

Mere Town Council

Town Clerk – Mrs. L. C. Wood

Minutes of a meeting of the Town Council held on Monday, 7th September at 6.00 p.m. outside at Duchy Manor, Springfield Road, Mere, BA12 6EW

Present: Cllrs. C. Hazzard (Chairman), A. Colman, P. Coward, R. Coward, R. Hill, G. Ings, G. Jeans (from 7.00 pm) J. Jordan, R. Pester, R. Sims, Mrs. K. Symonds & Mrs. L. Traves

15 members of public

Meeting convened at 7.30 p.m. with Public Session

The Chairman convened the meeting, welcoming everyone present and read out the consent notice for names of members of the public to be recorded in The Minutes. He also explained that due to Covid-19 Government Guidelines, the meeting was being held outside in order to minimise the risk to members of the Town Council and members of the public. He asked members of the public to ensure that they were keeping to the social distancing guidelines of 2m apart unless they were in small family bubble groups. He also suggested that anyone wishing to speak, should speak up loudly and reiterated that the public session was a chance for members of the public to have their say on any item which is on the agenda and they should not wait until we get to that agenda item because they will not be permitted to speak during the Council meeting.

David Drewett, Oak Lane asked what had transpired about the side agreement that the Council had agreed to sign to secure the S.106 funding from the Woodlands Road development and what plans the Council had to spend the money. The Chairman said that the funds had not yet been received but that the Town Council did have plans to spend some of the money. He asked the Clerk to forward any information on to David Drewett in due course.

Martin Pester said he had come to talk about the cemetery regulations following correspondence with the Clerk over a grave that they had recently applied edging stones to. Mr. Pester said that the family wanted to reiterate the letter they had sent and that they felt that their grave was much easier to maintain and the work that had been done enhanced the plot. The family wanted to know why the decision was made not to allow edging in the new cemetery and felt that the regulations were out of date and this decision should be revisited.

Paddy Sumner of Burton Grange said that he was one of a lot of people who had a lot of concern about what is going on at Burton Field. He wanted to ensure that Mere Town Council was aware of these concerns and what could be done.

Diane Mathiot said that one of the estate agents, Barnard Marcus, was marketing the site as having access from Southbrook which she said, meant that many of the potential buyers were thinking that they had vehicular access along the footpath.

Roy Sims reported that the wall along The Lynch was in a very poor state and, in his opinion, was in danger of falling down into the road. He also mentioned that the watering can in the cemetery was broken.

Apologies for absence – The Chairman reported that very sadly, Cllr. Mitchell's wife had passed away last week which is why he was absent from the meeting tonight. The Clerk also reported that Cllr. Norris was unable to attend the meeting tonight as he was not in the county. RESOLVED that an extension of 3 months be specified to the period of non-attendance allowed before which automatic forfeiture then applies in respect of Cllrs. Mitchell & Norris. Apologies for absence were also received from Cllr. Mead.

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.

To receive Declarations of Interest relating to matters contained in this agenda, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of officers and the Localism Act 2011 in respect of members.

R. Pester declared a personal interest in agenda item 6e) (Minute No. 138e)

Mrs. Traves declared a personal interest in planning application 20/06509/FUL

R. Hill declared a personal interest in planning application 20/05476/FUL

(b) To consider any dispensation requests received by the Town Clerk – None received

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: 20/06509/FUL

Application for: Full Planning

Proposal: Demolish existing conservatory and replace with single storey rear extension. Creation of dormer window to the front and rear of property

At: Suncroft, Springfield Road, Mere. BA12 6EW

The Chairman said that he had been to visit the property and neighbouring properties. He pointed out that this was a fairly large single storey extension with a sedum flat roof. Cllr. Jordan said that the extension was 10m in length and he was concerned that the extension appeared to be very close to the boundary which would leave very little space available for boundary maintenance. A letter from a neighbouring resident was read out to the Council.

RESOLVED to recommend approval of the application but to add the following: 'Concern has been expressed by neighbours relating to the height of this extension together with the length combined, causing an unacceptable loss of light to her patio and living room. Although the Town Council has no actual objections to the proposed extension, we do not feel qualified to comment on this concern by the neighbour. We would therefore request that the Local Planning Authority assess this concern when determining this planning application.'

Application Ref: 20/05476/FUL

Application for: Full Planning

Proposal: Erection of garage and rear/side extension

At: Fairhaven, Pettridge Lane, Mere. BA12 6DG

The Chairman said that he visited the site on Saturday. He confirmed that vehicular access had already been granted and could therefore see no reason to object to the application. Cllr. Ings expressed surprise that vehicular access had been granted but said that now that it has, he could not see any reason to object to the application and proposed that the Town Council recommend approval. RESOLVED to recommend approval of the application on proposal made by Cllr. Ings, seconded by Cllr. Jordan and carried with a majority vote. (Cllr. Hill, having declared a personal interest in the above application refrained from discussion or voting. In his capacity as Wiltshire Councillor, Cllr. Jeans refrained from discussion or voting).

