

## MILTON ABBAS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL held on  
15<sup>th</sup> May 2024 in the Reading Room, Milton Abbas at 7.00pm

### PRESENT:

Mr I. Baker (Vice Chair)  
Mr P. Ford  
Mr T. Ives  
Mr T. Khandwala  
Mrs D. Wyatt

Mr S. Driver (Chairman)  
Mr N. Hodder (Chair Ret'd)  
Mrs J. Jordan  
Mr S. Martin

### IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs E. Sellen (Clerk) Mrs E. Parker (Dorset Councillor) and 4 members of the general public.

**1. APOLOGIES** Mr S. Gould (Ill health).

### 2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

NH took the chair. It was proposed by SM, seconded by IB and unanimously agreed that SD should be elected Chairman. SD took the chair and thanked NH for his leadership, guidance and support as chair. Due to the review of officer appointments (item 4), SD suggested that it would be prudent to move the co-option of councillors from the ordinary meeting agenda to the Annual Meeting agenda.

### 3. CONSIDERATION OF VACANCIES AND CO-OPTION

Following the election, six councillors had been elected uncontested, leaving three vacant seats. PF, TK and DW had confirmed that they would be willing to be co-opted. Councillors considered that the election process had provided a fair opportunity for any interested party to come forward. It was proposed by TI, seconded by IB and unanimously agreed that all three individuals should be co-opted.

### 4. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by TK, seconded by SM and unanimously agreed that IB should be elected vice chairman.

### 5. APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS

Transport Adviser	Tayab Khandwala
DAPTC Rep	Stuart Driver
Rights of Way Officer	Steve Gould
Tree Warden	Steve Bewers
MATCH /Jane's Wood Rep	Ellie Payne on behalf of Brian Isherwood
Flood Wardens	Steve Gould
Emergency Officer/Contact	
Homewatch	Ellie Payne
Community Speed Watch Co-ordinator	Jill Jordan
Playpark	Steve Gould, Tom Ives, Steve Gorson

Neighbourhood Plan Working Party	To be reconvened when appropriate
Welcome Pack	Tayab Khandwala
Milton Abbas Health & Disability Fund	Tom Ives
Tregonwell Almshouses	Rodger Pressland
Website Liaison	Simon Martin
Emily Faulkner Trustee	Emma Parker
Communications Officer	Stuart Driver
Defibrillator Management	Tayab Khandwala, Simon Martin
Fingerposts	Stuart Driver, Tom Ives
Parish Mobile Comms Lead	Leo Hughes
Parish Broadband Lead	David Cocking
BT Kiosk	Stuart Driver
Electric Vehicle Charge Points	Tayab Khandwala
Village Flower Boxes	Phil Ford, Tom Ives
Jubilee Bench	Jill Jordan, Freddy Robinson
Lloyds Bank Signatories	Stuart Driver, Tom Ives, Tayab Khandwala & Simon Martin

## **6. FUTURE MEETING DATES**

It was unanimously agreed that the council should continue to meet on the second Wednesday of January, March, May, July, September and November.

## **7. CO-OPTION POLICY AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

A draft Co-Option Policy and updated Financial Regulations had been circulated by email. It was proposed by TI, seconded by IB and unanimously agreed that they should be adopted.

## **8. REVIEW OF GOVERNING DOCUMENTS**

Councillors had reviewed the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct, Risk Assessment Document, Privacy Policy, Welcome Pack and other policies. SD noted that the Risk Register is currently reviewed annually and suggested that it should be reviewed more frequently. SD offered to change the format to an Excel spreadsheet and proposed that it should be reviewed as part of every meeting and updated accordingly. It was proposed by SD and unanimously agreed that subject to the changes to the Risk Register, the governing documents are adequate.

## **9. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR**

It was unanimously agreed to continue with Darkin Miller Ltd.

## **10. MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the previous Annual Parish Council meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023 had been approved at the Parish Council meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023. There were no matters arising.

## **11. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

NH presented the Chairman's Report. (See ADDENDA)

## **12. FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Clerk presented the financial report. (See ADDENDA)

## **13. DORSET COUNCILLORS REPORT None**

The meeting closed at 7.25pm.

