

DOWNTON PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 8th August 2022 at 7.30 pm in the Bonvalot Room of the Downton Memorial Centre, The Borough, Downton.

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

In attendance: Unitary Cllr Richard Clewer, Wiltshire Council
Mrs Bev Cornish, Parish Clerk

Also present: Seven members of the public

115.22 Public Question Time

The Downton Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator gave a brief report on what he regarded as a serious incident of criminal behaviour involving a driver, a bicycle and a group of youths which occurred in the High Street and which he had raised recently with Wiltshire Police following reports on social media. He said the incident warranted a 999 call to the police but this was not made and the police had advised that until it was reported to 101, they could not take any action. It took 2 days and encouragement from him to witnesses for them to report it at which point the police responded, which he felt had been completely unsatisfactory.

He asked that there be representation from the Parish Council on the regular Neighbourhood Tasking Group meetings he organised, particularly following the Clerk's departure, as she had attended meetings. He also raised his concerns again about the number of youths able to ride around on motorcycles without helmets and potentially without licences or insurance and with little action being taken again by Wiltshire Police.

The Chairman of the Downton branch of the Royal British Legion expressed his thanks on behalf of branch members for the Clerk's support, knowledge and guidance throughout her tenure in helping with the organisation of the annual Remembrance Sunday parade.

A member of the public made comments on a number of items on the agenda:

- Whether the locum clerk would be able to attend Council meetings, as on a previous occasion when the clerk was on sick leave, the locum clerk appointed wasn't available on Mondays and didn't attend any of the meetings.
- A working group not be set up to on climate change until other as yet uncompleted projects and tasks had been completed.
- The Council should address the issue of drainage in The Borough which did not have the capacity needed for the volume of water generated in a heavy rainstorm.
- She had been unable to find the Administrative Officer advert on the Salisbury Journal website and suggested that it be advertised more widely around the village.

Cllr Mace advised that he would not be voting on the planning application for 3663 but asked members to consider the issue of glare from them across the surrounding area and Cranborne Chase AONB and whether this should be raised with the planning officer.

The Chair read out an email on behalf of the Estate Manager at Longford Estates offering a vote of thanks to the Clerk following her resignation and advising that in his view the Council had lost a major asset from its team, and that her knowledge and expertise of the workings of the Council and the wider workings of Downton will be a major loss to the Council and the people of Downton.

116.22 Unitary Cllr Richard Clewer

Cllr Clewer gave a brief report as follows:

- On the matter of the capacity of the drains in The Borough, this was an issue for the water company to solve and this would be a very large project.
- He was in agreement with the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator that some of the incidents described as anti-social behaviour was criminal behaviour.
- He and the leader of Swindon Borough Council had raised a number of issues on police response and action with the Police and Crime Commissioner and it was for the PCC to raise this with the Chief Constable.
- With Wiltshire Police being in special measures at the moment, there were a number of issues the force was tackling including one of staffing and of low morale.

Cllr Clewer offered his best wishes to the Clerk on leaving the Council. He said he had always found her very responsive and helpful in his dealings with the Council and that she had often managed to resolve matters without his intervention.

Cllr Roberts advised that as a manager of the Co-op he frequently reported incidents to 101, some of which were recorded on CCTV, the recordings of which were held in the shop's safe. However, there had been very few visits from the PCSO to follow up on any of them and he was at a loss as to what else he or his company could do.

The Chair made a statement regarding the Clerk's departure and thanking her for her 17 years of service to the Council and the good work she has done over the years which has been of benefit to the community.

117.22 Apologies

No apologies were received.

118.22 Minutes

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED, with 1 abstention from Cllr Watts, to approve the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on Monday 11th July 2022 and the Staffing notes under Minute 114.22 and that they be signed as a correct record.

119.22 Declarations of Interest and Dispensation Requests

- 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 Hall declared a personal and non-pecuniary interest in planning application PL/2022/05535 and did not vote.

Cllr Brentor declared personal and pecuniary interest in Minute 136.22 and did not vote.

Cllr Watts declared a personal and non-pecuniary interest Minute 133.22.

Cllr Mace declared a personal and non-pecuniary interests in planning application PL/2022/05023 and in Minutes 127.22, 131.22, 139.22 and 140.22 and did not vote.

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

The Clerk confirmed that no dispensation requests had been received.

