

CHARNEY BASSETT PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 12 MARCH 2003

PRESENT:

Mrs Douglas (Vice-chairman)
Mrs J Bath
Mrs E Dahele
Mr J Harper

Mr P G Davies (Clerk)

Apologies had been received from Mr G Beer (Chairman). Mr Terry Cox, District Councillor and 11 members of the public were present.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising.
2. Clerk's Financial Report.
3. Planning Matters
4. Charney Field.
5. Charney Mill.
6. Village College
7. Village Green
8. Clerk's Correspondence.
9. Village Plan
10. Ten minutes for Residents' Questions.
11. Any Other Business.

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING.

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.

Mr Daglish had obtained elm planks for a new Village Green seat at a cost of approx. £80. This expenditure should qualify for a 75% Village Improvement Grant.

The Clerk had not had any further contact with OCC concerning the Stanford recycling site but it did appear to have been cleaned up somewhat.

The Jubilee photographs are now in the possession of Mr Harper, who is arranging for them to be displayed in the Village Hall.

The Clerk had established from Mrs Rumble that the rat problem on the Cherbury footpath had apparently gone away; she was keeping an eye on the situation.

The Clerk:

- a) reported on discussions with the Vale Council on a Parish Council web site, proposals for which will await further developments.
- b) had reported back to Mr Brown of Pusey that he would act as contact if anything became of a campaign to improve the A420.
- c) Reported that the Vale would fund a new "Chapel Lane" notice but any addition to indicate the Village Hall and footpath would need to come from Parish Council funds and would cost around £20.

- d) had raised the matter of overhanging hedges in Denchworth with Dr John Myatt, Denchworth Parish Meeting Chairman. He had also mentioned in his Cherbury News report the hazard presented to Charney Bassett villagers with mobility problems by hedges impeding pavements.
- e) had reported the poor condition of the footbridge at the junction of the Stanford-in-the-Vale bridle path (5) and Footpath No. 4 to OCC and had been informed that it should be repaired later this year.
- f) had mentioned in his Cherbury News report that new councillors would be needed.
- g) had discussed the Lyford road trees with OCC and Mr Jim Cottrell, the farmer who planted them. OCC had received a complaint about them from Mr Vic Hodgkins and their first impression was they are on the highway, although there is some dispute as to the definition of the highway. OCC have subsequently reported that the Road Traffic Act 1980 forbids the planting of trees within 15 feet of the centre of a road which means that they do not comply with this Act. The statement in the minutes of the 8 January Council meeting that no law had been broken may therefore be incorrect. However, The Clerk has determined that the farmer believed he had complied with the rules of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CCS) which require them to be at least one metre from the road. It would appear from discussion with DEFRA, sponsor of the CCS, that there may be a misalignment between the CCS rules and the Road Traffic Act 1980. Furthermore, the CCS rule may be applicable only to hedges but there is a scheme to encourage the planting of trees in hedgerows, suggesting that the farmer's interpretation of the rules could be correct.

The Parish Council is not directly involved in this confusing matter except in its capacity of dealing with matters of concern to villagers but will continue to monitor the situation as OCC consider their response to Mr Hodgkins complaint. A positive outcome of these discussions is that OCC now accept they do own the verge between the parish boundary and the Goosey turn and will arrange for the hedge on it to be cut back.

All other matters arising were on the agenda.

2. CLERK'S FINANCIAL REPORT

The Clerk presented his simplified Financial Report which was adopted. The Council noted that six further applications for grants had been received which if paid would result in 15% of the precept going on grants. It was agreed that a policy on grants was needed and would best be determined by the new Council, so the decision on these applications was deferred.

The Council noted and approved the Statement of Approval in Section 2 of the Annual audit return for the year ended 31 March 2002.

3. PLANNING MATTERS

The appeal against the refusal to grant planning consent for a 2 metre high wall at "Coral Oaks" had been rejected.

