

# Minutes of the Askerswell Parish Meeting

held in Askerswell Village Hall 7.30pm 5 May 2022

**Present:** John Mahoney Chair and Acting Clerk  
Frank Hemmings Deputy Chair

**In attendance:** 27 Electors 2 Observers

**Item 01/22** Welcome and safety information

**Item 02/22** Apologies for absence were received from Anne Hobbs, Richard Hobbs, Mike Dyson, Janet Thomasson, Kathy Hince, Liz Guard, Nigel Guard, Harriet Laurie, Maya Pieris, Gill Foot, Graham Foot, Alison Lancashire, Jenny Hemmings, Enid Alcock

**Item 03/22** Minutes of October 2021 meeting  
Added Kathy Hince to apologies for absence.  
Acceptance of minutes proposed by Godfrey Lancashire  
Seconded by Maggie Barrett  
In favour 24 Against 0 Abstention 3

**Item 04/22** Matters arising from October 2021 not covered below  
None

**Item 05/22** Dorset Council topics [report from Dorset Council councillor Anthony Alford]  
AA summarised highlights of progress and plans. The response to the Covid emergency was and continues to be a whole-team effort throughout the Council. The Council was granted £19 million to improve the carbon footprint of its built estate and among other things has installed solar generation on two of its recycling centres and improved insulation and energy efficiency of other buildings. Verge cutting rotas have been changed to improve wild flower growth by removing the clippings and doing only one rather than two cuts a year except for road safety reasons. A consultation on library services has recently concluded and proposals taking those views into account will be available for comment in due course. A Community and Culture Project Fund is available offering up to £5,000 per project, subject to 20% matched funding – details are on the DC website. NHS resources continue to be under extreme pressure and that drives great pressure on social care for which the Council is responsible. Council-owned buildings in South Walks House in Dorchester have been leased to the NHS, freeing space in the County Hospital for additional patient services. The planned visit of the Tour of Britain to West Bay and the coast road on 10 September will bring much benefit to local hospitality businesses although some short-term traffic disruption can be expected. The DC leader has been discussing with central government a new approach to planning and the provision of housing targets which it's hoped will lead to a mechanism that's better aligned to the needs and circumstances of predominantly rural areas such as Dorset.

In discussion, questions were raised about recent changes to parking fees and season ticket costs. AA noted that the previous West Dorset District Council shoppers' permit charge had been unchanged since 2008. The meeting thanked Councillor Alford for his time. He emphasised that he's available to deal with issues and can be contacted by email through the Council website.

**Item 06/22** Correspondence

None

**Item 07/22** Chair's report for 2021/22

The Meeting noted the report previously circulated.

**Item 08/22** Finance report for 2021/22 and approval of statements for external auditors

The meeting noted the finance report previously circulated and the Internal Audit reports. The Accounting Statements for 2021/22, 2021/22 Certificate of Exemption and the Annual Governance Statement, previously circulated were approved.

Proposed by Gillian Fowler      Seconded by Ian Russell

In favour 27    Against 0    Abstention 0

These three documents will be published as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulation 2015 for a period of 14 days and will be displayed on the village noticeboard and the website. The Chair noted that Parish residents have a legal right of access to the Parish's financial records. Requests can be made within 30 days from the meeting, ending on 4 June 2022.

**Item 09/22** Washingpool Fund 2021/22

John Mahoney summarised the situation of the fund which had been reported in the Chair's written report previously circulated. There were no comments.

**Item 10/22** Budget plan for 2022/23

The meeting discussed and accepted the draft budget plan previously circulated with the Chair's written report. It was noted that the decision of how to divide the proposed donation of £1,000 between the hall and the churchyard was customarily made in the October meeting. Also noted that the payments were typically made in the last week of the Parish's financial year (i.e., at the end of March) in order to allow for possible unforeseen financial contingencies that might prevent such payments.

**Item 11/22** Summary of planning applications and highways work

A summary had been circulated with the Chair's report. It was agreed that the system of alerting people to planning applications using Askerswell Post emails and the noticeboard that had been used during the Covid emergency when face-to-face meetings were disallowed had worked well. Planning consultation meetings would in future only be called when the Parish Officers thought a particular application warranted one or when parishioners requested one.

**Item 12/22** Local reports and acknowledgements

**Item 12/22/1** village hall [Jessamy Wilsdon]

Activities in the hall are resuming, but slowly. There is a monthly programme of social events organised until the end of the year although there is only one regular external weekly booking. The hall's finances are secure for now. Jessamy will stand down at the AGM on 8 June after 10 years as a trustee and chair. The meeting thanked and congratulated her for her outstanding work that has secured and enhanced the hall both physically and spiritually as a much-valued community asset.

Item 12/22/2 Good Neighbours' Scheme [Godfrey Lancashire]

The scheme continues to fulfil its quiet and discrete purpose of providing help and support to those who need it – there are typically 5 or 6 such instances a month. GL recognised the coordinators, in particular Liz Guard, for all their work. He asked for others who could offer help, for example by giving lifts, to contact him. Also, he noted that there's a register of drivers with 4x4 vehicles who could offer to help during snow emergencies and asked that anyone who would like to add themselves to that list should please contact him. The Meeting thanked Godfrey and all the other helpers in the scheme for their help and sensitivity.

