

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Child Okeford Parish Council held on Monday,
03 April 2017 in the Community Centre at 7.00 pm**

1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Present: Councillors:

M Rudd (Chairman), S Jespersen, R Smith , P Blake, K Baird, M Giles, S Holdeman

In attendance: Debra Holland (Parish Clerk), County Councillor Deborah Croney, Footpaths Officer. There were five members of the public present.

To receive apologies for absence: Cllrs M Hepburn and J Chetwode

2 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 04 April 2016 having been previously circulated, were signed as a true record.

Proposed: Cllr Jespersen

Seconded: Cllr Rudd

3 Councillors' Reports

Cllr Rudd presented the **Chairman's Report**

The Parish and Council of Child Okeford have had a busy last year both in terms of the day-to-day curation and large projects that have been taking place.

In the current climate maintenance, progress and stability continue to be traded at all levels of government - local, district, county, nationally and even internationally. This would certainly seem to be occurring more regularly and deeply than at any time in recent memory. It is ever more crucial therefore that we pay due respect to trust and nurture the bonds within in our community and village to provide a place for us all to live.

We have been given long-term structural stability out to Shillingstone and beyond with the completion of the fantastic Hayward's Bridge project. Many thanks to Cllr Sherry Jespersen whom has worked to ensure that transport, communication and community links are set to be maintained by the work on this popular route. Thanks also to Cllr Deborah Croney for the work on this project whom, along with Cllr Jespersen, continue to help and maintain the village in the levels of government above the Parish Council.

With regards to upcoming highways-related projects – immediately in the future we start our work with the Highways Agency with the placement of the tubes around the village as we tackle traffic-calming in our community. We await the results keenly – thanks to Cllrs Mike Hepburn and Bob Smith for their endeavours to get us here and onwards.

Farther into the future the upgrade and maintenance of the Durweston Bridge will inevitably have its effect on the volume of traffic going through the village. We shall await more news on this project but it is reassuring to know that Cllrs Croney and Jespersen continue to take steps to mitigate the impact on the village and day-to-day life while this necessary work takes place.

Chairman's Report (Cont'd)

It has been a pleasure to welcome Cllr Kirsty Baird to the Parish Council this year. The village spoke strongly and cohesively when electing her to serve on the Council and she has thrown herself into her tasks with energy and enthusiasm. Thank you to Cllr Baird for chairing the Playing Fields charity as we take a large step forward with the Child Okeford Recreation Ground Improvements project. Thank you to all the residents whom attended the recent Open Day for the project and provided such positive feedback and volunteers for the project as it moves onwards.

We said goodbye to our clerk Lorraine Hunt last month and wish her all the best for her future. Happily Debra Holland has joined us as our new clerk and I'm sure I speak for all the Parish Council in offering her a warm welcome.

Touching on planning in the village the planning committee and Council have had the more usual applications and decisions – each important in their own right and each affecting one or more residents. One application rose up this year however that had the potential to impact the sustainability and temperament of the village as a whole – the change of use of the Beehive Self Storage. The opinion of the village was virtually unanimous in united opposition to this application and extremely pleasingly the rugged decision and response from North Dorset District council reflected this.

The well-reported and discussed unitary authority proposal for Dorset is currently being considered by the Secretary of State. This change is not immediate but imminent and we need, at a Parish level, to be very mindful of our long term positioning. This encompasses both the services we provide and the financial means to do so. At this time we need to be prudent and positive - a tricky but achievable proposition.

As the first swallows appear and we move into the summer the village is a truly beautiful place to live in with life and growth emerging from each and every corner of the soil and sky. I can't walk through one of the many new gates without a smile and reflection of the work done by Alan Blundell, the rangers and all the many volunteers.

We are very lucky to encourage that trust and community bonds exist in Child Okeford – not least through the hard work and endeavours of so many individuals. Thank you to you all for what you do: looking after the Millennium Garden; litter picking; encouraging Child Okeford in the Best Kept Village competition; putting on arts or sports events; baking amazing cakes for coffee mornings; running and attending social clubs and societies; helping out at St Nicholas Church; volunteering at The Ark and St Nicholas School. This is just a small list of some of the great things that make the village an enjoyable place for us all to live.

As we look forward to this upcoming year for the village and Parish Council we do have challenges and unknown quantities that lie ahead - however with the strength of trust, community bonds and energy and enthusiasm we may look forward to what the future holds.

Cllr Giles presented the **Hey Day Report**

The date for Hey Day and indeed the day on which it is normally held was changed last year to coincide with the Queen's 90th Birthday, it is normally held in July and on a Saturday. Last year it was held in June and on a Sunday.

The date was a key factor to the success of the event, i.e. before the school end of term and not too close to the school fete, this meant there was great involvement from the school and local children, joining forces with the community choir Vale Voices. This generated a lot more foot fall from mums, dads and grandparents coming along to enjoy the event and of course spend money...

The layout of the event being in a more confined space around the community centre created a lovely village green atmosphere and will be repeated this year.

The dedication of the community centre car for disabled parking was very well received as was the overflow car park with the use of the school car park.

