

DOWNTON PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the Virtual¹ Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 22nd March 2021 at 7.30 pm.

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

In attendance: Unitary Councillor Richard Clewer
Mrs Bev Cornish, Parish Clerk

Also present: Nine members of the public.

367.20 Public Question Time:

A member of the public spoke on behalf of her mother who she said was very supportive of the restored area of waste land with fence on the corner of Elizabeth Close. She said she had lived opposite the site for many years and was pleased to see that it was being looked after. She also asked whether more residents could take care of other unsightly areas of the village.

A member of the public asked that the Council proceed with transparency and inclusivity on the bridge project. He said he hoped that in canvassing the whole village more details on the project's total cost will be provided and both sides of the story be told as the Estate has given a definite 'no' with its reasons twice. He expressed concern that a consultation might generate ill-will towards the Estate, despite it previously being very supportive of the parish. He also said that the Council should encourage a good working relationship with the Estate, not destroy it and suggested the project be put in abeyance for the good of the village.

A member of the public advised that he was the person who had restored the waste land in Elizabeth Close, installing the fence at his own expense. He said he believed it had enhanced the area and numerous residents had made positive comments about it. He also said he had made enquiries as to land's ownership and had recently traced the custodian to whom he had made a formal request to buy it.

A member of the public asked whether there were any plans to update the equipment in the playgrounds, particularly the equipment in the Memorial Gardens.

Cllr Clewer reported that Inspector Pete Sparrow was moving on from the Salisbury Community Policing Team to lead the Response Unit. He said a new inspector would be joining shortly and it was important for the Council to build up a good working relationship with them. He said it may be sensible to set up a 'catch up' meeting with them in May once they are in post.

¹ In accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

368.20 Apologies

Cllr Brentor advised that Cllrs Cornell and Pearce had sent their apologies due to a personal commitment and Cllr Randall had sent his apologies due to a work commitment. Cllr Brentor proposed from the Chair and it was RESOLVED that the apologies and the reasons for them be approved.

369.20 Minutes

Cllr Brentor proposed, Cllr Mace seconded and it was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on Monday 8th March 2021 be approved with the following amendments and that further amendments be made to the Minutes of 22nd February:

340.20 Cllr Brentor proposed from the Chair and it was RESOLVED, that the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on Monday 22nd February 2021 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record with the change to the wording of Minute 330.20 to read:

'It will be easier for a Locum Clerk to understand the Rialtas Business Systems financial software than to understand bespoke spreadsheets'.

342.20 To amend the first bullet point to read:

'The Council would not spend money unnecessarily on the adjudication of the staff pension matter but it needed to obtain outside advice'.

365.20 The following words to be inserted after 365.20 and before 366.20:

'Cllr Brentor proposed from the chair and it was RESOLVED to continue the meeting beyond 10.00pm to complete the remaining items on the agenda.'

370.20 Declarations of Interest and Dispensation Requests

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:**
No declarations of interest were received.

b. **To consider any Dispensation Requests received by the Parish Clerk and not previously considered:**
The Clerk advised that she had received no dispensation requests.

371.20 Business Raised During Public Question Time:

Cllr Brentor proposed from the Chair and it was RESOLVED as follows:

- That the comments made on the bridge project and piece of land on the corner of Elizabeth Close be taken into account when those items were discussed by the Council.
- The Clerk advised that the Amenities Committee was in the process of conducting a survey of the playgrounds and a sum of money was available from the Persimmon Homes development to upgrade pieces of equipment in each of the playgrounds. Once the survey had been completed, residents and users of the playgrounds would be consulted on new items of equipment to be installed.
- The Clerk will make contact with the new police inspector and invite them to a future meeting once the new term of the Council had commenced.

372.20 Land on the corner of Elizabeth Close

Following a brief report from Cllr Hall and a detailed discussion, Cllr Watts proposed, Cllr Hall seconded and it was RESOLVED that the matter be left to residents to resolve as the land was not owned by the Parish Council.

373.20 Internal Auditor’s Report

Following a lengthy discussion, Cllr Brentor proposed, Cllr Watts seconded and it was RESOLVED that a response be compiled by the Clerk except for those specific questions relating to the contracting of the Locum Clerk which did not fulfil the Council resolution. These were to be responded to by Cllrs Brentor and Mace. The Clerk was asked to consider the wording of a resolution for the next meeting which enabled the Council to consider endorsing retrospectively the action taken by members of the Staffing Committee to vary that Council resolution.

374.20 Risk Management Policy

Following a discussion, Cllr Mace proposed, Cllr Watts seconded and it was RESOLVED that the amendments identified by Cllr Mace be approved to add a specific item on Loss of Key Staff and to ensure that any risks are also reported to all chairs of the standing committees.

375.20 Risk Assessment for Absence of the Clerk

At the suggestion of the Clerk, Cllr Brentor proposed from the Chair and it was RESOLVED that this item be combined with the review of the Risk Registers.

376.20 Risk Registers Review

Following a discussion, Cllr Brentor proposed, Cllr Mace seconded and it was RESOLVED that the proposed amendments to the registers be approved and incorporating the risks identified in the Absence of the Clerk Risk Assessment.

It was also agreed that the Clerk:

1. Should create a Business Continuity/Business Emergency Plan under 1.4.3 on the Corporate Risk Register to be put in place for the loss of key council employees which incorporates the elements from the Absence of the Clerk Risk Assessment; and
2. Draw up a list of agreed actions from the registers, who will carry them out and a timescale by which they will be carried out.

377.20 Payroll outsourcing

Cllr Mace proposed, Cllr Watts seconded and it was RESOLVED that the Council’s payroll be outsourced to DM Payroll Services Ltd as identified following due diligence presented to the Council under Minute 347.20 and following a consultation period with the Clerk as employee.

378.20 Earmarked Reserves

Cllr Mace proposed, Cllr Watts seconded and it was RESOLVED that the Council’s Earmarked Reserves as at 31st March 2021 be approved with the removal of the amounts £1,000 for ‘legal advice’, £7,500 for elections and £2,500 for ‘Staffing Independent Investigation’ ensuring that the Council could demonstrate a 3 month operational general reserve.

379.20 Bridge over the Avon Working Group

Following a lengthy discussion and alternative wording put forward by Cllr Hall, Cllr Brentor proposed, Cllr Roberts that Cllr Brentor will amalgamate the two drafts and circulate a second version for comment to councillors and working group members so that a final version can be agreed. It was also agreed that no public consultation/ information event should take place.

380.20 Date of next meeting

Cllr Brentor confirmed the date of the next meet as Monday 12th April 2021 at 7.30 pm and to be held on Zoom.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9.40 pm.

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

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