

## **ENVIRONMENT AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE**

### **Lytchett Matravers Parish Council**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011 in the Village Hall at 7:30 pm**

#### **PRESENT:**

Cllr M Colvey, Cllr J Dyball, Cllr D Gillard, Cllr M Gracey, Cllr K Norris, Cllr J Taylor, Cllr E Wilson, and Mr T Watton (Parish Clerk).

County Cllr F Drane and 4 members of the public were also present.

1. **APOLOGIES:** Cllrs R Miller and M Munford. In Cllr Miller's absence Cllr Wilson chaired the meeting as committee Vice Chairman.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest to report.

Before proceeding with the meeting the Chairman suspended standing orders and asked members of the public if they had any questions to ask or comments to make. Four residents representing objectors to the Foxhills play area were present and a spokesperson for them raised a number of points of concern. The points expressed by the spokesperson, with related responses from council members, were as follows:

1. They contended that some form of agreement had been entered into at a consultation meeting held in the village hall between council members and a group representing the objectors on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2010. This was felt by the council members to be an inaccurate interpretation of what took place. The outcomes of the meeting concerned were reported in minute 23 of the full council meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> of May. At the conclusion of that consultation meeting the objectors rejected any form of compromise, such as a smaller play area or it being restricted to a lower age limit. In the light of this the council agreed at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> May to carry out a survey of views of Foxhills residents with the play area as originally planned.
2. The objectors questioned the logic of the decision to go ahead with the project, based on the outcome of the survey (35% for, 47% against, 19% neutral). It would seem that they viewed this process as a "vote" rather than as one of a number of inputs on which the council's wider decision was actually based.
3. The objectors felt that they had not been informed of the council decision to go ahead. The council chairman pointed out that he had forwarded an e-mail, with the council's decision, on 22<sup>nd</sup> June to an address the objectors had specially set up (Frapa – Foxhills Residents against play area) for this purpose. It seemed that they were not familiar with "Frapa" or the email address – which may suggest some internal communication problems amongst the group. However, it was pointed out by councillors that all decisions had been made in open public meetings, with properly advertised agendas, and that clear minutes had been made available. It was also pointed out that no one objecting to the play area had come along to a subsequent council meeting, despite the inclusion of Foxhills Play Area items on the published agendas.
4. They felt that the size of the play area which is going ahead, and the apparent target age for the equipment users, are different to what they understood to have been indicated by the council - or which they expected to see. They explained that what they had expected was that it would be more in keeping with the original Morrish plan. However, both the size of the play area, and equipment to be installed, were detailed in the report attached to the minutes of the extraordinary council meeting

held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2010. Consequently it was noted that the information about the size of the play area and the type of equipment to be installed has been in the public domain for nearly six months.

5. They felt that the council should have proactively contacted them regularly to tell them of the decisions being made. Councillors remarked that this seemed to be a somewhat unreasonable argument given the points made in point 3 above.

6. Regarding the specifics of the play area and equipment itself, some concern was expressed about platform heights of equipment which they feared might provide opportunities for children to stand on the equipment and overlook an adjacent residents' gardens. Reference was made to a conversation on 10<sup>th</sup> January with the installation contractor from which it had been understood that the finished platform height of the "helter skelter" slide would be around 14 feet. Councillors and the Parish Clerk thought this to be incorrect as the specification of the ordered equipment says the platform height for this is just over 9 feet. **Action: Parish Clerk to check and verify this.**

7. Related to point 5 was a concern from the same resident about this overlooking problem. It was explained that at the pre-start site meeting the supplier's Project Manager had, at the council's request, checked with an expert the relevant legislation relating to minimum distances equipment may be placed from property boundaries. The positioning of this play area exceeds that minimum. However, it was agreed that this point should be further examined.

8. The objectors felt that the colours of the play equipment are too bright. This matter was explicitly considered by the council prior to orders being placed, and it had been felt that this was something best left to the experts to recommend. The expert view is that children find bright colours attractive – thereby helping to maximise the use of the play area – hence the choices made.

9. Finally the objectors also had an underlying concern about the installation of the play equipment making the area more attractive to youths as a place to congregate. They specifically pointed out that such equipment could be sat on or hid behind. Responses from councillors at the meeting were that this was speculative – the argument being that it is no more so than several other locations around the village. Councillors also pointed out that the equipment is designed for children of 12 and under, and that the police had been made aware of this play area project and have indicated that it will be included in their patrols.

In conclusion, the objectors explained that they were seeking for the installation to be halted whilst their concerns were addressed. It was pointed out that the details of the project had been formally agreed through a transparent series of publicly held council meetings some months ago, that orders had been placed and money had been spent; therefore the project would continue. It was also pointed out that the Environment and Amenities Committee, like all Parish Council Committees, undertakes discussion and makes recommendations only; the Full Council meeting being the decision-making forum. The protestors were reminded that County Cllr Drane had provided them with the advice that if they feel that the council has acted improperly in some way over this project then they have recourse to the Local Government Ombudsman on this point.

