

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL SHIPTON GORGE PARISH MEETING HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL ON 23 APRIL 2008

Present: Cllr David Smith (Chairman of the Parish Council), Cllr Charles Errington (Vice-chairman of the Parish Council), Cllr Mrs Jean Ayers, Cllr Richard Cunningham, Cllr Robert Langran, Cllr Robert White, Cllr Mark Parsons, Ernie Thomas (Parish Clerk), PC Nigel Case (for part of the meeting) and 30 members of the public.

9. Chairman's introductory remarks

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the annual Parish Meeting, organised by the Parish Council.

10. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Colin Green, Cllr Mrs Amy Steele, Cllr Ron Coatsworth, Mary Boughton, Elizabeth Langran, Vicky Thomas, Gillian Maxfield and Peter and Pamela Bates.

11. To sign as a correct record the minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 25 April 2007

The Clerk read out the minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 25 April 2007. It was proposed by Cllr Charles Errington, seconded by Hilary Cunningham and agreed by the meeting that the minutes be approved and signed.

12. Report by the Community Beat Officer, Nigel Case.

At this point the Chairman welcomed both District Councillor Mark Parsons and PC Nigel Case to the meeting. PC Case outlined his career to date and mentioned the new Safer Neighbourhood Policing Team that was in operation including five community support officers as well as police officers. The emphasis was on creating an "old fashioned" approach to policing with officers being seen in the community and dealing with local problems. He also mentioned a new initiative that would see periodic meetings involving the police and local organisations in order to tackle issues of local concern, including not only anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, theft and burglary but also the state of the roads, flooding and other matters of interest to the local community. PC Case then dealt with questions from the floor about speeding in the village and the congestion caused when traffic was diverted along Shipton Road when there was an accident on the A35. In each case he took note of the concerns and undertook to see what could be done. The Chairman then thanked PC Case for attending the meeting.

13. Chairman's Report

In reporting on the past year, the Chairman said that the four year term of the present Parish Council ("PC") had started in 2007. Four experienced Councillors – Richard Hewlett (the Chairman), Mary Boughton (the Vice-chairman), Robert Cornish and John Epplestone – had decided not to seek re-election. He paid tribute to their many years of service to the PC. He mentioned the sad loss of Geoff Shepherd who had served as a lay member of the Planning Committee for many years and expressed condolences to Betty Shepherd. His thanks were also expressed to Pam Graham who would cease to be a member of the Planning Committee in May. He was pleased to report that Steve Marriott continued as a lay member of the Planning Committee and welcomed Graham Cowland who had recently been co-opted as a lay member. Derek Vowles who joined the PC in 2007 had recently resigned due to work commitments and it would be necessary to find a new Parish Councillor. The PC was organised so that Councillors had individual responsibilities covering a variety of matters, including planning, playing field, highways, rights of way, Bridport Local Area Partnership, Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils, and Village Hall Trust representation. Over the past year 22 planning applications had been considered, ranging from minor matters to the Peas Hill development by Magna to provide affordable homes. The PC had made representations about matters of concern relating to the latter development and had been able to influence the process. Discussions were

currently in progress about lighting, drainage and parking arrangements. The Chairman said he believed that planning was the most important activity for the PC and he saw evidence that its opinions could be influential in contentious areas. The playing field was another area of significant responsibility for the PC. Several maintenance days had been held and he thanked all those who had attended. A major refurbishment of the roundabout had been undertaken and it would shortly be recommissioned. The PC was also looking into the possibility of significantly updating the facilities. An anonymous donation of £5,000 had been received with the specific request that the money be applied to the playing field. The PC would be seeking matched grant aid funding. The Chairman expressed thanks to Grayham Rosamond and Slim for their work in grass cutting and general maintenance. He mentioned problems of flooding caused by heavy rainfall and said that two site meetings had been held with County Council officials to discuss remedial works. Some action was taken and correspondence continued over major works in the vicinity of Courtfield Cottage. The Parish Plan was a matter the PC had wished to progress for several years and he was pleased to report that Simon Cleveland was leading a team to progress this. A separate report would be given later. The PC had signed up to the Connecting Dorset project that provided a laptop and associated equipment and broadband connectivity. This would assist the Parish Clerk in carrying out his not insignificant duties. The precept for 2008/09 funding had been set at £4,325. Although this was an increase, the 2007/08 precept had in fact shown a reduction on the previous year. During the past year the PC had introduced new Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, had met with Magna Housing prior to submission of their detailed planning application and had reviewed internal audit and control procedures (the Chairman expressing thanks to Simon Cleveland for his work as internal auditor). A number of consultation documents had been dealt with by the PC, including Affordable Housing, Conservation Area Appraisal and Local Transport Needs. The PC was also offering support to Burton Bradstock Parish Council in its efforts to retain the local Post Office, loss of which would have a negative effect on Shipton Gorge. A replacement member of the PC would need to be found to fill the current vacancy. The Chairman said that his six years as a Parish Councillor had convinced him that the PC was important to the community. Most of the PC's activities were carried on outside the view of local residents but he believed that without the PC their democratic rights would be reduced. Residents could provide support by assisting with the Parish Plan process or even by offering to become a Parish Councillor. The Chairman concluded by expressing thanks to all his fellow Councillors, particularly Charles Errington for acting as his Vice-chairman, and to Ernie Thomas for his work as Parish Clerk.

14. Reports from local organisations.

John Kent reported on the work of the Village Society. Although the Society was more concerned with providing an opportunity for villagers to get together, its varied programme of social events had also raised modest sums of money enabling it to make donations to support charities and local activities. The summer fete had been a particular success, raising around £600. This had funded the purchase of a marquee which was also available for hire. The Village Society had co-ordinated the application on behalf of the village for the Calor Community Village Award. Shipton Gorge had won the small village category and an award plaque together with a cheque for £250 had been received. An application for the current competition had been submitted and the result was awaited. John outlined the many events that had been organised over the past year and thanked all those who had helped to make them a success. He also gave details of forthcoming events and said that he would be pleased to receive suggestions for additional activities.

