

**Toller Porcorum Parish Assembly**  
**Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2024**  
**At Toller Porcorum Village Hall**  
**6.45pm for 7pm**

*Refreshments were served at the meeting.*

**Present:**

Cllr N Farmer (Chair)

Cllr C Wardle

Cllr P Crabbe (Vice Chair)

Cllr H Jones

Cllr J Miller

Cllr J Stavenhagen

Cllr D Ennals

Mrs C Smith (Clerk elect)

18 members of the public

Apologies: Cllr Anthony Alford (Dorset Council)

**1. Welcome by Chair of the Parish Council**

Chairman welcomed all Councillors, members of public and the speaker for the evening Claire Jennings

**2. Speaker: Claire Jennings – Dorset Community Resilience Liaison Officer**

Claire spoke about ways individual residents, families and communities coming together could ensure that their homes, properties and businesses were better protected in the event of unexpected emergencies. These might include, but not exclusively flooding, wildfires, gas leaks, roads blocked by ice and snow and unexpected prolonged loss of power.

Claire set out ways which communities could be better prepared for the unexpected not just in the winter months but the summer.

**Action: Emergency Planning officer in conjunction with Claire and the Clerk will review the content and publication of the Council's Emergency Plan.**

**3. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

Proposed Chris Wardle

Seconded Helen Jones

All Councillors in favour

**4. Matters Arising- none.**

**5. Chairman's Report for 2023/24**

The Chairman thanked Cllr Ennals and Cllr Stavenhagen for their years of service to the community as they would not be standing at the Parish Elections to be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024.

The Chairman introduced all candidates who would be standing in the May elections advising residents that there were three elections. Police and Crime Commissioner (1 vote), Dorset Council election for the Eggardon Ward (1 vote) and Parish elections (vote for up to 7 candidates). The Chairman reminded residents of the need to bring photo ID when voting.

**Administration**

The Chairman introduced the new Clerk elected Mrs Claire Smith, who would be taking up her new role shortly.

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## Community Support

The Council had in the last year continued to support the County Cars scheme, Toller Recreation Area Association, The PCC in regard to the maintenance of the church grounds, the Post Office and celebrations to mark the King's coronation. Cllrs Jones and Farmer continue to volunteer with the Dorset Wildlife Trust Beaver project.

## Community Meetings

The Parish Council had had a site meeting and presentation from officers from the National Highways Agencies and Dorset Council about the future of the old Powerstock Railway bridge. Whilst there were sound cases to both keep and demolish the bridge the majority of Cllrs felt the bridge should be demolished and that Dorset Council carry out road improvements to reduce the level of unacceptable flooding in this part of Barrowlands Lane. The final decision lies with the National Highways Agency.

Cllrs had received a presentation from an Officer from Wessex Water about their plans to carry out improvement works to the Water Treatment Works this summer. The works are required to reduce the number of semi treated discharges directly into the River Hook. There had been over 70 such discharges in 2024 compared to over 40 in 2022.

Cllr Wardle and Farmer had had various meetings with officers from the Environment Agency and Dorset Council to try and address excess flooding on to Toller Lane via Watery Lane. Whilst neither agency was prepared or able to take direct action they had offered advice to the Council as to works that might reduce frequency and the levels of flooding. The Council would make contact with the local Land Agent to see if any works could be progressed.

Cllr Ennals had continued to represent the Council at meetings of the Ammonite Patient Participation Group.

Cllr Farmer and Stavenhagen has met several times with Dorset Council highway offers to request a range of highway works be undertaken.

Cllr Stavenhagen in his closing address apologised for his failure (no apologies necessary) to get the High Street re-profiled but encouraged all residents to use the Dorset Council on-line highway reporting service to report every pothole, blocked drain or other highway hazard.

Cllr Wardle as the Council's Rights of Way Officer gave an update on the continued closure of Badger Lane bridleway. The High Court case was still some years away from being considered. The Chairman thanked the resident present who every year formally walks the lane and evidenced that walk.

## Projects

The Council had completed the legal transfer of the Recreation Ground into its ownership having been asked by the Recreation Association to do. The Council had set up a Working Group to oversee the management of the recreation ground.

Phase three of the 'stiles to gates' project had been completed. There are now a total of eleven gates around the Parish which provide easier access to the countryside.

The Council continues to support the work of George Sartin and his team to improve and complete the railway east to Maiden Newton.

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Two additional sandbag stores had been installed. One in front of the Village Hall to support the existing store located at the side of the Village Hall and one at the side of the Post Office.

## Financial Report

For the fiscal year 2023-24 income of £9,361.69 (£6,750 in precept) had been received and expenditure of £10,011.19 incurred. Most of the overspend related to unplanned legal costs associated with the transfer of the recreation ground.

End of Year balances were £13,032 of which £11,142 was in an interest generating account.

The Council's Asset Register now had assets recorded at approximately £32,000, excluding the land value of the recreation ground.

## Report from Recreation Association

The past Chairman of the Association reported that as no new volunteers had come forward at the 2023 AGM to take on the management of the recreation ground the Charity had asked the Parish Council to do so. With this having been agreed the Charity had now been closed and the balance of funds (£1,676.64p) transferred to the Parish Council. The bank account would be closed in due course.

The past Chairman advised the meeting that a new line of trees had been planted by Magna Housing Association as compensation for felling a boundary tree not in their ownership.

## Report from Parochial Church Council (PCC)

Cllr Ennals give a report on the work of the PCC in the past year. Whilst attendance at services remain low support by the village residents continues in their support of various fund-raising events like the Big Breakfast, Harvest Supper, Christmas Lunch and Summer Cream Tea.

A number of residents had come forward to form a new Bell Ringing Group and were going from strength to strength.

Building works to the Tower were now complete and the structure is now safe. Works estimated at £120,000 to repair the roof were at this time beyond the financial means of the PCC.

Financially despite all efforts to fund raise the Church's finances are in a precarious state. The PCC is required to pay the Salisbury Diocese £465 per month towards staff costs and has currently only £7,000 in balances. If income cannot be markedly increased the Church could be forced to close within 15 months.

## Democratic Forum – Questions from Residents

A resident asked if the taking over of the recreation ground would lead to a raise in the precept. The Chairman explained that he expected estimated revenue costs for this year would not exceed the level of previous grant given to the Recreation Charity. If the Council incurred major capital expenditure monies would need to be raised via the Public Loans Board and this expenditure might lead to an increase in the precept.

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The same resident asked whether a flood depth gauge could be installed in Toller Lane, where there had been significant flooding over the winter. The Chairman explained that whilst he was happy to take this back to the Council, Dorset Council had already been approached on this subject and had declined the Council's request to install a gauge. Street furniture being their responsibility. The general rule of thumb for flooding in Toller Lane was if you can see the curb proceed with care. If you can't find another way into the village.

Another resident asked if Dorset Council could be approached to install steps on a steep bank on a public right of way just off Kingcombe near Northover Farm. The Chairman said he would approach Dorset Council Rights of Way.

Meeting Closed at 8.55pm.