

# Mere Town Council

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

**Minutes of a meeting of the Town Council held on Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019 at 7.30 p.m. in The Andy Young Pavilion, Springfield Road, Mere, BA12 6EW**

**Present:** Cllrs. C. Hazzard (Chairman), E. Mitchell (Vice-Chairman), A. Colman, P. Coward, R. Coward, G. Ings, G. Jeans, J. Jordan, A. Mead, B. Norris, R. Pester, R. Sims, Mrs. K. Symonds & Mrs. L. Traves  
**Also:** R. Stone, D. Stone, H. Bell, D. Morris, Mrs. D. Pringle, J. Gammy, F. Legge, L. Dixon, P. Button & G. Ivory.

## **Meeting convened at 7.30 pm with Public Session**

*The Chairman convened the meeting and read out the consent notice for names of members of the public to be recorded in the Minutes.*

Mr. P. Button commented on the planning application at 1 Underdown Mead and said he had submitted an objection to Wiltshire Council's Planning Department but wanted to give the Town Council some additional information – In 1990-1991 developers originally applied for planning permission for 3 semi-detached dwellings in this location but this was refused and they were only allowed to build 2.

Mr. John Gammie speaking on behalf of the Butt of Sherry Preservation Society, would like to thank the Town Council for supporting them in submitting the application for Asset of Community Value. The Butt of Sherry has now been listed as an Asset of Community Value and the group is now applying for funding. We hope that the Town Council will look favourably at our application for funding from the SWW Area Board. If we do succeed the public house will need to be used for many other purposes.

Dick Morris gave an update on issues relating to the stability of the retaining wall alongside the road in Downside Close.

R. Sims said that it grieved him greatly to announce that the local Mere Cancer Committee has decided to call it a day through lack of members. The group has been in existence for 40 years and in that time had raised over £70k. The Chairman said he was sorry to hear this news and congratulated the committee on the tremendous amount of work that they had done over the years in order to raise such an extraordinary amount of money.

John Jordan said he had been asked if the Town Council could provide a water refilling station. He wondered about asking the Church to add it to their project. It was agreed to raise this as a future agenda item for Town Council discussion.

**Apologies for absence received from** Cllr. R. Hill and Cllr. Ings + Cllr. Mitchell said that they apologised but would need to leave the meeting at 9.00 pm

## **87. 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. Jeans declared a pecuniary interest in Minute No. 94a)
- Cllr. Mrs. Traves declared a personal interest in planning application ref: 19/10316/FUL and planning application ref: 19/10786/TCA
- Cllr. John Jordan declared a personal interest in planning application ref: 19/10786/TCA

**88. Minutes – RESOLVED** to approve Minutes of Town Council meeting held on Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019 on proposal made by Cllr. Colman, seconded by Cllr. Ings and carried with a unanimous vote of those present on 4.11.19. **RESOLVED** to approve Minutes of Annual Budget Meeting held on Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019 on proposal made by Cllr. P. Coward, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Traves and carried with a unanimous vote of those present on 20.11.19.

## 89. Matters Arising

**a) The Butt of Sherry – Decision to list The Butt of Sherry Public House, Castle Street, Mere as an Asset of Community Value** – The Clerk informed members that the Town Council had received confirmation that having considered all the information and submissions provided, following the nomination to list the Butt of Sherry as an Asset of Community Value, Wiltshire Council has decided to enter the property onto the list. The information will be entered onto the local land charges register and the property will remain on this list until 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2024. The estate manager for the pub owners has written to Wiltshire Council giving them formal notice of their intention to sell the freehold interest in the property which is being marketed by their agents, James A Baker. This starts the Moratorium process and an interim moratorium on the sale of the asset is now in place until 2nd January 2020. Community Interest groups have the opportunity in these six weeks to request to be treated as a potential bidder. Should WC receive such a request from a community interest group within these six weeks, then a six month ‘full moratorium’ period will be triggered, meaning that no sale can take place before 22.5.2020. There are criteria as to the structure of the community interest group and I suggest that the Town Council should write to the Butt of Sherry informing them of this information and also of their need to contact Wiltshire Council if they wish to be treated as a potential bidder. Mr. John Gammie confirmed that the Butt of Sherry Preservation Society Group had already registered their intention to bid and they were aware of the criteria for structuring the community interest group.

**b) Insurance claim update** – with reference to the break in at the South Chapel in October, the Clerk confirmed that because it was specialist work she had only been able to get one quotation to repair the windows on an ‘as was’ basis and the quotation had come in at nearly £12k + VAT. In the meantime, however, the Council’s insurers had offered to instruct their window contractor to quote for repairs.

