

Downley Parish Council
Minutes of the Council held online, via Zoom
on Tuesday 15 December 2020 at 7.03pm

Present: Councillors M Lazenby, (Chairman presiding), R Bowden, K Chandarana, A Lenard, S Monroe-West, V Naik, V Srao, S Steneskog, and S Tozer

In Attendance: Buckinghamshire Councillors W Mallen and P Turner and 2 Members of the Public.

Officer: M Kennedy (Locum Clerk)

1) Apologies for Absence (8206/12/20)

None.

2) Declarations of Interest (8207/12/20)

None.

3) Public Participation (8208/12/20)

Pamela Brookes addressed the meeting on two agenda items. As regards the application for an additional Street Light in Polmer Green Lane, agenda item 14, she considered that the costs would be prohibitive. As to the suggested proposal that the Council should seek a permanent office in the Community Centre, agenda item 15, Mrs. Brookes supported this opportunity adding that the Council needs a focal point for the public and councillors.

4) Minutes (8209/12/20)

The Minutes of the Meetings of the Council held on 13 October 2020, 24 November 2020 and the Extraordinary meeting held on 7 December 2020 were presented for adoption. It was **RESOLVED**

- (i) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020, be received, approved, and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record);
- (ii) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2020 be received, approved, and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record); and
- (iii) that the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on 7 December 2020, be received, approved, and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

5) Reports from Buckinghamshire Councillors (8210/12/20)

Members had before them, copies having been previously issued, the reports from Councillors Mallen and Turner. It was **RESOLVED** that the reports to received and noted.

Councillor Mallen entered the meeting at 7.28pm

Councillors Turner and Mallen left the meeting at 7.30pm and 7.34pm, respectively.

6) Committee Reports (8211/12/20)

a) The minutes of the meetings of the Finance Committee held on 24 November and 7 December, 2020, copies having been issued were presented to Council. The Chairman thanked the Clerk for presenting a draft budget for 2021/22. The latest figures had been circulated to the members of the Finance Committee for consideration and would be presented to Council on 12 January 2021 for adoption. A proposed precept of £100,000 would be recommended. Councillor Bowden highlighted the provision in the estimates for Parish IT costs and looked forward to receiving Councillor Naik's proposals for storing documents in the Cloud. It was **RESOLVED** that the reports be received and noted

b) The minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 24 November, copy having been issued were presented to Council. It was **RESOLVED** that the report be received and noted.

7) Planning Applications (8212/12/20)

The Chairman presented the recommendations of the informal meeting of the Planning Committee held on 14 December as the Council's representations to Buckinghamshire Council on current planning applications. It was **RESOLVED** that the Council submits the following comments to Buckinghamshire Council as set out hereunder

14 Southfield Road High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP13 5LA

Householder application for single storey rear extension, alterations to fenestrations, rear decking, and privacy screen

Recommendation is to refuse this application. As per a comment on the application, there are light restrictions to the neighbouring property (#16) on their lounge and patio. Overall, DPC feels this application be refused.

8 Narrow Lane Downley Buckinghamshire HP13 5XP Application for approval of details subject to conditions 4 (surfacing materials) and 5 (parking scheme) of householder planning approval ref: 20/06572/FUL

This notifies the Council of proposed work or development not needing its permission. The Council will not be approving or refusing the proposal, so comments are not invited.

25 Hillfield Close High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP13 5NA

Householder application for insertion of windows to front and side and raising of existing garage roof in connection with garage conversion to habitable accommodation

The application to make the changes to garage to convert into a habitable accommodation does not cause any impact to the overall look and feel of the neighbourhood. There will be an additional window to the front and 2 small windows on the side, but the side windows (at ground floor level) are far enough from the adjoining property to avoid any overlooking issues. Overall, DPC feels this application be approved

28 Gosling Grove Downley Buckinghamshire HP13 5YS

Householder application for construction of single storey rear extension, first floor side extension and fenestration alterations

