

Mere Parish Council

PARISH CLERK - MRS. L. C. WOOD

Minutes of a Parish Council meeting to be held on Monday, 2nd February 2015 at 7.30 p.m. in the Andy Young Pavilion, Springfield Road, Mere.

Present: Cllrs. Mrs. L. Traves (Chairman), B. Norris (Vice-Chairman), N. Beale, C. Hazzard, R. Hughes, Mrs. J. Hurd, J. Jordan, E. Mitchell, R. Sims & Mrs. K. Symonds.

Also: Mr. Hamish Bell (representing Mere & District Chamber of Trade), R. Flower, Mr. & Mrs. Kimber, Spence Gunn, R. Morris, Mr. & Mrs. Harding.

Meeting convened at 7.30 p.m. with Public Session

The Chairman will re-convene the Parish 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).

Mr. Hamish Bell spoke on behalf of Mere Chamber of Trade on the subject of Parish Council vs Town Council status. He said that the vision of the Chamber of Trade is supporting businesses including tourism and we feel that Mere is a small market town with the feel of a friendly large village. In an attempt to bring more people into this area to increase business we have been in discussions with Visit Wiltshire (the official Tourism Information Site) over Mere's presence on the site and we feel that the expression of it being a town with a village feel gives a better impression of what we have to offer. We feel we would have better access to grants, better jobs and higher skilled jobs and apprenticeships for young people. Describing Mere as a village may be quite attractive to the property sellers but their needs should be balanced with the needs of younger people and those looking for employment.

Apologies for absence received from Cllrs. M. Cassidy, R. Coward, P. Coward, R. Hill & G. Jeans (late arrival)

237. 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 Parish Council Code of Conduct for Members and by the Localism Act 2011.

- The Clerk declared a personal interest in Minute Ref: 239a) and 244a)
- Cllr. Jeans declared a pecuniary interest in Minute Ref: 244a)

238. Minutes – RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday, 12th January 2015 be approved as a correct record of proceedings on proposal made by Cllr. Beale, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Hurd and carried with a unanimous vote of those present on 12.1.15

239. Matters Arising

a) Issues relating to Downside Close (Oval Homes) Development (see Minute 220a) – Cllr. Hazzard said 'I would like to remind members of the public that we parish councillors do this voluntarily, without remuneration, for the good of Mere and for the people of Mere but have limited powers and resources. As councillors will recall, at the November meeting it was me who strongly supported the residents of Downside Close and proposed that the Parish Council should help them in any way possible. In the subsequent month, I became aware of some of the history on this dispute and also the correspondence that had been sent to the Parish Council and to individual parish councillors. You will remember that I felt strongly enough to speak again at the December meeting regarding several issues but still stating that we, the Parish Council, should continue to support the residents of Downside Close. Since the December meeting the Parish Clerk has received 50

emails from Mrs. Layard but signed as Downside Residents. We have, however, received a copy of reports prepared by the Head of Legal Services of Wiltshire Council which set out, in my opinion, a clear understanding of the situation. I would now like to refer councillors to the points that were agreed during the December meeting: throughout the recent emails there are now many derogatory remarks made about the Parish Council being in collusion with the developer – for example: In a recent email to various recipients, including the press, Mrs. Layard, on behalf of the Downside Residents refers to Mr. Cain’s report as ‘extremely aggressive’ and goes on to say *“For three years now the Council/Parish Council have actively encouraged the developer to bully, threaten and intimidate residents in an attempt to force us to pay for HIS unlawful wall which is not adoptable by anyone.”* I am therefore proposing to the Parish Council that, as I feel satisfied that we have now received as much information as we can and, as the conditions laid out to residents of Downside Close and agreed by the Parish Council at the December meeting have not been met, we adopt a recommendation that all help will be withdrawn and that no further correspondence will be entered into with Mrs. Layard representing the Downside Residents. Further to my proposal and in the interests of some of the residents of Downside Close, I feel that the Parish Council should continue to request updates and monitor progress regarding the adoption of the road and that the Clerk should be instructed to write a letter to all households in Downside Close, offering a copy of Mr. Frank Cain’s report (summary and full).’ Proposal seconded by Cllr. Mitchell and carried with a unanimous vote.

b) HLS Scheme – with reference to the HLS Scheme works programme (Year 4), the Clerk confirmed that she had prepared the specification and submitted them to three contractors for quotations but only two quotations had been received. Mr. Neil Maitland had been asked to carry out the work and work was starting this week as it needed to be finished before 28.2.15.

