

*Parish Clerk - Mrs. L. C. Wood*

Mere Parish Council

**Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday, 18th January 2010 at 7.30 p.m. in the Andy Young Pavilion, Springfield Road, Mere.**

**Present:** Councillors: E. Mitchell (Chairman), M. Hall (Vice-Chairman), R. Coward, C. Hazzard (from 7.50 p.m.), R. Hill, R. Hughes, G. Jeans, M. Peirce, D. Sealy, R. Sims, S. Squires, Mrs. L. Traves, Mrs. M. White.

Also Mrs. Barbara Hewitt (Mere & District Chamber of Trade) & Mr. Mark Blakeney

**Public Session**

Barbara Hewitt, Chairman of Mere & District Chamber of Trade reported that a delegation of 5 members attended the Environment Select Committee meeting last Tuesday at Trowbridge to put in their objections regarding the possibility of introducing car parking charges in Mere. Mrs. Hewitt said that she had also spoken to the press (Salisbury Journal) to stress the importance of this issue. Mrs. Hewitt was thanked for her support and assured that the Parish Council would keep up the pressure and do all it could to influence Wiltshire Council to vote against any proposals to introduce car parking charges in Mere.

Mr. Mark Blakeney, applicant for Down View Farm, spoke in favour of his application. He explained that he and his wife currently farm on local ground and that, although he was recently granted planning permission for a lambing shed at Cranleigh Croft (Burton), the planning permission had restrictions and these proposed buildings were necessary for his farming business to grow. He also explained that it would be necessary for him and his wife to live close to the animals which was why he was applying for a mobile home. However, since submitting the application it had been brought to Mr. Blakeney's attention that the proposed shed would obstruct a Right of Way and this was not his intention and he assured the Parish Council that he would be happy to resite the buildings away from any footpath.

Mrs. Mary White asked if the work on the A303 was proceeding as scheduled in view of the recent bad weather or if it would be necessary to review the timetable for the road closure. Cllr. Jeans reported that, as far as he was aware, it was all going as planned. Cllr. Jeans also reported that he has access to emergency contact numbers so that he can contact someone regarding the works 24 hours a day.

Roy Sims reported that the hand rail in Castle Street had been repaired but the broken manhole cover in Boar Street was still in need of replacement.

**Apologies for absence** received from Councillor P. Coward

**359. Declarations of Interest** – Cllr. Mitchell declared a personal interest in planning application No. S/2009/1910. Cllr. Jeans declared a prejudicial interest in Minute No. 362 e) and also in Minute No. 365 a)

**360. Minutes** – Cllr. Hall proposed that the Minutes of Parish Council meeting held on Monday, 7th December 2009 be approved as a correct record of proceedings. Proposal seconded by Cllr. Sims and carried with a unanimous vote of those present on 7.12.09.

**361. Planning**

**a) Applications:**

S/2009/1858/CU – CHANGE OF USE – CHANGE OF USE FROM RETAIL (A1) TO OFFICE (A2)

## 5 THE SQUARE, MERE.

Cllr. Mrs. White said that, whilst she realized that a change of use from retail to office would still maintain a commercial activity within the premises, she hoped that the Parish Council would maintain its policy of protecting retail shops in the centre of Mere. Cllr. Hall echoed this and said that the present shop, which was only open a few hours a week, had only just closed and he had not seen any attempt to re-market it as a shop locally. Cllr. Hall proposed that the Parish Council should object to the above application for the following reasons:

- It is against Policies G1 and PS3 of the Salisbury District Local Plan. The Parish Council does not feel that there is sufficient evidence or adequate demonstration that the premises is no longer viable for commercial retail use. The Parish Council has seen no 'To Let' advertising boards on the premises and members have not seen any local advertising. The applicant states that the present tenant 'leaves at the end of December 2009 and has quit due to poor trading conditions' but we would like you to note that, whilst this tenant was in the premises, the shop was only open for a few hours each week.
- This retail premises is in a prime site location in The Square in Mere with on-street parking nearby and is central to the economic and social life of the area within which it is located. It is considered a vital asset in helping to sustain the vitality and viability of the town centre. A change of use to office premises, whilst preferable to residential, would not help in our efforts to provide easily accessible shops and services to meet people's day to day needs in order to provide some level of self-sufficiency and sustainability and it would not reduce the need to travel by private car. Approval of this application may set a precedent for the few remaining shops to follow. Furthermore, a recent retail premises, when applying for change of use planning permission, was forced to demonstrate adequate marketing before determining that retail activity was no longer viable on the site.
- Policies in the Mere Parish Plan (adopted by Mere Parish Council) are set to resist change of use of retail & commercial premises.