The Clerk had been approached by the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, seeking the views of the Council on the inclusion of affordable housing in the development of McBain's yard and had told them that a village referendum in 1997 had rejected a similar proposal by a 2:1 majority. The Vice-chairman considered that it was important to air the topic as the referendum had been some time ago. Although the McBain scheme could be the last opportunity to include affordable housing in a development, the possibility of a future scheme like the one rejected by the referendum remained. Mr Cox informed the Council that, in his capacity as member of the Development Control Committee of the Vale Council he was involved in the delegated decision process to determine whether affordable housing should be included in the scheme. As a result he had undertaken some research which had revealed that there was nobody on the Vale housing waiting list in the catchment area for Charney Bassett and therefore no justification for rented accommodation. He also explained that inclusion of affordable housing could have an adverse financial effect on the developer's plans to relocate his business from the village, a move supported by the Parish Council for its environmental benefits.

There was a possible option of including houses which would be made available at 30% below market prices but it was not known exactly how this would work and in the knowledge that nobody was waiting for housing, this seemed irrelevant.

In the light of all this information, after further discussion the Council agreed that it would not support the provision of affordable housing in the McBain scheme. In order to keep the topic on the agenda, **The Clerk** was asked to write to ORCC inviting them to send a representative to the Parish Assembly to answer questions on the topic. Mr Cox was thanked for his timely and very relevant input into the discussions.

The Council had supported the Minmere Barn and Farm application which was duly granted planning permission with 11 conditions attached. It was noted that any change of use of the remaining agricultural barns would require planning permission and the situation should be monitored.

4. CHARNEY FIELD

The Field had been cleared of debris before harrowing by Mr Fitzgerald O'Connor who had confirmed that he would cut the Field grass free of charge during the cutting season. As a fallback, The Clerk had obtained a quotation from Mr Baxter of £50 plus VAT per cut.

The Toddler Group had approached the Council with a proposal that the Council order the children's play equipment, which would be paid for by a grant from CLET, thereby benefiting from a VAT refund and also include it in the Council's insurance. The Clerk explained the draft terms under which the Council would manage this and these were approved. The Council's statutory public liability insurance would provide basic cover at no additional cost but insuring the actual equipment and safety surface would involve an extra premium, to be determined. **The Clerk** was asked to continue to sort out the details of the equipment purchase with Lucy Gildersleeves and ensure the terms were applied, particularly the nomination of a person or persons to undertake the inspection of the equipment on behalf of the Council. Because the Council wished to deal in an even handed way with all organisations using the Field, a compensating donation from the Toddler Group equivalent to any additional premium would be sought.

Mrs Dahele reported on progress with erecting a Sarsen stone at the entrance to the Field. Initially stones had been selected from Stanford quarry and Mr McBain had been asked to help transport them to the Field. In the event, Mr McBain inspected the stones and declared them to be of inferior quality and susceptible to frost damage. He had offered to procure suitable stones from the Mendips and would not only transport them but would mount them in position. This kind offer has been gladly accepted and the delivery and placing of the stones is eagerly awaited. Councillors have been offered the opportunity to go and see similar stones in situ in Didcot.

Mrs Gildersleeves reported that CHAFT was proposing to carry out some work to tidy up access to the Field from the Bridle Path and had already laid some straw in muddy areas. It was reported that horse footprints had been observed in the straw and CHAFT would need to keep an eye out for unlawful use of the footpath. It was suggested that the horse riders organisation in the village could be invited to play a part in these activities.

5. CHARNEY MILL

Mr John Mant, Council solicitor, had completed his examination of the draft lease for the Mill and had advised that the Council could sign it. There are two minor matters to be addressed, the erection of a sign which the lease would forbid and the question of a Schedule of security work. The Clerk has discussed these with OCC and it is agreed that these can be resolved when the OCC solicitor produces the final draft for signature. Although OCC were not prepared to pay the Council's legal costs of the lease, they were prepared to make a grant of an equivalent sum towards the restoration work.

The repairs to the roof and weather boarding, due to be carried out by OCC as part of the agreement on the terms of the lease are expected to start very shortly now that the necessary DEFRA licence, needed because of the presence of bats, has been issued.

The Clerk has written to Mr Cottrell with a draft agreement for parking adjacent to the Mill and awaits a reply.

Mr Harper reported that there had been some progress in arranging for a flow of water to be restored to the Mill.

6. VILLAGE COLLEGE

Mrs Dahele reported that there was little to report on the College which had embarked on a new term with an additional class for flower arranging. The College has now been used by 40 people with 120 registrations for the various courses on offer. She pointed out that as she was retiring from the Council, it would be necessary to appoint someone else to undertake the organisation of the College and liaison with Abingdon and Witney College.