## 90. Reports & Consultations

**\*a) Neighbourhood Policing Report** – Cllr. Sims reported that someone from the Police Headquarters had been down to the Mere Police Station to make an assessment whilst he was volunteering there. Members raised concern that the assessment might relate to thoughts about closing the Mere police station.

**b) County Councillor’s report** – Cllr. Jeans said that he would make enquiries about the police station concerns. He also reminded members that his full County Councillors report is printed in Mere Matters.

## 91. 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: 19/10305/TCA  
Application for: Work to Trees in a Conservation Area  
Proposal: T1 – Raise canopy of beech by 1/3 thin  
T2 – Fell dangerous Ash nr. Footpath in field  
T3 – Fell Sycamore in box hedge  
T4 – Fell diseased Sycamore in corner of garden  
T5 – Remove one low limb of Indian Bean tree  
At: The Old Rectory Cottage, Church Street, Mere. BA12 6DS

**RESOLVED** to recommend approval on proposal made by Cllr. R. Coward, seconded by Cllr. Sims and carried with a unanimous vote.

Application Ref: 19/10316/FUL  
Application for: Full Planning  
Proposal: Erection of a new dwelling  
At: 1 Underdown Mead, White Road, Mere. BA12 6EX

The Clerk read out two objection letters. RESOLVED on proposal made by Cllr. Ings, seconded by Cllr. Mitchell and carried with a majority vote to submit the following objection. (As she had declared a personal interest, Cllr. Mrs. Traves abstained from discussion or voting and in order not to compromise his position as Wiltshire Councillor, Cllr. Jeans abstained from discussion or voting although he did say that he would take up the complaint about lack of planning notice.)

**Overdevelopment** – this proposal represents overdevelopment of the site. The plans do not show an accurate representation of the site. Both No. 1 & No. 2 Underdown Mead have conservatories and No. 2 Underdown Mead has a side extension. The area in the front of both properties is tarmac parking and turning areas, some of which is shared between three properties. The proposed new dwelling would have very little amenity land by the time parking and turning areas were incorporated into the site. The proposed development would also result in very little amenity land being left available for No. 1 Underdown Mead.

**Overshadowing** – the proposed development would cause an unacceptable amount of overshadowing to No. 2 Underdown Mead causing a reduction in sunlight and daylight which would result in a loss of amenity.

**Overlooking** – the proposed development would overlook nearby properties and No. 2 Underdown Mead as well as properties on the south-eastern edge of Downside Close that back onto the Old Hollow Road. This would cause an unacceptable loss of privacy to those neighbouring properties.

**Access from Old Hollow** – The Town Council feels it is wholly inappropriate to provide vehicular access from Old Hollow. The vicinity of this access is exactly where the Old Hollow road splits into two – with the higher Old Hollow road (which is a no through road) going one side of a steep bank and the lower Old Hollow road leading down to properties (also a no through road) going the other side of the steep bank. Both roads are single lane and only wide enough for one vehicle. The lower Old Hollow Road is also a bridlepath. The lower Old Hollow Road has no turning space at the bottom and so vehicles have to reverse back up the road. It would be an added hazard if there were to be a new access road created at this point.

Application Ref: 19/10786/TCA  
Application for: Work to Trees in a Conservation Area  
Proposal: T1, T2 & T3 – Leylandii Trees – Fell  
At: Highfields, Castle Hill Lane, Mere. BA12 6JB

RESOLVED to recommend approval on proposal made by Cllr. P. Coward, seconded by Cllr. Ings and carried with a unanimous vote except LT and JJ who had declared interest.

Application Ref: 19/10796/TCA  
Application for: Work to Trees in a Conservation Area  
Proposal: T1 – Beech tree – shorten vertical branches by 3m & lateral branches by 2.5m  
T2 – Horse Chestnut tree – shorten over extended branches in canopy by 1.5m  
T3 – Lime tree – crown lift to 1.5m & cut back overhanging branches to give 2m clearance  
T4 – hedge – reduce height to 3.6m

At: The Old Brewery, Water Street, Mere. BA12 6DY

RESOLVED to recommend approval on proposal made by Cllr. P. Coward, seconded by Cllr. R. Coward and carried with a unanimous vote.

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

***a) Report on CATG meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019 (Signage for The Lynch & dropped kerbs for Edgebridge)*** – the Clerk read extracts from page 4 (item 8) of the Action Notes of the CATG meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> November:

- Issue 6248 – Water Street/The Lynch signage for HGV's – the group agreed to fund the scheme subject to a contribution of 25% from Mere TC (TC decision on funding contribution to be made

- Issue 6481 – Clements Lane dropped kerbs – CATG to action following confirmation that MTC agreed to fund 25% of the costs.