This proposal was carried with a vote of 8 for and 3 abstentions. (Due to his role as Wiltshire Councillor, Cllr. Jeans abstained from voting).

### **Cllr. Hall in The Chair**

S/2009/1910/FULL – FULL PLANNING – ERECTION OF AGRICULTURAL LIVESTOCK BUILDING, STATIONING MOBILE HOME AND CONSTRUCTION OF FARM TRACK, TOGETHER WITH CONTAINMENT OF COMPLEX WITH POST AND RAIL FENCE AND APPROPRIATE LANDSCAPING.

DOWN VIEW FARM, LIMPERS HILL, MERE.

Cllr. R. Coward stated that he had no objection, in principal, to this planning application but said that if the buildings were going to be resited then the Parish Council should formally comment on the new plans. Cllr. Mrs. White said that she had sympathy with the applicant but felt that the Parish Council should object to the planning application in view of the fact that the building crosses a right of way. Cllr. Hughes felt that Parish Council could encourage the applicant by approving the application as long as the footpath issue is resolved. The Clerk pointed out that the Parish Council were being consulted on the application in front of them and that it was not really advisable to approve the application on condition that the buildings were moved away from the footpath, since the Parish Council did not know where the buildings would re-sited. Since the applicant was present at the meeting, it was agreed that the Parish Council should indicate if they had any other issues relating to the application or whether the footpath was the only issue so that the applicant had an understand of how the Parish Council will feel for any future application submissions. Members generally agreed that the Right of Way obstruction was their main issue and Cllr. Mrs. White proposed that the application should be recommended for refusal for the following reasons:

Reasons:

- The proposed buildings would obstruct and/or cause consequences for Rights of Way through and around the site.
- The 'Farm Plan' and 'Block Plan' does not show the Rights of Way in relation to proposed buildings and boundary treatments.

Proposal seconded by Cllr. R. Coward and carried with a vote of 7 for, 0 against and 4 abstentions.

(Cllr. Mitchell, having declared a personal interest, refrained from voting or discussion and due to his role as Wiltshire Councillor, Cllr. Jeans abstained from voting).

#### **Cllr. Mitchell in The Chair**

**b) South Wiltshire Core Strategy Examination** – The Clerk explained that, further to the Parish Council's representations in respect of the South Wiltshire Core Strategy relating to car parking in rural areas, she had received correspondence from the Inspector relating to a Pre Hearing Meeting to be held on 14th January in Salisbury. The Clerk had contacted Cllr. Jeans who had said that he would be attending the meeting and was happy to represent the Parish Council in this matter. Cllr. Jeans reported that the challenges must relate only to the soundness of the Core Strategy and confirmed that he had attended the Pre Hearing Meeting and would be given a timetable of further hearing sessions at a later date.

#### **362. Matters Arising**

**a) Wiltshire Councillors Report, to include report on South West Wiltshire Area Board Meeting held 21.10.09** – Cllr. Jeans confirmed that Mere Parish Council had been allocated a Community Area Grant towards the Xmas Lighting on the Clock Tower. Cllr. Hall confirmed that the Area Board did commit themselves to opposing car parking charges in rural areas.

**b) Report from Community Safety Representative** – Cllr. R. Sims said there was no news to report.

**c) Report from Transport Representative** – Cllr. R. Sims said there was no news to report.

**d) Report from Community Area Partnership Representative** – Cllr. M. Hall reported that there had been progress in the last few weeks and confirmed that the first Annual General Meeting would be held on 25th February at 7pm at Whitesheet School, Zeals and that anyone who lives or works in the community area is welcome to attend. It is hoped, at this meeting, to elect a Committee and a Steering Group Committee.

**e) Report on Environment Select Committee Meeting held on 12.1.10 when harmonization of car parking across Wiltshire was discussed and to consider future strategy** – Cllr. Jeans reported that Cllr. Hall had made a presentation on behalf of the Parish Council as did Barbara Hewitt on behalf of Mere & District Chamber of Trade. The officers proposed that car parking charges should be decided by the respective Area Boards but this proposal was not passed because it was considered that Area Boards were too parochial. Cllr. Jeans reported that Wiltshire Council was proposing to create four bands of car parking charges. Cllr. Hall stated that one particular councillor had suggested that Parish Councils, who are opposed to parking charges, should be given the opportunity to take on responsibility for their car parks. Cllr. Hall added that he found the debate extremely disappointed and was left in no doubt that most of the councillors at that meeting all came from urban areas. It was agreed that the Parish Council should continue to apply pressure to ensure that Mere is excluded from car parking charges, or at least to ensure that Mere is allocated the lowest band in car parking charges, with some kind of proviso to allow for the first hour's parking free of charge. Cllr. Mrs. White was concerned about the effect that car parking charges would have on visitors to the Doctors' surgery and Cllr. Jeans explained that concerns had also been expressed by the Mere & District Linkscheme who feared that car parking charges may cause people to use the Linkscheme more for surgery visits. Cllr.

