

SHIPTON GORGE PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL ON
WEDNESDAY 9 JANUARY 2008

Present: Cllr David Smith (Chairman) (DS), Cllr Mrs Jean Ayers (JA), Cllr Richard Cunningham (RC), Cllr Colin Green (CG), Cllr Robert Langran (RL), Cllr Derek Vowles (DV), Cllr Robert White (RW).

In attendance:

Parish Clerk Ernie Thomas, County Councillor Ron Coatsworth (CC), District Councillor Mark Parsons (MP), Simon Thompson of Dorset Community Action (ST) and five members of the public.

Open Forum:

Simon Cleveland expressed concern about the lack of involvement of members of the public in Parish Council meetings. This was not helped by the Open Forum being at the start of the meeting so that the public could not comment on matters that had been discussed by the Council. He stressed this was not a criticism of individuals but of the system. DS said that in the past the Open Forum had been at the end of the meeting but it had been felt that its present position was best. He pointed out that at the recent Planning Committee meeting regarding the Peas Hill development, members of the public had been allowed to participate in strict accordance with the Standing Orders laid down by the PC. The PC's rules on public participation were similar to those adopted by West Dorset District Council. DS said he agreed public attendance was an important issue and pointed out that it was open to the Chairman to invite members of the public to contribute to discussion during the meeting. DS then welcomed Simon Thompson from Dorset Community Action. Sally Parker mentioned a petition that had been organised regarding the Peas Hill development.

477. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Charles Errington (CE) on the grounds of his work commitment and from Cllr Mrs Amy Steele (AS) on the grounds of her childcare commitment and these absences were approved.

478. To sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2007

The minutes of the PC meeting of 19 November were agreed and signed by DS.

479. Clerk's Report

1. WDDC had now fixed a notice to the waste bin at Burbitt Lane about using it for bagged dog waste but the bin had still not been made a fixture. JA said that she felt the position and style of the bin made it visually unattractive. RL said that the bin had to be near to the main road to enable the local authority to empty it. It was agreed that the **Clerk** would explore the possibility of a more sympathetic style of bin being provided.
2. The Connecting Dorset agreement had been signed and returned on 21 November. It was expected that the hardware would be delivered and the broadband connection made in mid to late February. The VAT-inclusive cost was expected to be approximately £990. The VAT-exclusive element would be matched by a grant cheque from Dorset Community Action and the VAT would be recovered from HM Revenue and Customs, resulting in no net cost to the PC apart from a cash flow disadvantage between payment and recovery of the VAT element. There would be an additional insurance premium from the renewal date of the present policy (annual amount a maximum of £39.92 but probably less) to cover the hardware. CE's briefing note of 10 September 2007 previously circulated to Councillors proposed that the Clerk should be authorised to use the connection for personal use in recognition of all the extras undertaken for the PC. It was proposed by CG, seconded by RW and resolved unanimously that payment of the cost of the hardware and additional insurance premium be approved and that the Clerk be authorised to use the connection for personal use.

3. Application for the precept of £4,325 had been sent to WDDC and acknowledged.

480. Other matters arising from the minutes

1. DS confirmed he had written to Shipton Gorge Limited declining the invitation to appoint a representative director.
2. DS said he had put an item regarding the Parish Plan in the January edition of BVN inviting offers of help.

481. To receive and consider a report on development of a Parish Plan

DS expressed thanks to Simon Cleveland (SC) for his initiative in progressing the Shipton Gorge Parish Plan and invited him to present his report. SC thanked Simon Thompson (ST) of Dorset Community action for his support and guidance. He said that an inaugural meeting had been held on 21 December at which ST had given information on the parish plan process to himself, CE, RC and Peter Gates who currently constituted the members of the steering committee. The aim had been to have a proposed constitution for the Shipton Gorge Parish Plan Steering Committee (SGPPSC) together with a grant application form ready for approval at the current PC meeting and the drafts of these documents had already been circulated to Parish Councillors. It was proposed by RC, seconded by JA and resolved by a majority (RL voting against the resolution) that the constitution as circulated be adopted. This document was thereupon signed by DS. SC then explained the background to the grant application form which included an estimated budget of planned income and project expenditure. The planned income totalled £3,163, made up of a grant of £2,372 (75%), a contribution from the Parish Council of £158 (5%) and the balance represented by the value of volunteer in kind funding, namely £633 (20%). Projected expenditure totalling £3,163 was analysed under various headings and included a contingency sum of £400. The Clerk pointed out the possible impact of these financial transactions on the external audit fee which was based on total Parish Council income or expenditure. He was also concerned to establish whether these transactions were to be reflected in the PC's accounts and Annual Return or whether they should be dealt with as a separate matter. ST suggested that the **Clerk** should speak to David Webb of DAPTC for advice on this aspect. SC said there could be a case for establishing a separate bank account outside of the PC's finances which might also help to ensure that his position as internal auditor was not compromised. The **Clerk** undertook to look into these matters. As regards the required PC funding of £158, ST said this could be included in the 2009 precept and the Clerk confirmed that there were currently sufficient reserves to meet this cost. It was proposed by RC, seconded by JA and resolved by a majority (RL voting against the resolution) that the grant application as circulated be approved and that the Parish Council make a financial contribution of £158. The application form was thereupon signed by DS. SC went on to say that he was hoping to recruit other individuals to assist with developing the Parish Plan and outlined a number of planned initiatives. DS said that the Parish Plan would be a suitable matter to be discussed at the forthcoming annual Parish Meeting.