**b) Wiltshire Council's Deadline for receipt of waiting and parking restriction requests** – The Clerk informed members that Wiltshire Council's deadline for the receipt of waiting and parking restriction requests was 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020 and that she had been sent the relevant form (WR1) to be completed if any further parking restrictions were required. Cllr. Jeans said that he had one idea and would ask for this to be raised as an agenda item for the next meeting.

**c) Update on issues for MyWiltshire Reporting App, jobs for Parish Steward + identification of new issues & jobs** – Cllr. Jeans reported that Wiltshire Council was proposing to change the street lighting in Mere to LED lighting in 18 months. He therefore suggested that the Town Council should start looking at this now to see if we want any lights moved. It was agreed to raise 'Future of Street Lighting in Mere' as an agenda item for the next meeting.

**d) "SLOW" signs on road along Castle Hill Lane** – The Clerk informed members that she had looked at Google Street View where it was evident that "SLOW" signs on the road were in place. The "SLOW" paint markings had obviously now worn away and a request to reinstate them had therefore been submitted on MyWiltshire App. Cllr. Jeans confirmed that if no response was received, he would take the matter up with Adrian Hampton, the Head of Local Highways at Wiltshire Council.

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

**\*a) Proposals for expansion of Mere School and expansion of parking area** – The Chairman reported that a few weeks ago, he & Cllr. Jeans and the Clerk had met with representatives from Wiltshire Council (John Price & Clara Davis) & the Headmistress of Mere School. Due to the new development at Woodlands Road there is an expectation of more school pupils and finance has been sought from the developers to add to the education budget. The school therefore has proposals for expansion. The Town Council had been invited in on discussions quite late in the date but the proposals are for Mere School to move into the first floor part of the old Children's Centre. They have no plans to use the space downstairs although the school will need access across the foyer to get to the main hall and access from the front doors to the stairs to use as an emergency access and to make the upstairs rooms accessible using the stair lift. There are also proposals to extend the car parking area from the Andy Young Pavilion up to the edge of the MUGA, which would incorporate the swimming pool site that we cleared earlier this year. This car parking area would incorporate traffic calming, a safe pedestrian route and lighting with CCTV. Also proposing to put in a barrier across the road that comes up to the school which would only be closed during peak times. Preliminary plans were distributed to councillors to show the proposals. There was a general discussion on the proposals and whether or not the Town Council was happy to rescind land from its current lease. The Chairman also pointed out that there would be vacant and unused rooms downstairs along the corridor adjacent to the Town Council's present office. He said that neither the school nor the Town Council wanted to take on responsibility for the foyer but both needed access through it but he was keen to explore the idea, with the Town Council's backing, of the Town Council taking on responsibility for the vacant and unused rooms along the corridor. He pointed out that the Town Council had recently been approached by a group who wanted to provide an adult reading service but could not find anywhere in Mere to provide this service and he also said that other people had approached him about the idea of hot-desking facilities. Mr. Hamish Bell supported this and said that the Chamber of Trade would be willing to put together a grant application to the Area Board for a hot-desking facility to support small businesses if required and commended this project to the Town Council. RESOLVED that the Town Council support the idea, in principle, of leasing the remaining office spaces on the ground floor of Duchy Manor subject to terms and conditions arising from further discussions with Wiltshire Council. On the subject of rescinding land from our lease of the grounds at Duchy Manor, Cllr. Norris asked if the Town Council could request compensation for the costs incurred by the Town Council in filling the swimming pool earlier this year and reminded members that this space had been earmarked for the outdoor gym project which the Town Council would be unable to proceed with. It was also pointed out that the swimming pool was a memorial for WWII and a memorial plaque should be installed in the location. Cllr. Jeans felt that the Town Council should keep the land within its own lease and explore the idea of sub-sub-leasing the land to the school.

Members agreed, without prejudice, to await with interest further proposals from the school and Wiltshire Council. The Chairman mentioned that there were goods contained within the building i.e. gas cookers, fridges, dishwashers and computer equipment that could be offered to local groups or people in need.

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

**\*a) Payments – RESOLVED** to approve payments set out in payment schedules attached on proposal made by Cllr. Norris, seconded by Cllr. Sims and carried with a unanimous vote of those present in the room. As Cllr. Jeans had declared a pecuniary interest, he left the room whilst this matter was considered and took no part in discussion or voting.

