

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL AT 7.30PM ON WEDNESDAY 14TH NOVEMBER 2007

Present: Cllr Daniel Smy (Chairman), Cllr Joyce Rhodes, (Vice Chairman), Cllr Andrew Brewer, Cllr Terrie Connor, Cllr Elaine Stenning, Cllr Valerie Bache, Cllr Thelma Smith, Cllr Caroline Round, Cllr David Smith and Cllr Abi Scard

Apologies were received from Cllr Geoffrey Northcote

ITEM 1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PREDETERMINATION There were no Declarations of Interest or predetermination.

ITEM 2. TO CONSIDER AND VOTE ON THE FOLLOWING MOTION PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR TERRI CONNOR AND SECONDED BY CLLR ANDREW BREWER:

“THAT SUB COMMITTEES OF THIS COUNCIL (AMENITIES, PLANNING, FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION) BE ABOLISHED. THE POSITIONS OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF AMENITIES, PLANNING, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION SIMILARLY WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE ABOLISHED.

Cllr Terrie Connor speaking for the motion made the following statement:

“Mr Chairman, colleagues, I stand before you today and propose the motion before us this evening that the sub-committees of Crossways Parish Council should be abolished, such sub-committees being amenities, planning and finance.

It is important that I outline my reasons for proposing such a motion before you this evening.

Planning, Amenities and Finance sub-committees were originally set up to deal with the needs of Crossways, at that time a rapidly growing village. However, the rate at which Crossways is now developing has slowed and while there is a development in progress at the moment, the need to deal with the previous large number of planning applications has substantially declined. Therefore, it is suggested that the need to continue to have a planning sub-committee, as is now, is unnecessary as planning applications may be dealt with as an agenda item at full council meetings.

As a Parish Council we now have the assistance and expertise of individuals, such as Kris Hallett who is prepared to work alongside the Parish Council to guide and assist in raising funds for projects, both large and small. In abolishing the Amenities sub-committee any large or special projects to be dealt with, may be done so with the Chairman calling an additional or informal meeting to discuss a specific issue. I would also add that under Standing Orders Councillors also have the right to ask for a meeting to be called. An example of how this would work is that of the library meeting, where councillors worked constructively as a team to come to a decision on the way forward with the library issue.

It is also proposed that the finance sub-committee be abolished, thus alleviating any concerns which may be held by the public or other members of the Parish Council as to members understanding of financial matters and the running of the Parish's accounts.

In abolishing the sub-committees, the positions of Chairman and Vice Chairman will automatically be dissolved. Furthermore, business may be executed more economically and effectively.

For example, economically, thus cost, in terms of the Clerks time in preparing, printing and postage of sub-committee agendas and minutes. It will also enable the Council to run more effectively without the need for items having been agreed at sub-committee being carried over to full council or ratification, as is the case at this present time.

In summary the need to maintain the sub-committees of Amenities, Planning and Finance within the Parish Council is no longer necessary as the development of Crossways has slowed. Time and costs to the Clerk will also be reduced and as has been demonstrated with the library issue the Parish Council IS able to work as one body effectively without the need for a separate committee.

I therefore propose that the sub-committees of Crossways Parish Council, Amenities, Planning and Finance is abolished”.

2 (a) Cllr Brewer seconded this motion making the following statement:

Chairman,

“In seconding this motion before the Council tonight I would wish to place on record my support for what I consider to be a practical way of streamlining the business of this body.

The sub-committees were originally conceived as a way of spreading the considerable work load that was placed before us. A large number of planning applications and the associated needs for village amenities took up a great deal of our time and energies. Councillors were asked annually to express a preference for which committee they wished to work on. They then met on two evenings between main Council meetings which gives some indication of the work being undertaken. Some considered it unfair to be denied a voice on, say the Finance Committee because they were on planning and the playing field. If something along those lines was being proposed tonight I certainly would not be backing it.

