

CHARNEY BASSETT PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 9 JANUARY 2002

PRESENT:

Mr G Beer (Chairman)
Mrs J Bath
Mrs E Dahele
Mr J Harper

Mr P G Davies (Clerk)

County Councillor Andrew Crawford, District Councillor Terry Cox and four members of the public attended. An apology had been received from Mrs Douglas.

AGENDA

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

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING.

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman subject to a minor amendment to substitute Mrs Dahele for Mrs Douglas in paragraph 4 on page 39.

On matters arising, The Clerk had written to Thames Valley Police expressing the council's concern at poor communications and had subsequently exchanged letters with the officer responsible for communications, stressing the need to give callers reassurance that the police know where they are calling from.

Quotations for replacement of the Ock Green railings were still awaited and **The Clerk** was asked to chase these. Mrs Dahele had obtained the name of a firm who specialised in renovation work and would pass this to **The Clerk** as a possible source of another quotation. The Clerk had reported further village electricity failures to the distribution company

All other matters arising were on the agenda.

2. CLERK'S FINANCIAL REPORT

The Clerk presented his financial report which included an account of expenditure on the Village College, showing a credit of £311.35, a sum which is available for future expenditure on the College. The only other item worthy of note was the expenditure under Section 137 of the Local Government Act which now included the cost of the Charney Field fireworks.

Thanks were due to Mr Bill Clarke for donating the Christmas tree, to Mr and Mrs Gildersleeves for providing the electricity for the tree lights and to Mr Albert Rayner for disposal of the tree after it was taken down.

The report was adopted.

3. SETTING THE PRECEPT

The Clerk presented a paper on the budget requirements for the financial year 2002/2003. He recommended that the precept should remain at £2,000 but also recommended that now was the time to start spending some of the funds which had been accumulated in anticipation of ownership of Charney Field to avoid criticism that the precept was unnecessarily high. He drew attention to two items which were not included in the analysis. Mrs Rumble had volunteered to undertake street cleaning which had not been done since 1998 and this offer was accepted unanimously by councillors with acclaim. It was agreed that the basis of her contract would be for an average of two hours per week at a rate of £5 per hour (just above the national minimum wage). This would result in expenditure of £480 over the year, offset by a 50% grant from the Vale Council, resulting in a net expenditure of £240. The other item was the balance of the TOE grant for Charney Field which would result in extra income of £1,000, £721.75 of which had already been spent.

Mrs Dahele raised the question of possible village improvements expenditure such as Ock Green railings. The Clerk pointed out that such work would attract an 80% grant and that the remaining 20%, should it be incurred, could be accommodated within the contingency. As yet there was no indication of any such costs to make an estimate meaningful. There was also some discussion on whether expenditure would be incurred in celebrating the Queen's Jubilee but this was inconclusive and it was agreed to discuss this at the next meeting.

It was agreed that there was no need to adjust the recommended precept to take these items into account and **The Clerk** was asked to convey to the Vale Council the decision to set the precept at £2,000

4. PLANNING MATTERS

There was a long discussion on the granting of approval for the replacement for "Pennar" in Longworth Road, to which the Council had objected strongly. The Council had been represented at the planning meeting at which this was discussed and found the entire process thoroughly unsatisfactory, an experience repeated at another planning meeting on 7 January at which approval was given for an extension at 1, Buckland Road which appeared to be inconsistent with policy and with previous decisions in Buckland Road. It involved building in front of the current building line, a decision justified by the planners because of the screening effect of the hedge in front of the dwelling.

The Chairman commented that approval was given for unsuitable schemes on the basis of the advice of Vale planners who appear to spend a lot of time finding ways around Local Plan Policies instead of using them to prevent unsuitable development. This advice is then endorsed by committee members who do not live in villages and obviously do not understand the views of those who do. It was noted that of the fourteen members of the Planning Committee, only one (Mr Cox) lived in one of the small villages and hamlets (including Charney Bassett) listed in Policy H6 of the Local Plan to which special consideration should be given in considering development and to which Policy H13 (which the Pennar replacement breaches) applies. The "Coral Oaks" development and the Pennar replacement would result in two huge houses replacing two small bungalows and there was evidence that the developer hoped to buy more land or property in the road, no doubt resulting in more replicas of "Coral Oaks" being built. This raised the prospect of a total destruction of the existing character of Longworth Road which had already been damaged.

Mr Cox, whose support for the Council's and residents' objections was much appreciated, accepted the general criticism of the proposed development and the strength of the feelings it had generated. He undertook to speak to John Rawlings, the head of the Planning Directorate to ensure he was aware of these feelings. He pointed out that one reason given by the planners for not refusing the application was the belief that if a replacement was refused, an extension of unlimited size could be granted. The Clerk suggested that this was not a valid argument as extensions are subject to some limitation, if only by the requirement that "the effect of the development (in particular its scale, massing and positioning) on the character and appearance of the existing and adjacent dwellings" should be taken into account (Policy H18).