120.22 Business Raised During Public Question Time

Cllr Brentor proposed from the Chair and it was RESOLVED that the following responses be noted:

- The Chairman of the Downton branch of the Royal British Legion was thanked for his heartfelt comments.
- The appointed locum clerk was able to attend Council meetings.
- Comments on the working group were noted.
- A meeting of the Watermeadows and Flood Defence Committee would be arranged to consider the issue of drainage.
- The advert for the Administrative Officer had also been posted on noticeboards and in shops around the village.
- Cllr Carter was the police representative for the Council and if he was unable to attend Neighbourhood Tasking Group meetings, Cllr Brentor, Hall or Mace were willing to attend in his place.
- Following a discussion, the Chair would write to the Police & Crime Commissioner to highlight the many concerns raised by residents and councillors and asking that prompt and appropriate action be taken for the repeated incidents of both anti-social and criminal behaviour which have occurred recently in Downton parish. It was also agreed that more frequent reminders for reports to be made to Wiltshire Police on 101 or online would be posted on social media.

121.22 Planning and Tree Works Applications

PL/2022/05610 Herons Walk, 76 The Borough, Downton - T1-T5 Willow tree pollard back to old cuts T6 Conifer tree fell to ground level and replant new tree 3 meters away: Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to support this application but would accept the decision of the Tree Officer.

PL/2022/05023 3663 Limited, Batten Road, Downton - Install a 512 kWp solar PV (photovoltaic) system on the roof of the Warehouse building: Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to support this application on the grounds that it was compliant with Core Policy 23 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

PL/2022/05535 Mesh House, Mesh Pond, Downton - Replacement of an existing open garage with a triple garage and home office in the roof space at first floor: Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to support this application on the grounds that it was compliant with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

PL/2022/05630 27 Lode Hill, Downton - Proposed loft conversion and associated internal alterations: Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to accept the views submitted by the Conservation Officer for this application.

122.22 Planning Application Decisions

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to note the decisions on recent applications:
PL/2022/03818 South Lane Cottage, South Lane
Downton – Proposed raising of ridge of existing
Side extension, bootroom & lean to extension, floor
Plan redesign and all associated works. Approve with conditions

PL/2022/004527 Hamilton House, Barford Lane,
Downton – T1 Cherry – Fell No objection

123.22 Appointment of and Funding for Locum Clerk

Following a brief report from Cllr North, Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to resolve to:

- i. Approve the arrangements for contracting a Locum Clerk for an initial period of 3 months starting from 15th August and thereafter on a rolling monthly contract if required;
- ii. Approve the sum of £7,500 less the reduction in the staffing cost of the Clerk’s role once left to be allocated to Earmarked Reserves for this purpose and for the Clerk also to calculate the budget cost of the additional 5 hours agreed from 15 to 20 hours per week for the permanent Administrative Officer post.

124.22 Storage & Postal Redirection Costs for Council post, documents & equipment

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to approve the sum of £385.20 for 6 months of postal redirection and for the post to be redirected to the address of the Chair. It also approved a quote of £14.75 for the first month and thereafter £27.50 per month from Rhino Storage in Churchfields for the storage of the Council’s documents and equipment following the departure of the Clerk and Administrative Officer and prior to the appointment of their successors.

125.22 Civility and Respect Pledge

- i. Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge from the National Association of Local Councils:

Our council has agreed that it will treat all councillors, clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.
Our council has committed to training councillors and staff.
Our council has signed up to Code of Conduct for councillors
Our council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy.
Our council will commit to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise.
Our council will commit to calling out bullying and harassment if and when it happens.

Our council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council e.g., via the Local Council Award Scheme

Our council supports the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate

- ii. Downton Parish Council RESOLVED that all Downton Parish Council Councillors sign the Wiltshire Council 'Positive Conduct equals Positive Democracy' Charter.

Following a request from Cllr Mace that it was as important for employees to sign up to the pledge and charter as well as councillors, the Chair of the Staffing Committee advised that it would need to be checked whether the Council was compliant with employment law if it were to insist that the signing of them were conditions of the employment contracts for any new employees.

126.22 Family Fun Day in Memorial Gardens

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to approve a request from Downton Community Pre-school to use the Memorial Gardens on 17th September 2022 to hold a family fun day to raise funds for the Pre-school and Primary school provided the necessary insurance and risk assessment documentation was submitted to the Council ahead of the event.

127.22 United Nations International Day of Older Persons

Following a brief report from Cllr Jalland on the plans for the event, Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to approve her proposal to:

- i. Support the submission of a grant application for £350 to the Southern Wiltshire Area board for the holding of a celebratory event in aid of the United Nations International Day for Older Persons on the 1st October; and
- ii. Support the provision of a grant of £150 from the Parish Council towards the event and, if the grant from the Area Board was unsuccessful, to extend the approved grant to include a further £350 to enable the event to go ahead.

128.22 Neighbourhood Plan Survey

Following a brief report from Cllr North, Downton Parish Council RESOLVED, with objections from Cllrs Randall and Watts, to approve a request from the Neighbourhood Plan Review Strategy Group to allocate the sum of £250 for the printing, communication and distribution of a parish survey to inform the revision of the Neighbourhood Plan and that a copy of the survey be sent to members.

