

Mere Parish Council

PARISH CLERK - MRS. L. C. WOOD

Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday, 22nd September 2010 at 7.30 p.m. in The Andy Young Pavilion, Springfield Road, Mere.

Present: Councillors E Mitchell (Chairman), R. Coward (from 8.00 p.m.) C. Hazzard, R. Hill, R. Hughes, G. Jeans, R. Sims, S. Squires & Mrs. L. Traves

Also: Mr. R. Potter, Mr. M. Whatley, Mrs. Barbara Hewitt, Mrs. Pauline Bashford, Mrs. Janet Avery, Mr. & Mrs. R. Yapp, Dr. McBride, Olive Woodall, Mr. & Mrs. J. Gammy, Mrs. Sue Jeans, Mr. M. Jeans and Mr. J. Chalke

Meeting convened at 7.34 p.m.

Apologies for absence received from Cllrs. M. Hall, P. Coward, D. Sealy & Mrs. M. White

449. To receive Declarations of Interest

Cllr. Jeans declared a prejudicial interest in Minute No. 451 (owner of a business adjacent to Salisbury Street Car Park).

450. Planning

a) Applications: (All applications can be viewed on Wiltshire Council's website

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/environmentandplanning/planninganddevelopment/planningapplicationssearchonline/planningsearch.htm> – and type in the relevant application number)

Application Number: S/2010/1308/TCA

Location: THE COTTAGE, OLD HOLLOW, MERE.

Proposal: 1 x WEEPING WILLOW – POLLARD TO A MAXIMUM OF 30%

Cllr. Hill proposed that the above application should be recommended for approval. Proposal seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Traves and carried with a unanimous vote.

Application Number: S/2010/1327/TCA

Location: THE COTTAGE, OLD HOLLOW, MERE.

Proposal: 1 x WEEPING WILLOW – POLLARD TO A MAXIMUM OF 30%

Cllr. Hill proposed that the above application should be recommended for approval. Proposal seconded by Cllr. Hughes and carried with a unanimous vote.

451. Wiltshire Council's Car Parking Strategy:

i) Whilst the Parish Council was made aware that the final date for Parish & Town Councils to respond to the following options was 30th September, the Parish Council was not made aware that this was a 'now or never' opportunity. In other words, if the Parish Council does not amend its present consultation response, it will not be given any further opportunity to change its position. Hence the need to call an extra meeting.

The opportunities being offered to town and parish councils are as follows (please see section 3.3 of consultation document available from <http://consult.wiltshire.gov.uk/portal>):

- *Where there is a countywide consensus of opinion, to utilise surplus parking revenue (i.e. that which is over and above the overall revenue stream associated with the conventional level of parking charges - see section 5.2) to fund sustainable transport measures (e.g. a subsidised bus service, pedestrian improvements, cycle*

route, car club, etc.) in local areas (in line with Section 55 of Road Traffic Regulation Act) which would otherwise be unaffordable for Wiltshire Council particularly given anticipated cuts in government funding for local transport.

- In Band 3 towns, to 'buy back' a small proportion of short-stay spaces from Wiltshire Council to offer as free parking spaces.
- In Band 4 towns, to take over the costs of operating and managing the car parks as an alternative to parking charges being set by Wiltshire Council.

Mere Parish Council's formal consultation response submitted 2nd September is:

Question 9

Do you agree that town and parish councils should be offered the above opportunities?

No.

The definition of opportunity is 'a favourable, appropriate, or advantageous combination of circumstances'. What is being offered to us in Mere, as a Band 4 town, is not an 'opportunity' but a 'last resort, damage limitation, alternative' to save our town from parking charges. We do not feel that this should be the only alternative open to us and that Wiltshire Council could offer a further option, in recognition of the need to preserve essential services and the need to strengthen the local economy – to keep Mere Car Parks free of charge!

We assume that Wiltshire Council's response will be: 'Well why should all the Wiltshire rate payers pay to keep free car parking in Mere?' However, we would argue that Mere rate payers are already paying for a lot of services in other areas of Wiltshire that they never use – they pay for the Mere Cemetery through the Parish Precept but they pay for a whole host of other cemeteries within Wiltshire (that they are unlikely to use or visit) through their Wiltshire Council precept; they pay for our exemplary sports facilities through the Parish Precept but they pay for a whole host of other sports facilities within Wiltshire (that they are unlikely to use or visit) through their Wiltshire Council precept: We could go on..... Unless harmonisation is carried out across the whole range of services and facilities then this argument carries no weight.

ii) To approve letter to be sent to Cllr. Jane Scott, Leader, Wiltshire Council

The Clerk read out a draft letter which set out the Parish Council's dissatisfaction over the consultation and development of the car parking strategy. The Chairman then explained that it was now up to the Parish Council to decide whether it was prepared to take on responsibility for the car park as an alternative to parking charges being set by Wiltshire Council.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.46 p.m. to allow for public participation.

Mr. Jeans said that if car parking charges are introduced in Mere it will have a huge impact on the town.

