

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL SHIPTON GORGE PARISH MEETING HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL ON 25 APRIL 2007

Present: Councillors Richard Hewlett (Chairman), Mrs Mary Boughton (Vice-chairman), Robert Cornish, John Epplestone, Robert Langran, David Smith, Mrs Amy Steele, Ron Coatsworth (County Councillor).

In attendance: Ernie Thomas (Parish Clerk), PC Simon Herfet (for part of the meeting). 21 parishioners attended.

1. Chairman's introductory remarks

The Chairman welcomed everybody and explained that the Parish Meeting, organised by the Parish Council, was a legal requirement and gave the opportunity for a review of the past year with contributions from local organisations.

2. Apologies for absence

Christine Cornish, Cllr John Epplestone, Cllr Charles Errington, Elizabeth Langran, Cllr Mark Parsons, Geoff and Betty Shepherd, Vicky Thomas, Gary and Jo Warren.

3. Open Forum

Cllr Ron Coatsworth said he was the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Committee and gave a presentation on matters relating to the local Primary Care Trust. He also mentioned his continuing efforts to keep the Burton Bradstock Library open. In thanking Cllr Coatsworth the Chairman paid tribute to his active involvement in so many local issues. A parishioner expressed appreciation of the remedial work done in the vicinity of Plot Cottage and the Clerk explained this was part of a wider programme of works to alleviate flooding agreed following a meeting in the village with Blair Turner of the County Council's Highways Department.

4. Minutes of last Parish Meeting held on 17 May 2006

The Chairman said that the minutes had been approved and signed at the Parish Council meeting on 12 July 2006 and the Clerk read out the minutes to the meeting.

At this point the Chairman introduced PC Simon Herfet of West Dorset Police and said that as he was on overnight duty he would present his report at this stage of the meeting to enable him to leave early. PC Herfet said that Shipton Gorge was a comparatively safe village, with only 7 crimes reported over the past year. He outlined the work of the Police and mentioned a new Safer Neighbourhood Policing Team to be introduced shortly, which would involve community support officers as well as police officers. PC Herfet then dealt with questions from the floor and left the meeting following thanks from the Chairman for attending.

5. Chairman's Report

In reporting on the past year, the Chairman said that the Parish Council had been called upon to deal with a large number of issues, some of which he instanced. He expressed concern at the ever-increasing requirements imposed by legislation and whilst some of these might be appropriate for larger local authorities he felt that many were excessive in relation to a very small Parish Council. He hoped that Cllr Coatsworth would take this matter up in appropriate quarters as there was a danger of resources being stretched too thinly with the mounting compliance burden. He also mentioned his appreciation of the tremendous community spirit in evidence over the year. There had been a change in the composition of the Parish Council in May 2006, when Denise Marriott and Amy Steele had been co-opted as Parish Councillors. Sadly, Denise Marriott had died shortly after her appointment. Bob White had acted

as internal auditor for part of the year, but in anticipation of his joining the Parish Council he had been succeeded by Simon Cleveland and appreciation was expressed of the work of both individuals. The Playing Field Maintenance Day was well attended and thanks were given to Grayham Rosamond for all his efforts. The Chairman thanked Cllr Mrs Mary Boughton for her support in deputising for him when his work commitments prevented him carrying out his duties. He thanked Cllr Robert Cornish for all his work as Chair of the Planning Committee and Cllr John Epplestone for having represented the Parish Council on the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils. He mentioned that he, together with Cllrs Boughton, Cornish and Epplestone had not sought re-election and would be shortly cease to hold office although he was sure that they would continue to provide support if needed. He paid special tribute to the very long service of Mary Boughton and expressed thanks for all that the outgoing Councillors had done for the Parish. With only eight nominations for the Parish Council election, the new Council would need to co-opt one more Councillor. He also thanked Cllr David Smith for his work as representative on the Bridport Local Area Partnership, Cllr Robert Langran for serving as Rights of Way and Highways Officer, Cllr Charles Errington for his support and attendance at meetings despite working away from the area and Cllr Mrs Amy Steele for her work as representative on the Village Hall Trust and also on the Playing Field Committee. The Chairman also thanked Ernie Thomas, the Parish Clerk, for all his work during the year. Although there was no financial report, he observed that the precept for the current financial year had actually reduced by 3.1% due to the Parish Council's efforts to limit demands on financial resources. He mentioned the Parish Council's involvement in opposing the proposals of Magna Housing Association for development of land at Peas Hill which had been rejected by the District Council. Magna had recently stated it was developing alternative possibilities which, if funding was obtained from the Housing Corporation, would ensure that there was no open market housing included in the development. The Parish Council intended to continue negotiations with Magna to ensure that any development took full account of the needs of local people.