Eddy Buck reported on the work of the Shipton Gorge Village Hall Trust. Its main role was to provide a decent village hall as a venue for local activities. It was just the right size and was very often full. The Trust held four ordinary meetings per year plus the annual general meeting. He welcomed Jean Ayers as the Parish Council representative and also Jan Shaw who had been co-opted. He reported on a number of activities organised by the Trust, including Moviola and Artsreach productions and Christmas Bingo. There was also the 100 Club that helped to raise funds for the hall. During the year a new kitchen floor had been laid and the kitchen re-

equipped. The storeroom had been modified and trolleys provided for chairs. The hall floor had been sanded and resurfaced. He was proud that the village had won the 2007 Calor award and hoped that the village hall had contributed to that success. He concluded by thanking his fellow trustees. There was much unseen work and he was grateful to all who assisted in any way.

Charles Errington reported on behalf of Shipton Gorge Limited. The Company had already given details of its activities by holding public meetings. It now had 40 members and he welcomed Robert Langran as a director in place of Pam Graham who had left the board. The Company's acquisition of charitable status would lead to recovery of several hundred pounds in Gift Aid tax refunds. The first trees had been planted in the Orchard and many people attend this activity. The trees were doing well. Fund raising events included the Posh Nosh dinner which raised over £1,000. He thanked the organisers and supporters of this event. The previous Saturday, despite poor weather, there had been a successful coffee morning. To control dog fouling in the Orchard, a dog waste bin had been installed. The Company had published its Conservation Plan and copies were available. He also mentioned that there was a web site for the Company at www.shiptongorge.co.uk.

David Curtis, Homewatch Co-ordinator, said that the past year had been quiet until two weeks ago when there had been a daytime break-in to isolated premises with jewellery being stolen. He urged residents to be on the lookout for unrecognised individuals or vehicles and to report suspicious activities to the police. There had also been a jobbing gardener visiting the village who had been acting suspiciously and was reported to the police. The same individual had also been doing similar things in Charmouth. David asked villagers to be especially observant to avoid elderly residents being targeted by such people. Apart from these incidents, the past year had been generally quiet.

Speaking on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, Bob White said that the PCC was grateful for the efforts of many volunteers who worked in the background to help St Martin's Church. Fundraising events included the annual fete (including the dog show), the historic church cycle ride, the harvest supper and carol singing around the village. The Church cost between £11,000 and £12,000 a year to maintain and it was a struggle to meet these costs. The PCC's annual contribution to the diocese had fallen from over £7,500 to just over £6,500 this year reflecting the retirement of the Rev Anthony Ashwell. Services were held in the Church every Sunday. The most popular service was the annual Christmas Carol Service. It had been suggested that the traditional format of seven lessons and carols should be changed and the PCC would welcome ideas for alternative content. Bob also reported on the work of the Lilian Stone Trust, the trustees of which were the Rector and the Churchwarden. The interest on the trust fund was spent on helping the poorer residents of the village. Anyone needing help could approach the Churchwarden, Gillian Maxfield, in complete confidence and if residents knew of anyone in need they could suggest that they contact Gillian.

Burton Bradstock C. of E. V.C. School had been unable to send a representative but the Parish Clerk read out a letter from the Head Teacher outlining the School's many achievements over the past year.

David Smith reported on New Inn Support Limited. The Company had four directors – himself, Eddy Buck, Sally Parker and Ann Hunt, with John Kent as Company Secretary. The Company would be two years into its six year lease from Palmers in June. The pub was sublet to Gary Pellow and Sandra Tyson who were responsible for day-to-day management. £50,000 had been raised and spent on re-launching the New Inn which opened in August 2006. There had been a very satisfactory first year's trading and he acknowledged the efforts of Gary, Sandra and the staff. The Company had to take out loans but as a result of fundraising and an anonymous donation all loans had been repaid. The Company needed to build its reserves to meet ongoing costs. Annual accounts were published and the Company had held an AGM. The directors had resolved that the Company would be a "not for profit company" and no director or officer had

any financial recompense. Four shares had been issued to the directors but it was not intended to declare any dividends. In the event of winding-up, any surplus would be given to the Village Society. David said he hoped the village saw the New Inn as an asset to Shipton Gorge and he would like any comments or suggestions to be given to Gary and Sandra. The directors thanked all who supported the pub and they looked forward to a successful future.

15. Shipton Gorge Parish Plan

Simon Cleveland (SC) and Richard Cunningham (RC) gave a comprehensive presentation about the Shipton Gorge Parish Plan. In the course of this, SC explained that the Plan sought to reflect the needs and aspirations of parishioners and village organisations to guide the Parish Council in developing short and long term strategy. The Parish Plan Steering Committee was responsible to the Parish Council but independent of it. A Parish Plan would assist grant applications and give higher levels of government a more accurate view of local needs. More volunteers were needed, including two further committee members and working group leaders and researchers. RC said that there was a need to talk to people and to make recommendations and reach conclusions. Following the conclusion of the presentation, the Chairman said there was much to take in and he thanked SC and his team for their efforts. Having talked to Mike Southgate of Burton Bradstock Parish Council about their Parish Plan, he was convinced that the exercise was worthwhile.

16. Any other business

Charles Errington expressed thanks to David Smith for all his work as Chairman. Grayham Rosamond mentioned that the final work on the playing field roundabout was being carried out and an opening ceremony would be held.

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