Once the playing field and sports pavilion were running the need for a designated sub committee ended and so this body was abolished. This was carried out efficiently and without fuss with any matters concerning the field being dealt with by one of the other committees or the full council. ‘The wheels on the bus’ did not fall of because the subcommittee went and neither will it this time.

When numbers of Councillors fell due to retirement or resignations all Councillors were designated to be members of the remaining three sub-committees. We had at that time a separate post of Treasurer and his contact with the Council was through the monthly meeting of the Finance sub-committee. The Treasurer did not attend full council sessions. Upon the present Proper Officer’s appointment the role of Treasurer was also amalgamated. My predecessor as Chairman and I as the Vice-Chairman had both agreed that the system of sub-committees was cumbersome and inefficient and we looked to the abolition of them in 2006. Unfortunately Cllr Russell’s illness meant that no action was taken and this is a matter of regret that it has taken a realisation of the practicalities of this measure to prompt for a meeting tonight.

There is no loss of democracy or our rights as Councillors under this simple proposal. What is suggested is to recall powers which have been delegated but which are, in actual fact little more than a discretionary power to spend up to £100 without reference to full Council. All decisions made

at the sub committees have to be carried back to full Council for ratification and approval. The clerk of the Council also has to prepare a separate Agenda and minutes which are adopted and then signed at the next subcommittee. Recently, all Councillors have been supplied with letters where Mrs Wilson is having to constantly chase Chairmen of the Sub-Committees for information and this is an additional cost to the charge payer. It makes sense, brings us into line with our neighbouring Parish Councils and ensures that we all know how all matters will be dealt with through one Chairman and one Proper Officer. Repetition of business, minutes and agenda items will be avoided or that the same item crops up in more than one committee.

No alteration to our Standing Orders is required and our ability to reconvene sub-committees in the future is unimpaired. We have demonstrated that, for the major projects or items of business the calling of an informal meeting or working party is more efficient and much less time-consuming.

Whilst there may be a lengthening of the full Council session it will be on all Councillors to ensure that they are fully briefed before the meeting taking advantage of the information we are supplied or calling in at the Library. The previous Council used to circulate one copy of all papers which was passed between Councillors (and invariably buried on somebody's coffee table). Now with internet connection and copying facilities we are all able to benefit from greater efficiency.

This is not a matter about personalities but one of the practicalities of how we maximise the Proper officer's time and energy working for the good of the charge payer. We must be always vigilant of the amount being spent on administration. This is a practical way of cutting costs and expenses and I urge all Councillors to back this motion.

2 (b) The Chairman opened the meeting for debate. The Chairman asked the Clerk to read a letter sent by Cllr Northcote This letter is transcribed as follows:

Dear Stella

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

I am unable to come to the meeting, as I am helping with my daughter's home removal on the 15th November from 8.00am. This Council is now most unpleasantly equally divided on what are clearly issues of personal disappointments, clashes of personality, and unresolved issues of interest, ambition and predetermination arising from an unproven trivial and contentious incident At a children's game on the Sports Field, which is not going to be closed. **I wish to record My feelings and vote on the proposed motion, to be read out, if required in absentia.**

This is the second disreputable motion placed before this Council. This is a much more serious personal attack on each serving democratically voted officer, by the proposer and seconder. Council business should have nothing to do with character assassination. (The Second Commandment of the Summary of the Law) This second proposal will divide the Council further and make it unworkable. I hope the proposer and seconder will sensibly withdraw the accusation. What on earth is the reason, motivation or distrust behind this?

Finally, the reason that Chairman, Vice Chairman and sub-committees was proposed by this council years ago was to make council business and the current agenda less time consuming, with clear lines of responsibility, research and preparation to delegated chairman, and that somebody is ready to take over unforeseen circumstances. This is the '21st Century Way' that most of the World's Councils and Committees keep pace with progress and what needs to be done. The Council is working well.

