries raised should be directed to Wiltshire Council.

A second resident of The Lynch said that HGVs were still driving down Water Street and The Lynch. He said that the residents often telephoned the companies concerned who are always very apologetic and blame their Sat Nav systems. The chairman said he would be attending the CATG meeting this week and will ask for a progress update on the issue raised regarding The Lynch.

Cllr Norris said that he had attended a rivers group meeting this week where committee members were very worried about the water levels in Mere's rivers. After a respite during the summer Wessex Water started pumping again and within two days the water levels in the rivers were significantly reduced. Wessex Water intend to start pumping at maximum capacity from 18 November and I have been asked to request that the Town Council write to Wessex Water and express concerns about the levels. The Chairman agreed that this matter could be raised as an emergency item during the meeting.

Cllr Sims reported that he attended the Shaftesbury and Gillingham Transport Forum meeting last week where they discussed the sale of land near Gillingham station by Network Rail. "This land would have provided extra much-needed parking for rail users and has also left local businesses that occupied the land with an uncertain future. We also learned that the school in Gillingham has installed two new cycling sheds. I have a new timetable for the buses that stop in Mere." He also advertised an event taking place on 9 December when the Warminster Military Wives Choir will be performing in the church. Proceeds of this event will be split between St. Michaels Church & Mere Cancer Research.

A resident of The Lynch informed members about the bridge at The Lynch that had been repaired by Wiltshire Council and then subsequently vandalised. He said that Stour Homes, who are working on a development in the area, kindly repaired the vandalism damage to the bridge.

**Apologies for absence** received from Cllrs. G. Jeans and Mrs. J. Hurd

**204. To receive declarations of interest from members and to consider requests for new DPI dispensations.**

*Members are invited to declare disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests in items on the agenda as required by the Mere Town Council Code of Conduct for Members and by the Localism Act 2011.*

- Cllr. C. Hazzard declared a pecuniary interest in Minute No. 211 a) (recipient)
- Cllr. Hill declared a personal interest in Planning Application 18/10060/TCA

**205. Minutes** – RESOLVED to approve the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018 on proposal made by Cllr. Hazzard, seconded by Cllr. Mead and carried with a unanimous vote of those present on 1.10.18

**206. Matters Arising**

**a) Centenary of the end of the First World War (Battle's Over – a Nation's Tribute) – update on progress for event commemorations and further requirements** – The Chairman thanked Cllr. Sims for selling the large event poppies to businesses and householders in the town. Cllr. Sims said that he wanted to thank Mrs. Jill Turner for her help. The Chairman said that the mementos of the WW1 soldiers would be collected from their current locations and erected together in Jubilee Gardens during the week. He wanted to thank those at Mere Library for all their help in giving out the maps – they had handed out over 100 maps. The Clerk reported that the Town Council had ordered a new Union flag which would be erected on the flag pole on or before 11.11.18. Publicity has been issued but a reminder would be put on Mere Mutters Facebook page on Thursday this week. The Remembrance Service takes place at Mere War Memorial where the Chairman will lay a wreath on behalf of the Town Council. A temporary road closure will take place in The Square for 10 minutes from 10.57 until 11.07 a.m. The Council's grounds staff have road signs and will be on hand to stop traffic although any extra help with this would be appreciated. With the help of Mr. Richard Coward, arrangements are in place for the beacon to be lit on Castle Hill and the Council will notify the police and fire service. The Chairman will read out a Tribute at 6.50 p.m. from Jubilee Gardens where a bugler will play The Last Post at 6.55 p.m. The beacon will be lit at 7.00 p.m. and Church bells are to be rung at 7.05 p.m.

**207. Reports & Consultations**

**a) Neighbourhood Policing Report** – Cllr. Sims reported on a recent telephone scam where people are being telephoned and told that their boiler needs servicing and they need to pay money up front to have this done.

**b) County Councillor's report** - None

**208. Planning**

**a) Applications:** (All applications can be viewed on Wiltshire Council's website <http://planning.wiltshire.gov.uk/Northgate/PlanningExplorer/ApplicationSearch.aspx> – and type in the relevant application number)

Application Ref: 18/09215/TCA  
Application for: Work to trees in a Cons. Area  
Proposal: Two dead Birch trees – remove  
At: The Rondel, Castle Hill Lane, Mere. BA12 6JB  
APPLICATION DETERMINED (APPROVED)

Application Ref: 18/10060/TCA  
Application for: Work to trees in a Cons. Area  
Proposal: Goat Willow – Section Fell  
At: The Hurdles, Water Street, Mere. BA12 6DZ

Cllr. Mead reported that he had viewed the tree which looked like an overgrown bamboo. RESOLVED to recommend approval on proposal made by Cllr. R. Coward, seconded by Cllr. Mead and carried with a

majority vote. Cllr. Hill, who had previously declared a personal interest in the above application, refrained from discussion and voting.

