

Toller Porcorum Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 9th May 2017

At Toller Porcorum Village Hall

Present:

Cllr D Ennals (Chair)

Cllr A Carstairs (Vice Chair)

Cllr J Miller

Cllr J Stavenhagen

Cllr C Baker

Cllr D Billen

In attendance:

Mrs K Sheehan (Clerk), 14 members of the public

Speakers: Mr A Cole, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Service, Mr A Martin, Dorset County Council Highways, PCSO Sarah Pilcher.

Welcome and Introduction.

Cllr David Ennals, Chairman of Toller Porcorum Parish Council, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the speakers for the evening. It was noted that Councillor Janet Knowles had sent her apologies as had District Councillor Jill Haynes and that last week's County Council elections had resulted in two new County Councillors, Ros Kayes and Keith Day, who had both also tendered their apologies.

Andrew Martin – Head of Highways, Dorset County Council

Mr Martin gave a presentation focusing on the work of the DCC Highways team, areas of responsibility and budget issues. He noted that:

- * Revenue budgets had significantly decreased since 2012
- * Over 20,000 enquiries were received 16/17
- * Highways department now includes the emergency planning team
- * 'Mixed economy' means that some private sector firms are used by DCC
- * 'Working Together' document was about collating information for Parish and Town Councils and being clear about what Highways will and won't do.
- * Budgets are now so tight that only safety defects are being addressed.

Mr Martin concluded with a summary of key highways issues and how he saw the department moving forward. In response to a question regarding the visibility at the junction at the top of Toller Hill, Mr Martin agreed to look at this with a view to a possible safety audit and report back. Cllr Ennals queried the efficiency of sending a worker to identify potholes and a second worker to fill them in. Mr Martin stated that the inspection regime was a legal necessity. Cllr Stavenhagen highlighted a number of potholes in excess of the 40mm guidelines for filling in response to which Mr Martin stated that not all verges and passing places were owned by the County Council.

Cllr Ennals thanked Mr Martin for his time.

Andy Cole – District Commander, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service

Mr Cole spoke about the newly formed Dorset and Wiltshire service, outlining what this entailed locally as well as the background to the organisation. The service is now the 2nd largest non-metropolitan force in the country. He noted that:

- The fire service works on three strands – rescue, prevention and protection
- The number of calls the service attends are reducing which is partly due to improvements in technology, and improved safety awareness

Toller Porcorum Parish Council

- Key issues in local, rural fire safety were the onset of BBQ season, grass cuttings and safe storage of chemicals
- The service is facing budget cuts which was part of the reasons for the merge with Wiltshire.

Cllr Ennals thanked Mr Cole for his informative talk.

PCSO Sarah Pilcher

PCSO Pilcher was welcomed to the meeting. She stated that there had been some local reorganisation of policing areas. Areas of concern continued to focus on break ins to outbuildings and sheds – particularly with regards to machinery and scrap metal. People were warned to alert police to any suspicious behaviour. Local incidents lately tended to be around ‘beauty spot thefts’, poaching and white vans circulating locally. Cllr Stavenhagen highlighted an issue he had experienced with reporting the theft of a finial recently, eventually needing to call 101 but having to provide a great deal of unrelated personal information. PCSO Pilcher concluded by agreeing to supply more leaflets to the Post Office regarding leaving valuables in cars and reminding all present that she continued to hold monthly drop in meetings in Maiden Newton.

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 11th May 2016

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

None.

Chairman’s Report

“It is our custom as a Parish Council to award small donations from our income, and in this financial year we gave our church £320, Playing Field association £165 and the Village Association £165. village representatives from these 3 groups will provide us with short reports on their activities this year.

The activities of the PC over the past 12 months began with our May AGM. At that meeting I was re-elected as Chairman and Cllr Alex Carstairs was elected Vice Chair. Cllr Baker agreed to continue to represent TPPC at the Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils area meetings. He has attended all 4 this year, and always reports back to the Parish Council items that are relevant to our community such as Highways procedures, affordable housing and Winter gritting. Cllrs Judy Miller and Debbie Billen would serve as Village Hall representatives. Cllr Jeremy Stavenhagen agreed to take on responsibilities for overseeing our roads, reporting faults and liaising with our Community Highways Officer, Blair Turner; and Cllr Alex Carstairs agreed to take on responsibility for overseeing planning applications. Cllr Janet Knowles agreed to stay as our Rights of Way Officer, she sends her apologies as she was unable to attend tonight, but has given me her report to read.