2. I would vote to keep the existing structure, with all elected administrative Councillor's Posts.

3. To elect a new Chairman of Finance midterm is a personal slight of character, on an elected Councillor, who has my confidence. I am against the motion.

Councillors are getting on with their work, despite this harsh criticism and pointless manoeuvring. The fact that some members feel they could do better may have merit, and will be decided hopefully at the ballot box at the next election. It is not in question at the moment. We need to address a multitude of real problems for the village and the future of Crossways. For example I have completed the VDS, and it is currently being moderated. It will keep the Council busy for **at least 3 or 4 extra weekly meetings**, from New Year aiming for completion before mid February 2008.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Northcote

2 (c) Cllr Scard asked why sub-committees were being abolished mid-term. Cllr Scard was advised that a motion can be submitted at any time. Cllr Smith said he believed structure of the Council was working, the main Council, the committees and the working parties.

2 (d) Cllr Bache stated that after consulting with former Chairmen of the Parish Council she does feel that it would be unwise to take this retrograde step to remove Chairs of Finance, Planning and Amenities. The co-ordinating of all works; by the Chairman, would become unwieldy and time consuming. Work to be undertaken by the Parish Council should be formulated by Chairs and reported back to the Chairman and therefore full council and the public of Crossways. Cllr Bache continued stating there are 11 members of Crossways Parish Council and if everyone worked constructively and not destructively, to ascertain what need to be done, directed by Chairs, supervised by Finance, Planning and Amenities, Crossways Parishioners must be the winners.

2 (e) Cllr Round asked if other Councils have sub-committees. Cllr Smy replied that none other than Dorchester Town Council.

2 (f) Cllr Scard – awaiting report. To follow when received as Appendix A.

2 (g) Cllr (Mrs) Smith quoted from the Parish Councillors Guide stating that using committees allows different ideas from each Councillor. Committees bring together a smaller number of Councillors. Crossways Parish Council committee meetings are less formal and ideas are exchanged and they give an extra opportunity for public participation. The Council needs to tap into all knowledge, inside and outside the Council.

2 (h) Cllr Smith stated that the motion before us this evening to make a major and controversial change to our council structure at this time, shows no support for, and indeed undermines, the current conciliatory talks the Parish Council is undergoing under the auspices of the West Dorset District Monitoring Officer and initiated by our District Councillors in August this year. Council business should continue uninterrupted and we should proceed normally. Important decisions such as those before us this evening should be postponed until the conclusion of the conciliation process, when we will all have a better understanding of one another and our way forward for the benefit of the community which we serve. Cllr Smith urged all members of the Parish Council to work together to restore faith, confidence and dignity.

2 (j) Cllr Smy asked if there were any more comments. There being none Cllr Smy requested a recorded vote:

Cllr Smy	For
Cllr Rhodes	For
Cllr Smith D	Against
Cllr Smith T	Against
Cllr Bache	Against
Cllr Scard	Against
Cllr Round	For
Cllr Stenning	For
Cllr Connor	For
Cllr Brewer	For

The motion was carried 6 for, 4 against. CARRIED

3. TO ELECT A COUNCILLOR TO THE POST OF ELECTED TREASURER

3 (a) Cllr Smy asked for an amendment stating that Cllr Brewer has suggested the title of Vice Chairman (Finance) instead of Treasurer. Cllr Connor seconded this amendment to the motion.

A vote was taken 6 for, 4 against. The amendment was carried. CARRIED

3 (b) Cllr Smy asked for nominations to this post.

Cllr Scard nominated Cllr (Mrs) Smith, Cllr Bache seconded this nomination.
Cllr Smy nominated Cllr Brewer, Cllr Connor seconded this nomination.

A secret ballot was taken. The vote showed 6 votes for Cllr Brewer, 4 for Cllr (Mrs) Smith
Cllr Smy declared Cllr Brewer Vice Chairman (Finance).

There being no other matters the meeting closed.

Signed Chairman2007