

Melbury Osmond Parish Council

Draft Minutes the Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 24th January 2023, 7.30pm at Melbury Osmond Village Hall

24.01.01 Present; Cllr Paley b(Chairman), Cllr Ward (Acting Clerk), Cllr Smith, Cllr Penfold (Dorset Council). Three members of the public Apologies; Cllr Coverdale. Absent; Cllr Holtham

24.01.02 The draft minutes of meeting held on 8th November 2022 were approved by all councillors present

24.01.03 Open meeting

Cllr Penfold reported that since 2019, when the Unitary Council was formed, substantial savings have been made by the new Dorset Council, these have been reinvested into adult social care. Nearly 100 members of the public have been nominated by Dorset Council for awards in recognition of all the voluntary work that was carried out within local communities during the Covid pandemic. The Dorset History Centre is applying for lottery funding to improve and expand the service. Cllr Penfold also reported that some recycling collections had failed this week due to the freezing weather, and the resulting transport difficulties.

Regarding the issue of the water works taking place on Barton Hill, it was indicated that Mrs Townshend had been approached and that she had been amenable to allowing villagers to use the road through the Melbury Estate, should the need arise, during the course of any road closures affecting village traffic. However, due to the works being re-timetabled to take place over night, the given permission was deemed to be redundant. The council note their gratitude for such a stance.

A member of the Parochial Church Council requested use of the Reading Room for a meeting, due to be held there 13th March 2023. This has been noted.

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The issue of highways maintenance was raised, given the poor state of the Macadamised surface in some sections of the highway, especially near Bridge Cottage, and also on the hill leading to the estate. The surface was also deemed unsafe in sections covered by ice, due to the recent cold weather. The water pooling at the bottom of Barton Hill was tending to freeze and a drainage solution needs to be found to alleviate the ongoing flooding issue.

24.01.04 Matters to be discussed

- **Footpaths update;** Cllr Smith broached the Meads issue, which is ongoing. He has approached the affected parties and will continue to monitor the situation. The bridge at Higher Holt is still unsafe due to missing timbers, and remains closed to public use. Cllr Smith is continuing with discussions concerning its reopening.
- **Highways update (inc. date for additional drain clean);** Paul Thatcher has been contacted, and although he declined an on-site meeting, the request for remedial maintenance of sections of the highway through Melbury Osmond, including re-Macadamising sections of the roadway, and addressing issues of verge erosion, has been logged by the Highways Department. The flooding issues affecting Theresa Oaksford's cottage has been reported to the Highways Dept, and reportedly will be prioritised as much as possible. Post meeting note – a request for roads sweeping has been made to Dorset via the online system.
- **Play area (inc. options for grounds maintenance);** Cllr Coverdale reported that professional gardener, David Woolacott has been employed to maintain the playground for 2 hours per month (Sept-Feb), and 4 hours per month (Mar-Aug). Cllr Coverdale reported that work on the new villager's Welcome Pack was ongoing.
- **The Boules club bench;** Has arrived and is being temporarily stored by Cllr Paley.
- **Post Office services;** Internal operational issues within the PO has led to the outreach programme to be temporarily halted across many local villages. An investigation into the dispute between the main and sub Post Office is ongoing. Correspondence to the PO highlighting the value and need to retain the service has been lodged from several PC's including MO. Representation to the local MP is the next step.
- **Use of the Reading Room;** Due to an extraordinary increase in quarterly electricity bills from SSE, (now approaching £900 pa), the continuing viability of the Reading Room has been questioned, especially given the fact that the PO (the main user of the Reading Room) is no longer using it. Cllr Ward is investigating. An application has been made for the installation of a smart meter in the Reading Room. This will take place on 27th March 2023. SSE has been contacted in an attempt to organise an online account and to arrange a meter reading (although an unofficial meter reading

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has been provided by telephone). Once SSE correct the account using the latest meter reading, then it is anticipated that MOPC will have a healthy positive account balance or receive a refund. If this leads ultimately to future bills being substantially reduced, then the MOPC is willing to continue to maintain the Reading Room as a community resource. If the bills are not reduced the council will need to make a decision on the feasibility of retaining its use.

- **Jubilee copse;** Written communications have been sent to Oliver Adderley (Melbury Estate manager), and a response has been requested regarding confirmation of permission to plant the 105 saplings that are to constitute the Jubilee Copse at the western end of the playing field.
- **Coronation planning;** A suggestion was made that the village hall committee should be involved in planning any celebratory event, and efforts to find replacement village hall committee members is stepped up.

24.01.05 Approval of the finances for Financial Year 2021-22

These were approved by council members, and gratitude expressed to John Senior for auditing the accounts.

24.01.06 Approval of the Annual Governance and Review FY 2021-22

These were approved by council members, and signed by Cllr Paley and Cllr Ward.

24.01.07 Approval of the budget for FY 2023-24

A draft budget for 2023-24 was presented by Cllr Paley and various elements including monies unspent were discussed. A proposal to retain the precept at the 2022-23 level was made. General support for the draft budget was given. Cllr Paley will develop the final proposal for review by the clerk then submission to all councillors for remote approval by return email. The deadline for submission of the precept to Dorset Council in 31st January 2023. These were approved by council members, and signed by Cllr Paley and Cllr Ward.

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24.01.08 Current financial statement

MOPC currently has £7,605.64 in the Lloyds Bank account.

24.01.09 Planning applications

None.

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24.01.010 Correspondence

PKF Littlejohn – external auditors

DATPC newsletters

Paul Thatcher – re highways repairs

Kelly Innes – Post Office External Affairs

Parish clerks of Buckhorn Weston & Kingston Magna and North Cadbury PC's

Paul Wells re unsafe congestion at Drive End

Wessex Water and Ilchester Estates re – planned waterworks

24.01.011 AOB

None

24.01.012 To clarify decisions

Regarding S137 allocation - Cllr Smith is to ascertain up to date population figures for Melbury Osmond

Cllr Smith will ascertain the proposed timetable for mending the footpath bridge at Higher Holt.

Cllr Paley will publish the accounts for (2021/2022), finalise the 2023/2024 budget for final approval and precept submission.

24.01.013 Date of next meeting

Tuesday, 14th March 2023 in Melbury Osmond village hall.

Meeting closed at 21:00

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