Jeans also said that it would cause more on-street parking congestion because householders and nearby residents who had no off-street parking and who parked their cars in the car parks, would subsequently park them out on the road if car parking charges were introduced. Cllr. Hall proposed that the Parish Council should (i) speak to Dr. Andrew Murrison, MP for advice and support (ii) work alongside the Chamber of Trade and continue pressure by publicizing the issue with local press & (iii) examine what would be involved in taking on responsibility for the car parks ourselves. Proposal carried with a majority vote. (Cllr. Jeans, having declared a prejudicial interest, abstained from voting).

**\*f) Response from Wessex Water regarding Low Flows in Mere** – members noted the information in the Clerks Report. The Clerk pointed out that the levels at Burton Pond and along Waterside had risen in accordance with Wessex Water’s statement.

**g) Proposal to submit HLS (Higher Level Stewardship) bid to Natural England for funding for environmental management of Castle Hill and Long Hill and to appoint consultant to produce Farm Environment Plan** – Cllr. R. Coward said that, at the last meeting, the Parish Council agreed that we would get some quotations for scrub clearance on Castle Hill. However, Simon Ford, who had assisted the Parish Council by producing the Castle Hill Management Plan, had suggested that the Parish Council should enter into Natural England’s Higher Level Stewardship Scheme which offers a wide range of management options, targeted to support key features of the different areas of the English countryside. The HLS agreements are for ten years, payments being sent out every six months and relate to the options that have been chosen. Mr. Ford had also pointed out funding could also include the fees of a consultant who would help with the submission of applications and he had suggested a consultant who lived nearby. Cllr. Coward had also recently met with a representative from RSPB who was also keen for the Parish Council to enter the Higher Level Stewardship scheme. Cllr. Coward therefore proposed that the Parish Council should ask the consultant for help in submitting an application for the HLS Scheme, as recommended by Simon Ford. Proposal seconded by Cllr. Hazzard and carried with a unanimous vote.

**h) Tenders for scrub clearance on Long Hill** – In view of the decision made above, it was agreed not to open the two quotations received for scrub clearance but to advise the two contractors that we would not be carrying out the work at the present time.

**i) Report on judging of Christmas Lighting Displays** – Cllr. Mrs. Traves reported that Mr. & Mrs. Smith from Barnesfield House, Pettridge Lane had been chosen and that this was a striking lighting display even though it wasn’t immediately obvious from the road. The Parish Council thanked Jeans Electricals who had agreed to donate a prize to award to Mr. & Mrs. Smith.

**j) Floodlight repairs** – Cllr. Hazzard reported that the floodlights were being repaired but, because the repairs were being carried out using a scaffold tower, it had been necessary to lock the Multi Use Games Area in order to prevent public access and that it was likely to be inaccessible for a few weeks yet because there had been delays due to the severe weather and the need to get parts from abroad.

### **363. Highways, Rivers, Footpaths & Transport**

#### **a) Parish Steward – jobs for next visit:**

- subsidence of road at Mill Lane
- pot-holes along Limpers Hill

**b) Speed Limit Review – A & B Class roads** – consultation from Wiltshire Council on recommendations made – members unanimously agreed that they should send in objections to proposals and question the value of introducing a 50 mph speed limit on roads in Wiltshire that cross Somerset and Dorset county borders if the new speed limit is not introduced across those county borders. Members also felt that the new speed limits would be ineffective along long stretches of straight roads.

\*c) **Grit Bin requests** – It was agreed that the Clerk should submit a request to the Highways Authority for the grit bins, as identified in the Clerks Report and also to ask for one near the T-junction at Limpers Hill and along Castle Hill Lane.

### 364. Cemetery

a) **Gravel surrounds to cremation plots and breaches in regulations** – the Clerk said that this issue had been raised because a number of relatives had placed gravel surrounds around their cremation plots. This was causing safety problems because the stones flew up in the air and around the cemetery when the groundsman was strimming and could then cause damage to staff and to other machinery. The Clerk pointed out that the next of kin were granted permission for a 1'6" X 1'6" cremation tablet and that this was the size of the plot and that no other permission had been granted for gravel surrounds. It was agreed that a notice would be placed on site and put in Mere Matters giving relatives the opportunity to remove the gravel and if not done by a certain date, it would be done by the Parish Council.

b) **Suggested wording for signs (replacement sign in old cemetery and new sign for new cemetery)** – the Clerk read out the suggested wording for these signs which was unanimously agreed on proposition made by Cllr. Hall and seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Traves. The Clerk said that she would investigate costings for signs.

