

Stinsford Parish Council

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held on Monday 8 August 2016 at 7.00pm in The Old Library,
Kingston Maurward College**

Present: Mr Richard Wheal (Chairman), Mr George Armstrong, Mr Chris Hext and Dr A Stillman

Also in attendance: Cllr Mrs Jill Haynes (Dorset County Councillor), Miss Kirsty Riglar (Clerk) and 2 members of the public (Mr Hugh Grenville-Jones and Mr Winmill).

102. Apologies for Absence

102.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr Michael Clarke, Mr Will Molland and Cllr Patrick Cooke (West Dorset District Councillor).

103. Declarations of Interest

103.1 There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

104. Public Participation Time

104.1 Mr Winmill informed the Parish Council that he had objected to the planning application to extend the car park serving Thorncombe Woods and Hardy's Birthplace and expressed his concern that Dorset Countryside had undertaken pre-application work, including clearing trees and moving a fence, before the application was determined. He also expressed his concern that recent work was less to do with managing the woodland, particularly the removal of mature trees and holly trees, and more related to increasing visitor numbers to the Visitor Centre and Cottage.

104.2 Cllr Mrs Haynes explained that the woodland was owned by Dorset County Council and this work did not require planning permission. She understood that it had been anticipated that this would have been completed in time for the current visitor season but this had not been achieved. She added that negotiations were ongoing with the National Trust to increase the number of days on which the Cottage was open to visitors in order to spread this out across the week. She explained that the extension of the car park was not to create greater visitor numbers but to better cater for the numbers currently visiting. Investigations for the provision of overflow parking were also ongoing and it was now likely that parking meters would be installed in the car park, possibly in readiness for the 2017 season. She encouraged Mr Winmill to speak to Mr Giles Nicholson, Area Manager – West and North, Dorset Countryside if he required any further information about the activities in the woods.

105. Minutes

105.1 It was **resolved** that the minutes of meeting held on 4 July 2016 be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

106. Local Government Reorganisation

106.1 The Parish Council received a presentation from Cllr Mrs Jill Haynes about the proposed consultation on local government reorganisation within Dorset. She explained that:-

- (i) the nine councils currently operating within Dorset (six borough/district councils, the County Council and the unitary councils of Bournemouth and Poole) were no longer viable as government grant was being withdrawn and greater savings required;

- (ii) Bournemouth, Poole, East Dorset and Christchurch Councils had announced that they wished to form a single unitary authority and this had been the catalyst for reviewing the organisation of local government;
- (iii) the Government had stated that the whole of Dorset, including Bournemouth and Poole, was too big an area to create a single unitary authority;
- (iv) a large consultation exercise would shortly commence on various options for the organisation of local government in Dorset – mainly the creation of two unitary councils of varying sizes; this was being run by specialist consultants and would include events in public places and the targeting of a sample of households across the County;
- (v) part of the proposed change would be move to a system of 'area boards' to provide a mechanism for local decision-making;
- (vi) there would need to be a review of the number of councillors serving any new unitary councils created and there was likely to be significant reduction from the current number; and
- (vii) the formal request for the creation of unitary councils to replace the existing two-tier system in Dorset needed to be submitted by the end of January 2017.

106.2 Cllr Mrs Haynes also explained that the creation of a Combined Authority for Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole was progressing. This was separate to any reorganisation of local government and was a mechanism for the nine councils in Dorset to work together more strategically on economic development and strategic transport infrastructure. It would provide a means of applying greater pressure to secure government funding for these areas.

106.3 The Parish Council noted that there had previously been mention made of parish and town councils being devolved greater powers. Cllr Mrs Haynes explained that devolution had been paused whilst the reorganisation consultation and discussions were progressing. However, the proposed 'area boards' were based on the experience in Wiltshire of running such a system whereby elected members of the unitary council sat on local boards and had an allocated budget to spend in that area. The parish and town councils then lobbied the area board to seek funding in the local community. There were also linkages with planning and opportunities for the involvement of children and young people. This system worked well with the parish and town councils becoming the catalysts for action at the local level.

106.4 The Chairman thanked Cllr Mrs Haynes for her presentation.

107. Superfast Broadband

107.1 The Parish Council considered the email received from the Superfast Dorset Team and BT earlier in the day which set out the further information requested at the public meeting held in July. It was noted that the responses were very technical in nature and no indication had been given as to costings or whether funding might be available through the Superfast Dorset programme.

