

DOWNTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 22nd June 2015 at the Memorial Hall, The Borough, Downton at 7.30 pm.

Present: Cllr Mace (Chairman) and Cllrs Chandler, Cordell, Dean, Dickinson, Ford, Hayward, Lacey, Quarmby, Ross, Sutcliffe, Whitmarsh, Yeates and Watts.
Bev Cornish, Parish Clerk.

Thirty-nine members of the public were present.

Part 1

The Chairman, Cllr Mace, welcomed the members of the public to the meeting and thanked them for coming. He said that in view of the turnout, he was proposing as chair to slightly reorganise the order of the Agenda to enable the items relevant to those present were debated first. He brought forward items 7 and 9 to before item 5 and confirmed that in order for the Parish Council to be as open and transparent as possible, he would not be proposing to close the meeting to the press and the public until item 10, so that item 9 on the Agenda could be discussed with the press and public present.

Cllr Mace also said that he would be extending the usual 15 minute time period for members of the public to speak. He stated further that he wished to make a brief statement to bring out some important information which was not included in the Primary School's newsletter and that, contrary to the impression that members of the public may have gained, the Parish Council had always and continued to be a strong supporter of the expansion of the school. It was of the view that the way forward for the planning application was in the hands of the Primary School and Wiltshire Council's Education Department and had been so for several months. They needed to bring their plans much more into line with the July 2013 consultation proposals by:

- Reducing the height of the classroom block (in line with the existing roofline);
- Removing the swale (by widening the ditch upstream of the Memorial Gardens);
- Removing the requirement for public access to the extended playground.

He said the Parish Council had been given no compelling reasons for why these reasonable changes could not be made.

15/73: Apologies: Cllr Pearce.

15/74: Minutes: The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8th June 2015 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman. Proposed by Cllr Sutcliffe seconded by Cllr Dean and agreed by the meeting with abstentions from Cllrs Dickinson and Hayward.

15/75: Public Question/Statement Time –15 minutes to receive any other questions or statements from members of the public:

Mr Jonathan Freer, Vice-Chair of Governors for Downton Primary School, made a lengthy statement making reference to the school's newsletter and petition and confirming that the school did not wish to make money from the community access to the MUGA. He said the school did not 'want the hassle' of managing a MUGA and it was Sport England's requirement because the Memorial Gardens was a recreation ground containing a basketball and football pitch that the school's application needed to have community access.

DOWNTON PARISH COUNCIL

Mr Freer also said that the school wished to maintain its outstanding status for all the children of the parish and did not want to risk the possible refusal of the planning application by not allowing community access.

Cllr Mace responded by explaining that the Parish Council had worked in partnership for a considerable amount of time with the school and had 'gone the extra' mile in trying to be supportive of its application. However, following representations from neighbours and others that no consultation had taken place with them prior to the submission of the school's plans and their concern about the impact of the MUGA, the swale and the height of the classroom on their properties as well as their enjoyment of them, the Parish Council felt compelled to revert closer to the mandate it had obtained from the community in 2013.

Mr Nigel Walker, speaking on behalf of the Downton Society, said that the view of the Society had been summarised in its letter to the Governors of 18th June. He asked the Primary School to be absolutely clear in what it wanted and asked if more sporting facilities were really needed in Downton. He said what was needed was a new school on a new site.

Ms Jane Launchbury stated that she spoke with her experience as a former parish and district councillor and a secondary school governor. She said she felt the newsletter from the Primary School had been unhelpful and divisive although she supported the school in the problems it faced. She called upon the Parish Council to issue its own Newsletter which set out the facts of the issue. She also expressed concern about the increased number of cars at school pick up and drop which indicated that there were many more children who had gained entry to the school who came from outside the parish from such areas as Salisbury and even Breamore, which was outside the county, and asked the school to consider its Admissions Policy.

Mrs Vicki Sutton said that the whole process had been confusing and asked the Parish Council and school to 'peel it all back' and work together to achieve a good solution for the village.

Mr Chris Hall spoke giving a brief history of the initial discussion with the school and Wiltshire Council in 2012 following his idea, as Chairman of the Parish Council at that time, with Cllr Yeates of enabling the Primary School to expand by leasing a small area of the Memorial Gardens. He said the Parish Council had received considerable opposition to this idea and the community was not happy to give up the land. However, it was doing it for the benefit of the school and the school should be grateful for this and try to find ways to mitigate the impact of its expansion on its neighbours.

