**Askerswell Parish Meeting**

**Wednesday 16th October 2024 at 7.30p.m.**

**In attendance:** Peter Ballard (Chair), David Altree (Vice Chair), Lauryn Mealing (Clerk), Tim and Dinks Boden, Lara Altree, Mike Green, Antony and Jessamy Wilsdon, Elaine Ballard, Richard Hobbs, Maggie and Geoff Barrett, Godfrey Lancashire, Harriet Laurie, Graham Hall, Gill Reypert, David and Mary Dove, Mike Dyson, Janet Thomasson, Peter Gilmour, The Hansford Family (3), Kathy Hince, Sara Gay, Michael Sinclair, Morag Postles, Steve Howard and Cllr. Neil Eysenck.

**Item 14/24: Chairman’s opening remarks**. Peter opened by thanking everyone for their attendance and welcoming Cllr. Neil Eysenck to his first Askerswell Parish Meeting.

**Item 15/24: Apologies for absence** were received from Mandy Hall, Liz and Nigel Guard, Alison Lancashire, Eileen Bryan, Ali Green, Laura and Dave.

**Item 16/24: Minutes of the meeting held on 16th May 2024** were approved unanimously.

**Proposed:** Mike Green  **In Favour:** 24

**Seconded:** Harriet Laurie     **Against:** 0

**Item 17/24:** **Matters arising not covered below** – there were none.

**Item 18/24: Correspondence** – Highways team were contacted about the verges- one response stating a lack of funding.

**Item 19/24: Chair’s update**.  Peter gave the following update - The time has passed very rapidly! We have had a number of very successful events in the Hall – a Barbecue... a Chip Supper – with very fish-centric quiz, the annual Cream Tea, a fascinating history lecture from Antony, the Harvest Supper – just today, the Parish lunches restarted with 18 in attendance for an outstanding boeuf bourgignon and banoffee roulade for pud... absolutely the best lunch in Dorset and for just £6!!

Parish Coffee continues to attract a good number of people, the Table Tennis crowd seems to have been growing healthily... The Askerswell Amblers have ambled... the Five Pubs challenge passed off without serious injury – the Spyway Summer garden party went well... We all enjoyed the lovely Community Power Cut a couple of weeks ago and will certainly enjoy the compensation payment that we are now due (if anyone hasn’t yet had that, please let us know and we will advise on how to claim it, though it seems to have been issued automatically to all the affected properties)

We had our first wedding in the Church for quite some time... and as you will have seen from the recent Post, the decorations for the Harvest Festival in Church were outstanding! (Do feel free to attend services (just saying!!)) For such a small village, an incredible amount goes on – and on behalf of the Parish Meeting, we thank all of those who have been involved, helped plan, organise, cleared up, washed up, scoffed leftovers... I know I often comment about how lucky we are to live in such a wonderful community, but I really do think we need to acknowledge what a rare thing it is – it doesn’t happen by accident and we are fortunate to have had such strong leadership and inspiration over the years - which binds us together and makes this such a wonderful place to live. I look forward to many more years of outstanding community involvement and thank you all for your enthusiasm! If you haven’t booked your tickets for the Curry night on November 2nd – please see Elaine afterwards!

**Item 20/24: Finance Review (Clerk)** Peter displayed the Accounts statement (attached) that was previously circulated and talked through the highlights. There were no questions. Peter briefly detailed the expenses and, as there is a small but consistent surplus, there is no need to increase the precept and thus called for the vote to maintain the Precept at its current level - which was approved unanimously.

**Proposed:** Godfrey Lancashire **In Favour:** 24

**Seconded:** Richard Hobbs **Against:** 0

**Item 21/24: Washingpool Fund update –** £1708 in the fund, Peter noted that there had been no change in the balance since the last meeting and reminded those on the grass cutting rota not to feel they should fund petrol themselves and to submit receipts for reimbursement.

**item 22/24: Summary of Planning Applications and Highways work –** Planning      sought and granted at Medway Farm

**Item 23/24: Local Reports and Acknowledgements** (verbal)

Peter introduced Neil Eysenck - who stated that he aims to be very local and present in the village as he has local connections and lives nearby in Litton Cheney, his mobile number is available on the council website. Neil refers to the previous mention of the highways team and assures that this is an area he is happy to deal with personally, he is aware that the team are short of staff currently.