The application to construct a single storey rear extension, first floor side extension and fenestration alterations is partially okay with the DPC. If the applicant wants to go ahead with the single storey rear extension, they can do so via separate application as DPC does not see any objections with that part of the application. Also, as per a previous decision on application 06/07820/FUL for same work, the applicant was refused based on height, scale and projection towards #20 Gosling Grove (neighbouring property). Finally, current occupiers at #20 have already raised a valid objection for this application which should be noted. Overall, DPC feels this application be refused

57 Sunny Croft Downley Buckinghamshire HP13 5UR

Householder application for construction of single storey rear extension and fenestration alterations

The application to construct a single storey rear extension and fenestration alterations has an objection from a neighbour next door. DPC have independently reviewed the application and objections raised and the view is even though the extension work is okay, the roof for the rear extension is out of general appearance of the street. Other concerns around drainage and covenants do not fall with DPC's remit. If the applicant applies again changing from sloped roof to flat roof, the application can be reviewed, and a decision made accordingly. Overall, DPC feels this application be refused.

40 Sunny Croft Downley Buckinghamshire HP13 5UR

Householder application for construction of part single/part two storey rear extension with internal alterations

The application for construction of part single/part two storey rear extension with internal alterations is very similar to application 15/05565/FUL for next door neighbours (#42 Sunny Croft) which was a permitted development, hence this application is in line with the neighbourhood appearance. The 2 new windows on side have been mentioned to be glazed and non-opening which means there will be no overlooking impact on the neighbouring properties. Overall, DPC feels this application be approved

25 Gosling Grove Downley Buckinghamshire HP13 5YS

Householder application for construction of part single, part two storey side extension, dropped kerb and aluminium flue to fireplace at ground floor

The application for construction of part single, part two storey side extension, dropped kerb and aluminium flue to fireplace at ground floor is in line with expectations. An application in the past (15/07468/FUL) to drop the kerb was a permitted development so that part is already covered. In terms of building a side extension, there is an alleyway next to the property on the side the extension is being built so no concerns around overlooking or line of sight. Overall, DPC feels this application be approved.

45 White Close High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP13 5ND

Roof alterations incorporating double hip to gable roof extension, erection of 1 x dormer window to rear and installation of 2 x rooflights to front all in connection with conversion of existing loftspace to habitable accommodation.

There is nothing in the application and the plans that seems out of ordinary for this application. This design was put forward in 2019 and withdrawn in February 2020. Then a Certificate of Lawful Development for the same design (without dormer) was requested as a part of 20/05496/CLP which was refused on 20th April 2020. An appeal was lodged against the refusal which was allowed on 18th November 2020. Given the current application is the same which was allowed post appeal with only addition being the rear dormer window which does not have any impact on the decision of DPC. Overall, DPC feels this application be approved.

8) Decision Notices (8213/12/2020)

The Council noted the Decision Notices received from the Buckinghamshire Council as set out hereunder

4 Curlew Close High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP13 5JY

Notification of proposed single storey rear extension; Depth extending from the original rear wall of 5.5 metres, a maximum height of 3.0 metres and an eaves height of 2.9 metres **Decision: Application Refused**

3 Ravens Court Commonsides Downley Buckinghamshire HP13 5YA

Side and height reduction by up to 2m of hedge including Hawthorn, Holly, Hornbeam, and Hazelnut. **Decision: Not to make a Tree Preservation Order**

14 Southfield Road High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP13 5LA

Householder application for single storey rear extension and alterations to fenestrations. **Application Withdrawn**

4 Downs Park High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP13 5LX

Householder application for construction of two storey front and side extension and front porch with three roof lights and single storey rear extension following demolition of existing garage. **Application Withdrawn**

55 Plomer Green Lane Downley Buckinghamshire HP13 5TU

Construction of an attached two storey end terrace dwelling, creation of new access to rear with associated car parking **Decision: Application Refused**

2 Plomer Green Avenue Downley Buckinghamshire HP13 5LN

Householder application for construction of single storey conservatory extension **Decision: Approved**

2 Court Close High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP13 5JF

Certificate of lawfulness for proposed construction of 2 x side and rear box dormers in connection with loft conversion and fenestration alterations, **Decision: Grant Certificate - Proposed Development**