As the Rights of Way representative on Toller Parish Council I try to keep an eye on the footpaths, bridleways and byways in this area. This entails walking and checking stiles, reporting any breakages to the County Council. A broken stile needs reporting to the County Council.

There are 40+ of these Rights of Ways on my list relating to this area. Any member of the public, who comes across a stile that needs repairing is able to report this on line at www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/rightsofway/reportarightsofwayproblem

Toller Porcorum Parish Council

The form uses an interactive map which will allow you to select the exact location of the problem. You will also be able to track progress of your report using a reference number. Alternatively you can report a fault by phoning 01305 224463

There were several people in this village who, when I first became involved with footpaths many years ago, volunteered to help by walking (adopting) some of these paths and reporting any faults etc. These helpers have been and still are very much appreciated, especially those who take their secateurs with them to trim back any trifids!

*If there are any volunteers who are willing to just walk and keep an eye on some of these paths please let me know and I can provide you with a list and map of all the walks within the Toller boundary. There is already a map beside the village notice board. If there is anyone who is **really** interested in Rights of Way who would like to take over this responsibility please let me know, you do not have to be a member of the Parish Council.*

Many thanks to George Sarton and Tara Hansford for all their hard work in getting permission and clearing parts of the trailway towards Powerstock, Bridport and West Bay. Again, we should be grateful to Cllr Janet who has chased up various repairs to stiles and steps on footpaths, and continues to liaise with Jill Exton the Rights of Way Officer. One pathway/bridleway under review at the moment is Badger Lane. Unfortunately, this is not marked on the definitive map, but Jill Exton states it is a Bridleway. DDC are undergoing a consultation about its use, and there is a form which you can complete to help resolve the outcome, so if you have ever used Badger Lane for walking or riding or using it for access for any reason the Parish Council urges you to complete the form – please take a copy with you tonight.

Our parish emergency contacts were to be Mr Paul Comer, and Mr James Billen. We are grateful to these gentlemen for their care and concern over the past year. Paul reports that: *The wardens have therefore given up putting out signs any more. A fresh supply of sandbags was obtained and put in the store behind the village hall.*

During the Winter of 2015/16, Paul's and James' work had not met with a very responsible response from some people driving through or boundaries but, they carried on through last winter but now Paul has decided to stand down, but I am delighted to say that James is prepared to continue. If you meet these two gentlemen, may I encourage you to thank Paul for his work over many years, and words of appreciation to James will always be welcome. It is important that volunteers feel encouraged and valued in our village – and that goes for all those who take on a responsibility for the good of the community.

Following the demise of the Library Service bus, Cllr Colin has been working hard 'behind the scenes' to set up a book loan system with our Sub-postmistress, Evelyn. You may have read in Team News and Toller Times that this new scheme is about to be launched. Through the internet you can set up loans, and on a monthly basis these will either be collected and or returned by Colin or Robin Masters using the Post Office as the base for collecting and returning. You do need a Library card, and if you have no internet at home, a lap top has been donated and line set up for use in the Post Office. Our gratitude to Evelyn, Robin and Colin should be rightly expressed for their desire to maintain a library service to our village. Planning: Cllr Alex has continued to work extremely effectively as our Planning Co-ordinator. Planning issues can be detailed, and sometimes controversial, so as a Parish Council we are grateful to Alex to lead us through the various applications. Planning documents are sent by email to the Clerk, who forwards them onto all councillors. Cllr Alex collates feedback. If

Toller Porcorum Parish Council

there are contentious issues, he requests an extension to the deadline so that issues can be resolved at the next Parish Council meeting. This year we have commented on 4 applications, if you wish to see the applications these are easily accessed through the dorsetforyou.com website planning section where you do a localised search by entering your postcode. Alec would like me to reiterate that any member of the public can either write a letter or comment on line, both of which will appear on the website against any applications commented on.

Highways is always a regular agenda item! Cllr Jeremy has worked tirelessly to get the quality of our local roads improved. The patching of our roads, pot hole filling, verging and last year the top dressing of local roads are largely down to his persistent efforts.