240. Reports & Consultations

a) Neighbourhood Policing Report - None

b) Wiltshire Councillor’s Report – Cllr. Jeans said that the area from Burton Path to the Skate Park had become extremely muddy and the mud was inevitably being transferred onto the skate park which had hazardous potential. He was therefore going to try and obtain some Area Board funding to provide for a small area of tarmac footpath to extend from the Burton Path across the Recreation Ground to Skate Park. However, he pointed out that if successful, the grant application would require a small contribution from the Parish Council. Members thanked Cllr. Jeans for this initiative and agreed that a small financial contribution could be made.

241. 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: 14/12132/FUL

Application for: Full Planning

Proposal: Detached garage, workshop and greenhouse

At: Union House, Castle Street, Mere. BA12 6JQ

Cllr. Norris said that the plans were very difficult to read and if you want confidence to make a decision then you need to have decent plans to begin with. Cllr. Hazard said that he could see no reason why the proposed detached garage would cause any objection. RESOLVED to recommend approval of the above application on proposal made by Cllr. Sims, seconded by Cllr. Jordan and carried with a majority vote of those present.

242. Highways, Rivers, Footpaths, Traffic & Transport

a) Highway & footpath issues for Parish Steward & street lighting faults – the following works/jobs were identified:

- litter clearing on Gillingham Road.
- litter on A303 just before the slip road

243. Buildings, Open Spaces, Play Areas, Sports Grounds, Allotments, Car Parks & Cemeteries

Mere Youth Club

a) Condition of building and request from Wiltshire Council to cease tenancy sooner than 31.3.15 – the Clerk confirmed that she had met with Mr. John Price and Andrea Baker of Wiltshire Council at the Youth Club on 22nd January and confirmed that she was satisfied that all the remedial work, identified in report of meeting held on 28th October, has now been carried out on the building. However, Mr. Price had telephoned to ask if the Parish Council would be prepared to take on responsibility for the building before the official expiry date of 31st March. The Clerk had spoken to Jaki Farrell of Seeds4Success to see if this would be of particular benefit but the Clerk was given the impression that it would not be of much benefit to Jaki as she would not have finances in place to get everything in order to use the building before the 31st March. It was agreed that Cllr. Norris would make further enquiries about this at the next Youth Network Meeting.

b) Report on football success – the Clerk reported that she had received an email from Mr. Pete Down of Mere Town Football Club informing the Parish Council that one of their ‘young players has been selected for the England U18 squad for the Centenary Shield matches this season. Jordan Storey, who attends Yeovil College, has been playing for Mere for the last two seasons after being spotted playing for Somerset County U16’s last season. He has since moved up to U18’s playing a year young and his development has been such that he has now made the full England U18 side. Mere Town Management team Nick Ward and Kevin Wagland said it means an awful lot for a club like ours to have an International Player in our ranks.....’ Members were delighted to hear of this success and congratulated the football club.

