

MINUTES OF THE CROSSWAYS PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL AT 7PM ON THURSDAY 23rd APRIL 2009

Present: Cllr Joyce Rhodes, Chairman Crossways Parish Council and the Clerk

Also present: 23 residents (including 10 Parish Councillors)

1. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS PARISH MEETING** The Minutes of the previous meeting (Thursday April 24th 2008) were accepted and signed.
2. **ANY MATTERS ARISING** There were no matters arising.
3. **ANNUAL REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

Last year , in his Annual Report to the Parish, the then Chairman, Cllr Smy, gave a depressing report on the attitude of some members of the Council and hoped they would sit back and consider why they were there. He went on to say that all elected members should be considering the residents of the village and what they wanted in the way of progress in the modern age. Alas this has not happened, and we are still looking to hear from the majority of residents what they would like to see in Crossways. We are here and very willing to consider all ideas put forward provided they are not too costly in this difficult time. Ideas would be put in writing and sent to the Clerk.

During the past year, we have done our best to keep improving things in the village without undue expenditure. Mr Murgatroyd, our tree specialist, has carefully examined the trees where they were causing problems, and it was agreed that Mrs Wilson write to the various owners of the land where they were situated the offending trees should be trimmed or removed. This has met with some success and where not, we will proceed with the problem.

Some work has been done on the Memorial Park where the shrubs have been pruned and undergrowth sorted out. However, there is still a lot more to be done to make it into a delightful spot to take ones sandwiches and let toddlers play. Hopefully, we shall get some professional advice on the development of the area as it is very much frequented by residents as well as visitors who may have had distant relatives who were stationed here during the war.

During the year, the Sub Committees were dispensed with as they seemed unnecessary at this time. In their place, we have convened small numbers of the Council and any members of the public in Crossways who have a particular interest in the item for consideration. For example, we have representation from young people and nearby residents on the Committee considering the MUGA/skate bowl PROJECT WHICH HAS TAKEN UP A GREAT DEAL OF TIME OF THE Council this year but it is now going forward for planning permission on the favoured site at the north end of the Council Playing Field. I am sure it will be very well used when it is in situ.

Regarding the Playing Field, I am delighted to see that more young people are using the field for Soccer and Volley Ball as well as archery and practice for other games. We have experienced some difficulty with drainage after the heavy rain in the new year and have taken steps to have it examined by professionals.

During the year we have had a new Bus Shelter put up in Dick o' th' Banks Road with seating inside it and it appears to be well used. The one opposite the Post Office is about to be repainted and generally smartened up.

The Clerk and I have attended some useful exhibitions put on by Bardon Aggregates and Barry Crook showing what they intend to do developing their land. None of this land will be released for our use for a long time, but when that arrives, they hope to give us pleasant walks with very good wildlife.

We have had several meetings with Broadway Malyan regarding the use of land around the Village. Mr Wyatt Paul, one of the local land owners who used to live in the village seems to have some of our wishes at heart and recently he has allowed the Council to have a large item of land to the west of Woodsford Nurseries ending at the railway. This will accommodate about 28 members of our Allotment Association and the Vice Chairman and I were pleased to sign an agreement with the land owners which we hope will be ratified by our Council later this evening.

Broadway Malyan representative held a very useful meeting with members of our Council in which we were able to give them a 'wish list' of items which some residents asked for. They are considering this and we MAY get some useful come back, but do look out for possibilities appearing in the future. We might get items like a new

Village Hall, a tennis court, a Cafe, a new Health Centre and other interesting items. However, they all cost a great deal of money and I think residents would have to work for fund raising events.

Unfortunately, our Library had to lose some hours of opening in November. It is now down to 9 hours a week instead of 15 per week. In the course of economy Jill Fox, the very efficient assistant was moved to Dorchester (something our Council never expected to happen when we had to vote for volunteers or keep Mrs Galpin.