Mr Hall also said that he had met the Chairman of the Governors whilst he was delivering the Primary School's Newsletter and had challenged him about the MUGA. In response, the Chairman of the Governors had said that the school was not having a MUGA, and yet it was clearly set out in the Newsletter and Petition and in the Primary School's Planning Application and this had not been changed.

Mr Clive Emerson spoke as a governor of the school and former Chairman of the Parish Council's New Housing Development Committee. He said the Parish Council had initially supported the planning application and then had clearly swerved in a different direction by listening to a part of the community who had been alarmist. He said that with the timing of the application, there was a real risk that the school could lose the money allocated to it, so it was important that the most was made from the opportunity presented.

DOWNTON PARISH COUNCIL

Mrs Chris Parry said she had been to numerous meetings of the Parish Council and also some with the school at which the Headteacher had said that she did not want to have to manage a MUGA on the weekends and during school holidays. She said the school keeps going round and round in circles on this so just take the MUGA off the plans. She also said that nobody had ever said 'don't expand the school and don't have the extra land'.

Mrs Sandra Moody read out a letter she had sent to the Salisbury Journal which had not been published and said the Primary School had been fortunate that none of the neighbours had sued the school for defamation.

Mrs Jenny Saxby gave a detailed overview of the consultation process of the Primary School's planning application which had not included her property on the plans even though it was located directly beside the school, had sought residents' views in a short period of time over the Christmas 2014 break, included a MUGA which detrimentally affected her property, a noise assessment which was complete nonsense. She said it also been revised to include a swale also immediately beside her property. She also said she had a democratic right to express her legitimate concerns about the school's proposals.

Mrs Nikki Wilson, speaking as Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, said that she had previously suggested the school and Parish Council should consider entering into mediation.

Cllr Mace said that the school and Wiltshire Council Education Department had had three months to consider the Parish Council's reasonable concerns.

Mr Rick Ladds commented that for mediation to be successful both parties needed to enter with a willingness to compromise. However, the school had not compromised one iota over the last six months and questioned whether there was any benefit in meeting with a mediator.

Mr Freer stated that it was clear that the Parish Council had swerved in its decision not to support the school. He said the Governing Body firmly believed that what the school was asking for was do-able technically and this would be resolved at the meeting on 3rd July with the school being able to continue to maintain its status as an outstanding school.

15/76: Declarations of Interest: Cllr Dean declared a personal and pecuniary interest in planning application 15/05642/TCA and did not speak or vote.

15/77: To consider and agree on the ways in which the Parish Council may respond to the newsletter distributed by Downton Primary School and to the numerous emails received from residents and non-residents: Following a discussion the following responses were considered:

- **Parish Council Newsletter:** Following a suggestion from Cllr Quarmby that reference be made to a positive way forward being achieved at the meeting on 3rd July, Cllr Sutcliffe proposed, Cllr Yeates seconded and it was approved by the meeting.
- **Parish Council Press Release:** Following confirmation from the Chairman that the Press Release would only be used if the Parish Council's views were sought by the Press on the Primary School's planning application, Cllr Dean proposed, Cllr Watts seconded and it was agreed by the meeting that it be approved.

DOWNTON PARISH COUNCIL

- **Letter to Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education:** Following an explanation from Cllr Ford that the Board of Education should be given the opportunity to consider the contents of the Primary School Governing Body's misleading Newsletter and petition in terms of its wording and to compare it with that produced by the Parish Council, he proposed, Cllr Cordell seconded and it was agreed by the meeting that the letter be approved.