Application Ref: 20/06950/VAR

Application for: Variation of Condition

Prproposal: Variation of Condition 2 (materials) of planning application 19/08489/FUL – Erect oak framed extension to form larger kitchen and office to the first floor (change roofing materials to natural slate, grey coloured).

At: Green Ridge, Barrow Street, Mere. BA12 6AB

The Clerk explained that this planning application had been received this morning but the consultation deadline was on or before the next Town Council meeting. Although prior notification had not been made available to the public by way of this matter being raised on the agenda, members RESOLVED to consider this application at tonight's meeting. The Clerk pointed out that the application related to the change of

roofing materials – the current building has a 1960s interlocking clay tile and the applicants would like to replace the existing roof and the extension with a natural grey coloured slate. RESOLVED to recommend approval of the application on proposal made by Cllr. P. Coward, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Traves and carried with a majority vote. (In his capacity as Wiltshire Councillor, Cllr. Jeans refrained from discussion or voting).

b) Concerns relating to sale of and activity on land at Burton Field – The Chairman reported that Burton Field is being split up into small plots and is being marketed with the speculation that the land has development potential. The Town Council is not aware that there is any current planning permission or extant planning permission for development of the land. The land used to be an old greenhouse site and as such is covered in glass. It has not been used for the last 30 – 40 years. We have been told by residents living in the area that there are legal problems with any sale/purchase of the land because there are cautions registered with the Land Registry but we are not qualified to comment on this. There are people on the land now with diggers, machinery and a caravan has just moved onto the land. The Town Clerk has alerted Wiltshire Council's Planning Enforcement office, the Duchy of Cornwall, the police, Rights of Way Officers, the CPRE and our MP. Up until now the general response has been that we need to wait until something illegal happens before any action can be taken but we have heard last week that a Planning Contravention Notice has been served in respect of the touring caravan that has been sited and its potential occupation. Also that an Article 4 Direction to remove Permitted Development for means of enclosure has been served on the site. We realise that this situation is very frustrating for surrounding residents but as a Town Council, we do not have any powers of enforcement. All we can do is keep passing on information to the authorities and keep each other informed of what is going on.

c) Planning for the future – Consultation on proposals for reform of the planning system in England from Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government: The Clerk pointed out that there were actually three consultation documents that had been issued by the government to reform the planning system. Changes to the Current Planning System – Consultation closes 11.45 pm on 1st October <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system>
This consultation seeks views on a range of proposed changes to the current planning system including: changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need, securing of First Homes through developer contributions, temporarily lifting the small sites threshold and extending the current Permission in Principle to major development.

White Paper: Planning for the Future – Consultation closes at 11.45 pm on 29th October <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>
This consultation seeks any views on each part of a package of proposals for reform of the planning system in England to streamline and modernise the planning process, improve outcomes on design and sustainability, reform developer contributions and ensure more land is available for development where it is needed.

Transparency & Competition: Data and Land Control – Consultation closes at 11.45 pm on 30th October <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/transparency-and-competition-a-call-for-evidence-on-data-on-land-control>

This call for evidence seeks views on proposals to require additional data from the beneficiaries of certain types of interests in land – rights of pre-emption, options and estate contracts. It also seeks views on the design of the policy and additional evidence on the impacts of the policy.

The Clerk expressed her concern that these consultation documents involved a great deal of reading & research in order to compile a considered submission to the government and although some of the deadlines would permit discussion at the next Town Council meeting, NALC were asking for our thoughts by mid-September. She also wondered if it might be possible to obtain some kind of summary from Wiltshire Council on how the new proposals might affect the County as a whole. Cllr. Jeans said that he would ask Wiltshire Council if they intended to make a response or summary and the Clerk agreed to distribute further information to councillors and to raise the matter for further discussion at the next meeting.

Highways, Rivers, Footpaths, Traffic & Transport

*a) Re-allocation of Road Space – letter from Cllr. Bridget Wayman to CATG Members – the Clerk explained that Cllr. Sims had asked for this to be raised on the agenda. She reminded members that she had distributed a copy of this letter to members in August relating to money that had been distributed to Local Authorities by central government in order to identify and deliver schemes that gave greater priority to pedestrian and cyclists. The Clerk said that the Town Council had not submitted any requests for schemes in Mere and that the larger schemes being considered centred around the allocation of cycle lanes in more built-up towns and cities i.e. Chippenham & Salisbury.

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

a) Duchy of Cornwall allotment land rent review – the Clerk informed members that under the terms of the allotment lands rental agreement, the rent payable was reviewed every five years and was reviewable this month. A modest increase from £570 pa to £590 p.a. was suggested w.e.f. 29th September 2020.