129.22 Memorial Gardens Football Goalposts

Following a discussion on the report from the Administrative Officer regarding the installation of replacement goalposts in the Memorial Gardens at a cost of £1,362, Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to approve expenditure up to that amount but that un-socketed goalposts be purchased and installed without nets.

130.22 Heritage Signs

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to accept the recommendations in the report from the Administrative Officer regarding the installation of heritage signs in 3 locations at the cost of £113 but agreed to pay for the total cost of purchase but take up the Downton Society's offer to install them.

131.22 Installation of a French Drain in the Memorial Gardens

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to approve a quote from Leigh Bush of £280 to install a French Drain as specified by the Memorial Centre Surveyor in the Memorial Gardens which funding would be taken from the Earmarked Reserves for the Memorial Centre construction costs.

132.22 Charlton All Saints Replacement Picnic Bench

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to approve the purchase of a heavy duty octagonal picnic bench at the cost of £865 and additional cost of £300 for installation and the purchase of ground anchors for the replacement of the broken picnic bench in the Charlton All Saints play.

133.22 Fencing in the Moot Lane Recreation Ground

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to approve a quote from Leigh Bush of £1300 to include labour and materials to install a fence along the boundary with an adjacent property to provide security to users of the play area.

134.22 Climate Change Action Plan Working Group

Following a discussion, Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to defer a decision on the matter of setting up of a Climate Change Action Plan Working Group and appoint councillors to it for a further three months.

135.22 Ratification of Clerk's Delegated Powers for Emergency Expenditure

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to ratify the Clerk's emergency spend under her delegated powers for:

- i. Removal of offensive graffiti from shelter in Memorial Gardens – the repainting of internal walls of shelter over a weekend by Jonathan Emm for £250; and
- ii. Removal and disposal of broken goalpost and sharp edges remaining above ground by Leigh Bush for £160.

136.22 Salisbury Journal Vacancy Advert

Cllr Brentor made a brief statement that she now knows that her decision to go ahead with the expenditure was unauthorised and outside of the Council's Financial Regulations. However, she mistakenly believed differently at the time and took the action with the best of intentions, with no financial or otherwise gain to herself but accepted that she was wrong.

Cllr Mace took the Chair and a lengthy discussion followed during which:

- Cllrs Carter, Jalland, Randall and Watts spoke in support of Cllr Brentor's actions.
- Cllr Hall advised that he had told Cllr Brentor, during the discussion she had reported having with him in her document providing contextual information on the matter ahead of the meeting, that individual councillors could not spend money and that she should contact the Proper Officer to obtain the authorisation needed.
- Cllr North advised that whilst she had not followed proper working procedure for financial decision-making by the Council, he was prepared to support payment provided this was not repeated on future occasions.

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 17 ahead of the decision. It then RESOLVED, with 1 abstention from Cllr Mace, to approve the request from Cllr Brentor for reimbursement of the unauthorised spend of £573.60.

Cllr Brentor returned to the meeting and retook the chair.

137.22 Committee & Working Group Reports

Reports from the Chairs of Committees and Working Groups:

Staffing Committee: Cllr North gave a brief report on recent meetings at which the matters of the locum clerk appointment, administrative officer permanent post, which was to be changed to 20 hours per week, were agreed and the issues of TOIL and pension were discussed and deferred. Councillors also discussed what was required for the handover process ahead of the departure of the Clerk and Administrative Officer on 25th August.

Neighbourhood Plan Review Strategy Group: Councillors noted the written Report from Mr Laurence Burr which included information on the forthcoming survey to be circulated to residents and businesses in the parish.

Contextual Safeguarding Officer: Cllr Brentor gave a brief report on her discussions with the Contextual Safeguarding Officer who assured her that she was aware of the situation in Downton. At the officer's suggestion, she will attend the next partnership meeting which usually includes the police, a representative from the youth offender team and the Southern Wiltshire Area Community Engagement Manager.

Review of Financial Records

As the councillor appointed to review the financial records, Cllr Hall advised that he had carried out a review for the period 1st April to 31st July 2022 and confirmed that the bank reconciliations for all of the bank accounts balanced to the penny.

As the time was 10.00 pm Cllr Brentor proposed from the Chair and it was RESOLVED that the meeting continue for a maximum of another 20 minutes.