General council update-from Neil Eysenck

* Changes to Scheme of Delegation giving more power to parish Councils and Ward Councillors to bring to Planning Committee that locals object to.
* New Planning Enforcement Policy currently drafted. Presented to Cabinet recently.
* Challenges re changes to NPPF and housing targets rolled out by new central Government. Significant uplift in longer term housing targets required by local government. Dorset's pushback on this increased pressure on already stretched planning teams (importance of considering updating local plans)
* Devolution and expressions of interests regarding a ‘heart of Wessex’ Authority challenge over how to approach this given ‘carrot and stick’ steer provided by central government.
* Nature emergency- declared in July full council. Main impacts on council land and efforts to sign post direction of travel.
* Budget deficit £10m. Debatable where this suddenly appeared from, but issue is that it exists. New administration continuing role analysis of depths to identify potential efficiencies. Likely ongoing savings targets of £8-15m per annum but this is unlikely to crystallise this year. So immediate impact is pressure on budgets potentially seeing this in highways and rights of way responses to issues regarding flooding and roads - local preparedness plans in place?
* New regular [quarterly] Cabinet Bulletin prepared by each portfolio holder- sent out by DATPC recently- definitely worth reviewing for more specific area updates. *(Neil agreed to send a link which can be circulated on AP and posted on website)*
* Big Conversation Consultation. First draught of new council plan will be presented to overview committee soon and some of the first results of the “Big Conversation” will be available then. General acceptance that not all went well in terms of the way the process was managed.
* Additionally, potentially in the pipeline ‘hedge to hedge’- revised approach to managing verges and gullies Neil to liaise with John Andrews to know more.
* A review of approaches to managing hedges verges ditches and gullies to see whether a revised approach to going back to more regular clearances might be possible given budget and other practical constraints early days but watch this space.

                 Committees I am sitting on:

* Vice chair of S&W Planning Committee
* Place- scrutiny committee
* Audit and Governance Committee

Ward specific items

Highways- Pig Lane - Nallers Lane - drove up and reviewed for myself followed up finally with local highways officer 10/11/24 he is going to follow up with previous highways officer and provide me an update issue is that it is only impacting one person so low priority.

Mobile phone signal

Dorset council working with Atlas Tower Group regarding mobile phone signal should I put ask Askerswell forward to enter discussions too?

issues locally over obtaining smart meters.

\*\*include Cabinet Bulletin link to Askerswell post and website\*\*

[Key cabinet commitments - Dorset Council](https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/key-cabinet-commitments?p_l_back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Dcabinet%2Bbulletin) (post meeting note – this is what is currently available, updates to follow as and when)

Response to questions regarding phone signal- fuel and gravel plots potential sites for masts. Neil Eysenck will put forward with Atlas group in furthering this.

Richard - mobile signal impacts BT and the removal of copper/land lines. We cannot have no land lines with no mobile signal.

Harriet - we do have fibre to the property.

Mike Dyson - the phone box was left by BT only due to the lack of mobile signal.

* **Village Hall -** Mike Green is the new Village Hall chair. Thanks given to Geoff Barrett who will remain as treasurer. Trustees include; Elaine (secretary), Lara (legal), Mandy Hall / Linda Nicholson co-opted. Any issues with the Village Hall please contact Mike.

No questions.

* **Good neighbours Scheme / 4WD Drivers –** Godfrey gave a brief intro to what the scheme offers to those not familiar. He thanked Kathy and Liz (on holiday) for their tireless service. More volunteers needed as both Kathy and Liz are looking to move. If you are not on the 4x4 list and would like to join, speak to Godfrey. Reminder that yellow postcards with details are available.

No questions

* **Washingpool maintenance and nature report –** Dave gave thanks to those on the mowing rota. Reports that the mower has issues- it is with Dave currently for repair. The Green is very wet, new land drain could be needed? Wildlife is happy and thriving. Water vole monitoring - volunteers needed to assist Howard - contact Peter who recently went on a vole spotting mission with Howard and highly recommends the experience - or Howard himself.

* **Flower Tubs** – The Square has been kept very tidy Thanks were given to David and Rose (not present), and to Lara for the Hall tubs

* **Website -** no updates from Nick (not present)

* **Parish Lands charities update** – Anthony gave an update on what Is involved and how the funds raised from the lands can be used. Reports each quarter- no further activity since April balances- £808.39 (Fuel Allotment) and £808.38. (Gravel Allotment)

The Proposal that Mike Green be elected as a Trustee of The Parish Lands Charities from 3.11.24 went to the vote:

**Proposer-** Antony Wilsdon **In Favour** - 24

**Seconded**- David Dove **Against**   - none

* **Rights of Way**

Including request to Highways Re. Verges. Council has noticed a reduction in issues from Askerswell, which implies that we are maintaining them well! Stiles replaced at Washingpool and leading back to the road. New handrail on the bridge - although Sam advised that the bridge will need replacing in full in the near future.

Any issues raise with Peter.

Micheal – the approach to the stile on to Dorchester road could do with consideration for people with mobility issues.- Peter will investigate further.

* **Village Clean-Up day** – proposed 22.3.25 tea and biscuits may be provided.

* **Defibrillator** all is working and well, has still yet to be used thankfully! Hannah Butt from SWAS provided training before and will be contacted to provide update training/refresher courses.

**Item 23/24: Election of Officers.** No appetite for change, Current Officers remain.

**Item 24/24: Any Other Business.**

No updates on buses.

Suggestion to enhance the good neighbour scheme - Contact Peter if this is something you'd like to get involved in,

Kathy - increased number of scam emails purporting to be from the Askerswell post. No other instances reported. Peter will investigate this matter.

**Date of next Parish Meeting** was agreed as Thursday 15th May 2025

**There being no further business, Peter closed the meeting at 20.29**