Cllr Giles Hey Day Report (Cont'd)

The marquee was a great investment and justified despite the cost, especially when the heavens opened at the end of the day. The tables and chairs from the village hall and organic farm were gratefully received, as was the rubbish collection and recycling, with the bins being borrowed from Springhead.

The BBQ as always worked really well with Gill Fuglesang and her band of BBQ warriors. Pizza and ice-creams were a good addition and will be available again this year albeit with a faster delivery method for the pizzas. The lunch club tea and cakes are always in demand and cakes left over at the end of the day were sold at the evening event adding to their profits for the day.

Very successful bar, especially with its location being in the marquee. This worked especially well for the evening event. The addition of Pimms proved to be very popular and profitable! We will be offering the opportunity for local business or indeed individuals to sponsor a barrel or half barrel of beer this year in exchange for advertising attached to the Barrel.

The activities of the day were very entertaining, with the traditional welly throwing, coconut shy, splat the rat and tug-o-war giving the event a very traditional fete feel. The Human Fruit Machine whilst great fun does take up a lot of manpower and unless we have more volunteers may need to be dropped this year.

We had a good mix of stalls and we would like to see more this year and ideally have more village groups involved.

The evening event was a great success, the local bands were superb and despite lots of people's reservations and only having sold 20 tickets in advance of the day, we had over 80 people attend and boogie the night away...immense fun and a great way to end the day. The good news, we have combined the evening event to be organised by the Hey Day team this year too which means 'Hey Night' will be back. It proved so popular last year that I have already been approached by villagers looking to buy tickets...so watch out for these going on sale in the shop soon. It is best to buy them early, as we do have to limit the numbers for H&S and security reasons.

None of this event would have been possible without the support of the Hey Day committee and many volunteers, and on behalf of our Hey Day Chairman, Geoff Sparrow, I would like to take this opportunity to thank them again, and also put in a plug to ask for more volunteers for this year please...

Overall the event raised £2,294 which was split between Julia's House & the CO playing field charity.

This year Hey Day will be on Saturday 17th June. Please put the date in your diary and come along...Oh and this time you can bring your furry friends (dogs), after all, this is a family day and they are part of the family too! The PC has given permission for them to be allowed on the playing field for this one event in the year...but make sure you poop scoop responsibly!

Cllr Blake presented the **Planning Report**

Good Evening. Well, another year has gone by, Cllrs Bob, Mary and myself, have continued working together on the planning group for the parish council. It's been a year of extensions, porches, new builds and trees. With emails bouncing around between us with last minute deadlines needing considered decisions before the next PC meeting. The "biggy" this year was the application from Beehive Storage to build a large development just outside the village boundary, the PC hosted a very well attended public meeting, listened to all concerned villagers and responded accordingly. As you know this planning was refused, much to the relief of everyone. We monitored and commented on the amount of tree removal at one particular property and were much helped by the NDDC tree officer. The PC are very aware that our lovely environment does need managing, so on that note, it has been known for some of our number to don gloves and pruning shears on a number of occasions during the year. Here's to another year of planning applications...

Cllr Jespersen presented the **District Council Report**

I am, as you know, not just a member of this Parish Council but also the District Councillor for this and eleven other villages.

I am also the District Council Cabinet member, with responsibility for Community Engagement, Regeneration and Development.

This is a brief report on the most important work at NDDC over the last 12 months. This has inevitably been the journey towards LGR.

The driving force behind this is the financial constraints under which all the Dorset councils are working - like local authorities across the country.

NDDC is expert at providing services on a shoestring, but even for a tightly run council such as us, eventually it becomes impossible to plan for a viable future.

Add to this the ever increasing demand for adult social care across an aging population, and DCC's £198m of borrowing and the future for services looks bleak.

So, during 2016 the 9 Councils which provide services across Dorset, devised a plan to reorganise local government right across the county.

Together we commissioned three major pieces of work - *Options for the Reconfiguring of Local Government*, from consultants Local Partnerships; a *Case for Change Report* from PwC and a public consultation, run by Opinion Research Services.

The evidence in favour of LGR which emerged from this work was overwhelming and received strong support from households and businesses through the public consultation.

In January, 6 of the 9 Councils voted to replace the existing 9 Councils with two new Unitary Authorities, one for the conurbation and one covering the rest of the district.

A formal proposal for 2 Unitary Authorities has now been submitted to the Secretary of State and we wait his response.

The headline case is that reorganisation can deliver £28m cost savings each year, with a payback period for the £25m cost of reorganisation delivered in the first year. These are pretty compelling figures.

But I would not have supported the Unitary proposal if it had offered nothing more than cost saving.

I believe there could be more on offer here. If the new Authorities have enough courage and imagination this could be a chance to transform services rather than simply re-badging existing services to fit the shape of a new organisation.

Collaboration and strategic and operational co-ordination could strengthen the public realm across Dorset for decades to come.

This is the measure of the opportunity and the challenge which we now face. And it's once in a generation stuff.

And layer upon layer of work has now begun to put in place arrangements for the transfer of the functions; people; property; funds and liabilities of the existing councils to the emerging Unitary Authorities.