2 Court Close High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP13 5JF

Householder application for roof alteration works with front dormer in connection with conversion of loft with staircase access to create snug with front balcony, external alterations, and alterations to fenestrations. **Decision: Approved**

43 Plomer Hill High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP13 5NB

Householder application for construction of extension to lower ground floor and associated external alterations **Decision: Application Withdrawn**

Hughenden Hall Plomer Green Lane Downley Buckinghamshire

Householder application for construction of single storey linked extension, extension to & conversion of carport to store, internal alterations, and landscaping (alternative scheme to 18/05433/FUL) **Decision: Approved**

Hughenden Hall Plomer Green Lane Downley Buckinghamshire HP13 5XN

Listed building application for construction of single storey linked extension, extension to & conversion of carport to store, internal alterations, and landscaping **Decision: Approved**

9) Code of Conduct for Downley Parish Council (8214/12/20)

A Code of Conduct for Downley Parish Council was circulated to all Councillors for consideration and adoption. Despite extensive research, and notwithstanding the former clerk's claim that a Code of Conduct had been issued to all Councillors, it was acknowledged that the Council had never formally adopted a Code of Conduct for Downley Parish Council.

The previous Parish Council's document, issued to Members in October 2016, was taken from the former Wycombe District Council's Code of Conduct, and had erroneously referred to undertaking duties as a member of that authority. It was proposed by Councillor Lenard, seconded by Councillor Chandarana and **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the draft document as presented be formally adopted as the Code of Conduct for Councillors serving the Downley Parish Council.

10) Appointment of a Staffing/HR Committee (8215/12/20)

Members considered the appointment of a Staffing/HR Committee for the remainder of the local government year. Suggested Terms of Reference for a Staffing/HR Committee were issued for Members' consideration and adoption.

It was generally felt that a committee of 5 was too large because a future Clerk might be unhappy that too many Councillors would have sight of confidential business.

There followed a lengthy discussion when the following additional points were made.

The Clerk's Job Description states that the Clerk is line managed by the Chairman. It was recognised that the Clerk reports to the whole Council and until such time as the on-going dispute is resolved, the whole Council should meet to consider this issue rather than delegate responsibility to a smaller committee.

There was some doubt as to the existence or otherwise of a contract of employment for the former clerk. A view was expressed that it is possible to have a job description without a contract of employment. A member requested that the former clerk's job description be circulated to all Councillors and the Chairman agreed to issue this to everyone.

Referring to the Terms of Reference for the committee, it was suggested that the appointment of members to hear any formal grievance should include Councillor grievances as well as grievances raised by the Clerk (*Locum Clerk's post meeting note: Councillor grievances are matters for the Buckinghamshire Council's Monitoring Officer to determine*). It was also suggested that business continuity planning should also be a matter for the new committee's terms of reference.

A member suggested that the question of appointing an HR/Staffing Committee should be deferred until the on-going dispute is finalised however this was rejected as the Council needs a committee in place to consider arrangements for the recruitment of the new clerk.

It was recognised that a Grievance Policy also needs to be in place as a matter of urgency.

Having regard to the on-going conflict it was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference as presented be adopted and that the membership of the committee be deferred to a closed session of the Council following the conclusion of the remainder of business.

11 Co-option of Councillors (8216/12/20)

The Council considered a draft co-option policy for Downley Parish Council which sets out the procedures to be followed in the co-option process, copy having been issued. In noting there are presently two vacancies on the Council that may be filled by co-option, Member were asked to consider whether Council wished to fill the two vacancies or whether they should remain vacant until the local elections in May 2021.

A Member considered it was necessary to fill the two vacancies if only to share the workload identified earlier at the meeting. There was general disagreement with this view, instead Council should wait until the local elections in May. It was proposed by Councillor Lazenby, seconded by Councillor Naik, and **RESOLVED** that the vacant positions for councillors shall remain open until the local elections in May 2021. *Councillor Srao asked that his vote be recorded against the motion.*

Following further consideration of the co-option policy it was proposed by Councillor Steneskog, seconded by Councillor Tozer, and **RESOLVED** that the co-option Policy as presented be approved and adopted.

