

MILTON ABBAS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held on 13th September 2023
in the READING ROOM, MILTON ABBAS, at 7.30pm

PRESENT

Mr I. Baker
Mr S. Gould
Mrs J. Jordan

Mr S. Driver
Mr N. Hodder (Chair)
Mr S. Martin

IN ATTENDANCE Mrs E. Sellen (Clerk) and 4 members of the general public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Mr P. Ford, Mr T. Ives and Mr T. Khandwala.

2. DISPENSATIONS None

3. CO-OPTION

The Councillors had viewed a request to be considered for co-option from Mrs J. Jordan. It was proposed by SD, seconded by IB and unanimously agreed that JJ should be co-opted to the vacancy. JJ joined the Councillors.

4. OPEN FORUM

The following points were raised:

Mr R. Golledge advised that the pavements at Catherine's Well are badly cracked and vegetation is growing through. Mrs F. Robinson advised that there is a significant gully in the verge outside the Reading Room which also requires attention. On behalf of TI, SM advised that there is a lot of vegetation on the pavement past The Old Hospital. The Clerk will advise DC Highways. FR paid tribute to both Mr Chris Fooks aka "Mr Milton Abbas" for his involvement in the village and its history, and Mrs Della Jones (District and County Councillor) who was a strong advocate for Milton Abbas, whatever was happening and particularly prominently involved in the fight to try and save Milton Abbas School. The Clerk had been asked to obtain an update on the Windmill Clump mast, Mr Tiernan Walsh (Agent) has requested an update, and the Clerk will circulate feedback through usual channels (Facebook, Ellie-gram, Website etc).

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th July 2023 had been circulated. It was proposed by SD, seconded by SM, and agreed by those who had attended the previous meeting, that they should be accepted as a true record.

6. MATTERS ARISING

NH remarked on the progress that Wessex Internet are making, it is apparent that they are now installing fibre to properties in the street, suggesting that works at Catherine's Well are largely complete.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

All correspondence had been circulated by email or was available on the table.

The clerk drew attention to the following:

Milton Abbas Sports Club are holding a “Grand Opening” event on 16th September from 12-7pm.

NALC are reviewing the 2019 model financial regulations and the Clerk had circulated details of two online meetings and a survey as part of the process.

Details of the new Plus Bus scheme commencing 14th September have been circulated by Ellie-gram.

NALC are holding a free online session “Democracy In Action” for those interested in learning about the work and role of councillors and the huge difference they could make. (Advertised on Facebook, Ellie-gram to be requested nearer the event).

Dorset Council Housing Strategy online consultation ends 2nd October.

A letter had been received from a resident suggesting that a building is being used for residential purposes without planning consent. A Councillor had visited to investigate, no evidence was found to support the allegation and a reply to the resident was sent, including information on how to report planning enforcement issues through the Dorset Council website.

A resident had asked for details regarding the power cut caused by storm Eunice on 18th February 2022. An email reply has been sent, including Councillor recollections and the suggestion to make further enquiries via Facebook.

A tree surgeon had emailed reports of dead wood and overhanging branches on behalf of a resident neighbour of Jane’s Wood. The Clerk and a second professional have viewed the trees in question. Communication is ongoing.

8. REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCILLOR

Mrs E. Parker added her own tribute to Mrs Della Jones and answered resident questions regarding local issues.

9. REPORTS

HOMEWATCH

Mrs E. Payne emailed the Clerk to confirm Ellie-grams continue to be circulated regarding Dorset “Elerts” road closures, general information from the Parish Council and Dorset Council and the Plus Bus service.

MATCH/JANE’S WOOD None

PLAYPARK

SG advised that he had attended a second non-quorate meeting, but those in attendance had discussed the sinking “Captain Mannering” structure and whether it should be closed off to prevent use. Mr C. Lovell had supplied a quote for £815 to cut down hedges, crown lift beech trees and cherry trees and reinstate soil around the roundabout and skatepark facilities, which the Clerk will accept on the Committee’s behalf. Mr C. Tibbey will be asked to view the skate park installation to facilitate some remedial works highlighted in the play park inspection report. FR suggested the committee might want to approach the

Street Fair Committee to request a grant towards the resolution of the “Captain Mannering” issues.