Cllr Jespersen District Council Report (Cont'd)

The new Councils are expected to go live in April 2019 so the timetable is very tight. And of course the day job of providing services and running an effective Council must continue.

To that end we press on with bringing together staff and services across the Dorset Councils Partnership.

Almost all North Dorset staff have completed the move out of the Council Offices in Blandford and now work in Dorchester.

Meetings are all now in Dorchester except Full Council, which is held in Durweston and Planning and Licensing meetings, which will be held in local venues.

The Nordon site is to be sold for a development of mixed tenure low cost housing. In this way we will leave a legacy for people of ND and towns folk of Blandford.

So we are facing the biggest shake-up of Local Government since the 70's and the next couple of years will be very challenging.

Cllr Smith presented the **Speedwatch Report**

Speed Watch has been going now for about three years. Currently we have two active teams plus a third who are trying to recruit additional people to make it viable again. To give you all some perspective we currently average 5 SW monitoring sessions a week. This makes us one of the most active villages in Dorset. On average a one hour SW session at the Village hall, which has a 20mph limit, sees 150-200 cars pass with an average of 5% exceeding the reportable limit of 25 mph.

Last Wednesday, 29th March, SW had a meeting in the community centre with Mr Brian Austin from Dorset police and our local PCSO Mike Sinnick. Mr Austin spoke for an hour and a half on the measures that Dorset police are going to pursue to catch Dangerous and speeding drivers. This involves a much more rugged approach to the problem. Mr Austin took questions from the SW present and discussed the effectiveness of deterrents and SW. One interesting point was raised concerning signs, which has been discussed in council several times. The police believe that movable signs are much more effective than static warnings.

Dorset Police, despite budgetary constraints, have managed to employ a coordinator for SW in Dorset. This person will be in place within a few weeks. Following this, the Police plan to be much more proactive in taking action against cars repeatedly reported by SW. Currently there are two initiatives in place. These run with a joint task force made up of staff from Dorset, Somerset and Devon forces. 'Dragoon' which identifies repeated offenders thus allowing the police to actively target the offender and operation 'WOLF' which provides police officers to attend SW sessions and actually issue spot fines to offenders. Child Okeford hope to have this team supporting our SW at some point during April.

Cllr Giles presented the **Sports & Community Centre Committee (SACCC) Report**

The SACCC (Sports and Community Centre Committee) was set up as a sub-committee of the parish council. This year we saw the distribution of the village questionnaire to all houses in the village, with the intention of helping the parish council formulate ideas on the future use of the playing field and community centre. Seeking input into what facilities villagers and users of the site would like to see and would benefit from going forward. The results of the survey were presented at the SACCC & PC meeting and more recently an open morning which was held in the community centre for villagers to come along and see the results and also discuss ideas / recommendations from the survey.

Since the survey results have been reviewed, The Trustees of the QEII playing Field, Child Okeford Charitable Trust have begun a project to improve the facilities at the recreation ground. This group is now referred to as CORGI (Child Okeford Recreation Ground Improvements Project).

4 **Footpaths Officer’s Report**

Alan Blundell presented his report.

Another good year for our rights of way. Four more gates have been installed to replace stiles; two at Gold Hill Organic Farm and two at Chisel Farm. Our thanks go to the Countryside Rangers led by Stuart Caldwell and to the landowners for their permission and cooperation.

There are now 48 pedestrian gates in our parish, possibly a record for any parish. Some of these have existed for more than ten years but the majority have been installed over the last 10 years thanks to the Countryside Rangers with the help of a County grant negotiated by Bob Smith. Our thanks go to him.

Our application for a recognised path through the wood above Markstone is still pending and may take a further two years before it is processed due to staff shortages in the Definitive Map Department.

The closure of the bridge over the river at Haywards Lane meant that there was no access from the village to the Trailway for cyclists. Some however managed to access the Trailway via the Wilson Haines bridge. It is hoped that one day there will be an official off road route between the Trailway and Child Okeford.

The Countryside Rangers have continued to provide excellent service in keeping our designated footpaths clear and it is to be hoped that this Service Level Agreement will continue through next year.

5 **General Discussion**

Cllr Rudd opened the meeting to the public. There seems to be an issue with the Village Hall website as it does not appear to be visible as a link on the COPC website. Cllr Rudd said that the Village Hall Committee was now linked from Village Hall on COPC websites and that the COPC website will be run by Debra (Parish Clerk) so if information is COPC related, please contact her in the first instance. For anything else please use the contact form and it will go to the appropriate person. Cllr Holdeman raised the problem of there not being enough people to upload information on the Village website. Cllr Rudd pointed out that there had to be controls over who has authority to upload data to the website in order to protect its integrity from malware etc. Cllr Rudd invited members of the public to offer to help with the website. Cllr Jespersen reminded everyone to take responsibility to ensure information posted on the website is current and updated.

A member of the public said the searches don’t automatically take you to Child Okeford page.

Action: Cllr Rudd to investigate updating the website domain.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and participating in the meeting and closed the meeting at 7.57 pm.

SignedDate.....

(Presiding Chairman)

Please note that the foregoing do not become minutes until approved by Council and signed to that effect by the Presiding Chairman at the next meeting.