It was agreed that the seriousness of this issue and the implications for preserving village amenity was such as to warrant a letter to Mr Rawlings. This should express the Council's concern at the damage being done to the village by unsuitable development caused by failure to ensure compliance with the Local Plan and inadequate enforcement. On this last point, it was mentioned that the activities of the "Pennar" developer, who has a carpentry business and who lives in "Coral Oaks", continue to give Longworth Road residents cause for concern. The planners, in a letter to the Council when "Coral Oaks" was approved in 1996, stated that although "the applicant has a carpentry business, no such work takes place on the premises, nor are there any deliveries of materials, nor will any employee visit the site". The reality is that since the dwelling was completed, there have been employees permanently working there and there is a steady flow of employees and representatives cars and company vans and trucks to and from the dwelling increasing the risk of a road accident. Mr Cox also agreed to mention this matter to Mr Rawlings.

Mr Cox had been asked by the Chairman to find out what had happened to his objection to modifications at the Chequers Inn, not included in the approval given for an extension to the property, which overlooked Buckland Road gardens. Mr Cox reported that a visit by planners to the site had resulted in a request to the owners to submit a retrospective planning application. The planners could be expected to visit properties in Buckland Road to see the effect of the unauthorised work when the application was being processed.

The log store and garage at Rectory Farm House which had gone to the Planning Committee was approved, apparently at a reconvened Planning Meeting on 5 December.

5. CHARNEY FIELD

The Chairman referred to the recommendation in the setting of the precept that there should now be some expenditure on items for which the Council had responsibility. Immediate suggestions were notices, some form of permanent marker such as a sarsen stone and a gate (which should be easily operated by elderly people) across the footpath between the new fence at the north end and the adjoining field fence. Mrs Adamson and Mrs Gildersleeves representing the Village Hall and Field Trust were present and they agreed to come to the March Council meeting with specific proposals.

There was further discussion on the concerns that there had already been cases of dog fouling on the Field and it was being used by horse owners, neither of which activity was desirable for maintaining the Field in good condition. The Chairman reminded the meeting that these matters were now the responsibility of the Trust. Mr Rumble, from the floor, was concerned that Field management policies should be devised which did not discriminate against any group of villagers wishing to use the new facility.

6. CHARNEY MILL

OCC had now indicated that they were prepared to continue to insure the building but that they would like to see a contribution to the cost from the Council. The Clerk reported on discussions with OCC's agents and the sum they had in mind was £50 per annum. The Council rejected this idea as being contrary to the original idea that the Council would help OCC by taking on the liability of the Mill and saw no reason why this should involve an insurance cost. It would be preferable to maintain the *status quo* whereby OCC continued to own the Mill and the restoration continued as it has for the last 25 years. **The Clerk** was asked to convey this view to OCC's agents. Mr Crawford offered to use his good offices to see if the matter could be resolved satisfactorily and The Clerk undertook to provide him with details of an appropriate contact in OCC.

It was agreed that it was time for contact to be made with the new owner of Mill Cottage. Mr Harper had tried to visit him but with no success. **The Clerk** was asked to write to Mr Anderson explaining the Council's position and to pass the letter to **Mr Harper** for delivery by hand if possible.

7. VILLAGE COLLEGE

Mrs Dahele reported that the College was continuing but with delays to the starts of the next series of courses and a lack of a French conversation tutor. Funds had been found to ensure the completion of planned courses.

Mrs Dahele suggested that as the College is now well-established the question of its future management should be reviewed. It could possibly be removed from under the wing of the Council to make it a separate entity, with its own finances, run by a "board of governors" of interested parties. This need not be implemented until current courses were complete but it was agreed it was a suitable topic for discussion at the next meeting.

8. CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk had received a letter from CLET seeking a replacement Trustee for Mrs Dahele. Mrs Bath volunteered to take this on and **The Clerk** was asked to inform the Trust Clerk, Mrs Peters, of this decision.

The Clerk had received an application from the Abingdon Citizens Advice Bureau for grant aid. It was agreed to donate £25 as in previous years.

9. TEN MINUTES FOR RESIDENTS' QUESTIONS

Mrs Adamson commented that, having complained at the last meeting about the new fence which Mr Harper had erected along the Bridle Path, she was pleased that improvements made to it since then had made it more visually acceptable. The Chairman complimented both parties on achieving a satisfactory resolution of this issue.

The footpath from New Road to Charney Field was being obstructed by trees overgrowing from McBain's yard and "The Last". **The Clerk** was asked to see what could be done to clear it. Mr Harper hoped that OCC would liaise with him in clearing the Bridle Path in the Spring so that the end result would be in keeping with the Field.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

By letter, Mrs Douglas again raised the issue of parking on the Village Green. The Chairman and Mr Harper had not yet met Mr Crisp and since the problem had eased lately, it was agreed to keep an eye on this before devising a way of preventing it. Mr McBain had not yet been approached about obstruction by his vehicles in New Road.

The Chairman sought clarification of the purposes of the Wantage and Grove Forum and the new Standards Committee. Messrs Cox and Crawford explained that the Forum was aimed at consultation on local issues and membership was to be encouraged; the Chairman agreed to attend the next meeting on 30 January 2002. The Standards Committee had implications for the Council in that it was aimed at promoting and maintaining standards of conduct of councillors. Both these bodies had emerged from the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000.

Mrs Dahele and Mrs Bath would attend a Briefing Meeting by OALC on the Planning Green Paper at Abingdon on 14 February at a cost of £5.86 each. **The Clerk** was asked to arrange this.

11. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 13 March 2002 at 7.30 p.m. in the Village Hall.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.38 p.m. with thanks to all those who attended.

Signed.....
Chairman