

Stinsford Parish Council

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 9 November 2020 at 7.00pm
via Zoom**

Present: Mr George Armstrong (Chairman), Mr Michael Clarke, Ms Liz Crocker, Ms Susan Escott and Mrs Julie Martin

Also in attendance: Mr Mark Chutter (Head of English – Dorset Studio School), Dr Annetta Minard (Principal – Dorset Studio School), Mr Luke Rake (Principal – Kingston Maurward College), Miss Kirsty Riglar (Clerk) and two members of the public (Ms Sally Cooke and Mr Will Molland)

48. Apologies for Absence

48.1 An apology for absence was received from Dorset Councillor David Taylor.

49. Declarations of Interest

49.1 There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary or other interest.

50. Public Participation Time

50.1 No issues were raised under this item.

51. Centre for Rural Arts

51.1 Dr Minard and Mr Chutter from the Dorset Studio School provided the Parish Council with an update on the initiative to establish a Centre for Rural Arts. The School building was now too small for the number of students and it was hoped that funding would be secured from the Department for Education (DfE) to extend the accommodation. Dr Minard explained that the School now covered the Key Stage 3 curriculum which included arts – such as music, drama, photography and drawing - and this would be linked to the rural environment and heritage within which the School was located. It was intended to open the School to the local community to showcase the students' work.

51.2 Mr Chutter added that with the new arts centre for Dorchester at The Maltings not now being progressed, this provided an opportunity to celebrate rural arts. He explained that he was leading on synoptic learning at the Studio School, connecting different topics and subjects and initiatives had already been progressed with Dorchester Town Council to establish a Poppy Trail and on travel and tourism aspects. The School's curriculum retained a focus on the land but also sought to embed this as a creative inspiration.

51.3 Mr Rake added that Kingston Maurward College was also working with the Town Council on development of its heritage and tourism offer, utilising the grounds for such things as drama and sculpture. There was, therefore, a synergy between the two initiatives.

51.4 In response to a question, it was explained that this initiative would not compete with Dorchester Arts as a commercial arts centre but rather be curriculum-led. It was confirmed that the School had engaged with Dorchester Arts' Artistic Director about the initiative and he was supportive.

51.5 In relation to the expansion of the accommodation, Dr Minard explained that a capitals team was assessing what could be possible but this would need to align with the

Estate's plans. Mr Rake added that the school was 'owned' by the DfE who leased the land on a freehold from the Estate. He anticipated that any expansion would be contained within the Estate's masterplan and he confirmed that it would be the local planning authority that would be responsible for granting planning permission, in the usual manner.

- 51.6 The Parish Council thanked Dr Minard and Mr Chutter for their update and looked forward to more information in due course.

52. Kingston Maurward College update

- 52.1 The Principal of the College provided the Parish Council with an update on current matters. His report is attached as the Appendix to these minutes. He drew particular attention to the following:
- (i) an enormous amount of commercial activity had stopped as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and redundancies were being progressed resulting in the loss of 10.5 FTE posts;
 - (ii) the College continued to function and work closely with the Dorset Studio School;
 - (iii) he valued the positive relationship with the Parish Council and was keen to ensure that any development of the Studio School was within the masterplan and was mindful of the historical context of the Estate;
 - (iv) £3.5M funding had been received for the development of a University Centre; and
 - (v) whilst the current year continued to be challenging, new courses were being offered and the College was in a good place reputationally.
- 52.2 The Parish Council welcomed the update, particularly the introduction of degrees to the courses offered by the College which enabled the opportunity for continuity of education on the Estate. Mr Rake agreed that due to the distance between Dorset and most universities, which was particularly challenging for disadvantaged students, this was a step in the right direction and the College was receiving support from the universities of both Exeter and Southampton.

