



Downton Parish Council

**Minutes of the DOWNTON PARISH COUNCIL
Meeting held on
Monday 12 AUGUST 2024. Start time 7:00pm
MEMORIAL HALL, DOWNTON (BONVALOT ROOM)**

Councillors present: Jane Brentor (Chair) (JB), Dave Mace (DM), Andy North (AN), Matt Randall (MR), Gareth Watts (GW), Paul Roberts (PR),

Plus: Melanie Camilleri (MC) – Clerk/RFO, Susan Barnhurst-Davies (SBD) - Admin Officer, and one member of the public.

MINUTES

193/24 Public Question Time

Avon Meadow vegetation clearance

A member of the public reported 'hard' clearing-back of vegetation using a digger as well as burning at Avon Meadow. They are concerned as this location is SSSI. They have involved Natural England and provided photos. They wanted to know 1) if Downton Parish Council knew/had given consent for this activity and 2) what plans were in place going forward.

194/24 To receive a report from PC Marc Evans: PC Evans sent apologies and the following report: Burglaries

- Unfortunately, we have had more burglaries, Downton, Redlynch, Woodfalls and in Nomansland. Thankfully Our team caught two males in Nomansland and almost all property was recovered. These two males have been remanded and are likely to receive lengthy sentences.
- Salisbury response are working with Hampshire and Dorset police are actively patrolling and are carrying targeted patrols on individuals
- Please be extra vigilant, unfortunately while one burglary was on going in Redlynch officers were in Downton on patrol. The call wasn't made to 999 until sometime later. Please call 999 in the first instance if you suspect burglaries.
- Garages seem to be the targets, tools and motor bikes
- Any Suspicious vehicles please email me directly. It literally takes me 30 seconds to run a plate though the data base. I welcome local support in highlighting vehicles that are acting in a suspicious manner

Farmland

- 2 males were arrested locally Hare coursing, our rural crime team are investigating this. please call 999/101 of any sightings. Local intelligence has stated that Hare numbers are at a record high, and this will likely increase the numbers for Coursing

Speeding

- A total of 23 drivers have been reported for speeding since the last meeting across the ridge. I've also arranged a local response officer to carry out speed checks in and around Downton. I will also continue conducting pop up checks when I can

Vehicle thefts/ damage

- We have had reports of vehicle thefts. One from the cemetery at Redlynch and one vehicle parked on the Borough in which parts of the vehicle were taken

Abandoned vehicles

- I have noticed two vehicles parked at the bottom of Lode Hill close to the junction of Moot Lane, these look to be abandoned. I have reported these to the council.

Catapults

- A few non crime reports of catapults in and around Woodfalls and Redlynch. Please email me if you notice any youths with catapults. A vehicle was damaged by a suspected catapult

Social media

- Please report all crimes to 101 /999 or contact me for advice. Crimes reported on social media will not be reported.

195/24 To receive a report from Cllr Richard Clewer (Wiltshire Council): Apologies sent (due to annual leave) and noted.

196/24 Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Stu Carter (SC) and Stephanie Jalland (SJ). Reasons noted and accepted.

197/24 Declarations of interest: DM Agenda 204/24 (i) (Downton Memorial Hall invoices), GW Agenda 204/24 (i) (Public Toilets cleaning), MR Agenda 204/24 (i) (Reimbursement of expenses)

198/24 Minutes

i) **RESOLVED:** the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on **15 July 2024** were approved.

199/24 Business raised during Public Question Time

To resolve to refer any business raised by the public or items of information from councillors either to the appropriate committee or for any other action.

Avon Meadow vegetation clearance

JB confirmed that: -

- the land is not owned by Downton Parish Council; it's unregistered.
- Environment Agency did attend following reports and established that the residents carrying out the activity were doing so to improve this area in the hope to curb anti-social behaviour of local youths
- If anyone believes a rural crime has been committed, to report it to the Police's Rural Crimes Team.

GW added that the land was historically managed by Salisbury Council involving extensive cutting-back of the vegetation along the entire stretch of river. This stopped after the formation of Wiltshire Council. At that time, he believed that no harm had come to wildlife.

200/24 Village Matters

- i) Parish Steward: a list of jobs for Sept were identified
- ii) Lode Hill: SBD said that she'd received a report regarding the deterioration of the red pedestrian walkway. Highways are now looking into this. Highways will conduct a safety audit and consider if speed road markings are needed.
- iii) Gullies: SBD reported that we (through WC Highways) are taking a pro-active approach to gully clearance before September
- iv) Flood Meeting: note that the next meeting will be held on 10 September