Mrs Galpin is doing a wonderful job in running the Library but is rushed off her feet. Also she is no longer allowed the help of volunteers on Tuesday and Saturday. Since the reduction of hours, the Library is used by more people and this is very good as it shows that residents of this Village have wakened up to its excellent provision. The Barnado's Children Centre at Broadmayne visit every Tuesday morning for 'Rhyme and Story Time'. The reading Group comes the second Thursday evening in the month. The Youth Club for over 11 year olds come from 5 to 6.30 on Thursday evenings and Frome Valley School have a Reception Class once a fortnight in term time. As you also know, representative of the Local Police Force are in the Library on Friday afternoons to answer and help with any problems.

During the year, the owner of the 'Hippy Field' went into liquidation so we do not know what will happen to that in the future. Also the vacated Methodist Chapel was considered by the local Scout Group, but, in the end, because of planning problems and the state of the building where expensive renovation were needed this was rejected and it is now available for anyone who wants it I believe.

In recent weeks, the Village has started a Village Market in the Youth Centre on the last Saturday of the month. It has a variety of stalls with useful items to purchase. Producers give up 10% of their 'earnings' which in turn goes to Church Funds and other Village matters. At the first one in February a team of young people washed cars and managed to acquire of £100 towards the Young People's projects.

At this stage I should like to praise the young people of this village for organising events, like the Fun Fair last August which, not only raised a lot of money, but was enjoyed by so many residents. There was also a very enjoyable fete in the school grounds later that month when people got together and had a good time.

I also feel we should compliment all those in the village who organise small clubs and events for people in the Village like the History Group in the winter, embroidery, school breakfast clubs and several others. Events like this all take time and effort on the part of the organisers and on behalf of the members of the Council, I should like to thank them.

In this respect, I should like to thank Andrew Brewer for all his hard work on producing the Bridge. I believe this is his 21st year as Editor and almost all local events are posted in this useful free magazine. I should like to thank all his hardworking assistants who put the magazine together and deliver copies to every house in Crossways and the surrounding area.

We are very fortunate in Crossways to have a very strong Women's Institute, a Scout Group, Hand bell Ringers and together with Owermoigne, a healthy Gardening Society. Also, I must not forget the items in the Village Hall namely pre-school Play Group, run by Mrs Brewer, a badminton Club on Monday evenings, short mat bowls on Tuesdays and Fridays. There is plenty to do in the Village and I should like to thank everyone who gives up time to organise these events.

There is also a number of events in the Youth Centre and I am pleased to hear that it is now much better used.

This is my first year as Chairman of the Parish Council and I was very honoured to be elected when Daniel Smy resigned. I hope I have not let you down with too many faults. I must thank our Clerk Stella Wilson who has been a tower of strength to me and I have enjoyed working with her. She is knowledgeable on the legal matters and with 9 years in the job knows so much of what has gone on before.

I should also like to thank our new Councillors Barry Thomas, Dave Harris and Ron Arnold. All have joined in with the work of the council with help and enthusiasm.

I would also like to thank Vickie Hedges and Charlie Dale from the Pole who always try to attend our meetings despite other commitments. Thank you to Mrs Bunce for her help outside school commitments and to Reverend Jacquie Birdseye. My thanks go out to our District and County Councillors who always try to be present at our meetings and to Kris Hallett who has done so much to get the facilities for our young people off the ground.

In conclusion, I should like to thank all of you, the Councillors and members of the public who give up their time to come and take part in our debates and to see what is going on in our Village.

4. **NOTICES OF MOTION** There were no notices of motion received.

5. **QUESTIONS** The following questions were put to the Chairman.

a. **Question submitted by Mrs Fleur Chitson**

By what exact authority is the Parish Council allowed to require that Questions be submitted in writing by a set time prior to the Annual Meeting?