107.2 It was **resolved** that a response be sent to Superfast Dorset thanking them for forwarding this information and requesting that a representative of the team, together with a representative from BT, attend the meeting of the Parish Council in September to seek clarification as to the technical language used in the responses, as well as to gain an idea of costings and whether funding might be available through the Superfast Dorset project. This would enable the Parish Council to identify whether any of the potential solutions outlined should be progressed with its support.

Action by: Clerk

107.3 Mr Grenville-Jones reported that fibre optic cable was currently being laid between the A35 and Hampton Farm as a private installation.

108. Hardy's Birthplace Visitor Centre

108.1 Further to the issues raised under public participation time, the Parish Council expressed their continuing concerns about the issues relating to the management of visitors to Hardy's Birthplace, the Visitor Centre and Thorncombe Woods. It was noted that there had been an increase in cars driving up the lane to the Cottage as there was a lack of accessibility to people with mobility problems. There also appeared to be an increasing number of National Trust volunteers and staff parking at the Cottage. It was noted that some years previously, the Parish Council had been walked around the local nature reserve and woods by the Head Ranger to discuss the maintenance work planned and that it would be useful to repeat this.

108.2 It was **resolved** to write to the County Council's Coast and Countryside Service Manager in order to:

- (i) request a definitive map of the ancient woodland within Thorncombe Woods and the conditions placed upon the retention and management of this;
- (ii) raise the issue of the increasing number of cars driving to Hardy's Birthplace and the use of the parking there by National Trust staff and volunteers;
- (iii) draw attention to the lack of disabled access to Hardy's Birthplace and request a update on the provision of 'trampers' as set out in the initial travel plan for the Visitor Centre; and
- (iv) request that the Parish Council and interested residents be taken on a walk by the Area Manager – West and North, Dorset Countryside to engender a better understanding of the management activities being undertaken within the Thorncombe Woods local nature reserve.

Action by: Clerk

109. Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Draft Waste Plan

109.1 The Parish Clerk reported that the consultation on updated sites had now ended and the comments received would now be considered. She noted that the Environment Agency, Historic England, Wessex Water and Dorset Wildlife Trust had all commented on the site at Stinsford Hill. She undertook to send the link to the comments on the draft Plan to the members of the Parish Council.

109.2 It was noted that, despite articles in The Pilot and on the Parish Council's website, very few individuals had submitted comments on this site. It was **resolved** that every effort should be made to establish an email group of local residents to enable alerts about such consultations to be sent to them direct.

Action by: Members of the Parish Council encourage local residents to provide their email addresses for a contact group; Clerk to add these to the alert facility on the website.

110. Correspondence

110.1 Mr Stillman reported that the planning application for housing on the former HM prison site in Dorchester, to which the Parish Council had objected, was due to be considered by West Dorset District Council's Planning Committee on Thursday 11 August. The Clerk confirmed that no letter had been received to inform the Parish Council about this. It was **resolved** that the Chairman would attend the meeting and speak on behalf of the Parish Council; should he have to leave before his opportunity to speak, Mr Stillman would represent the Parish Council.

Action by: Clerk to arrange for representative of the Parish Council to speak at the meeting.

110.2 The Clerk reported the receipt of an email from the PA to the new Principal of Kingston Maurward College, Mr Luke Rake, stating that he would like to meet with the Parish

Council. It was **resolved** to invite him to a meeting preceding the scheduled meeting of the Parish Council in October.

Action by: Clerk

- 110.3 Mr Stillman drew attention to the email received from Stephen Mephram, Dorset Highways, in response to the Parish Council's request that the footpath along Stinsford Hill/London Road be turned into a cycle lane. It was considered that the request had been inflated into something much more complicated which the County Council had then been compelled to refuse. It was **resolved** to write to the County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Highways reiterating the Parish Council's desire to have a basic cycle lane – essentially formalising the use by cyclists of this route - to be copied to Sustrans, as this route linked to National Cycle Path 2.

Action by: Clerk

- 110.4 The Clerk reported that confirmation had been received from Electoral Services at West Dorset District Council that no petition for an election had been received and the Parish Council could fill the casual vacancy by co-option. It was **resolved** to advertise the vacancy in The Pilot and invite any expressions of interest.

Action by: Clerk

111. Items for future Agenda

- 111.1 No further items were added to the agenda for the next meeting.

112. Date of next meeting

- 112.1 It was **noted** that the next full meeting would be held on Monday 5 September 2016.

The meeting concluded at 9:00pm.

Chairman..... **Date**.....