### 365. Finance & Resources

a) **Payments:** Members approved the following payments. (Cllr. Jeans, having declared a personal and prejudicial interest, left the room whilst this matter was discussed).

Wiltshire Cricket Board	Coaching fees (to be reimbursed from Sport England Grant)	210.00 already pd
Mere School	Swimming Pool Electric 11.9.09 – 7.12.09	73.14
Mere School	Changing Rooms & Pavilion (??) Electric 11.9.09 0 7.12.09	72.09
Mere School	Changing Rooms Gas 11.9.09 – 7.12.09	124.02
Mere School	Swimming Pool Water 11.9.09 – 7.12.09	25.95
Mere School	Changing Rooms Water 11.9.09 – 7.12.09	42.48
Mere School	AYP & Bowling Green Water 11.9.09 – 7.12.09	22.71
Mere School	6.6% of cost to attend to gas leak under stage, main hall	74.57
Forge Garages	Fuel & Oil for December	85.90 already pd.
Southern Electric	Supply to Clock Tower	17.10 already pd
Jeans	Lamps & bulbs (various)	21.96
Sydenhams	Duchy Grounds	87.31 already pd.
Imprest Account – cheques 2630 - 2635	Wages, PAYE, Pension & petty cash	5676.68

b) **New computer** – The Clerk informed members that, after having serviced and re-configured the Parish Council's computer over the Xmas holidays, Mr. Tim Thornley had informed the Clerk that the computer ought to be replaced in the near future. Mr. Thornley had quoted a price of £450 to build and set up a new computer and the Clerk said that with a new keyboard, screen and accounts software package, this would probably come to about £600 in total. Cllr. Peirce stated his objection and said that a similar computer could be

bought from Dell or PC World for half that price. The Clerk pointed out that Mr. Thornley was well aware of that but that he had stressed to her that he could build a superior machine that would be easier to maintain and repair. It was agreed that Cllr. Hall should liaise with Cllr. Peirce and the Parish Clerk to reach a mutual agreement on the provision of a computer + software to a maximum price of £600.

*c) Delegation to Town & Parish Councils and transfer of Community Assets* – update on communication with Wiltshire Council – the Clerk informed members that Wiltshire Council had recently produced a policy on the delegation and transfer of community assets to Town & Parish Councils and community groups. Cllr. Jeans asked the Clerk to provide him with a copy of the policy.

### **366. General Items**

*a) Invitation to Chair of Unitary Authority and Leader of Wiltshire Council to visit Mere* – members agreed that the Leader of Wiltshire Council should be invited to Mere by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman sometime in February.

*b) Health Fair – Monday, 25th January 2019 from 3.00 – 6.00 p.m. at Dinton Village Hall* – members noted the information

*c) Invitation to Market Towns meeting to be held on Wednesday, 27th January at 9.30 a.m. at County Hall, Trowbridge* – it was agreed that the Clerk, Chairman and Cllr. Sims would attend the meeting.

*d) Invitation to Food Hygiene & Safety Seminars (for people involved in the running of community venues)* – it was agreed that this information should be forwarded to the Bowling Club, Cricket Club, Football Club & Mere Matters.

**367. Clerks Report** – Cllr. Mrs. White proposed that the Clerks Report be confirmed and adopted. Proposal seconded by Cllr. Hall and carried with a unanimous vote.

### **368. Mere Peace Memorial Sports & Recreation Ground Charity**

*a) Councillors' Guide to a council's role as charity trustee* (information attached)

i) Review of investments, risks and opportunities

ii) Is it in the best interests of the charity for the local authority to remain as trustee?

Members noted the information, as distributed by The Clerk but agreed to take no further action because a) there were no investments b) risks were assessed as part of the Parish Council's annual risk assessment and c) opportunities were explored in line with the Parish Plan etc. It was agreed that it was in the best interests of the charity for the Parish Council to remain as trustee.

*b) Approval of Annual Return to Charity Commission* – deferred.

*c) Skate Park* – Cllr. Jeans said that he was asking the parish council for support, in principle, in resurrecting the investigations into the provision of a skate park in the Recreation Ground, subject to Health & Safety assessments, planning permission etc. The Clerk reported that she had telephoned the Parish Council's insurers who had stated that they would provide Public Liability Insurance cover provided that the skate park was designed and installed by professionals in the field and a completion certificate was provided and that, once in place, the Parish Council undertook a visual weekly inspection, annual professional inspection and that the skate park was separated from other play areas (fenced off) and signs were provided stating that protective clothing must be worn at all times.