Mrs. Janet Avery, Manager of Mere Co-Op, said that she had lived in Mere all her life and did not understand why car parking charges needed to be introduced in Mere. She said that the economy of Mere was in decline and this would just make matters worse. She also pointed out that Mere had a very high proportion of elderly residents.

Mrs. Barbara Hewitt, Chairman of Mere & District Chamber of Trade, said that if we allowed Wiltshire Council to charge for our public car parks then the next stage would be to introduce business car parking charges on business car parks. She pointed out that the public car parks were used by employees as well as visitors and residents and that this part of the county did not have very high wages and that it was unfair to expect employees to take money out of their hourly rate to pay for car parking charges.

Mr. Jeans pointed out that the pharmacist travelled from Bath to Mere every day and car parking charges on top of travel charges would make her job unsustainable.

Dr. McBride said that although the surgery is in the centre of town, which is an asset, it does not have any independent car parking and it would be a disastrous state of affairs for the people who need to drive to the surgery. The surgery has a large number of staff who would also have to pay parking charges. Dr. McBride said that it was

sounding unlikely that Mere would be made an exception and, in the circumstances, she hoped that some local organisation would take on responsibility for the car parks in order to avoid parking charges.

Mr. Robin Yapp said that this was obviously a money-making exercise for Wiltshire Council but he feared that visitors would no longer stop in Mere to use the cafes and pubs and that the introduction of car parking charges would exacerbate our current street parking problem.

Mr. Jeans confirmed that the Chamber of Trade had carried out a visitor survey which confirmed that a large number of visitors stopped in Mere to break up their journeys and they said that they would no longer do this if car parking charges were introduced.

Mr. Jeans also stated that he had already received pledges of financial support from local businesses towards the costs of managing the car parks. Mere Co-Op had already sent a cheque for £500 and the doctors' surgery and Walnut Tree Inn had stated that they would be prepared to make a financial contribution. The non-domestic rates for the two car parks would cost in the region of £6,000 per year but if the car park management group is registered as a charity then it would receive an 80% relief on non-domestic rates.

Mrs. Sue Jeans stated that street parking was already hampering access for the emergency service vehicle and if it became any worse, their access would be obstructed completely.

Michael Jeans said that Gillingham had free car parks with the supermarkets and Mere would be unable to compete with this if car parking charges were introduced.

Mr. Hazzard explained that, having owned a small shop in Mere, he knew from experience that just losing a few customers can make a big difference and this could entail the loss of more businesses and if their staff do not park in the car park because of parking charges, they will park on the streets and cause even more congestion and chaos and this, in turn, will mean that shoppers can no longer park on the street short-term to do their shopping. Mr. Hazzard said that he also wanted dedicated patient spaces near the doctors' surgery.

Mr. Coward said that we all had to face this economic reality and pointed out that the Parish Council did not know the full cost implications of running the car parks and that funds would need to be set aside for resurfacing and upkeep as well as the rates.

Mr. Hughes felt that most householders in Mere would be prepared to pay a few extra pounds a year, especially if it means keeping free car parking for the doctors surgery.

Meeting reconvened at 8.25 p.m.

Cllr. Hazzard proposed that the Parish Council should ask Wiltshire Council to agree to enter into negotiations to enable the Parish Council to form a business plan to administer and manage the two car parks in Mere. This is subject to the potential resolution of Wiltshire Council's cabinet meeting, to be held in December, that Wiltshire Council will pursue car parking charges in Band 4 car parks and, more specifically, in Mere.

Proposal seconded by Cllr. S. Squires and carried with a unanimous vote of those members eligible. (Cllr. Jeans, having declared a prejudicial interest, left the room and did not vote on the above proposal).

iii) Environment & Select Committee meeting to be held on 2nd November 2010 where: 'Review of Local Transport Parking Plan' is an agenda item.

It was confirmed that this would be the last meeting held to discuss the car parking strategy before the matter was taken to Cabinet. The meeting would be held in Trowbridge. The Clerk was asked to email members nearer the time, to see how many would like to go and whether some transport arrangements could be made.

452. Finance: Cllr. R. Coward proposed that the following payments be approved. Proposal seconded by Cllr. Hill and carried with a unanimous vote of approval:

Shaftesbury Garden Machinery	Repairs to Husqvarna ride-on	£204.00
Scats	Sundries (grease gun, WD40, latex gloves etc)	£21.78

Tincknell Fuels	Shell Gas Oil	£182.96
Duchy of Cornwall	Rent for Castle Hill 28.9.09 – 28.9.10	£14.69
Duchy of Cornwall	Rent for allotments 25.3.10 – 28.9.10	£315.35
Playquest Adventure Play Ltd	Replacement timber for play equipment at Walnut Road Play Area	£41.12
B & S Chains	Drill bit for play equipment in Rec	£15.28
Cash	Mobile phone top-up fee	£10.00

Management of Memorials, Training & Inspection workshop – Corsham Town Hall, Wednesday 17th November 2010
- £120 + VAT – it was agreed that the Clerk should attend the training workshop if she felt it would be worthwhile.