At this point the four members of the public handed over a number of letters from residents, thanked the council members, and left the meeting.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2010**

The minutes of the meeting on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### **4. MATTERS ARISING AND ACTION POINT UPDATE**

The following comments on matters from the minutes of the last Environment & Highways Committee meeting were provided:

**Minute 9, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2010 bullet 2 Path between Foxhills open space and Deans Drove:** It was noted that Cllr Munford had reported to the January Planning Cttee meeting that: (i) that a survey of the site and the connecting path route will take place on 19<sup>th</sup> January involving Tony Bird, Mike Goater and Helen Lilley, and (ii) that Mr Bird's view is that the 6 month deadline relates to the timescale during which the legal work must be completed. He indicated that he will check this with John Hart (Legal Services, PDC).

**Minute 9, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2010 bullet 6 Switch back to BT for parish office phone and broadband services:** This matter has now satisfactorily been resolved with OPAL (broadband suppliers).

**Minute 8, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2010. Field and hedgerow ownership – Wareham Rd: school to Halls corner.** The Parish Clerk has now written to Mr Evans line manager. No response has yet been received and the matter has been referred to County Cllr Drane.

**Minute 6, 10<sup>th</sup> May – MUGA: meeting with Sports Club to discuss handover.** Meetings to discuss the draft partnership agreement are still to be set up.

**Minute 7, 10<sup>th</sup> May - installation of plaque for twinning tree.** The plaque is still with the Parish Clerk to arrange for it to be installed. **CARRIED OVER**

**Minute 7, 5<sup>th</sup> August – Allotments security:** the matter of obtaining 3 estimates for increasing the height of the gate and closing the Dyetts field entrance was put in abeyance during August whilst the council's budgetary situation was examined. The matter still has to be attended to, but is not considered a high priority due to the minimal impact it is believed to have on site security. **CARRIED OVER**

**Minute 7, 5<sup>th</sup> August – Hedges and ditches.** Mr Warr has trimmed the High Street car park hedge.

**Minute 7, 5<sup>th</sup> August – Foxhills Open Space, overhanging trees.** The one large tree which requires some attention where it hangs low over the footpath has been reported to the regular maintenance contractor for attention but has not yet been attended to.

**Minute 6, 1<sup>st</sup> November – Allotments.** Letters are still to be sent to the holders of the three inactive plots.

**Minute 6, 1<sup>st</sup> November – War Memorial.** The Parish Clerk confirmed that the two new inscriptions have been added to the war memorial.

**Minute 9, 1<sup>st</sup> November – Memorial tree for Mr MacDonald.** The planting site has been prepared and the tree has been ordered from Woodlands nurseries.

**Minute 12, 1<sup>st</sup> November – Replacement village name sign.** Cllr Norris reported on the information he had gathered about the stone sign at Bere Regis. It was noted that Judy Monk was to be asked if she would be willing to design and carve a stone sign. The Parish Clerk is to discuss the matter with DCC Highways, who may need to approve its location for road safety reasons. **Action: Parish Clerk to speak to DCC Highways about this.**

**Minute 14, 1<sup>st</sup> November – Grit bin for Loop Farm Rd.** A location has not been approved for this by DCC Highways.

## **5. OPEN SPACES –**

The following items were discussed:

**Recreation Ground / Car park -** nothing to report.

**Row Park Paddock –** nothing to report.

**Allotments –** The Parish Clerk reported that there are now seven names of the waiting list. Mr Warr has carried out the annual trimming of the hedge.

**Library Walk** – nothing to report.

**Memorial Green / War Memorial** – nothing to report.

**Turbetts Green** – nothing to report.

**Cemetery** – The churchwardens have approached the council about the removal of a small yew tree near the railings adjacent to the entrance to Church Walk which is being pushed over by a Horse Chestnut tree on the adjacent property. Mr Mills has examined the tree and believes it can be saved by some trimming and if the Horse Chestnut is crown lifted. The PDC tree officer has advised that neither tree is the subject of a TPO. It was suggested that the next step should be to write to the owner of the property to see if they are prepared to fund the work to the tree. **Action: Parish Clerk to write to the property owners accordingly.**

**Club Hall** – The Parish Clerk reported that as agreed at the December Full Council meeting, Mr Paul Fay has been asked to carry out the work to the disused side double door entrance and the rear door.

The Parish Clerk went on to report that he has had contact from the Lighthouse Family Church concerning general ineffectiveness of the storage heaters or stopped a wonder whether they should be serviced, repaired or replaced. He has raised this matter with Mr Fay who has a colleague who will provide an estimate for carrying out electrical safety checks, and any necessary maintenance and repairs to the heaters.

**Hedges and Ditches** – nothing to report.

**Foxhills Open Space** – the owners of September Cottage, Deans Drove have removed a section of undergrowth on their property bordering the stream on the adjacent bank from the line of the intended connecting path.

**MUGA** – The Parish Clerk reported the problem with the path lights to LTL Lighting. They have indicated that they will arrange to visit early in 2011 to evaluate the problems and plan any repairs needed.

