

MINUTES OF THE CORFE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT CORFE VILLAGE HALL, TUESDAY 24th January 2024.

PRESENT: Cllr J Harrison, Cllr. B Lenthall, Cllr. C Brown, Cllr. J Jackson, Cllr. G Alexander, Cllr. A Butler, SCC Cllr. S Wakefield. Ten members of the public.
Chair Cllr. J Harrison opened the meeting at 6.00pm, welcoming all.

81/10: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE. – Cllr. D Bradbeer

82/10: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST. Cllr. Harrison: Alms-houses Trust. Cllr. C Brown and Cllr. A Butler: Village Hall Committee.

83/10: MINUTES OF MEETING HELD TUESDAY 14TH NOVEMBER 2023 - Were discussed. The Minutes have been circulated, published, and signed as accurate records.

84/10: MATTERS ARISING FROM THOSE MINUTES – Nothing was commented on as items would be included under agenda.

85/10: REPORTS OF COUNTY COUNCILLORS.

SCC Cllr S Wakefield of Somerset County Council highlighted a number of issues to those present. Here are her written reports for December and January:

<https://www.corfevillagesomerset.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SC-Report-Dec-2023.pdf>

<https://www.corfevillagesomerset.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SC-Report-Jan-2024.pdf>

86/10: REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS.

PLANNING: Cllr J Harrison – Reported he had received details of only one application, for the Village Hall proposed extension which had now been given full planning permission.

HIGHWAYS: Cllr B. Lenthall – Reported that warning of ice signs had been deployed on Corfe hill following run-off from land washing away salt from gritting lorries. Flooding has also been an issue in the village - landowners have been contacted and advised to clear their ditches to help alleviate the problem. Corfe hedges being moved might also assist. Drains were also being blocked and residents have been asked to clear debris away from drain covers, when at all possible, when they have a chance to assist.

RIGHTS OF WAY: Cllr D. Bradbeer – Was absent but had nothing to report.

WEBSITE: Cllr J Jackson – The website remains well used and the Keep Corfe Healthy WhatsApp group now has 76 members.

VILLAGE HALL: Mr K Gosling/Mr N Furniss – Addressed those present on current Village Hall matters.

December had been a very busy month for the Village Hall with the Corfe Community café now established/trialled and proving to be very popular with residents and visitors.

The 100+ Club tickets, one of the main income support methods for hall improvements, is now selling tickets. Please contact Keith Gosling or Cllr. Chris Brown for tickets.

Bamboo used for screening of the metal container is proving a problem and will be removed by a working party before it becomes too serious. Reports of rodents living beneath the container have also been highlighted and will be investigated and action taken. The 10th February has been earmarked for a maintenance day if weather permits. **Volunteers are being sought to assist with the proposed works.**

Car parking problems following residents of Barton Grange complaints and photographic evidence was raised on the night by Cllr. J Jackson. A discussion took place with those present on any possible solutions that could be investigated. It was felt that as the access road in question is a privately owned one and better signage could be employed by the owners as the current sign is either being ignored or obscured by larger vehicles. Village Hall hirers have always been made aware of the parking restrictions associated to this access road when hiring the hall. A further suggestion of doing away with the grass verges on either side of the road or reducing them to discourage cars parking on them was also made, with residents of Barton Grange encouraged to contact the landowner/farmers for comment on this possible option. Further parking on Queens Acre was also viewed as an option and this will be investigated and discussed if it proves to be a serious option.

GREEN PORTFOLIO – Cllr. G Alexander – Reported her concerns that increased traffic at Queens Acre is a green emissions problem for Corfe.

She also raised flooding concerns that cottages close to the Pickeridge Cottage gully had been faced with water flow problems. Kerbs that had been lowered to assist access to some properties may not be helping the situation. Drains being covered and not cleared were also highlighted, with further pleas to those with drains to try to keep them clear if possible.

ALMSHOUSE CHARITY SELICKS GREEN REPORT – Cllr J Harrison – Nothing to report.