c) Complaint about access to Andy Young Pavilion – The Clerk read out an email from Mr. Tom Cardoza in which he stated that he had cause to attend a meeting at the Andy Young Pavilion one night a short time ago and was faced with deep squirmy mud and water filled potholes in the car park and by the time he reached the short length of footpath at the far end of the car park his feet were soaked and shoes and trousers were covered in oozy mud. Mr. Cardoza added that he is a reasonably fit 75 year old but what chance does someone infirm or in a wheelchair have under such conditions and added ‘that public access to a council facility has been allowed to degrade to this level with no maintenance attention whatever, I feel reflects adversely on the Council’s duty of care. The provision of a firm even footpath across the car park with night-time illumination is surely long overdue. I shall be most grateful if my observations could be passed to the Parish Councillors and trust that they, in appreciating that not everyone arrives by car, will find them of interest.’ The Clerk pointed out that the Parish Council had added more scalplings and used a compactor to flatten the car park on an annual basis. Members pointed out that when the Andy Young Pavilion and bowling green were built, the Parish Council tried to include a tarmac surface for the car park within the grant application but this was denied as it was considered to be a facility that could not be grant funded. Each year the Parish Council had considered, at the Annual Budget Meeting, whether or not funding could be found to surface the car park but each year it was deemed to be unaffordable at a cost of £7,000 (last quotation received November 2012) and the expense unjustifiable considering that there are no charges made to groups or organisations that use the Andy Young Pavilion. Cllr. Mitchell offered to help with making some enquiries about getting some planings (rather than scalplings) and said that he would be quite happy to help volunteer his time to help the grounds staff to fill the potholes and level the surface with a compactor again. He also agreed to make some enquiries about the provision of solar lights on timers that could be situated around the car park to provide some low level lighting at night time. The Parish Council RESOLVED to accept Cllr. Mitchell’s generous offer to help fill the potholes and to investigate the provision of solar lighting on proposal made by Cllr. Hazzard, seconded by Cllr. Norris and carried with a unanimous vote in favour.

244. Finance, Policy & Resources

a) Payments – RESOLVED that the following payments be approved (Cllr. Jeans, having declared a pecuniary interest, left the room whilst this matter was discussed).

Mainstream Digital	Telephone rental & call charges	46.09 Paid by DD on 16.1.15
Mainstream Digital	Broadband (3 months)	57.60 Paid by DD on 16.1.15
Eon Energy	Electricity supply for public toilets 11.12.14 – 13.1.15	62.29
Society of Local Council Clerks	Annual membership renewal	187.00
The Community Heartbeat Trust	Donation for dPAD Defibrillator	2020.00
Forge Garages	Fuel & Oil – January	157.58
Mere School	Gas for changing rooms 1.10.14 – 22.1.15	327.10
Mere School	Electricity for changing rooms & office 1.10.14 – 22.1.15	306.14
Mere School	Water for changing rooms 1.10.14 – 22.1.15	425.85
Mere School	Water for AYP 1.10.14 – 22.1.15	24.05
Newlands Training	Brushcutter/trimmer course Chainsaw course (5 days) PA1 & PA6 Spraying courses	1803.60
Cash (Sherborne Turf)	Turf for Castle Hill Play Area	14.75
Wybone	Outdoor litter bins for Changing Rooms & Andy Young Pavilion (to comply with Fire Risk Assessment)	617.17
Jeans	Bin liners & bulbs	116.43
Imprest Account – cheques 3029 - 3036	PAYE, Wages, Petty Cash & Pension	4374.53
Lyreco	Telephones, stationery & cleaning products	103.43
Sydenhams	WD40	7.45
Lewis Wood Tree Services	Cutting up of fallen beech tree on Long Hill	80.00
BT Payphones	Adoption of telephone box in The Square	1.00

b) To consider report on Interim Internal Audit – the Clerk confirmed that Mr. Wilson had carried out an interim internal audit on 29th January and had provided a report stating: ‘I have carried out an internal audit of the Parish Council’s Financial Statements for the year ending 31st March 2015. In my opinion the Council has maintained proper accounting records and the financial statements have been properly prepared. I would like to acknowledge the assistance I have received from the Clerk, Lindsey Wood. As always, she makes this task easier by having everything to hand and in such good order.’ Members were pleased that the internal auditor was satisfied with the Parish Council’s financial recording and were grateful to Mr. Wilson for his assistance with this matter.

c) To fix date, venue & membership for Annual Risk Management & Insurance meeting (April 2015) – it was agreed that the clerk should arrange for the meeting to be held during the month of March or April with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman & Cllr. Jeans.

d) Adoption of telephone box in town centre – The Clerk confirmed that the legal paperwork for the adoption of the telephone box in the town centre had arrived from BT Payphones this morning. She had not had a chance to read through the paperwork yet but assuming that there were no queries, she asked whether the Parish Council was happy to delegate authority to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to sign the transfer papers. Members agreed that the papers should be signed as long as there were no queries.