The trees on either side of the entrance track still need to be cut back. **Action: Parish Clerk to discuss this with Mr Mills.**

**Village Centre Project** – nothing to report.

**6.FOXHILLS PLAY AREA – Project update, including receipt of highlight report, for discussion of points and recommendations to Full Council.**

Project highlight report is attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

Site meeting with the supplier's project manager (David Owen) and the construction contractor was held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> January. At this meeting it was clarified that the regulations related to proximity to residential properties allow for a minimum of 10 meters from the building. It was decided to position the play area somewhat over 10 metres from the back garden fence of the nearest property. It was agreed that work would commence on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> Jan (weather permitting) and should

take 2 – 2.5 weeks to complete. Working will be in accordance with the method statements already supplied by Miracle and be confined to the hours of 08:00-19:00 Mon-Sat (maximum).

When approached by a resident after the site meeting, Cllr Gracey provided a copy of the site plan with the equipment details, consistent with what had been agreed and minuted at the Extraordinary Council meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2010.

Three emails were received from a resident of Fosters Spring between 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> January. These emails expressed the view that (i) the objectors group had not been informed of the council's decision in July 2010 to go ahead, (ii) that the size of the play area was larger than they thought had been proposed and (iii) that the type of equipment was intended for older children than they thought had been proposed.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Full Council authorises the purchase of a dog bin and litter bin for installation near the play area.

#### **6. CONSULTATION – DIVERSION TO FOOTPATHS 11 AND 16 (SEE EMAIL TO ALL CLLRS ON 6<sup>TH</sup> JAN 2011)**

It was noted that DCC have written to Cllr Julie Dyball about this. They have agreed to extend the consultation period until 16<sup>th</sup> February 2011. It was **RECOMMENDED** that a minimum of two volunteer Cllrs be sought to walk the proposed route and report back.

#### **8. CORRESPONDENCE**

**The Parish Clerk reported on two items of correspondence:**

- A letter from DCC's Western Highways Office enclosing their "Winter Service leaflet". Electronic copies had already been distributed to Cllrs, but a stock of paper copies is now available to hand out to residents. A copy, showing the map of all roads in the county on DCC's gritting routes, is on display on the main notice board. It was noted that the only roads in the village which are on this gritting plan are Wareham Rd and Huntick Rd. It was commented that DCC Highways had been challenged about not gritting Lime Kiln Rd and this had revealed that DCC Highways staff were not aware that Lime Kiln Rd was a bus route. *Action: Parish Clerk to contact DCC Highways and ask for the bus routes to be added to the plan – i.e. Wimborne Rd, Lime Kiln Rd and the high Street.*
- A letter from a resident of Ballard Close advising of a conversation with Mr Mark Green of the Dorset Engineering Consultancy (DCC) Street Lighting team regarding the street lights in Ballard Close. These formerly "private" lights have now been adopted by DCC. Mr Green had explained that they will not be included in the current PFI to replace lighting because the columns are already up to the required standard. However he had pointed out that DCC have a small amount of budget to upgrade existing lighting, and they would consider doing this in the case of Ballard Close if the Parish Council was prepared to support the residents' request. After a brief discussion it was **AGREED** to send DCC such a letter of support for this request.

#### **9. MATTERS OF INTEREST AND INFORMATION**

- In response to a question from Cllr Gillard it was reported that DCC Highways had authorised the intermittent closures of Lime kiln Rd during the snow and ice in December.
- Cllr Gillard reported that a PDC maintenance employee had informed him that the hedge and trees on the ransom strip at the end of Foxhills Crescent were to be tidied up.
- Cllr Colvey commented that the school crossing patrol situation is to be discussed in a

school meeting this week. In preparation for this he wished to clarify the council's views. Cllr Gracey clarified the key points which had emerged from discussion at the December Full Council meeting – i.e. that the council wished to focus on the point that it felt the Lytchett Matravers school crossing patrol to be an essential one due to the particular set of circumstances regarding traffic volumes, parking, lack of visibility and congestion. However Cllr Gracey also remarked that the latest communication from DCC (a letter written to all Head Teachers) had revealed that DCC's intention is to withdraw funding of all crossing patrols, in two phases. The funding for those currently considered "essential" is to be removed in the second phase in the Autumn - thus affording the schools and communities concerned some time to pursue the option of either funding their patrol(s) themselves or finding a suitable "free" volunteer to carry out the duties. Cllr Gracey indicated that he is willing to have an initial meeting with Mr France on this matter.

- Cllr Norris commented on the latest steps in the campaign to save the village library. He noted that a copy of a letter written by Graham Lee has been distributed, and that it was intended to challenge the selection criteria for closure. It was noted that these steps should trigger a review by the DCC Audit and Scrutiny Committee into the way the procedures have been applied. It was also pointed out that the PDC Core Strategy identifies Lytchett Matravers as one of only three "key service villages" and as such it's expected growth justifies expansion, rather than removal, of services and amenities.

The meeting closed at 9:40pm

**Modified by/on .....**      **Signed by/on .....**