Unfortunately, the top dressing did not resolve many issues in that it accentuated peaks and troughs, some drains still lie above the road surface as can be clearly seen and felt to all road users especially along the High Street. Cllr Jeremy followed up these issues and basically the road was not prepared before the top dressing was applied, but due to budget and time constraints, the work would not be put right. Cllr Jeremy likes to keep on top of things, he regularly posts road closure notices in the PO, reports road defects, and in preparation for tonight made contact with Mr Martin asking him to comment on such things as the state of the High Street, Barrowlands Road and pull ins.

You have heard mention tonight of 'Working Together' a Highways document detailing 'Core Functions' that we can expect to be carried out such as resurfacing (as required!), emptying water gullies, cutting back verges etc. But should the village want non-essential functions such as weed killing, sign cleaning, tree pruning, rural verge cutting, sign replacement etc then it very much looks like following consultations with the Community Highways Officer we have 3 options in order to proceed: use of volunteers, option 2 the Parish Council employs a contractor or we fund work carried out by Dorset Highways. If or more likely when used, Options 2 and 3 will mean the Parish Council having to pay for such works and to this end we have reserved £500 for the 2017/18 budget.

Cllr Jeremy has undertaken to repair our finger post signs – one of those 'non-essential functions' by the way! He has been liaising with a mobile sand-blasting company based in Chard, and has looked into the cost of lettering and paints. Currently, the aim is to replace the one at Kingcombe crossroads, and repair the one opposite Kingcombe Road, and possible the one at the entrance to Frogmore Lane.

If you have been reading our published minutes you will have noted that there has been what has become a long running issue of access for large farm vehicles round the bend in Frogmore Lane, mainly due to the beech hedges aligning 2 properties have encroached onto the road surface, narrowing the carriageway. The Parish Council has arranged 2 site meetings to help resolve the issue – one attended by Cllr Jeremy, and one attended by myself. Residents involved have attended at least one Parish Council meeting and or a site meeting. As I stated in the January minutes, 'The Parish Council approach to this matter was to find a workable compromise that all parties could live with, and that the Council would always guard against taking sides in any neighbourhood dispute'. Unfortunately, on this issue no workable compromise could be reached, and as a result the only 2 options that remain are either to replant the hedge on the inside of the boundary, or it will have to be settled through legal means. The Parish Council can do more on this issue.

In 2015, a group of ladies, 2 of which were Councillors thought it would be a good idea to start the Toller Times and this has now become a regular publication 10 times a year, the Parish Council decided to fund its print run and we hope that residents find it a helpful

Toller Porcorum Parish Council

community resource. Another community resource is the TP Website and again, our appreciation is expressed to former councillor Peter Davies for running the website www.tollerporcorum.org And you will be pleased to know that you can catch up on all the PC minutes (and even the Chairman's reports!). If any village group is holding a special event it is always worth contacting Peter who will willingly advertise it on the Noticeboard page, which may I add is currently advertising our famous plant sale for May 13th!

In January the Playing Fields Association held an open meeting with a view to decide on how it is to be run in the future. At that meeting, it was decided to approach the Parish Council with a view to the Parish Council adopting the responsibility for the management of the field, while any fundraising for enhancing its resources would remain with interested volunteers. The Parish Council has agreed in principle only to formally adopt the playing field once the running costs and procedures for the adoption have been ascertained. Cllr Debbie who is the PFA Chairman has spent much time liaising with the Charities Commission and Fields in Trust to resolve how the adoption can proceed: we know now there are two ways forward:

Option one would require a valuation of the land to be carried out by a qualified surveyor who would have to offer a recommendation as to rent charges. The granting of a new lease would make the Parish Council accountable to Fields in Trust as landlord and the fact that we own the land would ensure that it remains protected. Option two would see the Parish Council assume the role of sole trustee holding title to the land as non-beneficiary owner with responsibility for the management and maintenance of the site. A Deed of Dedication with Fields in Trust would retain the ongoing protection of the land for recreational purposes.

We are yet to make a final decision on this matter, and we will resolve the matter in future Parish Council meetings. Additionally, I would like to add that the grant we gave to the PFA this year was to cover insurance costs, but in our November meeting, we resolved to include in our 2017/18 budget £800 for the cost of mowing the field.