RESOLVED to agree the suggested increase on proposal made by Cllr. Jeans, seconded by Cllr. Sims and carried with a unanimous vote.

b) Lighting for Andy Young Pavilion car park – Cllr. A. Mead – this item was deferred as Cllr. Mead was not present.

c) Water refill station – Cllr. J. Jordan said that the money that was on offer from Wessex Water seems to have disappeared but there is now money available from Wiltshire Community Fund. He asked for this item to be deferred in order to allow further research time.

d) To arrange liaison meeting with Sports Clubs – it was agreed that this matter should be deferred until it is deemed safe for larger gatherings to meet.

e) Issues relating to Cemetery Regulations – the Chairman explained that the Clerk had been corresponding with Mr. Pester & his family about issues relating to the cemetery regulations and more specifically about the fact that kerb stones had been laid around a grave in the new cemetery without requesting permission and which were against the Town Council's regulations. The Chairman reminded members that the Town Council had made a decision, back in 2006, that resulted in different regulations between the two cemeteries in relation to the use of kerb stones. It had then been agreed that kerb stones would be allowed in the existing cemetery only if they were professionally installed and on condition that the owners

agree that if the kerbs fall into disrepair the Council will be permitted to remove the kerb stones upon notice. It was also agreed that kerbed graves will not be permitted, under any circumstances, in the new cemetery. The Chairman said that whilst he realised that there were a number of informal memorialisation issues in both cemeteries in Mere where relatives had decorated graves with soft toys, ornaments and plastic flowers which may not be to everyone's taste he was aware that they can bring comfort to the family concerned and we all have loved ones in the cemetery and so, as a Town Council, we try to be as relaxed and informal as we can in recognition of the fact that families are going through a very difficult time. However, if the Town Council were to allow these edging stones or kerb stones to remain in the new cemetery then members would need to apply a change to our rules and regulations. Hill said that the reason why this decision had been made, when the Town Council purchased the land for the new cemetery, was because the maintenance issue of the ground when kerbed graves are in situ, is far more difficult and they also present a health and safety hazard due to the tripping potential. He pointed out that there are very few cemeteries, these days, that allow kerbed graves for Health & Safety and maintenance reasons. Cllr. Mrs. Symonds said that her husband was buried in the cemetery and pointed out that it is not just a question of whether the family will continue to maintain the grave and the kerb stones, which she is sure they would, but she also wanted to point out that headstones and structures in the cemetery are let into the ground by several feet so as not to become loose or lean over in later years and that this is particularly important in our cemetery since the ground is clay with a tendency to become unstable. The Clerk pointed out that apart from the requirement of prior permission, any installation in the cemetery would need to be professionally installed by monumental masons accredited with the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) in order to satisfy the Town Council's insurance for public liability purposes. The Chairman said that the Town Council would either need to keep the regulations as they are or we would need to review them at the next meeting and he asked for a show of hands for a) those in favour of standing firm with our existing regulations (6 in favour) and b) those in favour of reviewing the regulations (3 in favour). RESOLVED that the Town Council's Cemetery Rules and Regulations remain unchanged and that Messrs. Pester & Sons be requested to remove the edging stones and any unauthorised permanent installations from the grave.

Finance, Policy & Resources

*a) Payments – RESOLVED to approve payments set out in payment schedules attached on proposal made by Cllr. Colman, seconded by Cllr. Ings and carried with a unanimous vote.

*b) To consider draft Procurement Policy (attached) – RESOLVED to approve and adopt the policy without amendment on but the Clerk was requested to standardise the design & layout of Town Council policies. Proposal made by Cllr. Colman, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Sims and carried with a unanimous vote.

c) To consider review of income for financial year – the Clerk said that she was concerned that the Town Council may not receive its expected (budgeted) income for the year on the basis that a lot of the sports clubs were not active at the present time. RESOLVED not to send out any invoices to any of the Sports Clubs for the 2019/20 financial year on proposal made by Cllr. P. Coward, seconded by Cllr. R. Hill and carried with a unanimous vote. The Clerk also expressed concern about invoicing businesses for their sponsorship funding for the car parks & floral displays on the basis that some of those businesses were struggling financially. RESOLVED that the Town Council should send out invoices to the businesses for sponsorship and that if objections are received then each case will be considered individually. Proposal made by Cllr. P. Coward, seconded by Cllr. R. Coward and carried with a majority vote. Jeans abstained from voting or speaking.