53. Minutes

- 53.1 It was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

54. Finance

- 54.1 The following items of expenditure were **resolved**:
- Print Team (Dorset) Ltd – Printing of Neighbourhood Plan document for consultation and surveys - £112.00
 - Dorset Planning Consultant Ltd – Neighbourhood Plan consultancy support (October 2020) - £807.70

55. Planning Matter

- 55.1 WD/D/20/001957 – Lower Bockhampton Farm, Lower Bockhampton, Dorchester DT2 8PZ – Demolish existing old dairy parlour and build new dwelling

Mr Molland, the applicant, explained that the existing building was currently falling down and it was proposed to rebuild on the same footprint but with new foundations raised to a level to offset the flood risk from the nearby river. He acknowledged that this would not be a site that would be considered for brand new development but the proposed build would preserve the existing range of buildings on the site. The key difference in the appearance of the building would be a slate roof, instead of the current tile.

In response to questions, Mr Molland confirmed that the public right of way through the site would remain unchanged and that he was working with Dorset Council's ecologist on a mitigation strategy for bats on the site.

The Parish Council considered that the proposed development would preserve the range of buildings on the site and it was **resolved** to support this application.

56. Neighbourhood Plan for Stinsford

- 56.1 Ms Cooke, on behalf of the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, reported that the virtual consultation meetings for each settlement within the parish on the draft Plan had commenced with that for Frome Whitfield. To date the reception of the draft Plan had been reasonably positive. She added that she and the Chairman were due to meet with Mr Rake on the following day to discuss the links between the Neighbourhood Plan and the Kingston Maurward Estate masterplan.

57. Lower Bockhampton Play Area – Annual Inspection

- 57.1 The Parish Council considered the annual inspection report. It was noted that this identified low or very low risks but recommended cleaning and ongoing maintenance actions. Consequently, it was **resolved** that:

- (a) the annual inspection report be received; and
- (b) a maintenance plan be developed to respond to the recommendations.

- 57.2 Ms Cooke asked whether consideration could be given to the inclusion of a wildflower area within the play area. The Chairman explained that this was something under consideration for the parish in general and the play area would be included in any plans. However, stinging nettles needed to be kept in check as this had been previously raised through inspections.

58. Road Safety, Traffic Management and Rights of Way

- 58.1 The Chairman reported that he and Ms Cooke had recently met David Ackerley, Senior Ranger – Dorset Countryside, at the bridge near Three Bears Cottage. The cost of rebuilding the path and works to the bridge was estimated at approximately £13,000. Mr Ackerley was now investigating permissions and funding sources for this work. His attention had also been drawn to the fact that near Bockhampton Bridge, there were at least four areas of the River Path which were threatened by the eroded bank. It was hoped that remedial repairs could be made in Spring 2021. As the River Path was frequently used by cyclists and horse riders, it was hoped that surfacing more appropriate to such use would be used. It was noted that the state of the path was particularly bad where Church Lane joined the River Path and that it would be necessary to work closely with Dorset Council to ensure that the most damaged areas were focussed upon.

- 58.2 Ms Cooke reported that she had followed up a lead on possible co-funding for these works but had drawn a blank. She would also raise this with Cllr Taylor but there may be a request for a financial contribution from the Parish Council. She also added that if specific Rights of Way improvements were included in the Neighbourhood Plan, these needed to be raised with Dorset Council's Countryside Project Development Officer.

- 58.3 Councillors expressed their concern about the safety of cyclists using the River Path, particularly in the dark. It was **resolved** to request urgent action be taken on safety grounds, even if it was merely signage to alert users of the bridleway to the dangers.
Action by: Clerk

59. Correspondence

- 59.1 No issues were raised under this item.

60. Items for next/future Agenda

60.1 Wildflower planting proposals

61. Dates of future meetings

61.1 It was noted that future meetings of the Parish Council would be held on:

Monday 12 December 2020 (reserve)

Monday 11 January 2021

The meeting concluded at 8:20pm.

Chairman..... Date.....



Kingston Maurward College
Stinsford Parish Council Update

Introduction

These are indeed interesting times. The challenges of leading a college in a pandemic, both operationally and in light of the effect on financial incomes, is certainly one I would not wish to repeat. The challenge is far from over, and stamina is required to deal with the weekly changes in direction and guidance.