7. VILLAGE GREEN

Mrs Dahele had asked for this item to be placed on the agenda because she felt much could be done to improve the appearance of the Green. It was agreed to reseed areas where parked cars had damaged the grass and to resite the No Parking signs to more appropriate locations. Mrs Gildersleeves reported that repairs to her barn would start shortly and although it was hoped to minimise disruption, re-seeding there might need to wait.

Mrs Rumble asked whether the sign saying "The Green" could be removed as it was surely not necessary to identify the Green. However, The Clerk pointed out that the sign was not identifying the Green it was displaying the postal address of the properties adjacent to the Green and was designed to aid deliveries to these properties.

8. CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE

A letter had been received from Friends of War Memorials, an organisation which inspects village war memorials to ensure they are looked after. They report that while the Charney War Memorial "appears to be in overall good condition, there are some cracks in its base that may benefit from professional attention" **The Clerk** has some information from FoWM, including details of grants for repairs and would follow this up.

An invitation to enter the Best Kept Village Competition had been received and it was agreed to enter. **The Clerk** was asked to submit an entry form.

9. VILLAGE PLAN

As this item had been deferred for discussion at the Parish Assembly in May, it was not discussed but Mr Harper took the opportunity to remind the public briefly of what it entails.

10. TEN MINUTES FOR RESIDENTS' QUESTIONS

Mr Paske explained that his property in Chapel Lane did not include Chapel Lane in its official address. He had consulted the Vale Council who explained that this was because the name had never been officially registered. It could be, but would need to have a new postcode if it was. The Clerk confirmed that this was the case and pointed out some other anomalies in village addresses, especially Main Street which, according to the Electoral Roll, only had two properties in it, completely isolated from other properties and surrounded by properties with High Street addresses. Residents could write to ask the Parish Council to arrange registration but it was felt that the alternative procedure of residents writing directly to the Vale Council was preferable.

Mr Paske asked whether the Council could write to OCC concerning the phasing of the new traffic lights at the junction of the A415 and A338 as these appeared to be heavily biased in favour of A338 traffic, to the disadvantage of the A415 traffic. **The Clerk** was asked to do this.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Clerk was asked to deal with two other matters: a large pothole in the road approaching the pig farm and fly tipping along the same road. He agreed to do the former and was able to report that he had already reported the fly tipping to the Vale Council and had been promised it would be removed by 21 March.

It was agreed to hold the annual village clean-up on Saturday 12 April at 10.00 a.m. (meet on the Green). Mrs Rumble was invited to let The Clerk have a list of areas of the village which need attention.

The Clerk reported on a successful deployment of a Mini Gatso speed recording device on loan from OCC Speedwatch. It had confirmed the speeding in the morning rush hour when one-third of vehicles proceeding toward Longworth had driven along Longworth Road at 35 m.p.h. or more. He produced anecdotal evidence which suggested that the device had made a contribution to reducing speeding and it was hoped this was a lasting effect.

On behalf of the three councillors who would not be seeking re-election, Mrs Douglas thanked the villagers for their support during their four-year term of office, explaining that this was the last meeting of the Council as currently constituted, although they would continue in office until 30 April 2003. She also thanked The Clerk for his support.

Mr Cox explained that it, too was the last meeting he would attend as District Councillor, due to the changes in electoral boundaries which would apply at the 1 May election. He had had a 20-year association with the Council, including a brief spell as Chairman during the resignation crisis and he paid tribute to the energy of the Council and to the level of public interest which resulted in bigger attendances than many of the larger villages he looked after. He would continue to live in Goosey and would watch village developments with interest.

Mrs Douglas responded by thanking Mr Cox to whom the Council owed a debt of gratitude for his support and wise counsel over such a long period.

Mr Hook from the floor, speaking on behalf of villagers, thanked the Council for their efforts in serving the village and meeting its needs.

12. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 14 May 2003 at 7.30 p.m. in the Village Hall. As this would be the first meeting of a new Council, it was agreed to hold the Parish Assembly on the same evening. The Council meeting would be scheduled for 7.30 p.m. to deal with administrative matters and the Assembly would follow at 8.00 p.m.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.22 p.m. with thanks to all those who attended.

Signed.....

Chairman

Date.....