- v) Footpaths:
 - SBD reported a successful volunteer led footpath clearance work on Route 66 and Downton 27 (South Lane loop). SBD put photos on Social media which received positive feedback. SBD will submit a request for kissing-gates and way markers to WC's Rights of Way Team. JB expressed her thanks to SBD for keeping the momentum going.
 - MC confirmed that £100 is allocated in DPC's 2024/25 budget for footpaths
- vi) Defibrillators:
 - SBD reported that the replacement cabinet at the Memorial Centre has been installed (in a slightly different location i.e. moved away from the drainpipe)
 - SBD reported that the next training course will take place 17 Sept
- vii) SID: SBD reported July data from Moot Lane. She will now liaise with PC Marc Evans on setting-up mobile speed checks
- viii) Tannery Bridge cleaning: SBD presented a proposal on a joint volunteer group comprising Parish Council volunteers, Downton Society, and other volunteers from within the community. **RESOLVED** that activity may go ahead subject to HC Highways consent in relation to any road closures and production of a Risk Assessment.
- ix) Trees Leisure Centre: trees overhanging private property was discussed. **RESOLVED**: SBD to ask BWSCA to contact the member of the public.
- x) Littering: noted litter hotspots reported by a member of the public with a request to write to the Trafalgar School on this matter. Agreed that SBD will issue a message of thanks via Social Media to all those who pick-up litter, SBD will put-up posters on the subject, PR will approach Trafalgar School to discuss and establish if anyone who is doing DofE would like to take-on a litter-picking initiative.

201/24 Idverde Grounds Maintenance contract

- i) Moot Lane Rec Grd - damage to rubber matting around the play equipment
MC reported that Idverde has committed to repair the damage and will be carrying out a site visit tomorrow to assess and give a timescale. MC will report back.
- ii) Grass cutting
To receive a report on the following areas of non-delivery of contract and resolve on what actions to take
 - Moot Lane Rec Grd grass has been left in a poor and very long condition for several weeks. Continue to monitor the situation.
 - Dennets Drove Footpath (to be cut twice in high season): has not been carried out this year. The footpath is completely blocked. SBD confirmed that partial clearance has been carried out by the Footpath Group.

202/24 Planning

- i) The applications received were considered and recommendations made to Wiltshire Council Planning Authority (see Planning Schedule)
- ii) Planning decisions were noted (see Planning Schedule)

203/24 S106 monies for Scotts House development

- i) MC reported that after escalating the situation to WC legal, S106 monies have been paid to Wiltshire Council. Downton Parish Council are due the following payments: -
 - £37,691 renovation and refurbishment of Memorial Centre's early years provision
 - £16,045 Community Facilities
 - £14,220.41 Open Space
- ii) MC reported that it is not mandatory to instruct a solicitor to act on behalf of Downton Parish Council in the signature of the Side Agreement between the Parish Council and Wiltshire Council. Agreed that once DPC has had sight of the Side Agreement (being produced by WC Legal) they will further consider legal representation.
- iii) Identifying eligible projects for use of the S106 funds: matter deferred

204/24 Finance: Part 1

- i) **RESOLVED:** the Cash Flow Report and payments were approved
Account Balances
Lloyds Treasurers Account 06 Aug 2024: £1,544.95
Lloyds Business Bank Instant 06 Aug 2024: £115,264.04
Lloyds Treasurers Account (Heritage Fund) 06 Aug 2024: £0
- ii) **RESOLVED:** the Bank Reconciliation prepared by the RFO was signed-off as correct by Members of the Council
- iii) The decision to purchase domain names and web host for Downton's Wiltshire Towns Programme was ratified.

205/24 Finance: Part 2

- i) MC ran through the mid-year 2024/25 budget.
- ii) The unrestricted reserves @this mid-year point were noted.

206/24 Finance: Part 3

- i) Noted that three members of the public have exercised their right to inspect and copy Downton Parish Council's accounting records for the financial year ended 31 March 2024.

JB added that:-

- DPC employed a professional and independent internal auditor who is highly qualified and experienced in working with local government.
 - Unlike her experience to date of DPC, the internal auditor did not identify a single matter arising as a result of his scrutiny of the 2023/24 accounts and therefore did not need to produce an accompanying 'Matter Arising' report. JB believes this demonstrates the internal auditor's complete acceptance of Downton PC's accounts for 2023/24.
 - The three residents were provided with an opportunity to inspect and take copies (by means of photo'ing) on 02 August, as is their legal right. This required the Clerk to undertake a significant amount of work copying, redacting personal data (under GDPR) where necessary, and putting all documents into a form that could easily be presented to the three residents.
 - Prior to the inspection, the Clerk had spoken extensively with the external auditor (PKF Littlejohn's Head of Challenge) on all aspects of how the inspection was to be conducted and papers presented to the members of the public. The Head of Challenge confirmed that all aspects were acceptable.
 - One resident who inspected the accounts congratulated DPC on coming within budget for the Play Park Refurbishment Project. They raised no other points in relation to the 2023/24 AGAR and accounts.
- ii) MC delivered a report on the basis upon which an electorate may raise an objection with the external auditor, PKF Littlejohn, who have limited remit i.e. the objection must :-
- Be made by an elector of the authority
 - Relate to an item within sections 1 or 2 of the 2023/24 AGAR in respect of objections to incorrect or unlawful items of account i.e. if an objection does not relate to either a mandatory governance requirement, a material inaccuracy in the accounting statements, or an unlawful item of account, it cannot be considered to be eligible. Matters of policy cannot form the basis for an eligible objection i.e. just because an elector does not agree with an authority's decision does not make it an unlawful decision
 - Be received during the specified 30 working day public rights period
 - Be copied to the authority in full