**\*b) To adopt recommendations made by Budget Meeting, as shown in Minutes of Budget Meeting held on Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019 (Minutes attached)** – Cllr. Colman said that he had some questions on the budget that related to salaries. The Chairman said that this should be discussed under Confidential Business at the end of the meeting but asked if any other members had any other issues that they wanted to discuss relating to the recommendations made at the Budget Meeting which would result in an increase in the precept of 4.83%– there were no other questions raised. The Chairman said that at the budget meeting, one councillor raised concern at the amount of business rates we pay which amounted to nearly £9.5k this year. Cllr. Jeans has come up with some suggestions that could reduce our yearly business rate bills and are worth exploring – they involve charities but it will need a lot of advice. Proposing we put in an extra £2k to pay for professional legal advice to try and get our liability for business rates reduced this would result in an increase in the precept of 6.17%. **RESOLVED** to add an increase of £2000 to the amount recommended by the budget meeting to be allocated for legal/professional fees, on proposal made by Cllr. P. Coward, seconded by Cllr. R. Coward and carried with a unanimous vote.

The Chairman said that, as confirmed in the Minutes of the Budget Meeting, it has been agreed to purchase a good second-hand gator vehicle from a local dealer which may cost in the region of £8-9k. However, on further investigation, it may be better to buy a new machine on a 3-year payment scheme. The Clerk had doubts as to whether or not this was possible but we have sought advice from Wiltshire Association of Local Councils who have said the following:

*“15.10. A contract to purchase land or goods or to employ services pay include a provision relieving the council from the usual obligation to pay the whole of the consideration money at one time. From the council's point of view the effect may resemble that of a loan[\*1], but the transaction is not a loan because the other party is not appropriating money but transferring property or giving services whilst exercising forbearance in requiring full payment. Such contracts are merely varieties of ordinary contracts of sale, and the forbearance is not an appropriation of money because no money would be due at all if, for example, the goods were not delivered. Moreover, a council may even pay for such forbearance by agreeing in the contract that the total of the instalments shall be more than the lump sum and may well save its council tax and ratepayers by so doing, without the risk of being charged with illegal borrowing. It is possible to spread a total payment over three accounting years, yet to ensure that the creditor receives all the money due to him within a period of a few days over twelve months.”*

**\*1.** This is relevant because in most circumstances a local council would need to get borrowing approval from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MCLG) if it wished to take out a loan. My interpretation of the above paragraph is that a local council may pay for goods by instalment.

**RESOLVED** that the Town Council use the sum that was allocated for the second-hand machine as a downpayment for a new machine and to spread the remaining cost over a 3-year period.

**c) To approve Precept on Wiltshire Council for 2020/21 – RESOLVED** to approve a Precept of £157,978 (one hundred and fifty seven thousand, nine hundred and seventy eight pounds) for 2020/21 on proposal made by Cllr. P. Coward, seconded by Cllr. R. Coward and carried with a unanimous vote.

**d) To approve contribution of £500 to CATG towards Signage for The Lynch – RESOLVED** to agree a contribution of £500 to CATG towards signage for The Lynch on proposal made by Cllr. Jeans, seconded by Cllr. Mead and carried with a unanimous vote.

**\*e) Asset insurance reinstatement valuations** – members noted the information and agreed to submit the valuations to the Councils insurers and ask them to adjust the valuations accordingly.

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

**a) Judging Xmas Lights** – Cllr. Jeans said he would find someone to do it and would provide prize.

### **\*Briefing Notes:**

- Briefing Note No. 19-032 – Community Governance Review
- Briefing Note No. 19-033 – Payphones Consultation
- Briefing Note No. 19-035 – Community Foundation Surviving Winter Fund and Warm and Safe
- Briefing Note No. 19-037 – Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) Strategy

## **96. Forthcoming meetings/events**

**a) Community Safety Group Meeting** – 15<sup>th</sup> January at 6.00 p.m. at The Nadder Centre, Tisbury

**b) Mere Town Council** – Schedule of meeting dates for 2020

Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> January

Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> February

Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> March

Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> April

Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> May (I believe that the early May bank holiday has been moved to Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> May and so our TC meeting should be OK for Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> May)

Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> June

Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> July

No scheduled meeting for August

Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> September

Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> October

Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> November

Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> December

## **97. Future agenda items**

- Water refilling station

*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

**CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS - EXEMPT BUSINESS – RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting (or part thereof) during consideration of the business set out below on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined within part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A and more particularly specified in paragraphs 14 and 1.** Proposal made by Cllr. P. Coward, seconded by Cllr. Jeans and carried with a unanimous vote.

Cllr. Colman raised a query relating to the level of wage increases that had been recommended by the Budget Committee and the fact that some staff had been recommended a smaller wage increase whilst others had been recommended a larger wage increase. Members felt that they were able to justify their recommendations. RESOLVED to approve recommendations made by Budget Committee on payroll and wages for 2020/21 on proposal made by Cllr. Hazzard, seconded by Cllr. P. Coward and carried with a majority vote. Cllr. Colman abstained from voting.