482. To consider and, if thought fit, adopt Financial Regulations

DS reported that more work had been carried out by himself, CE and the Clerk in refining the proposed Financial Regulations, a revised version of which had been circulated to Councillors. It was proposed by JA, seconded by RC and resolved unanimously to adopt the Financial Regulations as circulated.

483. To receive and consider a report on stormwater drainage in the village

DS said that he and the Clerk had met on 18 December with Blair Turner, David Norman and Dave Maunder of DCC to discuss problems with stormwater drainage in the village and it was hoped this would lead to a number of improvements. The County Council representatives had acknowledged that increasing the capacity of a drainage pipe across Rosamond Avenue had been agreed at a previous meeting and undertook to progress this matter. DS had expressed dissatisfaction with the two week delay in sweeping debris from the highway following a previous flooding episode but the County Council representatives had pointed out the difficulty

in responding given resource constraints and the fact that at times of heavy rainfall there were numerous similar requests from villages all over West Dorset. The Clerk read out an e-mail received from Blair Turner on behalf of his colleague Richard Bastow, to whom the Clerk had written on 19 December regarding a particular problem with stormwater in the vicinity of Courtfield Cottage. Whilst acknowledging an obligation on the part of both DCC and WDDC to work together under the new Pathfinder agreement to address this matter, Blair Turner had indicated that there were major funding implications and any decision to involve the County Council would at the very least require authority from the Director or Chief Executive with the possible need for consideration by council committee. The message concluded that it was therefore not possible to give a firm commitment regarding the possible solution and timing. DS said that any further matters for attention should be included on the next PMU works request form. RW asked whether the County Council's 'Clarence' system could be used to obtain early action. The Clerk said he had been informed by Blair Turner at the meeting that this system had recently been replaced by the Dorset Direct initiative and problems could be reported and logged by calling 01305 251000. DS concluded by saying that he and the Clerk had done their best in trying to have the local flooding problems addressed effectively by the County Council. CC left the meeting.

484. Reports:

Planning

The latest edition of the Planning Sheet had been circulated. CG mentioned that a tree-work application for Barton House had been withdrawn. This had apparently been done at the behest of WDDC and CG would seek clarification. CG mentioned the PC's response to WDDC regarding the Peas Hill Development and gave a comprehensive report on various matters that had arisen subsequently, particularly in relation to parking and stormwater drainage. He asked DV to comment on the latter issue and DV said he had taken photographs of flooding at Peas Hill and reported the situation to Magna who had not responded. It was understood that the application would be going to the full WDDC Planning Committee. MP said that the information before the Planning Officer would not include that which had come to light since the PC's response to the consultation and so this would not be covered by his report to the Committee. The best approach would be to await notification of the WDDC Planning Committee meeting convened to consider the application and for further comments to be sent individually to each member of that Committee on behalf of the PC. DS said he understood the petition referred to earlier would also cover some of these matters. At his invitation, Sally Parker outlined the background to the petition. The petitioners were not against the proposed development in principle but were voicing specific concerns about parking, water supply, street lighting and flood prevention. There were 152 signatories to date. At this point MP left the meeting.

General Finance

Copies of the 2007/2008 accounts with details of bank balances at 31 December were distributed. No payments had been made since the last meeting. Payment of an invoice for £5 from St Martin's Church PCC for use of the church for the Peas Hill planning meeting was approved. The PC's thanks for use of the church would be expressed to the PCC. The Clerk read out a letter from the Village Society enclosing a donation of £40 out of the award received for the Best Community Village 2007. DS had sent a letter of thanks and it was agreed to use the donation for the purposes of the playing field.

Playing Field

RW reported that the replacement frames for the roundabout had been manufactured and were ready for collection. The request for suggestions made in BVN had produced a few responses. AS would be submitting a full proposal for the Playing Field with costs and timescales at the next PC meeting. A maintenance day was planned for mid to late March. DS said he hoped that appropriate grant funding would be sought. RW said the cost of fabricating the new frames would be £487.50 plus VAT. It was agreed that this expenditure would be ratified in due course after payment of the invoice.

DAPTC

JA reported on issues discussed at the meeting held on 29 November. There had been mention of a “White Book” for clerks costing between £12 and £15 and also the suggestion that it was preferable for clerks to attend planning meetings. **Clerk** to find out details of the White Book from DAPTC. Mention was also made of flood wardens and risk assessments regarding land drainage and localised flooding. JA had details of an appropriate contact. The importance of parish plans had been stressed and it was mentioned that Dorset had been the last county to be consulted on post office closures.

BLAP

DS had nothing to report.

Rights of Way

RL had nothing to report.

Village Hall

JA had nothing to report.

Highways

Clerk to circulate blank works request forms to Councillors to be completed and returned to DV by 31 January with details of matters requiring attention by the Parish Maintenance Unit. CG enquired as to the position regarding the absence of a sign warning heavy vehicles against using Smacombe Lane to approach the village. DV said this was under enquiry.

Web site

Nothing to report.

Shipton Gorge Ltd

DS said the company did not wish to make a report on this occasion and in future this item would only appear on the agenda if so requested by the company.

485. Correspondence

The correspondence log had been distributed and was largely self-explanatory. As regards item 140 it was left to individuals to respond to the DORBAG petition if they wished to do so, the matter having already been publicised in BVN. As regards item 148 the Village Society’s request to use the playing field for a ‘picnic in the park’ on Sunday 6 July was approved on condition that no dogs were admitted to the field. **Clerk** to reply accordingly. As regards item 153, DS had offered to help with the transport study.

486. To fix the dates for subsequent meetings including the Parish Meeting

Due to the Clerk’s absence on 12 March, it was agreed that the next PC meeting would be held on Monday 17 March. It was agreed that the annual Parish Meeting would be held on Wednesday 23 April.