

## **CHARNEY BASSETT PARISH COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2009 IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

**Present:** Mr G Rumble, Chairman  
Mr J Harper, Vice-chairman  
Mrs J Bath  
Mr M Cox  
Mr J Stiles

Mr P G Davies (Clerk)

#### **09/01 Apologies**

An apology had been received from County Councillor Melinda Tilley; no other apologies had been received. Three members of the public were in attendance. There were no declarations of interest.

#### **09/02 Minutes of the November 2008 Meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the November 2008 meeting be approved and signed by the Chairman.

#### **09/03 County Councillor's News**

In her apology for her absence, County Councillor Tilley stated she had nothing to report.

#### **09/04 District Councillor's News**

District Councillor Hayward gave a summary of the Vale Council's 20-year plan (the Local Development Framework) which replaces the Local Plan which is current until 2011. He detailed some of the proposed housing locations, all of them in towns in the district. There were no house building implications for Charney Bassett. The plan has been published and a consultation process is ongoing with a deadline for comments of 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009. *[Clerk's note:- The document can be downloaded from the Vale Council web site at [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk). There will be a consultation event at Wantage Civic Hall from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. on 12<sup>th</sup> February]*

#### **09/05 Clerk's Financial Report**

The Clerk presented his financial report CBPC/FIN/08/07 (appended to minutes) which had been distributed to councillors. It was agreed to give donations to six charities: the three which had made specific requests for grants (Abingdon Citizens Advice Bureau, Oxon Association for the Blind and South and Vale Carers), The Independent Advice Centre, Wantage (for which Ed Vaizey MP had sought a donation), Hanney Royal British Legion and the Thames Valley and Chiltern Air Ambulance Trust. Other applications for funding were regretfully rejected as not being able to satisfy the criterion of a direct benefit to the village. The Air Ambulance was considered to meet this criterion because 16% of the incidents it attended in 2008 were to horse riding accidents, an activity carried out within the village.

There was some discussion of a proposal to give a donation to The Oxfordshire Woodland Trust as a "thank you" for the free advice given on Charney Field trees and The Clerk suggested that this could be a £20 donation plus £10 to become a member of the Trust which would benefit the Council by providing future advice on trees in the village. (See also minute 09/09/01 below). This latter proposal was approved by four votes to one with Mr Harper voting against as he was not convinced of the need to become a member.

RESOLVED that the financial report be adopted and the seven donations listed above be paid (see also minute 09/09/01 below).

### **09/06 Setting the Precept**

The Council discussed paper CBPC/FIN/PRE0910 prepared by The Clerk, setting out the expenditure budget for financial year 2009/10. While the basic budget was not in dispute, there were two items which it was considered should be taken into account and which would result in an above-inflation increase in the precept. The two items were the question of Council funding for the Village Hall Project, the level of which had been criticised when funding was discussed with the Vale Council, and the question of payment of a salary to The Clerk.

Currently, the Council has offered a grant of £500 to the Project (and holds a donation of £100 from Carillion) and it is this sum which was the subject of the Vale criticism. By increasing the precept to allow the grant to be increased to around £1,000 this criticism would be removed (or at least reduced) and as the village as a whole would benefit, it was a justified call on the precept. The question of a Clerk's salary has been discussed in the past and while the existing Clerk is content to do the job on a voluntary basis, this is an unusual situation as the vast majority of councils pay their clerks and in the event of the need to recruit a new clerk it would not be possible to do this without the incentive of a salary, however modest. The sum discussed for payment at the end of the financial year 2009/10 was £500 for a years work which would equate to approx. 100 hours, or 2 hours per week.

RESOLVED that to be able to increase the grant to the Village Hall Project and to pay the Clerk an annual salary of £500 at the end of FY 2009/10, the precept should be raised to £3,200.

### **09/07 Planning Matters**

Decisions are awaited on the change of use of the offices at Minmere Farm to a residential property, conversion of "Penny Chickens" Buckland Road to a chalet-style bungalow and replacement of garage and sheds at Home Farm, Chapel Lane. The Council did not raise any objection to the first two but has written to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) to question the intervention of the Conservation Officer in the third one. The owners of the adjacent dwelling (Mr & Mrs Rothwell) complained about the increased height of the development arising from the insistence of the CO that the roofs of the replacement buildings be pitched and not flat or sloping. A report by a planning consultant commissioned by the Rothwells supports the Council's view that the CO intervention is unwarranted.

An appeal against the decision not to permit two worker's houses at New Manor Farm was the subject of an informal hearing at Abingdon on 25<sup>th</sup> November; the inspector's decision is still awaited.

The application by Charney Manor for a new gateway and path had been withdrawn.

### **09/08 Flooding - Project Chaffinch**

Project Chaffinch (**CH**allenge - **A**void **F**urther **F**looding **I**N **CH**arney) has continued with work to clear the upstream side of the bridge to Charney Wick Ditch having been undertaken by the landowners. One short stretch, alongside the Lindsey's property, requires clearance and this will be tackled by the Charney Army when conditions are suitable. There is further work to be carried out to Charney Wick Ditch where it runs alongside Bridle Path and this, too, will be cleared by the Charney Army. Contact with the EA has been maintained and they are looking for instruments which will enable us to measure flows in the watercourses.