138.22 Committee Minutes

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to receive and note the Minutes of:

The meeting of the Staffing Committee held on Friday 7th January 2022

The meeting of the Staffing Committee held on Wednesday 22nd July 2022

139.22 Payments

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to approve the payments for August:

£910.00 Maranji Commercial & Domestic Cleaning for Public Toilets

£1043.37 Idverde - Grounds Maintenance

£241.28 Idverde - Bin Emptying

£28.79 Ionos

£25.62 West Mercia Energy

£19.99 Dropbox fees

£156.16 Viking Stationery

£150.45 BT Broadband & Mobile

£134.05 A McGowan expenses

£130.00 B Cornish expenses

£160.00 L Bush – for maintenance

£250.00 J P Emm – for maintenance

£140.00 Memorial Centre – Room Hire June & July

140.22 Accounts for Payment

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to approve the sum of £6,811.20 as the Accounts for payment for August and to record the bank balances:

Name of Payee ¹	Amount
Maranji (Toilets July)	910.00
Idverde (Grasscutting)	1,043.37
Idverde (Bin emptying)	241.28
West Mercia Energy(Toilets)	25.62
BT (broadband and mobile)	150.45
A McGowan expenses	134.05
B Cornish expenses	130.00
L Bush	160.00
JP Emm	250.00
Downton Memorial Centre	140.00
Dropbox	19.98
Salisbury Window Cleaning (for bus shelters first quarter)	90.00
Microshade (software hosting)	24.00
Viking Stationery	156.16
Ionos (Website hosting)	28.79
Salaries PAYE and Pensions	3,307.50
Total for Bank transfers	6,811.20

Balances Approved and Noted as at 08.08.2022

Current A/c: £4,203.59 A/c: £114,896.38

Memorial Hall Extension A/c: £180.39

141.22 Budget to Actual Report for July & Bank Reconciliations

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to approve the Budget to Actual Report and Bank Reconciliations for the period to 31st July 2022.

142.22 Correspondence

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to note the Correspondence received:

1. Wiltshire Council - Emails regarding:
 - Various emails re Covid-19, Ukraine and opening of Melksham campus.
 - Annual Pension Report
2. Wiltshire Association of Local Councils – July Newsletter.
3. Wessex Community Action - July Newsletter.
4. Cranborne Chase AONB – A request to attend a meeting to advise the Council on the dark skies designation of the AONB.
5. Neighbourhood Tasking Group – Minutes of a recent meeting.
6. Wiltshire Citizens Advice - Emailed letter requesting a grant.
7. CPRE, South Wiltshire Group - Invitation to a summer drinks party on Wednesday 31st August from 6-8pm at the Manor House, Stratford Tony.
8. Email resident – regarding the lighting of bonfires at the Downton allotments site in Wick Lane and an email from the Chair of the Allotment Association advising that bonfire lighting is banned for the foreseeable future due to their being a fire risk.

9. Emails residents and WC officers – several emails thanking the clerk and administrative officer for their work over the years.
10. Email – Longford Estate Manager regarding the Clerk’s resignation.

143.22 Clerk’s Report

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to note the Clerk’s report providing information on recent issues and work completed:

Amenities

- Graffiti reported in the shelter in Memorial Gardens and regarded as offensive was painted over by a contractor over the weekend of 9/10th July.
- Broken toddler swing in Memorial Gardens has been taped up so that it cannot be used and Redlynch Leisure have been asked to replace it with one in the lock up.
- Speed Indicator Device - Post Replacement of Bus Stop Pole on Maypole Green - the installation of the new pole is still awaited.
- The second kissing gate on Barford Down was installed by the rights of way team and volunteers to provide greater accessibility to walkers on footpath Downton 27.

Other

Defibrillator at Charlton

Cllr Carter was liaising with residents to find a mutually acceptable solution after comments on social media that the telephone box was not suitable for it because it is used as a share/exchange venue for the village. It is owned by the Council and has a useable electricity connection which is a requirement for the defibrillator. An alternative location was in the porch of All Saints Church.

BT Pole Objection

BT and Wiltshire Council have acknowledged the Council’s objection.

The Goat Licence

As set out in the statement posted by the Council on social media, the applicant made a considerable number of amendments to the licence to take account of the concerns raised by the Council and residents.

Wiltshire YFC Pop Up Youth Cafe Project

Unfortunately due to the lack of availability in July and August, the Youth Café will not be able to come to Downton until September on a date as yet unspecified. The grant application for a £500 contribution from the Area Board was approved on 25th July.

Iron Bridge Repair

Wiltshire Highways advises that they have received and accepted quotations to manufacture and install the required new section of parapet. Ringway have been tasked to assist with installing the new section once it has been assembled, however, due to the level of fabrication required and lead times on casting processes, it is unlikely that this will take place before late September. The construction times should be minimal and completed within a week working under two-way temporary traffic signals. The Council will be updated with more exact dates for these works closer to the time.

144.22 Date of next meeting

Downton Parish Council RESOLVED to note the date of the next meeting as Monday 26th September 2022 at 7.30 pm and to be held in the Bonvalot Room at the Downton Memorial Centre. Any planning applications which arrived during that time would be assessed by Cllr Hall and members of the New Housing Development Committee and, if required, an extraordinary meeting would be called to consider them.

There being no other action, the meeting ended at 10.10 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.