General Items & Consultations

*a) Request from Sarum West Primary Care Network for temporary (portacabin) Hot Clinic to be located in Salisbury Street Car Park until end May 2021 – with reference to the report distributed to councillors, the Chairman said that he had received a telephone call from Dr. Tim King this morning informing him that this temporary Hot Clinic will now be going to the Nadder Centre in Tisbury. However, he pointed out that he was very concerned about the idea of it coming into Mere and did not feel that our car park was the right venue. He said that it would take up too many car parking spaces and proposed, from the Chair, that the Town Council should formally decline this request. The Chairman's proposal received a unanimous vote. RESOLVED that the request be declined and that the report prepared by Cllrs. Colman and Symonds be sent on to the Doctors Surgery.

b) Plans for Remembrance Day 2020 – the Chairman reported that he and Cllr. Sims had attended the memorial for VE Day and he had arranged for The Last Post to be played. He said that what we would be able to do for Remembrance Day is still up for debate but it seemed unlikely that we would be able to encourage the sort of crowds that normally gather for the Remembrance Day Service in The Square. It was agreed to wait and see if we can get any clarification and discuss again in October.

Future meetings and agenda items

Members generally felt that they would prefer to hold a face-to-face meeting than a virtual meeting but the Clerk expressed concern at the number of public presence that had attended tonight's meeting, pointing out that if the meeting had been held inside the numbers would exceed the risk assessment for the building and would not be able to social distance. She reminded members that we have no idea of the numbers in terms of public participation but that the public have a right to attend a Council meeting. Members asked the Clerk to explore the possibility of a hybrid meeting – Council members to meet face-to-face but public members to attend via Zoom or similar alternative.

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

MERE PEACE MEMORIAL SPORTS AND RECREATION GROUND

Registered Charity No. 1093497

For Trustees to consider:

Mere Youth Development Centre –Extension/Refurbishment project – Update on project and approval of granting of 25-year lease which will involve surveyors' fees & solicitors fees (approx. £1500). Also looking for councillors to volunteer to join steering group.

The Chairman reported that on 19th August he and Cllr. Rodney Coward had met with David Corbin and Ross Coad who are both Trustees of Seeds4Success to discuss the rebuilding of the Youth Club building in the Recreation Ground.

The Chairman reminded Trustees that the Youth Club building belonged to the Mere Peace Memorial Sports & Recreation Ground Charity and was built about 40 – 50 years ago and is in need of updating. He also reminded Trustees that the issue of extending and refurbishing the building had been discussed previously and that the Trustees had thought this was an agreeable proposition and had agreed to seek some advice about extending the length of the lease. Indeed, money had been set aside to give as a grant towards the project. Since then, the proposals have changed slightly and plans are now to rebuild the building with a much bigger and better building.

With regards to extending the lease, the Chairman said that the Clerk had made some initial enquiries with a specialist solicitor who had said that “most grant making organisations require that the organisation in receipt of the grant has a lease for at least 25 years which cannot be brought to an end prior to the end of 25 years by the Landlord other than for a substantial breach of the terms of the lease. The Charity has the power to grant a lease for 25 years, but this must be in accordance with the terms of the Scheme, (land not required by the Charity and public consultation), but also in accordance with the provisions of the Charities Act. These require that in leasing land for more than 7 years the Charity must be satisfied that the terms of the lease are the best that can be achieved and obtain an independent Surveyors Report to that effect. The Surveyor can recommend advertising the proposed terms but this is not always necessary if the proposal has been considered by a prior public meeting. Having received the Report the Trustees have to consider that the terms of the proposed lease are the best that can reasonably be obtained for the Charity.

The lease has to be considered from the point of view of the Landlord Charity, not the tenant organisation. There are guidelines laid down for Surveyors in these circumstances. They take into account not only any rent paid, which is income in the hands of the Charity, but also any value in the Landlord Charity having a building which it will own on the termination of the lease. If there are any queries please let me know. If we were to prepare and agree a lease you should budget a figure of £950 plus VAT for preparing and agreeing a lease. The lease will have to be registered by the Tenant at the Land Registry and we will need to deduce the Charity's title to the land, and have a plan of the area to be leased prepared in accordance with Land Registry requirements.'

The Chairman said that he estimated the total cost (solicitors and surveyors) would come to about £1500 + VAT. RESOLVED to progress with the solicitors and surveyors to achieve a 25 year lease.

With regards to plans for the building, Cllr. R. Coward said that Seeds4Success originally wanted to include some toilets which would be accessible for the general public using the Recreation Ground. However, it was pointed out to them that the maintenance of these toilets, if open to the general public, would be significant and very expensive and it was therefore decided that they would only be accessible when the youth club building was in use. Cllr. Coward also said that the original plan was to use the same footprint as the existing building but he had put forward a proposal to make the building big enough to include workshops at the end – about 10 ft longer.

The Chairman pointed out that Seeds4Success are asking for some councillors (Recreation Ground Trustees) to come forward and join some of their Trustees to form a steering group to take this project forward. Cllrs. Aubrey Colman, Glen Ings and Mrs. Lesley Traves volunteered for this role.