15/78: Correspondence:

- 1 An email from change.org advising of a petition set up by the Governing Body of Downton Primary School.
- 2 Letters and emails in support of the Primary School's newsletter have been received from: Mr R Nash, Mr S Sutton, Mrs E Porter, Mr I Porter, Ms J Ramsay, Mr C Basham, Ms D Zakss, Mr D Gillett, Mrs S Humby, Ms L Sutcliffe.
- 3 Letters and emails in opposition to the Primary School's newsletter have been received from: Mr and Mrs Willcox, Ms Claire Freemantle on behalf of the Downton Society, Mr and Mrs R Burrows, Mr and Dr J Brewin, Mr A Bruce-Burgess, Mr N Walker, Mr C Haresign.
- 4 Mrs L Jojic – A letter stating that as a parent and objector to the Primary School's planning application she was required to have an ongoing relationship with the applicant and felt it was now even more difficult to express her continued concerns over the planning application. She wished to say more but felt it was not in her best interests to do so; however, she did not want her silence to be construed as supporting the letter or the planning application so as difficult as it is she would like her continued objection to be known.
- 5 Mr J Meropoulos – A copy of an email to Ms C Freemantle in response to the Downton Society's note and letter to governors.
- 6 Mrs S Moody – A copy of a letter she had written to the Salisbury Journal regarding the Primary School's planning application and the proposed removal of the yew trees in the Memorial Gardens.
- 7 Mrs L Masterson – An email relating to confidential issues on a deceased relative.
- 8 WALC – June Newsletter
- 9 Southern Wiltshire Area Board – Minutes of the recent Southern Wiltshire Area Board.
- 10 Southern Wiltshire Area Board – A briefing for those attending the Magna Carta pageant.
- 11 Wiltshire Council – Several emails from Ms Emma Dragge regarding youth issues.
- 12 Charles Church – An email and letter regarding comments on the Downton Neighbourhood Plan.
- 13 Wessex Water - An email and letter regarding comments on the Downton Neighbourhood Plan.
- 14 Two emails from Mr Peter Turner of Breamore regarding the Agenda for 22nd June and the Primary School's planning application.
- 15 Downton Baptist Church – An email from Mrs Katy Ulliyatt asking for the use of the Moot Lane Recreation ground on Sunday 13th September for a church service.
- 16 Mr Luke Wordley – An email thanking the parish council for the change in its response to his planning application.
- 17 Mrs J Saxby and the neighbours – A letter of complaint about the content of the school's newsletter and citing The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 Section 77 (7).
- 18 Downton Primary School – A letter from Mr Richard Fishlock containing all the signatures and comments from supporters of the petition and including statements on the school's current position.

DOWNTON PARISH COUNCIL

15/79: Matters arising from the Minutes: None.

15/80: Planning and Tree Works Applications:

15/05279/FUL - Unit 12 Parkers Close, Downton Business Centre Downton - New windows at ground and first floor levels on north and south elevations: Cllr Quarmby proposed, Cllr Chandler seconded and it was agreed by the meeting that no objection be raised.

15/05642/TCA - Willowdene Long Close Downton- Reduce crown of T1 walnut tree by approx 1m all round, and crown thin by approx 25%: Cllr Sutcliffe proposed, Cllr Watts seconded and it was agreed by the meeting that no comment be submitted in view of the fact that the applicant was a member of the Parish Council.

15/05203/FUL - The Old School, Barford Lane, Downton - Conversion of existing church buildings to 3 x residential units including mezzanine floors. Alterations to fenestration. Infill extension to rear: Cllr Ford proposed, Cllr watts seconded and it was agreed by the meeting, with one abstention from Cllr Whitmarsh, that no objection be raised and it also be stated that the Parish Council supported the views submitted by the Conservation Officer.

Part 2 – CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION – EXEMPT MATTERS

15/81: Cllr Mace proposed the following resolution – ‘That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest, that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they be instructed to withdraw’, Cllr Ross seconded and it was agreed by the meeting.

15/82: To consider a forthcoming meeting with officers from Wiltshire Council’s Planning, Spatial Planning and Education Departments to discuss matters relating to the Charles Church development and Primary School’s planning application and to agree on:

82.1 The members to attend on behalf of the Parish Council:

82.2 The questions to be asked:

82.3 The final position to be taken by the Parish Council:

Cllr Chandler asked for his thanks to be recorded to the Chairman for his excellent handling of the meeting.

Cllr Sutcliffe asked for his thanks to be recorded to the Chairman and Clerk for the tremendous amount of work they had done over the previous week and in preparation for the meeting.

15/83: Date of next meeting: Monday 13th July 2015 at 7.30 pm at the Band Hall, Gravel Close, Downton.

With no further business, the meeting closed at 9.50 pm.