245. General Items

a) Parish Council vs Town Council Status – Should Mere Parish Council become Mere Town Council? Cllr. Jeans said that in the recent television programme, Penelope Keith's Hidden Villages, TV historian and University of Winchester lecturer Dr. Alex Langlands clearly confirmed that Mere was a town as opposed to a village. Cllr. Jeans said that Mere has a Town Football Club, a town clock and three large employees in Hamiltons, Hill Brush Company, F. J. Chalke's a large wholesale nurseries and a notable wine merchants – all things that you wouldn't expect to find in a small village. However, he pointed out that some facilities were in decline and there was no sorting office at the Post Office any longer, the bank is only open part-time and could be in danger of closing altogether. In terms of strategic planning, Mere is currently considered as a Local Service Centre with small town status. Tisbury is now pushing it's campus and this will raise its status within Wiltshire Council hierarchy and could push Mere further down and if Wiltshire Council decided to take away our small town status it could remove our potential for sustainability which would therefore remove any potential for development or growth. Cllr. Jeans said that the question is whether or not changing our name to Mere Town Council would give us greater sway but he felt that there was strong enough reason to push ourselves forward. Cllr. Mitchell said that when visitors arrived at his caravan site they were often quite surprised at the facilities that Mere has to offer. Mr. Hamish Bell from the Chamber of Trade said that there are 31 towns in Wiltshire and Mere is one of them. The Visit Wiltshire initiative is pushing the fact that we have facilities and services to offer visitors. It was agreed that this matter should be discussed again at the next Parish Council meeting and the Clerk agreed to investigate the legal position in the meantime.

Cllr. Sims thanked Cllr. Jeans for clearing the Chamber of Trade sign.

b) To fix date, venue & agenda items for Annual Parish Meeting – Members felt that it may be difficult to book an alternative venue for the Annual Parish Meeting and that it may be better holding it in the Andy Young Pavilion as the attendees for last year's Annual Parish Meeting were so few. It was agreed that the meeting would be held on Thursday, 23rd April 2015 and that agenda items would be discussed at the next Parish Council meeting.

c) Public Consultation on the cost of policing in 2015-16 – the Clerk informed members that Angus MacPherson, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire, had begun a public consultation on the cost of policing in 2015-16 and was considering an increase of £3.06 per year, or 6p per week, for the average home (Band D property). The increase is to help reduce the impact of significant central government grant reductions on policing and crime services in Wiltshire and Swindon. The consultation is now open and runs until Wednesday, 4th February 2015. A presentation will be made at the South West Wiltshire Area Board meeting on 4th February and a copy of the presentation is available online at www.wiltshire-pcc.gov.uk

d) Parish Council links with Mere School Council – The Clerk said that she had received some communication from Mere School regarding the possibility of establishing links between Mere School Council and the Parish Council. Cllr. Jordan said that the School Council has an active group of young members and this was an invitation to the Parish Council for 2 or 3 members, perhaps including the Clerk, to go before the school council and discuss the roles that the parish councillors play and the responsibilities of the Parish Council. Cllr. Jordan said that maybe there would be an opportunity to share a school dinner with the pupils. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman & Clerk said that they would be happy to attend and Cllr. Jordan agreed to co-ordinate dates etc.

Mr. Hamish Bell said that if there was anything that the Chamber of Trade could do in terms of exploring with the children their view of the town, he would be happy to contribute.

246. Forthcoming meetings

- Rivers Group meeting – on 18th February at the AYP and World Wildlife will be there. How to go forward with the river clearance will be on the agenda. Report back at the next meeting.
- South West Wiltshire Area Board Meeting, Wednesday 4th February 2015 at East Knoyle Village Hall
- Setting the 2015 budget for Wiltshire Council Services – Thursday, 5th February at Guild Hall, Salisbury

247. Clerks Report – (None) and request future agenda items.

Note: Members are reminded that the Parish 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.

MERE PEACE MEMORIAL SPORTS AND RECREATION GROUND

Registered Charity No. 1093497

Mere Youth Club

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b) Submission of Annual Return 2014 – The Clerk confirmed that she had submitted the Annual Return 2014 online to the Charity Commission on 29th January 2015.

Meeting closed at 8.37 p.m.