- Specify the facts and grounds on which the objector is relying (opinion cannot be considered) and supported by reference to documentary evidence

The external auditor's remit excludes: -

- Enforcement of the proper provision for the exercise of public rights
- Re-examining closed years i.e. only items in the 2023/24 AGAR can form the basis of an eligible objection
- Work of the internal auditor

The external auditor highlights that additional work involved in considering challenge correspondence is carried out by an engagement lead at a cost of £2,485 per day + vat. This cost is met by the local authority (local taxpayer).

- iii) To note the cost implications to the local taxpayer of electorates raising an objection:
- JB reported that since the Agenda was published, one resident has submitted an objection to the external auditor, copy sent to the Clerk.
 - JB stated that all Councillors have a high level of confidence in every element of the Council's accounts and the way in which they were presented for the exercise of public rights (which the Clerk had verified in advance with the Head of Challenge). JB added that it's therefore very disappointing local taxpayers will have to pay for whatever time the external auditor takes to consider the eligibility (against criteria) of this objection.
 - **RESOLVED:** to allocate £2,485 (the external auditor's day rate) from the unrestricted reserves.

207/24 Coronation Living Heritage Orchard Grant

- i) **RESOLVED:** the Grant application was approved subject to any suggested changes by WC's tree officer and production of a Risk Assessment

208/24 Additional planting to attract pollinators

- i) **RESOLVED:** The creation of a wildflower meadow at the Moot Lane Rec Ground was approved. Downton Green Network Group has committed to:-
- spend £170 on wildflower seeds
 - consider the cost to hire a turf cutter
 - lay the seeds
 - liaise with a local resident to strim every autumn
- The cut turf can be relayed around areas of Play Equipment
JB will check this work is acceptable with the covenant holders
- ii) Gifting Lavendar and Rosemary bushes: regrettably the belief that these had been offered was a misunderstanding. JB has written to Funeral Directors seeking donations for plants.

209/24 Committee & Working Group Reports

- i) The 1st draft Downton 3-year Strategy Plan was considered. **RESOLVED:** the 3-year Strategy Plan was approved subject to some minor changes. The final version document to be published on DPC's website and circulated within the community by mid-September.

210/24 Parish Council website

- i) MC confirmed that the 1st stage of the new Parish Council website has been produced for review.

211/24 Councillors Reports

i) To receive reports from Councillors

PR: recently attended a Cuckoo Fair meeting: -

- The Cuckoo Fair may wish to seek a 5-year Agreement for the fair to proceed every year on the Borough Green. It was agreed that this request will be fully considered upon receipt of a formal written request to the Clerk.
- The Cuckoo Fair has asked if DPC can write to landowners requesting that their trees along the green be cut back. Agreed to add this to the Sept Agenda.

JB:

- Is attending a WC Teams meeting regarding their feedback on the modified Neighbourhood Plan
- Confirmed MC has submitted the Youth Grant application (for the Mural Project) to SWAB. Will be considered in Sept.
- SBD will be attending the online 'Wellbeing' meeting

212/24 Correspondence, AOB, urgent matters

i) Offer of a 25-30ft tree for Downton Parish Council's Annual Christmas Tree and 'switching on the lights' event - logistics were discussed but further consideration is needed before accepting this generous offer. For the Sept Agenda.

213/24 **RESOLVED:** that Agenda items 214/24 and 215/24 will be closed to members of the public and press under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Sec 1 (2) by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

214/24 BWSCA Lease

No resolutions were passed under this Agenda item.

215/24 Staff Matter

RESOLVED: unanimously that the Clerk's contracted hours will increase to 37 hours per week wef 01 September 2024. An updated contract to be produced to reflect the increase in hours.

RESOLVED: unanimously that the Clerk will receive an honorarium payment equivalent to 2 hours per week on her current SCP for the period 01 April 2024 - 31 August 2024. Councillors wished to award this honorarium payment in recognition of the actual hours MC works whilst delivering a high level of skill in the performance of her duties.

216/24 Date of next meeting

The date of the next Meeting for Downton Parish Council will be held on **09 September 2024 at 7:00pm** in the **Memorial Hall, Downton (Bonvalot Room)**.

Being no further business, JB closed the meeting at 10:20pm.

DRAFT MINUTES TO BE SIGNED AT THE NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING