

DEDDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Council held at The Town Hall on Wednesday, 8th March 2001 commencing at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillors Flux (Chairman), Clarke, Clinch, Cosgrove, Mrs. Cox, Mrs. Davies, Hart, Miss Hill, Newey, Mrs. Swash, Todd and Mrs. Walker.
Mr. D. Blakey (Clerk) and Mrs. J. Smith (Minute Secretary)

155/01 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bell, District Councillor O'Sullivan and County Councillor Matthews.

156/01 **Correspondence**

a) Notice has been received regarding the temporary HGV restriction on the A361 at South Newington. HGV's will be diverted via the Hempton Road, which will result in an increase of heavy goods traffic for the length of the closure. The diversion will begin on 12 March 2001 and will last approximately 5 days.

b) Cllr. Todd reported that Cherwell DC have confirmed support for the library project by awarding a grant of £3,335. Thanks were given to all persons concerned in the preparation of the grant application and also to Cherwell DC. The County Council grant will be considered in April.

157/01 **Stonepit Land, Hempton**

At the meeting held on 21st February 2001, a resolution was made to the effect that no further action would be taken regarding the possible use of Stonepit land until Council had considered all possibilities for future use and that a special meeting of the Council would be held, in closed session, when Cllr. Flux returned from holiday so that the Council could consider the background to the matter.

It was agreed that the discussion of this item would start in open session.

Cllr. Flux reported that a letter was received from Mr. Middleditch in August 2000 requesting that his client, Mr Caulcott of Hempton, be allowed to buy the land known as Stonepit. At that time the Clerk replied that the Council leased the land and the lessee, Mr. West of High Street, Deddington, had not given intention of notice to quit.

Councillors raised concerns that this correspondence had not been reported to the Council and that when parish land is concerned all Councillors should be kept informed. Some newer members of the Council were not aware that the Council owned the land until it appeared as an asset on the Audited Accounts approved at the last meeting. Speculation had taken place about possible development of the land.

Cllr. Flux explained that the letter received in August had been dealt with routinely as no action was necessary, the land was leased and not available for sale. He apologised that the correspondence had not been reported at the September meeting. Mr. West telephoned the Clerk and confirmed the cancellation of the lease later in the year and he has not yet put the matter in writing. Cllr. Flux stated that he then consulted with the Vice Chairman, Cllr. Todd regarding the possible use of the land options was considered including the possibility of affordable housing. However, it was borne in mind that the Council has previously agreed that no more peripheral development should take place. It was agreed that the land should be valued. Cllrs. Todd and Miss Hill and the Clerk also met with Mr. Buxton, Planning Officer, at Cherwell DC to investigate the attitude of the Local Authority regarding future use of the land. An item was included on the agenda for the February meeting. This was to be discussed in closed session. Cllr. Flux stressed that no decisions had been or would have been made without the matter being considered by the Council. The Chairman had considered that the matter should be discussed in closed session to avoid speculation from local estate agents or other interested parties.

Cllrs. Flux and Todd stressed that meeting with Cherwell DC was purely an exercise in ascertaining the value of the land and pointed out that best value must be obtained in respect of all

council assets. It would not be best value to allow the land to lay fallow and to have no income or use appertaining to it. Cllr. Newey stated that it appeared that it was procedure that was incorrect in this matter and there appeared to be a lack of communication between councillors. Cllr. Mrs. Davies felt that the matter should have been put before the council before the February meeting. Cllr. Clarke requested that the letter from Mr. Middleditch be read for all to hear, however, the letter was not available at the meeting. Mr. Clarke also expressed his concern regarding the date of Mr West's notice in respect of the land as he had been informed that this had been given earlier than indicated by the Clerk. Cllr. Flux stated that a certain amount of trust had to be allowed to enable working groups to perform their functions. The Clerk is the council's Chief Financial Officer and as such must represent the Council in its best interests; this involves attending meetings such as with the Planning Authority.

It was agreed that, to avoid similar situations in the future, all correspondence will continue to be presented to the Council in list form, as at the last meeting. It was also agreed that a review of Working Groups and procedures would take place and guidelines would be drawn up to make the procedures clear. These procedures would include guidelines on who should attend statutory meetings etc. It was also agreed that a site plan of Stonepit would be sent to all Councillors.

It was proposed by Cllr. Clinch that discussion of the Stonepit land should take place at the next meeting and that a working party should be formed to investigate possibilities for its future use. Seconded by Cllr. Newey. 11 in favour, 1 against.

158/01 **Other Matters**

a) Cllr. Miss Hill was concerned about correspondence, which appeared in the Deddington News relating to Mr. Nobbs hedge. The Clerk confirmed that the hedge had been cut two days after the parish council meeting and he had now spoken and written to Mr. Nobbs.

b) The Clerk confirmed that a further objection had been sent to Cherwell DC regarding the planning application at Pretoria House.