87/10: - WHITE HART INN UPDATE – Cllr J Harrison gave us a brief update on the White Hart following reports of a break-in at the property. The property owners have yet to inform us of their intended plans and are aware the White Hart Inn has an Asset of Community Value Order on it. We believe the owner wants to sell the property and land for a profit; this is why the ‘for-sale’ sign remains. He has increased the asking price to achieve this goal to such a level that it is now an unrealistic price in the current climate to any potential purchasers. Voices from the floor questioned if the pub was now a viable option and could it be run by a village consortium if enough public interest were to be shown for this to be a sincere consideration. However, it was felt this was unlikely now especially given the asking price had been so inflated scaring off any serious publican or similar investors. We await news from the property owner when and if he is prepared to share any plans and will relay this on to residents.

88/10: QUEENS ACRE PLAY PARK – Has been closed due to safety concerns relating to the playing surface. Concrete footings for post supports are being exposed that could prove dangerous if fallen on to by users. Cllr J Harrison and Tony Dewhurst are now working together to remove any surplus concrete and improve the situation regarding the concrete exposure. Solutions and costs involved were discussed with those present. Future maintenance concerns for the park play equipment and the costs involved were also raised from the floor. It was highlighted to those present that until this moment all monies involved in creating and maintaining the park had been obtained through grants and the Parish Council had not ever had to contribute excessive amounts towards its running and maintenance. However, this year grants from Somerset County

Council that helped with local park maintenance would probably not be coming this year due to the weak financial position of Somerset County Council.

89/10: FINANCES – Cllr J Harrison presented the current financial position since the last meeting on 14th November 2023.

We have £21,234.21 Parish council funds available. A further £4,761.67 exists but these are protected funds being £1,434.67 associated to Corfe Lifts and £3,327.0 for a village Gateway proposal.

Payments made since the last meeting of 14th November 2023 include:

Church Grounds Fund = £220

Mountstevens Electrical Works = £535.88

Corfe Village Hall Fridge Contribution = £79

Total = £835.38

Income received since last meeting of 14th November 2023 include:

Refund of Mountstevens Electrical = £48

Corfe Village Hall Picnic Bench = £156

Corfe Village Hall Contribution to Electrical Works = £406.57

Total = £610.57

90/10: – PARISH PRECEPT – Cllr J Harrison opened a discussion on what the Parish Precept should be set at for 2024 following the warning from SCC that parish councils may have to foot the bill for certain services usually provided by the County Council in 2024/25. The Precept needs to be set shortly and an increase is therefore being called for to cover these potential cost increases. We note that some other parishes have already done this ahead of a potential Somerset County Council decision on spending. We think this is prudent and have requested a 100% rise in the precept. Those present were reassured that although this is a large percentage increase, the precept only represents a small proportion of the total Council Tax Bill (c.2%) and is money that can be used by Corfe Parish Council to provide services in Corfe.

This increase could be reversed next year if the unknown costs for 2024/25 do not materialise. In the meantime, the parish council felt this approach was in the best interests of residents and we apologise in advance to residents receiving their forthcoming Council Tax Bills.

91/10: CORRESPONDENCE – Cllr J Harrison reported that he had received requests to set the Parish Precept. He also reported emails relating to parking concerns at Queens Acre, as well as play park concerns and overhanging trees all of which has been mentioned and discussed within this agenda.

92/10: ANY OTHER BUSINESS – Well behaved dogs accompanied by their owners visiting on Corfe Community Café days was discussed. A patio only proposition was aired with Café volunteers however preferring an area fenced off close to the existing dog poo bin with a bench being moved to be trialled in the first instance. A further proposal to erect a picket fence around the patio to contain any dogs present preventing access to the playing fields was proposed from the floor and was well received by those present.

PLEASE NOTE ALL MEETINGS ARE NOW ON A WEDNESDAY.

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 13th March 2024 at 6.00pm