

Dolton Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held Monday 21st May 2007-06-11 7.30pm in the village hall

Present: Cllrs.Lock, Giles, Burnage, Genge, Jury, Boyce, Berkley-Sage
J.Kendrew (acting secretary) 39 members of the public.
Mrs.L.Smith of DAPC

Apologies: Cllrs.Partridge and Grigg

1. Mrs.Lesley Smith from Devon Association of Parish Councils. The Chairman introduced Mrs.Smith and she outlined her work with DAPC as follows:-

- a) she is employed by Community Council of Devon so links well with funding schemes etc.
- b) this is a new term for all councils. We must keep eye on central government policies, such as planning, as this is one of lots of interesting things to challenge local councils.
- c) 3rd May 2007 revised Code of Conduct (yet to be adopted) She believes Councils should adopt new code from *now* to make it fair for new councillors, less confusion.
- d) She then asked the public if they could draw a picture of the perfect councillor. She gave paper to groups of the public and gave the example that a good listener might have big ears! This was greatly enjoyed by all the public, lots of laughs. All drawings were then shown:-

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| Picture 1 | showed wisdom |
| Picture 2 | showed brains, big ears, small mouth, broad shoulders |
| Picture 3 | showed broad shoulders, big heart, finger on pulse, feet on ground |
| Picture 4 | showed see no evil, not blinkered, no chips on shoulders |
| Picture 5 | showed broad shoulders, smiley, big ears, well spoken so can be heard |
| Picture 6 | showed halo, listening, not self serving, Dolton in heart |
| Picture 7 | showed big hand – welcoming, smiley, feet on ground in wellies |
| Picture 8 | Showed halo, broad shoulders, thin neck – so you can break it easy.
Big nose for sniffing out problems. |
| Picture 9 | Showed big ears, not open to corruption, time to listen |

Mrs.Smith suggested Parish Council keeps the drawings as examples of what the electorate expects of them.

e) Being a Councillor is not an easy thing. Some have strengths in listening, some don't but have other strengths. Some are good at gathering information. It takes time to become a whole parish councillor. She will leave books for Parish Council to pull from for info on procedures and such like. We have DAPC for reading the big books and gathering information as a service. She thought Quality Council status is very important. Councillors must listen to everyone to form decisions. Councillors must treat people equally. They have a duty to listen to people outside of meetings, not just to those who attend. Going with majority is not always the right route. She has a new model code that will serve all councils not all applies to parish councils. Most interesting bit was section 2) if a councillor has an interest a councillor will be able to speak in the public session and then has to leave the meeting before discussion and decision. This will take a while to work through. Standards Board web site for information. Councillors will be trained on all these issues.

The following questions were then asked:-

a) J.Genge “how can a council be proactive to take a lead on issues such as affordable housing”. Reply: you have a very thorough parish plan, use this to be proactive, it is a professional document that can back up your arguments. You cannot be seen to be biased before meetings. Where a parish councillor is also a district councillor they must be even more careful. You cannot say I will get this for you or vote this way or that a parish council decision is always a corporate one.

b) D.O’Brian “if you have been elected on an issue a councillor surely should be able to take that issue forward”. Reply: life is not that simple, again pointing to the parish plan, issue on issue should be just that. Parish Council should not have to sit and wait for sites for affordable housing, could put in local newsletter “we need some land for affordable housing”.

Cllr.Burnage thanked Mrs.Smith for her very interesting talk.

2. The minutes of the annual parish meeting held 22nd May 2006 (having already been approved) were read. There were no matters arising.

3. Chairman’s report – Chairman gave his report for the past year, a copy of which is attached in the minute file.

4. Any other business:

a) Miss C.Beedles asked the following question: in Dec.2005 the Parish Council including yourself as chairman – apparently felt so strongly that the right thing to do to protect the Dennis Cross play area for the village for all time – was to make it subject to a deed of dedication – and they resolved to do so without consulting the parish. For reasons which have never been made clear – the Parish Council was reluctant to do the same for the playing field site. Although two public meetings were called in March 2006 and Feb. 2007 – the Parish Council never took the trouble to put the arguments for and against placing a deed of dedication on the playing field site – or to explain why this site was in any way different to Dennis Cross play area. Despite this – the people of Dolton who attended the public meetings – voted in each case by a strong majority – for the playing field site to be protected by a deed of dedication. The Parish Council – led by you as Chairman – ignored these democratic expressions of public feeling. Please explain to me – in what circumstances you believe the democratically expressed wishes of the people of Dolton – should be respected by the Parish Council – and in what circumstances you can choose to ignore them as you have done – in respect of a deed of dedication for the playing field site. She also asked if the chairman had had more than 37 people approach him against this issue.

Chairman Cllr.Lock replied: he had more than 37 people approach him not to enter into a deed of dedication. He feels he made a mistake in voting for a deed of dedication to be put on Dennis Cross and he was sorry to have voted that way.

b) Mr. N.Woods demanded a Parish poll on this issue Under Part 3 Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972 so the views of the parish, not the parish

council, could be heard

c) Mr.N.Woods asked the question “do you want Dolton Parish Council to enter into a deed of dedication with the National Playing Fields Association to protect for all time the playing field which it owns next to the churchyard?”

Chairman stated he could not make a decision without other Councillors. Mr.Wood replied he would take that as a no then and informed the meeting that if the chair refuses then he would need other people to back him through a straw poll.

Straw poll taken by the proposer- 27 (without the proposer) wanted a parish poll on this subject.

Chairman asked if this group wanted to pay approx. £2,000 for a parish poll. N.Wood replied he did not think that this was the issue.

d) Mr.I.Williams – reported he had spoken on the subject of a deed of dedication at other meetings and feels democracy has not been seen to be done.

There being no further business the chairman closed the meeting at 8.30pm.

signed.....chairman.....dated