

**Minutes of the Meeting of**  
**Didmarton Parish Council**  
**Held 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023 Didmarton Village Hall**

Members present: Cllr J Pearce, J Hammond, H Turner, S Hewlett, A Darbyshire, H White  
CDC: Cllr T Slater

**23/278.Apologies for Absence**

Cllr C Rogers,

**23/279.Declarations of Interest under the Localism Act 2011 for any items on this agenda**

None

**23/280.Reports from County and District Councillors**

Cllr T Slater reported:-

At CDC: I attended my first Overview and Scrutiny committee which was very interesting as it gave me my first insight into the workings of the council. The committee has responsibility to highlight any issues on reports that are going to the cabinet for their approval. On the finance report I queried why income from car parking was almost £500k lower than forecast, and did it have anything to do with removing the ability to pay by cash? Another report highlighted a new Rural England Prosperity Fund that will open for applications in September/October – this grant scheme will enable local organisations and businesses to request funds for improvements to local facilities such as village halls and energy efficiency improvements. I'll let you know when it is open, but it would be advisable to make plans now. It will need a 20% matched fund from the project.

You may have seen elsewhere that the new 'Changing Places' toilet facility is now open in the Abbey Grounds in Cirencester.

I have already been to several PC meetings this month, and its interesting that there are common themes in the villages – mostly around speeding and parking. It's a very difficult subject to resolve but I have been able to recommend actions to work with GCC Highways to get data before deciding on a course of action.

It is also apparent that attracting new councillors is difficult, with several parishes short of volunteers.

I have been reading that Link, the organisation that runs the UK cash machine network is opening shared hubs to provide a banking service in towns where all banks have left. The idea is that individual banks have their own staff on duty one day per week, but general banking can be carried out every day. I have made early enquiries if such a hub could be opened in Tetbury.

Didmarton:

Unfortunately, this article had to be prepared before attending my first Parish Council meeting at Didmarton, but I'm looking forward to meeting the team.

I understand that the Badminton concerts didn't cause too much inconvenience and were well organised, but I'm sure there will be a full report at the PC meeting.

Guided walk:

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens will be hosting a walk on Friday, 25th August – Start: 10:00 am Sherston; Difficulty: MODERATE Duration: 5.5 HOURS Distance: 10.0 MILES. Start point: Outside the Sherston village shop and post office in the village square. From Sherston they will walk along the Sherston branch of the River Avon to Didmarton before returning via Sopworth and Luckington.

**23/281.Confirm Minutes of meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

Decision: proposed by Cllr A Darbyshire and seconded by Cllr H White, agreed by all.

**23/282.Finance**

a) Payment of accounts

- F Thornton – clerk fees pro rata to end of July 23 £266.67
- Hathaway Landscapes – monthly maintenance contract £260 per month (05.23/06.23)
- Shiftbond Ltd – replacement screen £365 (funded from CIL monies)

Decision: proposed by Cllr H Turner and seconded by Cllr S Hewlett, agreed by all.

- b) Council to note income/expenditure and bank reconciliation as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 – (see end of minutes for details)

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**23/283.Planning Matters**

None

**23/284.Correspondence/Communication with Parish Council**

None

**23/285.Council to receive feedback and actions (if any) re: Concerts Worcester Park July 2023**

Cllr J Hammond reported.

- Lighting in the car park was not directional and was shining towards the houses in Berthas Field
- Some people used St Arilds Road as a pickup point and not the designated place.
- Dog walkers on Badminton Lane complained of excessive speed of contractors.

The consensus was that the events had gone well and the traffic flow had worked perfectly. The question was raised as to whether there was a need for a follow up meeting.

**23/286.Maintenance Contract – additional works**

Following a great number of years, Mr G James is retiring from his voluntary mowing of the churchyard and the grass verge housing the war memorial.

The cost to add these 2 areas to the village maintenance contract is 27 cuts x £35 = £ 935 total which over 12 months is £78 extra a month. The Church wishes to contribute to this cost and will pay £20 towards each cut.

Decision: proposed by Cllr H Turner and seconded by Cllr H White, agreed by all.

**23/287.Response from Badminton Estate re: tree management issues raised at previous meeting.**

Here are some clarifications and updates:

Trees: We have a retained woodland and arboricultural consultant who assists our in-house team in managing the estate's trees. While we value and protect our trees, as landowners, we also have a duty of care to ensure public safety. The recent felling of ash (not oak) trees near Sopworth and along the Wiltshire path was necessary on the advice of our consultant due to severe ash dieback, which posed risks to public safety. We follow modern veteran tree management practices, which prioritise minimal intervention, retention of trees, conservation of deadwood as habitats, and long-term planning for their sustainability. We have a planned replacement program, for trees in the Estate's woodland and have planted 50,000 over the last two years.

Concert: An arboricultural survey has been conducted for the concerts in Worcester Park, and trees requiring work for safety work were identified. We are in the process of developing a new landscape management plan that will incorporate agreed-upon practices for tree preservation and replanting. This plan will provide guidance for the next 25 years and beyond. Regarding the condition of Worcester Park, the concerts have been timed to coincide with one of the anticipated driest periods, during midsummer, with the intention that the concert activity cause as little disturbance to the soil structure and surface vegetation as possible.

Sopworth Grass Fields: The ploughed grass fields were not ancient. They were assessed by our agronomist and identified as generally new grassland leys with a high content of ryegrass. The fields have been in arable rotation in the past. In our future agricultural practices for these fields we will adopt direct drilling, a method that minimises soil disturbance, preserves soil structure, promotes soil health, enhances water management, reduces energy consumption, and supports biodiversity.

We regret the effects of ash dieback as much as everyone else, but we have no choice but to take down affected trees, particularly where they are beside public highways and rights of way. We are committed to responsible stewardship and the preservation of the estate's natural assets.

I hope this is helpful and gives your parishioner some reassurance of the Estate's policy towards land and woodland management.

Decision: this information to be published in the Dyddi.



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**23/288.Parish Council Profile**

It was agreed that the Dyddi is the best form of communication within the parish.  
The need for a new website was flagged up. – **next agenda item**  
Cllr H White to do research on desired website format.  
Cllr H Turner to organise Dyddi submissions.

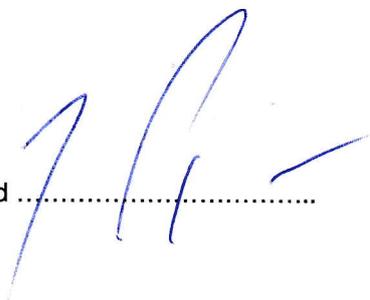
**23/289.Items to report**

(Items can be discussed but members can make no decisions)

- Resignation of Clerk w.e.f. 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023 – Working group of Cllrs J Pearce, H White and A Darbyshire to meet and commence process of recruitment of a replacement.  
Cllr H White to receive council email login and password.  
Cllrs J Pearce and J Hammond are already on the bank mandate so it is a simple process of them registering for online banking.  
Clerk to pass current file and minute books to Cllr H White.
  
- Cllr A Darbyshire raised the matter of missing football goal nets. It was thought they maybe stored on the Village Hall premises.

1. Date of next meeting – September 2023. Date to be arranged by new Clerk.

Signed .....



Date.....

10/10/2023