**b) Neighbourhood Plan – RESOLUTION to agree to the application for Mere Neighbourhood Plan Area based on the parish boundary.** The Clerk explained that in order to submit the application to designate a Neighbourhood Area, she needed to submit a copy of the Town Council's meeting resolution to provide evidence of the council's agreement to the application. RESOLVED to approve the designation of the Mere Neighbourhood Plan Area based on the parish boundary on proposal made by Cllr. John Jordan, seconded by Cllr. Norris and carried with a unanimous vote.

**c) Review of Wiltshire Core Strategy (renamed Wiltshire Local Plan) for the period to 2036 – Report on consultation event** – The Chairman reported that the vice chairman and he had attended as representatives of Mere Town Council & the Clerk had attended as a representative of the Mere Neighbourhood Planning Group. The event was held in Trowbridge on Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> October. Cllr. Mrs. Symonds reported that this particular event was aimed at rural parishes and many of the representatives present came from much smaller villages than Mere which was quite evident in the issues raised. It was a workshop-type event where we were asked to think of issues that affected us and how policies in the new Local Plan could address those issues and how policies within the Local Plan could support proportionate housing growth outside named market towns and principal settlements (the rural area) and support the role of neighbourhood plans.

## **209. Highways, Rivers, Footpaths, Traffic & Transport**

**a) Highway & footpath issues for Parish Steward, Wiltshire online reporting & street lighting faults**

- None reported

**b) Urgent Closure Notice of Boar Street/Pettridge Lane, Mere – 6<sup>th</sup> November 2018** – The Chairman reported that a resident had spoken to him to complain that this work was not going to address the worst part of Boar Street.

**c) Temporary Closure Notice of C59 Pettridge Lane (Part), Mere – 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018** - Noted

**d) Suggestion to extend footpath around the radius of T-junction at Gillingham Corner and add dropped kerbs** – The Chairman reported that this had been raised previously at CATG level but it remained unresolved as it had not been possible to identify the land owner on the western side of the Gillingham corner junction. He pointed out that the issue had been raised to address pedestrian safety when crossing the road as visibility was so poor. The Chairman said that he had recently taken a group of people on a walk when one of the group suggested that the footpath could be extended around the radius of the junction on both sides and then a dropped kerb could be provided to give pedestrians a much shorter stretch of road to cross with more visibility and be more visible to drivers. The Chairman said that he thought this was a good idea and said he would bring it to the meeting to see if members felt that it was a sensible proposal. A number of members felt that the proposal could be hazardous and may put pedestrians in danger and the general feeling of the meeting was that the highways authority should be asked to submit a proposal. The Chairman agreed to raise this matter again with highways representatives to see if they could come up with an alternative solution.

### **EMERGENCY ITEM**

**e) Low river levels** – with reference to the information given by Cllr. Norris in the public session it was RESOLVED to write to Wessex Water to express the Town Council's concern that the river levels had dropped in the last month. Proposal made by Cllr. Jordan, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Symonds and carried with a unanimous vote. Cllr. Norris said that the Town Council may be interested to learn that the rivers group had recently discovered that in 1969 Mere Parish Council fought ferociously to stop the increase in abstraction rates by Wessex Water and even paid for legal advice although, unfortunately, they lost their case.

## **210. Buildings, Open Spaces, Play Areas, Sports Grounds, Allotments & Cemeteries**

**a) Clearance of old swimming pool site** – The Chairman reported that he had approved a quotation from a local company to clear and level the swimming pool site so that the Town Council would then be in a

position to get meaningful quotations to equip the site. The quotation was within the budget allocation that was made last year.

**b) Vandalism in public toilets** – the Clerk reported that on four consecutive evenings last week, the public toilets had been vandalised. The vandalism all took place in the ladies toilets and involved breaking and kicking in toilet roll dispensers, sanitary bins and breaking in cubicle doors and generally leaving the place in an absolute mess. The estimated total cost of cleaning, repairing and replacing equipment will be around £400 - £450. The Chairman and Clerk had taken the decision on Thursday last week to lock the toilets at 6.00 pm and open again at 7.00 am until further notice. The Clerk has reported the incident to the police who have now contacted her to ask if the Town Council would like to make a formal complaint which will mean interviews, taking statements and getting a breakdown of the damage and costs involved. If the Town Council does want to make a formal complaint then the police would like to know how we would like them to deal with the culprits if they can be identified: the conventional route which would lead to a caution and/or court or by community resolution. Members unanimously agreed that they would like the Town Council to make an official complaint and opt for community resolution. Members also unanimously agreed to erect infra-red CCTV cameras (with CCTV surveillance signage) to give surveillance of the building and to do this a.s.a.p. Once the CCTV is in place then the toilets should be re-opened at night. Members felt strongly that the public toilets should remain open 24 hours a day.

**c) Repairs to Castle Street Car Park boundary wall – assessment from local builder** – the Clerk reported that she had asked a local builder to assess the walls around Castle Street Car Park. The contractor had noted that the worst area is on the outside (road side) along Barton Lane and that it needs repointing to make it safe and it may be necessary to replace one or two stones. He didn't think that it was necessary to repoint the whole wall although he pointed out that it was difficult to give a fixed quote because he may find that he would have to do a bit more work than he initially thought once the job was started. His advice was that £300 - £500 should be sufficient money to make it safe and protect it and that would include using proper lime mortar for the repointing. RESOLVED to ask the builder to carry out the work as advised on proposal made by Cllr. Norris, seconded by Cllr. Hill and carried with a unanimous vote.