6. Planning Report

Cllr Robert Cornish, Chairman of the Planning Committee, said that there had been 14 planning-related matters over the last year (compared with 17 the previous year). He reported on the key applications and said that 9 applications had been approved by the Planning Authority, 3 refused, 1 was awaiting their decision and a recent application would be considered by the Planning Committee the following Wednesday.

7. Reports by local organisations.

Speaking on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, Gillian Maxfield said they had had a good year with a number of fund-raising events including a successful Harvest Supper. She mentioned the problem of dogs fouling the churchyard and had placed notices at the Church and in BVN in the hope of reaching those responsible. Given a prospective increase of some 3 to 4% in the contribution to the Salisbury Diocese, more fund-raising events would be held and she hoped for good support from Parishioners. Following the recent AGM, Janet Lane had ceased to be a Church Warden but continued as Lay Worship Leader. Phyl Webster had succeeded her as Church Warden and James Webster had become a Lay Worship Reader. Following the retirement of Anthony Ashwell, there was now only one stipendiary clergyman, the Rector the Revd. Bob Thorn, with Jean Thorn as a non-stipendiary. Services were also conducted by Mike Read and Ryder Rogers. Sir Geoffrey Howlett had left the PCC and Gillian paid tribute to his great support for the Church. She also mentioned the work of the Lilian Stone Trust, which had helped four families with grants totalling some £800.

Eddy Buck, Chairman of the Shipton Gorge Village Hall Trust, outlined the work of the trustees in managing the hall, dealing with its upkeep and organising fundraising events. The Hundred Club continued to provide income as did hiring out of the hall for various events. He mentioned the increased membership of the Table Tennis Club with some members playing socially and others competing in the Weymouth & District League with the prospect of winning the league trophy. He said that work would be done on improvements to the kitchen and storeroom and hoped for continuing support for the fundraising events.

Cllr Mrs Mary Boughton reported on the formation of Shipton Gorge Limited under Charity Commission rules in July 2006. The company had acquired land between St Martin's Church and Brook Street for the benefit of community. Grants, loans and donations had been received and it was proposed, following discussion at a public meeting on 6 April, to restore the land as an orchard. The Company's income and expenditure was outlined and mention was made of various fundraising events for which support would be welcome. It was expected that the Company would obtain charitable status during the next few months.

David Curtis, Homewatch Co-ordinator, said that it had been a quiet year with the few crimes mainly being interference with buildings. He asked everyone to keep an eye on neighbouring buildings and to report anything suspicious to the Police.

Cllr David Smith reported on the formation of New Inn Support Ltd in February 2006. The directors were unpaid and the Company would present its first accounts at an AGM. The Company had successfully negotiated with Palmers Brewery to secure a lease of the New Inn as well as raising substantial funding through loans, grants and events to pay for alterations and improvements. More fundraising events were planned which he hoped would be well supported. He said that whilst the Parish Council had no financial involvement he was grateful for its support whilst in negotiation with the brewery. He also thanked the many people who had helped to ensure that the pub could open last August and said that the New Inn was trading very successfully.

John Kent reported on the work of the Village Society of which he had become Chair this year. He expressed thanks to his predecessor, Sally Parker, for all she had done for the Society. Various activities had been organised, including a day at the races, shopping trips and pensioners' lunches (these now open to non-villagers). He thanked Grayham Rosamond for his work on the Playing Field and members of the Sorrell family for use of their land. He was pleased at the community spirit in the village and the support for the Society's events, which were publicised through BVN. Future events were mentioned, including a proposed family event to replace the firework display. The Society was producing a welcome pack for new residents and a copy would be placed in the New Inn for reference. They were also entering Shipton Gorge in the Dorset Village of the Year Competition. The Chairman said he was pleased at this news as the Parish Council had not been able to find resources to pursue this. He also mentioned the work of Pam Graham and Geoff Shepherd in acting as lay members of the Planning Committee and expressed thanks for their support.

8. Any other business

There was brief mention of changed waste collection and postal arrangements.

The Chairman thanked all who had attended and spoken at the meeting, which he declared closed.