

ALTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting at the Coronation Hall, 7.30, December 5, 2013*

Present: Steve Hepworth, Peter Emery, Kate Fielden, Ben Owen, Jayne Drew, Robert Carpenter Turner, Polly Carson, Jenni Bickerdyke
Apologies: PC Richard Barratt. In attendance: Councillor Paul Oatway

098/13 Minutes: The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed (proposed Robert Carpenter Turner, seconded Polly Carson) and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising not on the agenda:

099/13 Woodborough Garden Centre ad: This had been removed by Wilts Council, but since replaced. Members agreed that such a large sign (at the Pewsey/Devizes crossroads) should be removed. Steve Hepworth to contact Simon Jenkins, Wilts enforcement officer.

100/13 Altons Village Design Statement: has been validated by Wilts, who hope it will go to committee for final approval in January. It already has status as a “material consideration” in policy decisions.

101/13 Fertiliser tanks, Alton Priors: Reasons for Wilts’ rejection of the planning application (13/00551/FUL) had been circulated to pc members. Tank contents needed to be used up before the tanks could be relocated.

102/13 Chimney Lane repairs: Charles Reiss (Clerk) reported an email from the Canal and River Trust (CRT) stating that no repairs are currently needed for the section of the lane it owns. The email also claimed that residents must pay for any repairs required to maintain their access, and asked whether the parish council would meet part or all of the cost. Members strongly disputed that residents are liable; there is a right of access which the CRT as landowner is obliged to maintain. It is not pc land and no question of a pc contribution. Agreed SH write to the CRT in those terms.

103/13 Grant applications / pc roles: Paul Oatway reaffirmed that grant is available. Jayne Drew reported that she had looked into funding for the playground from North Wessex Downs AONB but found there was none currently available. Ben Owen reported the basic cost for a playground fence and gate was estimated at £1,500. Peter Emery to check the price of more durable concrete posts, rather than wood.

104/13 Workway Drove car park: Paul Oatway reported that Wilts Council is pursuing the option of a byelaw to deny overnight stays and thus give police powers to act.

- 105/13** **Precept:** This has been held at £2,250 for the past two years. Jenni Bickerdyke said that grant from Wilts Council will be reduced next year to £148.71. To maintain the precept at the same rate would therefore need an extra 76p from each council-tax payer. PO intervened to say that all parish councils face serious decisions. Both the government and Wilts Council had reduced precept grant. At the same time residents on benefit, including pensioners, will no longer be required to make any precept payment. And the government intends to cap precepts in three years time. Members pointed out that the number of residents on benefit is unknown (though the number of pensioners is high) making it impossible to budget. If half the households were on pension or other benefits, remaining residents would have to pay double just to keep the precept at its present rate. JB said the main regular expense was the playground insurance. That could become unaffordable. Members agreed an eventual increase was inevitable. The question was whether to phase it in or face a big jump in two or three years' time. After considering various options, the following resolution was proposed by Steve Hepworth, seconded Jayne Drew:

With reluctance, and entirely in order to compensate for major reductions in central funding, the precept for 2014-15 be set at £2,400.

Agreed, five in favour, two abstentions

Further agreed: that JB, as Responsible Financial Officer, sets out the figures in detail as an annexe to the minutes; that a full explanation be given in the next parish newsletter and at the AGM; that the County Council be urged to include an explanation with the next Council Tax demand. PO to take up the latter point with the council.

- 106/13** **Rumble strips** on the approach to Alton Barnes from Lockeridge: These could cost from £4,000 to £6,000 but might be funded by the Community Area Transport Group. SH to take forward.

Planning applications

- 107/13** **Fernbank, 13/03736/FUL:** PO reported that the planning officer is moving towards approval with conditions. He had received many representations and hoped to take the application to the Planning Committee.

- 108/13** **Honeystreet Mills E/10/0772/FUL:** Wilts planning is moving to approve, with some very strong conditions. The pc already supports in principle but with serious doubts over detail. PO said he would check on the outstanding issues and conditions proposed and, if not satisfactory, would call it in. However, members agreed it was now time to move forward on this site. Members thanked Paul Oatway for his help.

- 109/13 White House, Honeystreet 13/06192/LBC:** The applicant, invited to speak, explained the proposal. Members, after discussion, agreed to support.
- 110/13 Hillsboro Alton Barnes 13/06269/TCA:** Tree works in a Conservation Area. Considered. No objection, no comments.
- 111/13 13/04045/TCA & 13/05472/TCA:** tree works, 1 The Granary Alton Priors & St John's Cottage, Alton Barnes. Both settled by email – noted for the record
- 112/13 Defibrillator:** Members agreed that the cost, £2,500 plus running costs, was too heavy, and decided not to proceed.
- 113/13 North Wessex Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty:** AONB Management Plan checked by KF, no problems.
- 114/13 Pewsey public lavatories – funding:** a request had been made for a contribution from the parish. The pc had contributed in the past. However, given the pressure on the precept members felt this was no longer affordable. Agreed the request be declined.

Any other business:

- 115/13 Cheques:** £80, two sprayings white horse (Peter Emery); £88.80, annual playground inspection; £14, newsletter printing (Steve Hepworth); £6.70, website domain name renewal. All proposed RCT, seconded PC, agreed.
- 116/13 VAT refund:** JB reported a claim for £130 approx had been submitted. The pc noted she will be unable to attend meetings from next March while on maternity leave.
- 117/13 Track outside Oxford Cottages:** Residents had voiced concern over the “shocking” state of the track and asked who is responsible for upkeep. PE said this is the responsibility of the farm.
- 118/13 Pewsey Area Board – Coronation Hall:** KF reported that a grant of £962.42p for equipment for the hall had been approved.
- 119/13 Application 13/03451/FUL:** Land to the rear of 1 and 2 Old Smithy Cottage, Alton Priors. KF notified members that since her application had been refused she intends to re-apply, with some changes.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 21.01

pc minutes 5.12.13 amended

* minutes subject to confirmation at the next pc