

## OKEFORD FITZPAINE PARISH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF OKEFORD FITZPAINE HELD ON TUESDAY 12 APRIL 2018

**Present: -** Cllr M Weeks (Chairman)      Cllr R Corben (Vice Chairman)  
                  Cllr B Fox                                      Cllr D Gartside

In attendance: Mrs S Deary (Clerk) and 30 members of the public.

- 1)      **APOLOGIES:** Cllr Banning, S Corben and Rowe.
- 2)      **MATTERS ARISING:** None.
- 4)      **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman gave his annual report as follows:

I was considering conveying the good news followed by bad but have decided to get the more challenging issues of village life over with first.

The Neighbourhood planning team have faced a number of challenges this year. Having been advised by North Dorset District Council that one of the sites selected for development in the first version of our plan was designated for employment and therefore could not be allocated for development (and it was not Brownfield or Countryside either) and effectively without a revision to their local plan our Neighbourhood plan could effectively not progress.

Based on this advice and the significant number objections to the allocation of this site in the first consultation exercise, the team then looked the next highest scoring available site that both fulfilled the previously identified housing need and equally fitted the sustainability criteria that they had set themselves and also added some value to the village amenities as whole.

The resulting second version of the plan proved even more divisive than the first, particularly now amongst those whose properties adjoined or were near to the newly allocated site. And more concerningly very public statements were made by certain members of the community, who really should know better, alleging that members of the planning team, myself and its chairman included were engaged in doubtful or illegal activities with promoters of other sites for our own purposes. Other than saying that these accusations are completely without foundation or merit, I will not dignify them by as yet publicly identifying those responsible or by commenting further.

All this has now been overtaken by the news that NDDC have failed to meet their 5-year housing supply target and have therefore been obliged to suspend portions of their Local Plan. This means that all new development proposals that are put before them now come under the guidance of National Planning Framework which in practice has a 'Presumption to Approve' any application that meets its sustainability and other criteria.

The effect of this policy change is that promoters of all of the three sites from both versions of our Neighbourhood plan, Pleydells Farm, Land on Castle Lane and now the former Faccenda poultry farm have now submitted planning applications, the total of which comfortably exceeds the total number of houses that AECOM housing needs survey figures has identified in our Neighbourhood plan. The Parish Council will have lesser influence on

these applications and has therefore accepted the planning team's recommendation that further work on our plan is suspended until the outcome of these applications is known.

Another challenge that the village faces is antisocial behaviour.

Dog fouling is again on the rise and is a consistent irritation to all residents, dog owners and non-owners alike. Dog ownership comes with responsibilities and the Parish Council will push for fines by NDDC when offenders can be identified. The Council has considered provision of additional dog waste bins but the charges for regular collection by DWP are quite onerous and presumes that regular offenders will actually pick up after their dogs. Responsible owners will take their collection bags home for disposal in any case rather than expecting the community having to bear the cost.

Similarly speeding through the village remains an issue and presents a danger to residents and to children at the school in particular. In addition to the improvement of enforcement of the existing speed limit, the creation of a 20 mph zone in the village centre may go some way to addressing the issue. Representations have been made to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Dorset who advised that, in the absence of actual serious injuries or deaths there is a need to provide evidence of persistent offending for any 20mph zone project to be considered by DCC, Police, and other relevant authorities. The council is currently setting up a SpeedWatch team to gather and communicate this data and more volunteers are welcome. This is not a quick process and any costs for the zone will ultimately probably need to be funded through the annual council tax precept. In the meantime, the Council has asked for increased frequency of camera van visits to act as a deterrent.

The good news is that community spirit is alive and well in Okeford Fitzpaine!

A shining example of this is the recently completed Little Lane (aka Mill Lane) Project, this was the result of a dedicated team of volunteers who wanted to create a safe, all-weather route for pedestrians and cyclists from the village to the North Dorset Trailway. Funding was obtained from the North Dorset LEADER Fund and is now extensively enjoyed by all.

The Village Community Group continues to greatly enrich the life in the village in a number of ways, the fabulous Mud Pie Café on Saturdays, the Christmas concert and Seniors lunch and the Welcome Fair for new residents for example. The Silent Soldier silhouette and the Memorial Bench, funded by the group, provides a poignant reminder of the ultimate sacrifice made by past villagers, made so that we may enjoy our way of life today. The recent unveiling of the bench was attended by many relatives of the fallen and attracted a large crowd to honour their memory.

Looking to the future; the village shop, pub and school, which are cornerstones of our community and have faced challenges in the past, are currently thriving, we should be mindful that the increase in our population through controlled future developments will be needed to sustain them in the future. However, we must also consider and plan for the need to improve and enlarge other facilities provided by the Parish Council to accommodate this growth.

With this in mind the Council has recently resolved to use the Section 106 agreement leisure improvement funds resulting from the Old Dairy development to fund enhanced sport facilities on the Recreation Ground. The Council has also resolved to fund an initial planning application for tennis courts and a Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGA) as a first step in this initiative.

The extensive discussions around the use of the S106 funding prior to a decision being taken raised the question of the long-term suitability of the existing and much-loved Village Hall when considered in the light of the needs of the current and future planned populations increases. Accordingly, a group of volunteers have approached the Council with a view to taking a long-term look at this question in conjunction with current Trustees of the hall. They

will be seeking resident's views in due course. The Parish Council will also be looking to utilise further Section 106 /Community Infrastructure Levy Funds from future housing developments for the improvement of our village facilities.

Similarly, the Church also has a project underway to look at ways of making the building more multipurpose and broaden its appeal to all.

Finally, Dorset is changing, the current nine local authorities will become two unitary authorities in April 2019, one for Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch and the other for the remainder of the rural county. This change will have a number effects on us, not in the least harmonisation of council tax rates, probably an increase in our case, and a greater reliance on more local services being provided by Town and Parish Councils. The Parish Council will be working on these changes as they become clear.

In closing, on your behalf, I would like to offer my thanks to my fellow councillors who are here to listen to your views but also to use their judgement and experience to make the right decisions for all residents and not just following the wishes of the sometimes more vocal few. And more importantly, all our thanks go to the countless volunteers in the community whose work and dedication make this village a good place to live.

#### **5) OPEN SESSION/PUBLIC MATTERS**

The Chairman invited members of the public to ask questions but none were put forward.

The Chairman thanked all present and closed the meeting at 7.45 pm

The Parish Council meeting followed immediately.