TRANSPORT

NH advised that the Plus Bus maiden voyage would be Thursday 14th September to Blandford and then following week Wednesday 20th and alternately weekly to Blandford / Dorchester there on. A £2,500 grant from Dorset Council has secured a six month service to establish usage levels, the service will cost residents £7 each (or £5.60 from Dorset Council for those with a bus pass). There will be a joint Parish Council and Dorset Transport meeting on 5th October.

WELCOME PACK None

CSW

FR advised that there are not currently enough volunteers for a Speed Watch to be carried out. NH/FB to circulate an Ellie-gram request for volunteers.

MILLENNIUM GREEN TRUST

RG advised that he is still cutting the grass on a regular basis, but fallen apples are making it difficult. He thanked Mr B. Towers for several hours of strimming and help to cut branches as they were breaking under the weight of the apples. The “Sausage Club” boys have agreed to carry out another intensive session before the winter.

TELEPHONE KIOSK

SD confirmed that restoration work has commenced, the windows have been removed for washing and this will aid priming and glossing. There is still a call for ideas to identify a purpose for future use.

COMMUNICATIONS

NH confirmed it’s been a quiet few months, and only a few planning notices publicised.

FR advised that many residents do not receive Ellie-grams, Facebook messages etc and without the Bulletin, there is a need to identify a means of reaching all residents with news. NH agreed that the Parish Council should think about improved electronic methods of communicating with a wider reach.

COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS

NH confirmed nothing to report and suggested that it could be removed from the agenda.

JUBILEE BENCH None

MILTON ABBAS SPORTS CLUB

The Clerk read an email from the Secretary (Mrs K. Leigh) confirming receipt of funds from MATCH and the Street Fair which has been used to create a hardstanding area for cars and to reroof the Pavilion so that the facilities can now be rented out. They have Public Liability Insurance and a music licence and have been gifted kitchen units, chairs and foldable tables etc. They’re allowing the church to use the Sports Field and Pavilion for their upcoming dog show on Saturday. The committee have put together a pricing structure for renting the field and Pavilion to generate funds for future improvements. Proprietors of “The View” cafe have sympathetically refurbished the redundant shower block and changing rooms in keeping with the Pavilion and the Sports Club are proud to 100% support this new venture.

D-DAY 80

SM advised no progress has been made yet, but he will raise it at the next History Group meeting.

REPORTS FROM OTHER PC OFFICERS None

10. PLANNING

Decisions

P/NMA/2023/04372 Long Close Cottages to Hewish Farm - Non material amendment - change the design of the brick and flint panels to echo adjacent buildings, and omit the flint to the North West elevation to match the main farmhouse to planning permission P/HOU/2021/03719 (Replacement Annexe) – Granted

Applications

P/LBC/2023/05049 Hambro Arms – Repair internal reed ceiling. It was unanimously agreed that this is a repair that needs to be carried out and there were no objections.

11. JANE'S WOOD & SEYMOUR WOODLAND TREE WORKS

NH made reference to previous discussions with MATCH and suggested that it is unrealistic for MATCH to be expected to undertake the financial burden to carry out sufficient works to mitigate risks to neighbours and users of Jane's Wood and therefore the Clerk has sought an initial report from Hinton Forestry who have provided a 5 year program which appears sensible and requires no payment until the end of the first year, so would have no budgetary impact for 2023/2024. The report has been reviewed by members of the Jane's Wood Working Party and their observations have been noted. RG referred to the original arrangement whereby the Parish Council accepted the title deeds for Jane's Wood on the express condition that there would be no financial impact to parishioners (MATCH sought to finance works through sale of lumber) and suggested that the Parish Council should consider selling Jane's Wood if it is no longer financially viable. FR advised that the Clerk should check the deeds as there could be a restrictive covenant. The Councillors accepted that there was a need to manage the woodlands responsibly and it was proposed by NH, seconded by SD and unanimously agreed that the Clerk should seek two further comparable quotes before the November meeting, and in the meantime the Clerk should review the deeds.