12) Taxi Licencing Policy (8217/12/20)

Council considered whether it wished to make any written representations to Buckinghamshire Council on the draft taxi licencing policy. It was **RESOLVED** that the Council makes no comment on the draft taxi licencing policy.

13) Defective Street Lights in the Village (8218/12/20)

On 24 November, min. no. 8197/11/20 refers, the Council had approved expenditure of up to £3,500 for the urgent replacement of approximately 13 lamps with new LED bulbs in the current financial year, these lamps to be removed from the final contract to be placed on Contract Finder.

The actual number of lamps out at the time of seeking a quotation was 15 however, a further two lamps were in urgent need of repair and for which a quotation of £4,993.92 had been received. It was proposed by Councillor Bowden, seconded by Councillor Srao and **RESOLVED** that the Council approves expenditure of £4,993.92 for the replacement of 17 lamps in the current financial year, 2020/21, this number to be deducted from the overall total listed on Contract Finder

14) Additional Street Lamp in Plomer Green Lane(8219/12/20)

A request had been received for an additional streetlamp in Plomer Green Lane from Patrick Crotty of 51 Plomer Green Lane. While Members were sympathetic to the request, it was generally felt that the application should be deferred until the full replacement programme of lamps to LED lights is completed. It was **RESOLVED** that the application for an additional streetlamp in Plomer Green Lane be deferred until the full replacement programme of lamps to LED lights is completed.

15) Street Lighting in Narrow Lane(8220/12/20)

The report outlined the issues concerning the installation of a column in Narrow Lane junction with Commonside. Although the Council's electrical contractor could have had the new electrical connections underground, the nearest supply point is an overhead main that was referred to Scottish and Southern Electric.

There were further issues relating to cutting back a tree on the boundary at 23 Commonside. Unfortunately due to the tree issue and increased cost the new connection was never progressed as there were on-going discussions between the resident and the Council.

The situation at present is that the lantern, installation of the column and upfront payment to SSE for the first quotation is still outstanding. It was **RESOLVED** that the matter be progressed by the Clerk

16) Use of the Community Centre as a Council Office (8221/12/20)

Members considered the detailed report of the clerk which explained the ownership of the Downley Old School Community Centre and the management arrangements under the terms of a lease between the Parish Council and the Downley Old School Community Association (DOSCA) dated 25 January 2011 for a term of 30 years at a peppercorn rent.

The report outlined the terms of the lease and the Council's responsibility for maintaining the building while DOSCA is responsible for the day to day running of the building. The Council has no rights or privileges for exclusive use of any room or rooms within the building. However, weekly drop-in sessions were held in the Community Library for residents and councillors when the former clerk was available to deal with questions and inquiries, the payment of allotment rents etc. No charge is

made by DOSCA, for these sessions or indeed the hire of the Main Hall for Council Meetings including storage of old Council records and documents.

It was understood that the Council contributes £3,000 per annum towards library costs although it was unclear where or when this £3,000 contribution was agreed as there is no mention of this in the lease.

Councillors proceeded to consider whether it wished to establish a permanent office within the Community Centre subject to the agreement of DOSCA and further negotiation on a fee structure. Following further debate it was **RESOLVED** that

- i) the report be noted and that the Council reviews the £3,000 contribution it makes to DOSCA towards the library;
- ii) the Council pursues the use of the Maple Room as a permanent office from 1 April 2021 on terms to be agreed by the Council in consultation with DOSCA.

Arising from the foregoing it was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk produces a comprehensive asset register for the Council.

17) Park Fencing School Close Park (8222/12/20)

The Council had received complaints that the fencing around School Close Park had collapsed in many places and needed repair. In noting that the Buckinghamshire Council is responsible for the park, the Clerk reported receipt of an email from Andy Sherwood, Contract Manager, confirming his intention to replace some sections with a grass bund from material available from the Wycombe Cemetery which will be used to form a mound capped with topsoil and seeded.