Item 12/22/3 Washingpool maintenance and nature report [Antony Wilsdon for Howard Atkinson]

Antony summarised Howard's report, previously circulated. The work on the pond seems to be proving effective: it still has water despite the very dry late winter and early spring, so that amphibians should be able to survive to maturity. Now that Howard has moved from the village, volunteers are needed to help clear the pond of weed periodically and to help assess and maintain the nest-boxes on public land around the village – please contact Antony.

Item 12/22/4 flower tubs [Graham Hall]

The tubs in the Square have been planted on the customary rotation. The tubs themselves have deteriorated and will be replaced shortly, planted with a display of red, white and blue in time for the Jubilee. The old tubs will be moved to the village hall where, partly buried to compensate for the rotted lower level, they will enhance the car park approach. There was wide appreciation of the cheering enhancement that the flower displays bring and the Meeting thanked Graham and Mandy Hall for making it so.

Item 12/22/5 website [Mandy Hall]

Monthly website hits have risen from around 200 last year to around 250 this, possibly due to people thinking of viewing one of the several properties that have been for sale in recent months. The site continues to add content and is generally valued as a source of useful local information. The Meeting thanked Mandy Hall and the webmaster for their work.

Item 12/22/6 Parish Lands charities update and confirmation of trustees [Antony Wilsden]

The previously circulated report was noted. The history of the charities was summarised. Ian Russell noted that during his chairmanship of the Trustees the charities' purpose had been widened to include help to the village as a whole rather than just a designation of 'the poor'. The small grants scheme remains open and applications have recently been made through the Good Neighbours' Scheme. Details and a simple application form are on the parish website.

The meeting appointed two new trustees – Graham Hall and Richard Hobbs - to replace vacancies arising from the resignations of Howard Atkinson and John Mahoney.

Proposed by Antony Wilsden      Seconded by John Mahoney

In favour 27    Against 0    Abstention 0

Item 12/22/7 Rights of Way [Antony Wilsdon]

The Meeting thanked Antony for being the Rights of Way Liaison Officer. He has completed his annual review, walking all the rights of way in the village. They are in much better condition. Many stiles and gates have been repaired and replaced by Dorset Council and the footpath between Parson's Lane and Naller's Lane has been strimmed, much to the benefit of the plants there: "Glorious with bluebells now is Parson's Walk in the spring".

**Item 12/22/8** village clean-up day 2022

Recognising that the verges are being tidied as people maintain the lock-down habit of local walks and clean as they go, it was decided not to have a clean-up day this year. It's too late to be useful anyway, once spring growth has begun. It was agreed to discuss in the October meeting how to arrange for a clean-up day in February or March 2023.

**Item 13/22** Suggestion to install a defibrillator in the village [Godfrey Lancashire]

The meeting noted the report previously circulated. It accepted in principle that it wished to have a defibrillator installed in the village, in a timely way, and that it was prepared to allocate an annual budget of around £50 to create a cumulating fund for maintenance and replacement of parts. There was discussion about the best site for the equipment and the working group agreed to review its recommendation in light of the points made. Questions of training and of signage were deferred pending the group's further consideration. The Meeting thanked the working group for its efforts so far. It noted that a capital cost would be needed of approximately £1,000 and that that could be raised by fund-raising, possibly augmented by small sums available from various local sources. It was also suggested that a one-off increase in the precept for one year could be used to raise the money, subject to confirmation (probably via DAPTC) that such expenditure is within the Meeting's power. All will be considered and decided by the Parish Meeting when the working group is ready with a further proposal. The group was invited to request a special Parish Meeting if it is ready to present proposals before the scheduled October meeting.

**Item 14/22** Update on Jubilee tree plans [Frank Hemmings]

Several oak tree saplings are already spoken for, a few remain available (contact FH), all generously raised and cared for by Pat and Howard Atkinson. They have also donated an 8ft oak tree that will be planted on 5 June at the western end of Washingpool. FH is sourcing labels and a commemorative sign that the Meeting will pay for.

**Item 14/22** Election of officers for 2022/23 and appointment of internal auditor

Nominations were received for

Chair: Harry Coutts                      Deputy Chair: Dave Atree                      Clerk: Peter Ballard

Nigel Guard has kindly agreed to act as internal auditor for 2022/23

Proposed by John Mahoney                      Seconded by Gillian Fowler

In favour 27                      Against 0                      Abstention 0

**Item 15/22** Next meeting and agenda items

Agreed: Thursday 20 October 7.30, Village Hall. Non-routine items: clean-up, defibrillator.

**Item 16/22** Any other business

Item 16/22/1 The meeting asked the chair to send its great appreciation for their many village contributions to Pat and Howard Atkinson, recently moved from Askerswell. Their engagement, enthusiasm and energy will be greatly missed.

Item 16/22/2 Gillian Fowler invited the Meeting to thank John Mahoney and Frank Hemmings, now standing down, for their work as parish officers, particularly during the recent difficult period. John and Frank acknowledged those thanks with gratitude and appreciation.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.25

Chairman's signature ..... Date .....