Signed:

(Presiding Chairman)

Date:

## **ADDENDA:**

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2024**

Firstly, the year witnessed the coronation of King Charles III and the village held events arranged by Michael McAvoy and the Community Fund to which the Parish Council contributed £500 to cover expenses. Our thanks to Michael for his continued support of village events.

The past year has been notable for the introduction of an "on demand" weekly shopping bus service provided Dorset Community Transport (a charity). Called PlusBus, this has been developed across 4 local Parishes (Hilton & Ansty, Cheselbourne, Melcombe Horsey and Milton Abbas) committing to support the service by sharing the shortfall between the marginal operating cost and the fees paid by passengers and Dorset Council for free bus pass users. It alternates each week between Blandford and Dorchester and has proved to be successful with about 70 people having registered and approximately 10 regular users of the service each week. A shortfall in revenue to DCT over a full year of c. £3000 is anticipated based on current usage levels, of which the Milton Abbas contribution will be 25%.

The village has finally seen the introduction of a mobile telephone mast on the BT property opposite the Sports Field serving Vodafone and O2 users. On the same site you will find Wessex Internet equipment providing those who desire it with faster broadband speeds via fibre to the door. The land owned by the PC opposite the surgery has had cable laid in readiness for future property development.

Talking of which, initial discussions have taken place with Symonds & Sampson regarding what our commercial options may be when the land is eventually sold for (primarily) affordable housing in line with the Neighbourhood Plan. I have no doubt your new Council will be developing this project over the months and years to come.

As for the NP, it would be wise to consider reviewing this as there have been recent examples of potential developers obtaining planning permission where a Planning Inspector has overturned a refusal decision by the Local Planning Authority despite the provision of a Neighbourhood Plan being in situ!

It is encouraging to see the work that has been carried out on the Sports Field making it once again a valuable community asset. Their committee has worked hard, and I know there is ongoing development, some of which will be supported by a grant from the Parish Council. I understand the café is also getting good reviews – an excellent venture and long may it continue to be successful.

Unfortunately, the planned public consultation never quite got under way but hopefully a renewed effort will see one emerge in the coming months.

I am conscious that the 80th anniversary of D Day is to be celebrated across the Parish and a big thank you goes to Simon Martin for leading this initiative on behalf of the PC. I am sure it will be a great success.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention the significant increase in precept this year. This has been a very necessary increase due to expense that will be incurred in managing woodland areas owned by the PC. To some extent, these areas have not received the attention they deserved in terms of tree management, in particular. There is now a plan being developed that will inevitably incur significant cost, hence the sudden increase for which I can only apologise. I think there is a lesson to be learned from this exercise and that is that it would be wise to consider small annual incremental increases which is significantly less painful than a 50% uplift year on year!

I cannot finish without mentioning our Parish Clerk.

It was Liz who persuaded me to seek co-option onto the Council in July 2019 when I had always said over the years that I did not need the hassle of being a Parish Councillor. Liz Sellen has been my close adviser, confidante, and chauffeur for the past 2 years. It is somewhat ironic that I agreed to take on the role of Chair at a time when I was preparing to move to Milborne, and I cannot recall one meeting since when I have had to drive here myself! Stu, if you ever get tired of the walk up the hill.....

On a personal note, I now move on to new challenges in Milborne St Andrew (no, I haven't joined the PC) with the knowledge that this year's Councillors now have the experience to move forward and serve the Parish as much as I have enjoyed doing. So, thank you, Liz, and good luck keeping this lot in check!

## **FINANCIAL REPORT 2024**

### Receipts

Our precept for 2023/2024 was £15,700 for the fifth year. Other receipts included the legendary Chilli Fest and Easter and Halloween themed play park fundraising proceeds of £519.44 and a grant from the Street Fair of £1,000 towards the playpark.

### Expenditure

Expenditure of £12,752 shows that the decision to maintain the level of precept was justified.

### Overview

We started the 2024/2025 with adjusted funds on hand £67,114 however we are planning to carry out some maintenance to woodland areas and the play park, so the precept has been increased to £22,736.