12. WEBSITE & EMAIL FEES

The Clerk advised that Hugo Fox are no longer supplying free website facilities to Parish Councils. The Bronze, Silver and Gold package information had been circulated by email. The Clerk advised that the benefits afforded by the silver package were not worth an additional £10/month and having spent several weeks from Nov '22 to Jan '23 populating the current website (unpaid), the Clerk is not prepared to start a new free website. The Ionos email fees are currently £1/month, rising to £3/month and its benefit depends on whether the Councillors are successfully using the new addresses. There is a current budgetary

provision of £500 for website costs for 2023/2024 so the costs are more than covered for the current year. It was proposed by NH, seconded by SG and unanimously agreed that the Parish Council should adopt the Bronze package with Hugo Fox and continue to use the email service at the increased fee. The Clerk will set up a direct debit for the website fees.

At this point Mr James Watson, Headteacher of Milton Abbey School, was introduced by NH. JW advised that he has been working at the School for four years and is disappointed that the School appears not to have a great deal of interaction with the community. As Headteacher (since last week), he hopes to ensure that the School are more involved in the community and vice-versa in the future. He noted that the Milton Abbas has many lovely facilities, including the post office, farm shop, pub, Jane's Wood and the Chapel, which the School are able to make use of and equally the School facilities such as the golf course, astro turf, swimming pool and theatre etc could be beneficially utilised by the community and he welcomes ideas on how this might work, although every idea will have to be reviewed with a mind to safeguard pupils first. JW suggested that if a village newsletter was still of interest, the School could assist with this venture. The Clerk will bcc JW into communications from the Parish Council. NH thanked JW for his offers and suggested that ongoing dialogue could see the start of a proactive future forward.

13. NATIONAL EFFORT TO PROTECT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

NH relayed the content of an email from C Knight detailing how a recent planning inspector's decision allowed a housing development in Staffordshire in direct contravention of an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, which left unchallenged, could set a precedent undermining the weight of NP's in future planning decisions. CK requested other Town and Parish Council's to lobby their MP to bring the matter to the attention of the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, using their letter as a template or as an enclosure, expressing our own concern about the arguments made and how they could affect us locally. NH related this to our own experience with Gleeson and how our NP went in our favour despite not being adopted at that time. As an aside it highlighted the need for the Parish Council to progress the development of land opposite the surgery, as a future "Gleeson type" challenge may not go in our favour. It was proposed by NH, seconded by SM and unanimously agreed to show support by writing to MP Mr Simon Hoare. FR suggested that since over 12 months has elapsed since the Milton Abbas NP was adopted, we could be open to criticism for lack of progress. Councillors agreed to consider whether there was anyone with appropriate expertise within the village to assist in the project.

14. FINANCE

Balances:

Current A/c	£41,862.85
Playpark A/c	£23,658.69

The following cheques were authorised:

Current Account

Mrs E. Sellen Clerk's Salary June 2023 (repl 1396)	1402	£352.97
Mrs E. Sellen Clerk's Salary July 2023	1403	£352.97
Mrs E. Sellen Clerk's Expenses July 2023	1404	£45.09
Mrs E. Sellen Clerk's Salary August 2023	1405	£352.97
Mrs E. Sellen Clerk's Expenses August 2023	1406	£21.69

Playpark Account

Mr C. Lovell April – September 2023	0153	£700.00
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Due to the absence of signatories, the cheques will be signed at a later date.

15. CHAIRMAN'S URGENT BUSINESS None

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Councillors were reminded that the next meeting would take place on 8th November 2023 and, there being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Signed:

(Presiding Chairman)

Date: