

ALTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting at the Coronation Hall, 7.30, September 13, 2012

Present: Steve Hepworth (Chair) Peter Emery, Charles Fletcher, Kate Fielden, Ben Owen, Polly Carson, Robert Carpenter Turner

In attendance: Councillor Robert Hall

Apologies: Jayne Drew, Jenni Frost

066/12 Minutes: The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed (proposed Peter Emery, seconded Charles Fletcher) and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising:

067/12 Speedwatch: SH reported that the deployment of flashing speed limit signs (usually placed for a two-week period) had been delayed due to high demand. A new rota was being arranged. SH said he would take over as co-ordinator from Charles Fletcher, who was moving out of the parish. Members thanked CF for his solid and successful work.

068/12 Police report: In the absence of a police representative, this item was not taken

069/12 Playing field Community Asset Transfer: Steve Hepworth reported that Charles Reiss (Clerk) had signed the transfer documents to convey ownership to the Parish Council and that he would sign tomorrow. He briefed pc members on the covenants under which the transfer of ownership will be governed.

SH also informed pc members that the cost of the public advertisements required for the CAT had been considerably reduced, from the original £735.36 to £418.54. If the transfer was completed in September the pc would receive a £40 refund of rent paid to Wilts Council, bringing the charge down to £378.54. The following resolution was proposed by Polly Carson, seconded Robert Carpenter Turner:

In view of the much-reduced cost and notwithstanding previous resolution, minutes 057/12, the total charge should be paid as a single lump sum. Agreed nem con.

070/12 Great Stones Way: Councillor Hall reported on recent meetings to consider the Environmental Impact Survey, and written comments criticising many aspects of the proposed path. Wiltshire Council's Senior Rights of Way Officer, Richard Broadhead, had said he could not possibly recommend to the council the route currently proposed. He had proposed a very different route: to cross the A4 near Fyfield, through the West Woods, east or west of Oare to Pewsey, and thence following the Pewsey Avon trail to Salisbury. The key point was

that Pewsey has the facilities - including toilets, shops, car parking and accommodation – which the current proposed route lacks. Friends of the Ridgeway had responded that such a change was impossible since it would put their entire scheme back to square one. Cllr Hall stressed that while people could not be stopped from using existing rights of way, no signs could be installed without council consent.

Several pc members spoke strongly in favour of the route proposed by Mr Broadhead. It was better-established with much better facilities, including access to Pewsey by rail and bus. Pewsey was also more likely to benefit economically. Members thanked Cllr Hall for his continued work.

071/12 Canal Quiet Zone: Charles Reiss reported that the Canal and River Trust (formerly British Waterways) had named a date for the signs to be installed at Honeystreet as agreed. Arrangements were in hand for representatives from the pc and from the Barge Inn to be present to check the exact location.

072/12 Robert Pile Trust: SH reported that the education charity currently has a healthy cash balance, and three recipients. Jenni Frost had been concerned at being unable to attend some Trust meetings but it had been agreed that she should continue as the pc representative.

Any other business:

073/12 Clothing Banks: SH reported a request from Devizes Textiles to install clothing banks in the village, with a small amount of money going to either the pc or to charity. After a brief discussion, with no voices in favour, it was agreed not to take up the proposal.

074/12 Date of next Parish Council meeting: SH requested the date of the next meeting be changed from November 15 to November 29. Agreed.

075/12 Barge Inn: Polly Carson, as a member of the Barge Inn Community Project (BICP) committee, declared an interest and left the meeting. Before doing so she asked consent to make a short statement concerning alleged theft by occupants of the pub's campsite, drug dealing on the campsite, excessive noise, and other matters. PC said that the committee had contacted one local resident regarding theft from his property, the fact that he had seen the incident and followed the culprits to the campsite, where they were staying. However, since he had recovered the stolen property and was not contacting the police, there was nothing more the committee could do. Regarding drug-dealing, three people had since been barred. The pub had been very noisy because the windows had been opened. The committee will meet next week to review campsite policy. One option

was to refuse bookings for large groups, blamed for many of the problems. Any other ideas would be welcome.

PC left the meeting. In discussion, the following points were made:

Drugs: the pc was given a first-hand account of drugs offered on the campsite and the events which followed. The drugs offer was immediately reported to the bar manager. The manager asked a BICP committee member, who was in the pub at the time, for permission to take action. He was told to take no action because there was no problem. PC members voiced shock at this attitude. It set “alarm bells ringing all round.” A pc member said he had seen drugs being exchanged on the towpath immediately outside the pub. The real problem was the failure of management to act, despite promises of a “zero tolerance” policy. The bar manager had no power; and there was no independent supervision of the campsite. There was concern that members of the BICP committee were friends of those involved.

Theft: as with drugs, local residents were reluctant to go to the police because they felt intimidated. One had had his truck smashed with a hammer. Others had been verbally abused.

Noise: the Barge was not the only culprit; there had recently been continuous loud drumming through the early hours from a boat, over which the pub has no jurisdiction. However there was also excessive noise from the pub and from the campsite. One option was to install a decibel counter, which Wilts Council would supply. The campsite needed a day-and-night manager who was wholly independent of those staying there, with power to act.

Rubbish and rats: the pub had acknowledged that the bins were in a state, and apologized. A new emptying schedule, more cleaning and additional treatment against rats had been arranged. It was suggested the bins should be enclosed in a lockable cage to stop them being used by others.

Taking all the issues together the Barge was, in the words of one pc member “the complete opposite of a community pub.” Very few people from the parish now used it. It was agreed that Steve Hepworth, as chairman, should write to the BICP about these concerns, with a copy to Ian McIvor, the pub’s owner.

076/12

Speedwatch (continued): SH reported a letter from an Alton Barnes resident, forwarded to him by Caroline Brailey of the Pewsey Area Board, raising concerns about speeding through the villages. SF had contacted him and explained the situation, and the resident has now volunteered to join the Speedwatch scheme. CF reported that preparations were being made to reduce the speed limit over Honeystreet bridge from 40 to 30mph.

There being no other business the meeting ended at 8.41 pm.

pc minutes 13.9.12

* Subject to approval by next pc meeting