

ALTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting at the Coronation Hall, 7.30, November 6, 2014

- Present:** Steve Hepworth, Peter Emery, Ben Owen, Polly Carson, Robert Carpenter Turner, Alex Oliver, Debby Lester. Apologies: Kate Fielden.
In attendance: Cllr Paul Oatway
- 078/14** **Minutes:** The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and signed by the Chairman. Matters arising not on the agenda: none.
- 079/14** **Responsible Finance Officer:** Steve Hepworth welcomed Debby Lester and thanked her for agreeing to fill this important role as a volunteer. Proposed Robert Carpenter Turner seconded Polly Carson, that Ms Lester be appointed RFO. Agreed unanimously.
- 080/14** **Playground inspection & repair costs:** A cheque to RoSPA for £88.80 to cover playground inspection was proposed Alex Oliver seconded Robert Carpenter Turner and signed. Peter Emery reported on the urgent need to repair the fence, highlighted by the RoSPA safety report. Repair including 13 concrete posts (wood and plastic being unsuitable) would cost up to £2000. Members voiced concern over the cost; it was pointed out that the play areas in Lockeridge and All Cannings were both unfenced. The following resolution was proposed by Polly Carson, seconded Peter Emery:
That the existing playground fence which is in poor repair and would cost up to £2000 to renew be removed and, subject to legal advice re liability, warning signs erected instead. Agreed unanimously.
- 081/14** **Precept:** Debby Lester reminded members that the precept last year was set at £2400, up from £2250 the year before. SH said he was concerned that the pc is being run on a shoestring with no reserves. Costs in the past year included £690 for grass cutting and maintenance at the playground and RAF memorial, £766 playground insurance, £19 expenses, £774 legal fees for purchase of playground and £88 playground inspection. Paul Oatway warned that the pc's power to set a precept could soon be tightly capped by government, which could eventually leave it in a position where it could not meet its obligations. The pc needed to consider possible situations 10 years or more down the line. It might be sensible to set up an emergency contingency fund. RCT pointed out that the last refurbishment of the white horse in 2009 cost £21000. There was general concern that the pc is underfunded and might soon lose the right to raise money to meet that problem. An increase to £4,000, while large in percentage terms, would raise the precept on a band D property from £21.26 to £36.11 a year, an annual rise of just over £14. It was then proposed by Steve Hepworth, seconded Ben Owen, that the precept be raised to £4,000. Agreed, six

in favour and one abstention. A full explanation to be included in the forthcoming parish Newsletter.

- 082/14 Parish flood plan:** Peter Emery has volunteered to be emergency contact for Barnes with Ben Owen as backup; Steve Hepworth, Priors with Kate Fielden backup; Alex Oliver Honeystreet. Wilts Council has offered to provide a ton of sand and bags but the question was where to store them. Agreed that PE approach Tim Carson re storage of the sand and SH ask Coronation Hall committee for consent to store the bags.
- 083/14 RAF memorial:** Ben Owen suggested that to save money the land surrounding the memorial should be made a wildflower area. After seeding it would need to be cut only once a year and should be self-supporting. Members welcomed the idea. Agreed.
- 084/14 Pewsey Vale bus services:** SH reported that the latest proposals would see services through Alton Barnes and Honeystreet maintained and in some respects improved with eight buses a day and an extended route. However, it was very important that as many residents as possible should respond to the latest consultation to show that the service is valued. This point to be made strongly in the forthcoming Newsletter. RCT urged that timetables show Honeystreet correctly, as one word.
- 085/14 Workway Drove car park - bylaw:** Paul Oatway said he had held a productive meeting on site with Wilts County officers. The car park is on a byway which is subject to the Highways Act, so a bylaw cannot be put in place. However the existing law lays down that users cannot park overnight or camp. Members questioned who would deal with law-breakers at night or at weekends. PO said Wilts Council was prepared to pay for signage. Once that was in place they could look at enforcement. Agreed the pc and David Carson as landowner should decide wording of signs. Members thanked Cllr Oatway for his help
- 086/14 Barge Inn, forthcoming planning application:** Members discussed outline plans from Ian McIvor, the owner of the pub, for a new toilet block and an observatory on the campsite behind the main building. They believed the new block would be a great improvement and an observatory was “a lovely idea” though light-pollution might be a problem. Summing up, Steve Hepworth said members could see no reason for any objection and wished to encourage Mr McIvor in his venture. He thanked him for consulting the pc in advance.
- 087/14 Police report:** In the absence of a police representative, this item was not taken.

088/14 **Christmas Newsletter:** Items for the newsletter were discussed and agreed

Any other business

089/14 **White horse maintenance:** Cheque to Peter Emery for £150 proposed SH, seconded AO. Agreed.

090/14 **RAF memorial, bunker:** Ben Owen asked why there was no access to the wartime command bunker. AO asked about ownership. Agreed that BO approach David Carson about both issues

091/14 **VAT:** DL noted that there is a VAT return of £150 to be claimed.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9.02pm.
