

DOWNTON PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the Virtual Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 11th January 2021 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Cllr Mace (Chair) and Cllrs Brentor, Cornell, Hall, Randall, Roberts and Watts.

In attendance: Unitary Cllr Richard Clewer

Also present: Five members of the public.

Prior to the election of Chair, and as existing Chair, Cllr Cornell proposed to appoint a Parish Councillor, Cllr Brentor, to act as minute taker for this meeting, for which she will not be paid, in the absence of the Clerk and Administrative Officer. This was unanimously RESOLVED.

Part 1

247.20 Election of Chair

It was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED that Cllr Mace be elected as Chair.

Cllr Mace proposed from the Chair to re-order the agenda and bring forward agenda item 266.20 to be heard in Part 1 of the meeting after agenda item 255.20

248.20 Election of Vice-Chair

It was proposed, seconded and RESOLVED that Cllr Brentor be elected as Vice-Chair.

249.20 Public Question Time:

- A member of the public asked a question about wearing of facemasks in the Coop which was answered but it was explained that this was not Council business. The same resident also asked about the proposed date for the Water meadows and Flood meeting. Cllr Hall responded to say that he will ask the Council's Admin Officer to let the resident know.
- Mrs. Claire Westlake, on behalf of 1st Downton Scouts Group, asked the Parish Council to support their funding to improve the facilities at the Scout Hut in Barford Lane. She explained that the Scouts are asking for £4,500 from the Area

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Board and £2,500 from the Parish Council. She was asked whether the Scouts had made a request to Redlynch Parish Council as many of the scouts attend from that area. She explained that they did intend to make such a request and also to consider Hale Parish Council.

- Mrs. Nikki Wilson, on behalf of The Downton Society, notified the Parish Council that the Downton Society has made a decision not to enter the Britain in Bloom competition this year due to the fact that the National Competition is not running and it is considered that local businesses will be in a difficult position to support with funding due to Covid for any local competition. She explained that, however, the Downton Society will ensure that the planters are filled with plants to brighten the village. She thanked councillors for their help and support. She agreed to provide some communication to be circulated via Facebook and other means.
- A resident asked Cllr Clewer why the current Local Plan consultation was issued on Christmas day but Cllr Clewer was unable to give a reason.

250.20 Unitary Cllr Richard Clewer

Cllr Clewer updated regarding the fire in Castle Meadow on Christmas day and explained that the emergency pull cord system in the bungalows is now working. He stressed the seriousness of the current lock down with hospital numbers increasing.

He stated that it is likely that local elections will still be held and that the Census will go ahead unless he hears otherwise.

He also explained that, although the budget situation for Wiltshire is still very difficult it is not as dire as initially expected.

Cllr Clewer agreed to 'call in' the 20 Lode Hill planning application if it is recommended for approval but stressed how busy the planning team are at the moment.

251.20 Apologies

Apologies have been received from Cllr Pearce. Cllr Mace proposed from the chair and it was RESOLVED that the apology and the reason for it be accepted.

252.20 Minutes

Cllr Brentor explained that, after seeking advice from WALC, councillors have been advised that confidential information considered as part of an ordinary Council meeting, should not be published as part of the minutes but that a record should be made of the confidential decisions made at the meeting and retained as notes for Human Resources reasons. These should not be published and any record held by members other than the Staffing Committee should be destroyed.

Cllr Mace asked that the following text be added to the minutes:

'Cllr Brentor, Cornell and Mace explained how the advice obtained from the NALC legal team, The Pensions Regulator, NEST and LGPS covered different elements of the necessary decision making and was clear with each element of the advice being from experts in their field.'

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Cllr Mace proposed from the Chair, seconded by Cllr Watts and it was RESOLVED to approve the minutes from the ordinary meeting on Monday 14th December 2020, as amended by the additional text proposed by Cllr Mace, along with the confidential supporting notes of the meeting which councillors have seen and which will be retained by the Staffing Committee for staffing purposes.