As the Parish will be aware, we have opened for the core business of education again, with some reasonable success. In some cases the student experience may actually have been enhanced, with a more focused college delivery model with a strong ambition to ensure practical skills are delivered here with more theory being done online. There will be aspects of this we may continue to deliver for the future. Students appear happy.

Other activity continues as best we can, but the reality of government interventions preventing effective trade in commercial business such as the animal park and the weddings means this area is completely becalmed.

Finance

This will be an extremely difficult year, with real issues, and currently no indication of when commercial activity might resume in any capacity worth doing. I doubt we will be doing anything much prior to Easter 2021 and our developing plans reflect this. The Animal Park and Gardens have been put to rest for the winter, and we look forward to re-opening at some point in the future in 2021.

Student Recruitment

Student recruitment this September has been extremely strong, with an additional 75 students (at time of writing) on roll who are funded at the 16-18 rate. In the majority of cases, this is reflective of an increase in students of this age group, rather than those with SEND/EHCP who are older but funded at the lower age (but higher value) rate. This is extremely encouraging. Not least in that rolled forward this might amount to approximately £600k additional funding in next year's income. It shows clearly a progress made in attracting

students from schools and our literal and reputational growth for two years in succession against a preceding downward curve is a powerful case for our strategic changes and position.

The reasons for growth are not attributable to a single cause, and our view is that there are a number of factors – improved brand position, better engagement with schools, students desperate to get out of the house, early delivery of A Levels demonstrating to some that academic subjects may not be the most appropriate route. The September enrolment numbers themselves as a proportion of change compared to the preceding year speak for themselves:

- 2017 - 10%
- 2018 - 1%
- 2019 + 5.5%
- 2020 + 11%

Curriculum Development and Student Activity

New offerings include new curriculum areas of Aquaculture, Rural Business, and Heritage Tourism and Land Management. These are all new 'products' which I hope will add to our core offer and enable further growth. These will start in September 2021 and are both aimed at Sixth Form students as well as acting as precursors to much of the focus of the University Centre build with recruitment and delivery therein targeted for September 2022.



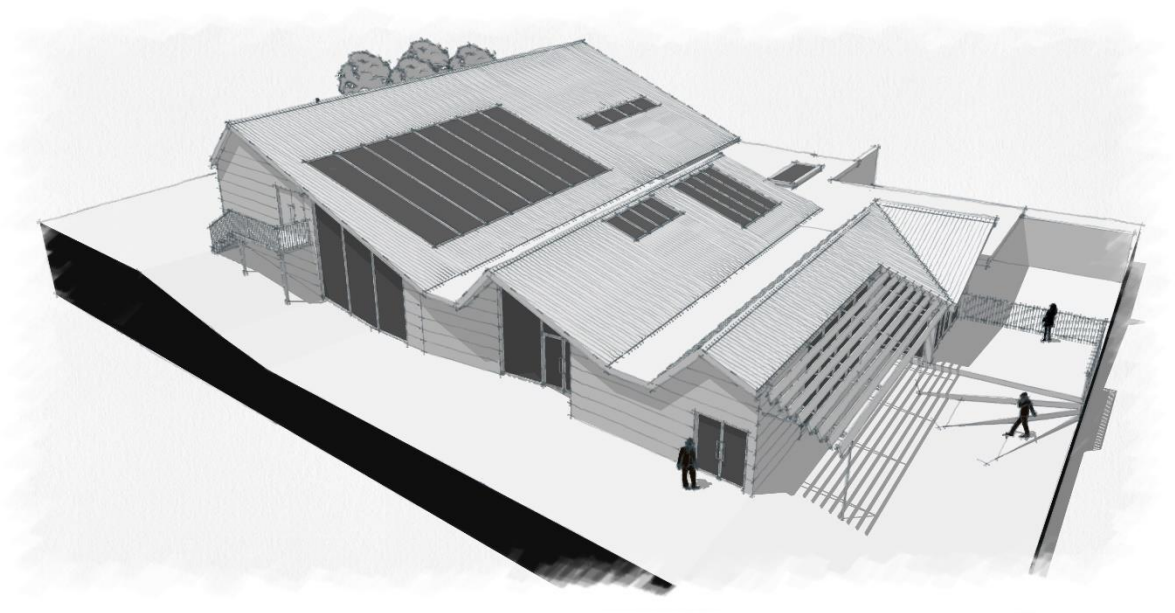
Local Industrial Strategy / LEP Engagement

The Dorset Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) is still with government, and one expects this to remain thus for a while. Work is well underway on the associated investment prospectus and I have been involved in a number of groups looking at the 'big ideas' to which it might be applied, to give Dorset the best chance in the mix of funding bids. Agri-environment, health and 'living well' appear in a number of places as a result and I think KM will be well placed going forward to maximise benefit.