A view was expressed that a grass bund could be more environmentally friendly, should prevent illegal parking and further damage to the posts and railings. However, concern was expressed that a bund would not be seen as aesthetically pleasing for the visual amenities of the neighbourhood and quite enjoyment of the residents in School Close because it would enclose an otherwise open aspect given the relatively small size of the green and close proximity of surrounding properties. It was the view of the Council that Buckinghamshire Council reconsiders its position and replaces the posts and rails in an efficient and effective manner ensuring the posts are securely concreted into the ground and **RESOLVED** that the Council's position in this matter as expressed at the meeting be communicated to the principal authority.

18) The Community Library (8223/12/20)

The report gave details of work carried out by Colin Clarke Construction Limited to the lobby and drain in the total sum of £5,095 plus VAT. While acknowledging the Council's obligations under the terms of the lease for external works, Members wished to better understand the process by which an order was placed without apparent reference to the Council.

Since part of the invoice appears to concern internal works, i.e. repair and decoration to the Lobby and making good the window and door frame in the sum of £720 plus VAT, Members considered this was the tenant's responsibility and as such DOSCA

should pay for these works. It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk seeks further clarification from DOSCA on the matters expressed by Members at the meeting.

19) Additional Defibrillator for the Village (8224/12/20)

The report gave details of a charitable organisation, London Hearts, that works with parish councils in the supply and procurement of defibrillators and cabinets. They offer a small grant of £200 towards the cost of supplying a CPR/Defibrillator along with free training for the community. The usual cost for an SP1 IPAD Defibrillator is £1195.00 however considering the £200 donation, the required minimum donation for the Defibrillator alone is currently £995.00.

Council understood there were currently 2 defibrillators in the village at the Community Centre, School Close and at the Cricket pavilion at Plomer Green Lane. Members discussed two location, outside the Co-op in Plomer Green Lane and outside Tesco at Cross Court, close to the ATM and Pharmacy. Council thought an additional defibrillator would be positively received by the community and agreed that the Cross Court location was the better of the two given the greater footfall. It was **RESOLVED** that the Council procures an additional defibrillator from London Hearts and seeks a further grant from Tesco towards the overall cost of £995.

20) Payment of Invoices (8225/12/20)

The Council received and approved the schedule of payments, as set out hereunder

Ch No.	Payee	Amount	Description of goods/services
1920	M Lazenby	£4.80	Printing costs
1921	V Naik	£14.39	Zoom meeting monthly set up charge
1922	cancelled cheque		
1923	KAD Garden service	£2,987.00	Grass cutting /Leaf clearance
1924	James Glasgow	£80.83	Padlock for Allotment gate
1925	Mike Dean DCAG Expense	£140.00	Printing of Leaflets Covid 19
1926	Fourlegswood	£1,368.00	Litter picking January - Sept
1927	M Kennedy	£2,162.63	Professional services for November £1,666.20
			Batteries for TSID Cameras £122.15
			Office 365 £59.99
			Printer Cartridge £27.99
			Mobile Phone £139.95
			Sim Card – monthly charge £2.47
			Annual Zoom Pro subscription £143.88
	TOTAL	£6,757.65	

The Chairman indicated that cheque number 1926 payable to Fourlegswood in the sum of £1,368 for litter picking will need to be re-issued because the company had incorrectly submitted their invoice.

21) Exclusion of the Public and the Press (8226/12/20)

It was **RESOLVED** that the Public and the Press be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting in accordance with the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960

as matters which are considered to be private and confidential were about to be discussed.

22) Appointment of a Staffing/HR Committee (8227/12/20)

Council considered the appoint a Staffing/HR Committee and the membership thereof. Having regard to the fact that all complaints to the Buckinghamshire Council's Monitoring Officer have now been withdrawn and following a detailed debate it was **RESOLVED** that the membership of the Staffing/HR Committee for the remainder of the local government year shall be Councillors Lazenby, Lenard, Monroe-West and Steneskog.

23) Readmission of the Public and the Press (8228/12/20)

It was **RESOLVED** that the Public and the Press be readmitted to the Meeting.

24) Date and Place of next meeting (8229/12/20)

It was agreed that the next ordinary meeting of Council shall be held by zoom on Tuesday 12 January 2021 at 7pm

25) Closure of the Meeting (8230/12/20)

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 10.00pm, thanked everyone for attending and extended seasonal greetings to all.

Chairman_____

Date_____