253.20 Declarations of Interest

a. To receive Declarations of Interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda, in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of members and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of officers:

Cllr Cornell declared a personal and non-pecuniary interest and said that she would not take part in the vote on agenda item 259.20

b. To consider any Dispensation Requests received by the Parish Clerk and not previously considered

Cllr Cornell advised that no dispensation requests had been received.

254.20 Business Raised During Public Question Time

Cllr Hall will follow up the proposed date of the Flood Committee meeting; The Downton in Bloom plans were noted and the comments made regarding the Scout hut will be taken into consideration for that agenda item.

It was proposed from the chair, seconded by Cllr Cornell and it was RESOLVED to note the actions as stated.

255.20 Planning and Tree Works Applications

20/09706/FUL/

20/10508/LBC 20 A Lode Hill, Downton - Proposed development Proposed alterations to the built garage and walls at 20A Lode Hill (amendment to 19/10972/FUL and 19/11390/LBC).

It was noted that the final date for comment for this application is 11th January but an extension to 13th January has been obtained from the planning officer.

After a brief discussion, reference to the recently amended plan submission and consideration of a briefing note submitted by Cllr Hall, Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to support the change of type of brick as these are more in keeping with the local brickwork but to reiterate its strong object to these applications and to recommend to the Planning Officer that this application be refused on the same grounds as submitted in the letter to the planning officer dated 16th December 2020. Downton Parish Council also again asked Cllr Richard Clewer to 'call in' this application if necessary so that it can be considered at a future meeting of the Southern Area Planning Committee. It was noted that the next Southern Area Planning Committee is before the date of the planning decision and Cllr Clewer agreed to cover this matter.

NB During this agenda item Cllr Hall briefly left the meeting due to technical issues and was unavailable between 8.10 and 8.15.

20/10869/FUL – 7 Lode Hill, Downton.

It was proposed by Cllr Roberts, seconded by Cllr Cornell and RESOLVED to support this application on the grounds that it was compliant with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

20/10633/FUL – Magna Motor Company, The Headlands, Downton.

It was proposed by Cllr Cornell, seconded by Cllr Roberts and RESOLVED to support this application on the grounds that it was compliant with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and is supported by Policy LE2 of the Downton Neighbourhood Plan.

20/10619/FUL – 5 Mill Race View, The Borough, Downton.

It was proposed by Cllr Roberts, seconded by Cllr Watts and RESOLVED to support this application on the grounds that it was compliant with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

256.20 Planning Application Decisions:

Cllr Cornell updated the meeting and it was RESOLVED that the decisions on the following applications be noted:

- 2 Gravel Close, Downton – 2 metre height reduction and 1 metre lateral reduction of Whitebeam.
Approved with Conditions
- 20 Batchelor Way, Downton – 2 and single storey rear extension and alterations.
Approved with conditions
- Memorial Gardens and Recreation Ground, Downton – tree works
No objections
- Stag Cottage, the Highway, Downton – single storey rear extension.
Approved with conditions

257.20 Budget and Precept

Cllr Brentor explained that this item was deferred from the December meeting as it had been thought that there would be an impact from the agenda item to be considered at 264.20 at this meeting. However, it has since been identified that, if accepted, this will be funded out of reserves rather than change the proposed budget and precept.

It was proposed by Cllr Cornell and seconded by Cllr Roberts and RESOLVED to approve the revised 3 year Budget and level of Precept for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 as prepared by the Clerk.

The level of Budget for 2021/22 was approved and set at £116,198.54 and the level of Precept approved and set at £113,248.54. The Band D figure was set at £82.16 being an increase of 0.0% on 2020/21. The level of reserves to be included in the budget was approved at £2,950.

266.20 Appointment of a locum Clerk

After a brief discussion Cllr Cornell proposed, Cllr Roberts seconded and it was RESOLVED to authorise members of the Staffing Committee to appoint a locum clerk (as a contractor, not as an employee) to act as the Clerk for meetings of the Parish Council, and any of its Committees and Sub-Committees, whilst the Clerk is not fully back to work, and to allow the members of the Staffing Committee to spend up to £2,000 on such services.