Estate and Capital

Following a rather manic period prior to submission of a Full Business Case prior to July 31st, followed by further rapid updates and queries following assessment in August, we are now in the happy position of having a signed funding agreement for the £3.5M grant for a new University centre and Rural Business Hub, probably on the Stinsford Farm site

This is a transformational level of grant funding, and is strongly supported politically. Pre-application work for planning is already started, and engagement with both consultants and procurement planning in hand. I walked the patch with our planning consultant and a member of the DC team recently, the later confirming the Local Authority is firmly behind the plan. I have also already had a virtual tour with Historic England and initial discussions suggest little in the way of objections to the build, which may well take similar structures to Sticklefords and DSS with regard to style, and improve the entrance to the estate.



The new Bouldering Wall project is now complete and has potential for a phase 2 should CAPEX allow. ICT developments continue as result of contracting with Prodigy coupled with the additional funding from the LEP.



The LEP has recently asked for additional 10% uplifts to both these funding requests, along with some additional scaling up should this be possible.

Alumni

As part of our wider relationship marketing, we have now sketched out plans for a professional alumni foundation with the aim of increasing both bequest and legacy funding streams, but also as a way of interacting with adults who may wish to undertake further training. Of course, the general awareness of the KM family in the county is also enhanced by these ideas.

Dorset Studio School

This is addressed in a lengthy paper elsewhere. This is a crunch year for the school and College so governors should note this is an acute issue and carries reputational risk.

Farm

The farm strategy group met in September after a year's hiatus to look at the state of play. With an impending Brexit and (as I write!) an Agriculture Bill going through the Lords with a number of amendments which may have profound implications on how competitive the UK agriculture market may be, it is too early to tell quite which way to jump. The farm is operating well, relationships with Velcourt continue to be extremely good, and it serves its function well as a 'good' farm for students to learn their trade safely. I have taken back line management of the Farm and Estate personally and this continues to work well, and we continue to develop our environmental focus where we can, including for example some new cropping of Triticale for both forage and Nitrate reduction benefit. We will be reviewing in the early spring what the next steps might be.

Other items of note

In amongst the challenges with operating a college in a pandemic, a major build project, a number of redundancies, restructures and the strategic challenge we continue to look forward as much as we can!

Dorset LNP – I have picked up the Chair of this group in the last month, This aligns well with strategic developments of the College and in particular the focus in Dorset's Local Industrial Strategy in terms of natural capital. My first blog post is here: <https://dorsetlnp.org.uk/blog-oct-2020/>

Weymouth Country Park (Radipole/Lodmoor/Tumbledown) - We have been involved on the fringes of Tumbledown Farm discussions in Weymouth for some time, but the council are now raising their ambitions with a sizeable bid for funding to support a coherent country park and environmental scheme, aligned to both tourism and health benefits.

Dorset 5G There is government funding for a 5G investment which has identified with Wessex Internet the opportunity for a trial on the KM estate, linked to Aquaculture and precision farming.

Low-Carbon/Salix Investigations are ongoing regarding the benefits of a potential ground source heat and/or woodchip project on site. This is potentially fully funded.

Dorchester Heritage Tourism Group – Member of steering group on combined marketing and development of Dorchester 'brand' and enabling post-COVID and out of season tourism recovery. Good links to both council and museums for KM and subsequent Heritage Management courses.

County Farms – Discussions ongoing with Cllr Tony Ferrari regarding possible role for KM in County Farms activity, primarily as additional resource for KM, both commercial and educational.