

ALTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting at the Coronation Hall, 7.30 pm, January 7, 2016

Present: Steve Hepworth (Chair), Peter Emery, Robert Carpenter Turner, Polly Carson, Ben Owen, Alex Oliver, Mike Golden, Debby Lester.
Apologies: Cllr Paul Oatway

Steve Hepworth was sorry to note that Cllr Oatway is unwell and in hospital. Parish Council members joined him in sending Cllr Oatway their very best wishes.

001/16 Minutes: The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed (proposed Robert Carpenter Turner, seconded Alex Oliver) and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising not on the agenda:

002/16 Honeystreet Wharf ownership: The previous pc meeting (minutes 104/15) had been told that this site had been acquired by Mr P Carty, builder. That had since been disputed. Alex Oliver to clarify.

003/16 Speed limit C38: Steve Hepworth reported that a MetroCount survey at The Hermitage, Honeystreet, found 85% of vehicles travelling at or below 45mph. That meant there would be no further action. Wiltshire Council had also carried out a survey of the C38 Woodborough-Lockeridge road and concluded that lowering the speed limit was not justified because there was not sufficient density of housing. Members agreed, with regret, that it would not be effective to pursue the matter further. That might be re-opened if, as is possible, Honeystreet sees a significant housing increase.

004/16 Village Hall defibrillator, grant request: SH reported that Pewsey Area Board hopes to contribute £500.

005/16 Neighbourhood Development Order, procedure: Charles Reiss reminded members that as Clerk he would normally intervene only on matters of procedure and conduct. But as a member of the NDO Steering Group he had the right to speak and vote. He asked the consent of the pc, therefore, to speak (but not vote) on NDO-related matters. Proposed Steve Hepworth, seconded Polly Carson, that this be approved. Agreed unanimously.

006/16 Horse warning signs: Debby Lester reported that these were going ahead but that White Horse Liveries, who needed to raise £150, were seeking a contribution from the pc. After discussion this was refused.

007/16 **Precept:** Debby Lester, as Responsible Finance Officer, presented options for the precept for the financial year ahead. She pointed out that the current level of £4,000 was relatively low compared to neighbouring parishes. The money was needed to cover running costs such as maintenance of the playground, the White Horse, and the RAF memorial, and also for eventualities. There were concerns that the precept could be frozen in the next year or two. Available grant was expected to be significantly less, and parish reserves were low. Her opinion as Finance Officer was that “an increase would be a wise place to go.”

Members were keen to keep any increase as low as reasonably possible. After lengthy discussion Robert Carpenter Turner proposed, Alex Oliver seconded, that the precept for 2016-17 be set at £5,000. Agreed by four votes to three. Members thanked DL for all her hard work.

008/16 **White Horse maintenance:** During the precept discussion members raised particular concern at the cost of maintaining the White Horse chalk figure. They pointed out that the Horse is on private farm land, owned by New College, Oxford. At the same time it was an asset to a far wider area. Why was the parish covering the cost of cleaning, weed-killing etc at all? After discussion it was agreed that Peter Emery approach David Carson, for the farm, and through him New College. Alex Oliver to check whether the Horse is a scheduled monument.

009/16 **Neighbourhood Development Order:** SH reported that the NDO is stuck at its submission point. Wiltshire Council had declined to process it because they are unhappy with the proposed area and the proposed voting area for the final referendum. At a meeting with Georgina Clampitt-Dix, Wiltshire’s Head of Spatial Planning, she had suggested the Sawmill site could be handled as a normal planning application. That was contrary to the advice initially received from the council. However an email received today from a member of Ms Clampitt-Dix’s team had reiterated that a planning application could be the best way to go, and added that in such an event “clear support from the local community would be a significant material consideration.”

Alex Oliver said that he had spoken with a planning consultant with experience as an NDO examiner. He advised that the Parish Council could choose whatever NDO area and voting area it wished. However, he had questioned whether this was the right way to achieve the pc’s objectives. He warned that it would cover consent for a scheme only in general terms. It would not allow the pc to specify design or materials for the housing proposed. And it would not stop the developer coming back for more housing.

Members questioned whether, in that case, the NDO route is worth pursuing. They voiced concern that the current limited-area NDO is

already stretching resources, and the workload, to the limit. Widening it – which would necessarily involve the two further development sites on the other side of the canal – was not a practical option. The developers, HAB, were asked to seek an urgent meeting with Wiltshire Council to clarify the position.

Members agreed a questionnaire about the future of the site to be distributed to and collected from every household in the parish.

010/16 **Village gates:** Debby Lester reported that it would be necessary to wait until after April to identify contractors and costs.

011/16 **Highways meeting:** SH reported on a meeting with Wiltshire Highways officers to view problems on the spot. Issues addressed included: blocked culvert at Alton Priors – gates to be installed; Browns Lane – hedge to be cut back, and bund installed on road to direct surface water; Honeystreet – culvert cleared at entrance to Chimney Lane, road surface at that point to be investigated once it has dried out.

012/16 **Honeystreet post collections:** CR to pursue point that 9am is too early.

013/16 **Fire, Browns Lane:** Associated with thatch-burning. No action required.

014/16 **Complaint, Priory Cottages horsebox:** Wiltshire enforcement officer Stephen Jenkins had written to the tenant asking him either to remove the structure or apply for planning permission within a specified time.

015/16 **Playground fence review:** Peter Emery and Ben Owen reported on the situation six months after the fence was removed. Apart from the original objection no complaints had been received and the playground continued to be well-used.

016/16 **Fernbank visit:** PE reported on a visit by PC members to the site in Honeystreet, where the owners plan to remove a bungalow and annexe and replace them with two new dwellings. The owners were keen to cooperate with local residents and open to suggestions. Members agreed that plans for the proposal were needed, and that the apparent scale and style of the development remained problems.

017/16 **Honeystreet road signs:** CR reported that two new, correct village signs had been purchased for £215.52, including VAT, and that local residents were generously covering the cost.

Any Other Business

- 018/16** **Everleigh recycling centre:** SH reported widespread protest at Wilts Council plans to close the centre. To be pursued at the next meeting of the Pewsey Community Area Partnership Area Board.
- 019/16** **Barge Inn:** RCT reported, with regret, that the pub was closed after the tenants, Mark and Sharon Daniels, had been given notice to quit. Members agreed that they had made a valuable contribution to the community and that Steve Hepworth, as Chairman, should write to thank them. Alex Oliver to investigate whether the pub could be registered as a community asset.
- 020/16** **Expenses:** Steve Hepworth submitted expenses, last submitted in 2013: 200 miles on pc business, £117.45; printing costs, £21. Approved.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.18pm.