

Parish Council Update – November 2014

Neighbourhood Plan

In our last Update we reported that that the 4th Draft of the Plan had been circulated to members of the Neighbourhood Planning Forum (parishioners who had told us that they wanted to be involved in the development of the Plan) for comment. A copy had also been left in the DFR and on the Dorstone Community web site. These comments and suggestions, together with further amendments from members of the Steering group and our consultant Claire Rawlings, were incorporated into a 5th draft and discussed at a Steering group meeting on October 13th. We are now preparing a sixth draft, which hopefully will become the final version.

A key part of the Plan is future housing and its possible location. Rather than identify particular sites we have drawn a list of criteria against which we could judge future applications. To support this approach we have asked Mark Owen of Owen Hicks Architecture to carry out a village characterisation survey which will identify key features of the main village and particular the role of open spaces in the character of the village. Responses from the residents Questionnaire demonstrated that preservation of open spaces and views was a matter of concern to Parishioners. Mark is due to provide his final report shortly and this will help us prepare the 6th draft of the Plan.

We hope that the final draft will be completed by the end of the Year and we can then undertake the formal consultation with the community and Herefordshire Council in the New Year. In parallel with our work on the Neighbourhood Plan, Herefordshire Council's Local Plan, against which our Plan has to be judged, has now been submitted to an external Inspector who will be holding hearings probably in February/March. It makes sense therefore to run our plan on a similar timescale.

Planning Application for 2 Broiler Units at Bage Court – Details to be available at Village Hall on Sunday November 30th between 3.00pm & 6.00pm

A Planning Application has been lodged with Herefordshire Council for the erection of 2 Broiler Sheds at Bage Court. Given the level of interest shown already over this application the Parish Council has arranged for the Plans to be on display in the **Village Hall from 3.00pm until 6.00pm on Sunday November 30th**. The Applicant, Mr John Morgan and his Agent, Mr Ian Pick have been invited to be present to answer questions from Parishioners on the Application. Members of the Parish Council will be present to receive comments from Parishioners.

The whole application can be viewed on line at the Herefordshire Council web site:-

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/development-control/planning-applications/details?id=143343&search=Dorstone>. Comments on the application can also be made directly on the Herefordshire Council web site.

The Parish Council will also be contacting owners of neighbouring properties directly to ensure they are fully aware of the proposals and to receive comments. The Council will consider the application at a meeting to be held on **Thursday 4th December at 7.30 in the Village Hall.**

Budget and Precept

Herefordshire Council has brought forward the usual timescale for Parish Councils to prepare their budget and precept proposals by one month. Therefore at our

November meeting we agreed a budget for 2015-16 and proposed a precept of £3800.

Over the past three years the Council has recognised the need to achieve a better balance between fixed and controllable expenditure and the precept (i.e. Income) and therefore has adopted a policy of phased increases in precept in order to eventually cover the Council's expenditure rather than continue to draw down reserves. The increase to £3800 nearly achieves this objective. This brings the monthly payment for a Band D property for 2015/16 to £21.60 an annual increase of £3.52 compared with 2014/15.

Village Hall - Public Toilets

Thank you to the 20+ residents who responded to the joint request from the Council and the Village Hall Committee for views on the issue of keeping open the Public Toilets at the rear of the Village Hall. The response was unanimous that the toilets should remain as a facility for both residents and visitors to Dorstone.

Amongst the comments was a anonymous note making a series of points concerning the way this matter has been handled and the alleged failure of communications by the Council. Therefore perhaps we can provide some clarification on this issue.

- In early 2011 the Village Hall Committee asked the Parish Council for some help in maintaining the toilets, pointing out that they were not required by the Village Hall itself and were more of a public facility. In response the Parish Council agreed to provide a grant of £200 towards the cost of running the toilets (cleaning, consumables, heating/light septic tank emptying costs etc). This grant was paid during the 2012/13 & 2013/14 financial years.
- For the 2014-15 financial year the Council felt that the Village Hall Committee could apply for this grant under the terms of the Council's Donation Policy, designed to help meet the needs of Village organisations. However in September 2014 the Village Hall Committee reviewed the matter and took the view that applying under the Donations Policy would prevent them from applying in future for grants for other items more relevant to the requirements of running the Hall than the provision of public toilets.
- Therefore to resolve the issue in October the Village Hall Committee and the Council decided to seek the views of Parishioners on the future of this facility.
- Given the views of Parishioners and other visitors who have contacted us we have decided to continue paying the grant of £200 for both this year and the coming financial year and hopefully in the future. The Village Hall Committee have accepted this arrangement.
- The anonymous note also drew attention to the absence of recent Parish Council minutes on the Dorstone Community website, which has now been rectified. Whilst Parish Council Updates such as this one, have been produced on a quarterly basis copies of the Updates have not been placed on the web site since April 2013 and this has also been rectified.

Colin Thomas
Chairman