## **211. Finance, Policy & Resources**

**a) Payments** – RESOLVED to approve payments set out in payment schedule, on proposal made by Cllr. Mrs. Traves, seconded by Cllr. R. Coward and carried with a unanimous vote of those present. (Cllr. Hazzard, having declared a pecuniary interest, left the room and took no part in discussion or voting).

**b) Enquiries about PCC contribution towards grounds maintenance of St. Michaels Churchyard** – the Clerk explained that this matter had been raised because she had received an enquiry from the treasurer of St. Michaels PCC who said he was reviewing their expenditure and wanted to understand the history of the arrangement of their contribution to Mere Town Council for the upkeep of the churchyard and whether there was a document outlining what the agreement was as his understanding was that when a churchyard closes it is normal for the responsibility for the maintenance of that churchyard to pass to the local town council. The Clerk said that she had written back saying that she was not certain whether or not an official Order of Closure for St. Michael's Churchyard had ever been made but that it was her understanding that the Church, knowing that the transfer would have been made to the Local Authority, then Salisbury District Council, and that the standard of maintenance would be fairly poor, had agreed that the Parish Council should maintain it and that the PCC would make a financial contribution. The Clerk pointed out that the PCC's contribution of £456 p.a. is less than 14% of the cost to the Town Council. The Clerk said that she had subsequently discovered that the Churchyard was officially closed in 1857 which was before the introduction of Parish & Town Councils. Cllr. Philip Coward explained that his understanding was that notice was not served to the local authority to take over maintenance at the time of closure order. However, during Rev. John Smith's time in the ????? (1960s, 70s – any idea), he approached the Parish Council to say that the PCC had agreed that a request be made to the local authority to take over the maintenance of the churchyard. It transpired, at that time, that the PCC had not agreed this and there was no Minutes to corroborate this and therefore the request was withdrawn. It was also pointed out to the PCC that the standard of maintenance would not be as high under the local authority as it had been previously and it was at that time that the PCC had agreed that the Town Council (then Parish Council)

should undertake the grass cutting and hedge/tree cutting and that the PCC would make a financial contribution to the Town Council. Members pointed out that if the Church wanted to request that the local authority (Wiltshire Council) take over maintenance of the churchyard then it was highly likely, given the current financial climate, that the standard of maintenance would be significantly less. Cllr. Norris said that the Church must make money from weddings and that they would be unlikely to attract weddings and other events if their grounds are untidy. Cllr. P. Coward said that the churchyard is an important part of the town and he would not want to see a deterioration in its upkeep and for this reason, he hoped that the PCC would recognise that this is a very reasonable contribution. The Clerk said that she was concerned that the PCC understand that the Town Council was only undertaking the grounds maintenance of the churchyard and was not responsible for Risk Assessments and gravestone inspections etc. A member of the public present, who was a PCC Committee member confirmed that the PCC was aware of its responsibilities in this respect and had inspections, with reports, carried out on a routine basis.

**c) Emergency Plan for Mere** – The Chairman reported that this topic had been raised some time ago and he thought that perhaps, as a Town Council, we should have an emergency plan in place so that there was some written documentation of procedures in case some catastrophe strikes. He explained that he had received an offer from Vernon Phillips to help start an emergency plan and that Vernon Phillips would welcome the opportunity to come and talk to the Town Council about this. Members agreed to ask Mr. Philips to attend a future Town Council meeting to talk about an Emergency Plan for Mere.

## **212. General Items & Consultations/Briefing Notes**

**a) Volunteer Award Nomination** – The Chairman informed members that the Town Council had nominated Mrs. Adrienne Howell for a Community First Volunteer Award ‘The Arthur Laflin Volunteer Award’ and that this nomination had been successful. Mrs. Howell had collected her award on 11<sup>th</sup> October. Members of the Town Council were extremely pleased to hear this and said that Mrs. Howell was a very worthy winner.

## **213. Forthcoming meetings/events**

- Seeds4Success Annual General Meeting, Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> November , 7pm – 8.30 pm at Mere Youth Centre, Recreation Ground, Queens Road, Mere. BA12 6EP
- Community Area Transport Group meeting, Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018
- Wiltshire Council Focusing on the Future: various dates & venues

## **214. Future agenda items**

- Parking - The Chairman said that Cllr. Jeans had requested that the Town Council discuss parking and the Chairman would like this discussed at a meeting when Cllr. Jeans is present.
- Rivers - Cllr. Norris asked for an update on Mere’s Rivers to be raised on the next agenda.

*Note: Members are reminded that the Town Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and any disability), Crime and Disorder, Health and Safety and Human Rights.*

\*Further information on these items enclosed/attached

Meeting closed at 20.38 p.m.