Surely it is our democratic right as parishioners/residents to insist that the Chair stands to account once a year and fields questions - in a similar format to Parliamentary Prime Minister's Questions. It is understood that neither former Chairs Mr Napper nor Mr Russell required Notice of Questions in this way: it is either part of the constitution or it is not, and I wish to know which is the case - and by what statute it is permitted. Whilst it is acknowledged that without notice, the Chair may not be able to give full figures etc, and thus full answers may not be forthcoming then and there; but a Parish Council Chair is supposed to be sufficiently on the ball to be able to speak to Parishioners in general terms about matters which concern them which they are able to raise at the Annual Meeting.

Thus please quote fully the standing orders, byelaws or other statutory instruments which require this notice of Questions. If no such statute exists, please state the authority by which this is achieved and insisted upon?

Response: The Clerk informed Mrs Chitson that the Parish Meeting is formed under the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12 Part III which requires the Council to hold a Parish Meeting. The Clerk further informed Mrs Chitson that the process of calling a Parish Meeting; the notice giving the Electorate to submit questions is a format which has been used under the Chairmanship of Cllr Napper and Cllr Russell and is a format she inherited from the previous Clerk in 1999.

Mrs Chitson was not satisfied with this answer and requested further detail regarding statutes, legislation etc. The Clerk agreed to follow this up and report.

b. **Question submitted by Mrs Chitson**

The second matter I wish to ask about is regarding Quality Council Status for the Crossways Parish Council. Specifically, I wish to be aware of the actual proposals to develop a portfolio which addresses the requirements for the Crossways Parish Council to become a "Quality Council", setting out what is achieved already, and what needs still to be done, with accountable timescales. Specifically, I wish to question such matters as the requirement for 80% of Councillors to have been elected, and a timescale for achieving this; also verification of the Clerk's qualifications (probably by the DAPTC Human Resources Dept; this may only be a matter of submitting a CV and certificates for inspection). A definitive answer on the above matters would help to make the Parishioners feel that this is an accepted "live" issue which is being addressed to ensure our Parish Council is as high quality as it can be. Should the Council NOT be seeking Quality Status, a definitive answer is required as to WHY this is NOT currently and actively taking place, with full and justifiable reasons why the Council feels it can effectively fail to seek to set itself appropriate targets for improvement within the DAPTC guidance for "achievement" and "success".

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Response Mrs Chitson was advised that matters of the Clerk CV were personnel matters and the Council would be given the opportunity to discuss these matters in camera. It was agreed that the Council would address the whole provision of Quality Councils

in due course. Mrs Chitson was also advised that the Parish Council does fulfil the requirement to have 80% elected Councillors having only one co-opted Councillor. (Parish Council election May 2007 refers)

c. Question submitted by Mrs Hilary Marett

Digital recording of parish council meetings - Even though not a legal requirement, why does the parish council not digitally record its meetings, to help the Parish Clerk in her work, to ensure complete accuracy of records and to demonstrate its commitment to open, transparent democracy. The costs are insignificant compared to the peace of mind it would bring to the community.

Response: This was and is a matter for the full council to decide. On the 25th September 2008 the Council agreed not to purchase the recording equipment at an approximate cost of £250+ . This matter will be placed on the next full council agenda to be reconsidered.

d. Bridge Magazine The Parish Council Vice Chairman is editor of the parish magazine and is village correspondent for the Dorset Echo. This, on occasion, represents a clear conflict of interest. Preferably, without jeopardising the future of the "Bridge", what is the parish council going to do about it?

Response The Parish Council has no mandate to discuss Cllr Brewer's involvement in the Parish Magazine. The Parish Council did not appoint Cllr Brewer to the post of Editor and subsequently has no power to discuss this question. Cllr Brewer's editorship of this Magazine is noted on Cllr Brewer's Register of Interest. Any Councillor may, and is, a member of outside organisations and providing these interests are noted and the appropriate declaration of interest is made where necessary there is no other reason to debate his/their involvement. Should this or any involvement by a Councillor to an outside committee/agency/voluntary work be considered to be outside that Councillors Code of Conduct then that is a matter for the Standards Committee not the Parish Council.

7. ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIRMAN

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting and declared a 10 minute interval before convening the Full Council meeting. The meeting ended at 8.40pm

Signed Chairman 2009