This time last year I highlighted the Plus Bus Service to Dorchester on Wednesdays. The cost remains at £5 return, but must be booked by 2.30pm on the Tuesday (01258 287980). This is proving to be popular, and we encourage its use or we might lose it.

Before finishing, I would like to thank all the Parish Councillors who make for lively but friendly debate at meetings. They give freely of their time for the good of our community and to our hard-working Clerk, Katharine Sheehan, who keeps scrupulous records and always seems to have any bite of required information to hand!

Thank you to everyone for coming tonight, and should anyone have any concerns or issues through the forthcoming year please don't hesitate to approach one of us or attend one of our meetings which are, of course, open to members of the public and you can share your concerns or ideas during the public forum sections."

Financial Report from the Clerk

A financial report from the Clerk had been previously circulated. No questions were asked.

Report of the Recreation Field Committee – Cllr D Billen

Cllr Billen reported as Chair of the Recreation Field Committee, stating that:

- The field has been a great community asset for fetes, celebrations and theatre performances

Toller Porcorum Parish Council

- It is managed by the Rec Field Committee but protected in perpetuity by Fields in Trust
- Unfortunately, only one trustee remains and a minimum of 6 are required by the Charity Commission
- Finding a way forward for the playing field and its future management are being explored by the Committee and the Parish Council

Report of the Parochial Church Council – Cllr J Miller

Cllr Miller reported that:

- Numbers in the congregation are slowly diminishing
- It is proving difficult to raise the money required to pay the diocesan share (which funds the clergy)
- Support at PCC fundraising events is therefore invaluable
- The PCC appreciates the grant from the Parish Council which goes towards churchyard maintenance

Report of the Village Association – Cllr C Baker

Cllr Baker reported that:

- The annual grant from the Parish Council had been used to help meet insurance costs
- The changes to the library service had largely been addressed in the Chairman's report but joining forms were now available in the Post Office

Report from West Dorset District Council – Cllr Jill Haynes

Cllr Haynes had tendered her apologies but sent the following written report for the minutes:

This has not been an easy year for the Tri Council Partnership. One of the main concerns has been the Local Plan. This is a joint plan with Weymouth and Portland and West Dorset the council struggled to find sufficient land to provide the required housing allocation. Areas were suggested and then rejected during the local consultation process. Therefore, when the plan went to the planning inspector for approval concern was raised by him about an appropriate amount of housing land available in the first five years of the plan. His view was that there was insufficient land available in the first five years and this led to a plethora of applications for development outside the development boundaries of communities. Some of these were successful and some refused by the Development Control Committee. Those refused nearly all went on to appeal and again some were upheld and some refused at this stage.

The District Council has reviewed again the land allocation as part of a new, revised Local Plan submission. The Inspector in particular noted that insufficient land had been allocated in the towns of Dorchester and Sherborne. In fact, sufficient land was proposed in the original plan but local people voted not to have it. There are now two large areas of development land proposed of both of these communities and they are out to public consultation at the moment. The area to the east of Dorchester proposes some 8000 houses in the next 20 years.

There has been continued pressure on the budget due to continued reductions to Central Government funding. The situation is not sustainable and across shire Dorset there is a two-

Toller Porcorum Parish Council

tier system, the councils of Dorset have been looking at moving to potential Unitary, or single tier local government. This to me makes perfect sense, most people do not understand which services the District or the County council provide. There will be some savings to be made by joining up services within the councils, for example several legal departments. However, the more important area is that services like housing needs to be linked to social care for example and people need to have a greater say in what happens in their local community.

The councils in Dorset including Bournemouth and Poole have been looking at potentially merging into two unitaries, Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch in one and the rest of Dorset Councils in the other. This was then voted upon by the various councils and six voted for change and three against. The three who were against the change were all District Councils. A bid has now gone to the Secretary of State and we had hoped for a decision by April this year, however with both the County Council elections and now a General election the response is on hold until the summer. If approved the change to the new councils could happen in the financial year 2019/20.

Cllr Ennals noted that he would look forward to meeting the two new County Councillors representing Toller Porcorum at a future meeting of the Parish Council.

Democratic Forum

No issues were raised in the Democratic Forum and the Assembly duly closed at 8.50pm, with Cllr Ennals thanking all those present for attending.