The Vale Council has provided forms to enable Project Chaffinch to be registered as a Local Community Flood Group, with the potential to apply for funding for its activities. In order to Qualify, the group has been

registered, as agreed at the last meeting, as being a Parish Council group. Deadline for the first set of applications is 28<sup>th</sup> February 2009 with approval and distribution of the first set of grants by March 2009. Any funding will be paid to the Parish Council who will pass it on to the Charney Army, which is currently drawing up a list of its funding requirements. This list include some basic equipment such as waders, personal protection gear and weed removal tools but later could also include hire charges for mechanical equipment.

The Clerk has established that the Council's insurance policy provides £5M Public Liability coverage for its "employees", the definition of which includes voluntary workers. The only stipulation for this coverage is that work carried out by Project Chaffinch volunteers should be under the supervision of the Council which should provide any tools, materials and training required for the tasks undertaken. As two councillors and The Clerk are active members of the Flood Group, the supervision criterion is being met.

Mr Etherington has written to Charles Dingwall asking him to clear out the ditch which runs north along Longworth Road from his property to the entrance to New Manor Farm but has yet to receive a reply.

### **09/09 Clerk's Correspondence**

09/09/01 Charney Field Trees

Following the invitation referred to in the minutes of the last meeting, Mr David Rees of the Oxfordshire Woodland Project visited Charney Field and, after inspecting the trees, provided a report which recommended a five-year management programme, the principal feature of which was the felling of about one-third of the white poplars, most of which were planted too close together. He had volunteered to make another visit in February to offer further advice on pruning the other trees on the Field. This has proved to be a very valuable exercise and although the advice was given without charge, the Council agreed to make a donation (see minute 09/05 above) to the OWP as a gesture of thanks. The Clerk reported that he had been in touch with Oak Leaf Tree Services who would visit the Field on 22<sup>nd</sup> January in order to be able to quote for the work involved; two other quotes would be sought.

Mr Stiles wished to have placed on record his concern at the activities of the Charney Army which he believed had been felling trees without adequate concern for health and safety considerations. He drew attention to the fact that these activities were carried out under the insurance cover of the parish council and an accident could result in a claim on this insurance.

09/09/02 Charney Field and Land Registry

The Clerk had received a request from the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment to register the TOE interest in Charney Field with the Land Registry. This interest is to ensure that the Council does not dispose of the Field without the written consent of TOE. The Clerk had acknowledged the request and had made enquiries as to how this could be done. However, councillors questioned the validity of a retrospective register on interest and The Clerk agreed to look at the original terms of the 100% TOE grant with which the Field was purchased which he believed would contain the grounds for this action. *[Clerk's note: TOE have been asked to produce an explanatory note to clarify their request]*

09/09/03 Freedom of Information

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2005, the Council is required to have in place a Publication Scheme which ensures that it makes information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. The current scheme, which the Council adopted when it was first published, has now expired and a new scheme must be adopted in its place. After an explanation by The Clerk of what is required of the Council, it was agreed to adopt the new Scheme without modification and to publicise on the Council web site the fact that this has been adopted.

RESOLVED to adopt the new Model Publication Scheme prepared by the Information Commissioner and to place this on record on the Council web site.

**09/09/04 Community Awards Lunch**

The Clerk had received an invitation for the Council to nominate someone who it felt should be recognised for their achievements in the sporting community. The Council was unable to think of anyone to nominate but The Clerk was asked to advertise this event on the Notice Board.

**09/10 Information Exchange**

A village clean-up will be organised for a Saturday morning in the Spring (with a back-up date a week later in case of adverse weather) and the date will be chosen at the next meeting. The Clerk will book the materials and equipment on offer from VWHDC for such an event.

Mr Harper had been in touch with the Stanford-in-the-Vale Community Bus Committee but had yet to attend a meeting due to cancellations. He emphasised the need for more drivers (there are currently none in Charney Bassett) and asked that this be reported in Charney Chatter. He reminded the Council that there was one further place on the Bus Committee for a representative from Charney Bassett and asked for suggestions. The Clerk suggested contacting regular bus users.

Mr Cox reported on his attendance on behalf of the Council at a Community Safety Partnership Forum. His general conclusion was that there are no major policing and safety problems in the Vale and he ventured the opinion that there were too many organisations consulting over non-problems. He became involved in a syndicate session with the drafting of a constitution for the Faringdon East NAG, which has now been issued to NAG members. He was encouraged by the involvement in community policing of Chief Inspector Andy Boyd who has an excellent reputation in Thames Valley Police.

In response to a question from Mrs Bath, The Clerk had to confess that for a number of reasons he had forgotten to send the agreed letter to the Station Commander at RAF Benson concerning low-flying helicopters and would now do so.

**09/11 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday March 11<sup>th</sup> 2009 in the Village Hall.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.40 p.m. with thanks to all those who attended.

Signed ..... Date .....

Chairman