258.20 Wiltshire Council Consultations

Cllr Brentor explained the background to the Wiltshire Local Plan Review. At this point the meeting was opened to allow members of the public to comment. Mrs Wilson on behalf of the Downton Society said, on their behalf, that she hoped that the Downton Society would want to either support the Parish Council's submission or consider a joint submission. Cllr Clewer suggested that it is advisable to maximise numbers of submissions from Downton and that traffic issues may be pertinent. Cllr Brentor proposed, Cllr Cornell seconded and it was RESOLVED to delegate the drafting of a response to the Local Plan review to the NP Review Working Group to be bought back for consideration by the Parish Council at its meeting on 8th March.

Cllr Brentor also explained that the Gypsy and Traveller Plan had yet to be published so, until its contents are understood, it was unclear whether there is a need for the Parish Council to respond. As the meeting had not yet been closed to members of the public, Cllr Clewer advised that the remit of the consultation focussed on transit sites and would be less relevant to Downton.

Cllr Mace proposed, Cllr Cornell seconded and it was RESOLVED that Cllr Hall would examine the document once published and make recommendations to the Parish Council on whether to respond.

Cllr Mace closed the meeting to the public.

259.20 1st Downton Scout Group

After a detailed discussion a consensus was that the members wanted the Parish Council to support the request from the 1st Downton Scout Group. Further consideration, however, is needed by the council on the allocation of its reserves. It was hoped that, with young people of Redlynch parish being in this Scout Group, the Redlynch Parish Council would also look favourably on a request from the Scout Group for funding.

Cllr Watts proposed, Cllr Brentor seconded and it was RESOLVED with one abstention to approve £2,000 towards a request from 1st Downton Scout Group to support the Downton Scout Hut Refurbishment project and to consider the case and feasibility, based on a more detailed examination of the Parish Councils' reserves, for a further £500 to be approved at the Parish Council meeting on 25th January and to

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fully endorse an application by the Downton Scout Group for financial support from the Southern Area Board.

260.20 Accounts for Payment

Cllr Mace proposed, Cllr Brentor seconded and it was RESOLVED to approve the following payment for January:

£331.66 Kingspan Water & Energy Ltd

261.20 Next Meeting

Cllr Mace confirmed the date of the next meeting to be 25th January at 7.30 and that it will be held on Zoom

Part 2 – EXEMPT MATTERS – EMPLOYMENT, STAFFING and CONFIDENTIAL

262.20

Cllr Mace proposed from the Chair and it was RESOLVED that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded, and they be instructed to withdraw in view of the confidential nature of the business on staffing and confidential matters about to be transacted.

263.20 Grave Request

Cllr Brentor explained the background and established that all Councillors had viewed the briefing report about this matter. After a lengthy and considered debate, Cllr Brentor proposed, Cllr Hall seconded and it was RESOLVED to bring this matter back to the Parish Council meeting on 8th March with

- a) an impact assessment on the grass cutting contract if kerbs etc. are to be allowed in future
- b) draft changes to the cemetery regulations and/or a contractual document to be signed by future applications for burial plots at the cemetery

Cllr Brentor will take on this task on behalf of the Amenities Committee

264.20 Review of the clerk's salary

Cllr Brentor outlined the background identifying that advice regarding the contractual obligations surrounding this matter have been mixed but that most recent advice is that a good employer should honour the request.

Cllr Brentor proposed, Cllr Cornell seconded and it was RESOLVED with one objection (Cllr Watts) to increase the salary of the Clerk in respect of recent qualifications successfully completed, in line with the contract of employment, on the understanding that the total cost of backdated payment would be less than £3,200 and the future cost be approximately £1,500 annually.

265.20 Wiltshire Local Government Pension Scheme Membership

Cllr Cornell explained that, in order to execute the agreement to implement part g of the Pensions Report resolved at the meeting on 14th December 2020, a resolution regarding LGPS start date is required.

Cllr Cornell proposed, Cllr Brentor seconded and it was RESOLVED that approval be given that the Parish Council joins the Wiltshire Local Government Pension Scheme from 25th November 2019.

With no further business the meeting closed at 9.50 pm

Members of the Council considered the foregoing in the matters of consideration of their duties: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and any disability); Crime and Disorder, Health and Safety and Human Rights