



# Dodington Parish Council

**MINUTES** of **Full Council Meeting** of the Parish Council held in Council Chamber adjacent to Dodington Parish Hall on **Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025** at 7.30pm .

**PRESENT:** Councillors David Fitt, Bob Graham, Louise Harris, Christine Howard, Paul Hulbert, Adrian Hutton, Sandra Jee, Oliver Lodge, Jean Thomas, Karl Tomasin and Chris Zapata (Chairing Meeting)

**ALSO PRESENT:** Hannah Saunders Clerk to the Council – Clerking the Meeting, Ward Councillors Ben Stokes, Marilyn Palmer and Cheryl Kirby plus 9 Members of Public

*Chair welcomed everyone to Full Council meeting, ensured that they had signed in and explained evacuation procedure.*

*Chair stated that following first 2 agenda items – he would open the floor to the public – and then was going to bring Item 6 Planning Matters forward.*

*As there were a lot of people present – he reminded members of need to raise hand if wanted to speak.*

## **387/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Were received and accepted from Cllrs Laura Pearson Tong, Sarah Hurley and Richard Evans.

## **388/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUEST FOR DISPENSATION**

NONE

## **389/25 PARISHIONERS QUESTIONS**

Members thanked Juliet for sending over report prior to the weekend.

Two residents that live in the nearest property to Mousewell Farm addressed the council with their objections to the proposals for Solar Farm.

Mr & Mrs Archer were aware that members had seen document produced by another resident – so they didn't reiterate anything other than to stress not only their concerns but concerns of their neighbours regarding Policy CS34 and development in rural area and negative impact that the solar farm would have on the local area. They aren't against renewable energy – just don't feel this is the right solution for the area.

Ward Councillors Ben Stokes and Marilyn Palmer – representing rural ward both confirmed that they would be referring this application to development control – as they felt that an

application of this significance need to be heard at 2<sup>nd</sup> tribunal level.

Ward Councillor Cheryl Kirby had nothing further to add and Louise Harris (dual hatted councillor) wished to speak as a Parish Councillor later.

There was one further question from member of public regarding precept request for the Parish 25 – 26, Clerk referred them to draft minutes that were on website – which detailed the decision taken on budget on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

As there were no further questions – Chair closed public participation – reminding members of public that they could no longer take part in meeting – just observe.

### **390/25 PLANNING MATTERS**

As mentioned at start of meeting Chair moved item 6 forward and members duly discussed planning application P24/03001/F – Construction of Solar Farm and Battery Storage – on land at Mousewell Farm and Pool Farm.

Chair went around table – giving each councillor opportunity to speak – and make comments regarding the proposed application.

Brief summary – A few councillors felt scheme too large. Members that were also involved with Wapley Bushes had concerns – particularly regarding biodiversity and flooding. Members are supportive of renewable energy and use of battery storage – in right place...however, need to know more about future decommissioning. There were comments about Off Shore renewable energy and Wind energy and how this should be progressed. Cllr Louise Harris – who didn't speak as Ward Councillor – but spoke as a parish councillor explained that it is tricky...as SGC have declared a Climate Emergency and have a need to promote such plans. She feels that a lot of the objections / issues can be overcome via conditions put in place and further information that officers have requested. If council is moved to object – Louise would like it made very clear what the objections are.

After due consideration despite members being in favour of renewable energy and appreciating the need for it – it was proposed by Cllr Paul Hulbert and seconded by Cllr Oliver Lodge and RESOLVED to Object to the planning application as it currently stands.

Vote went 10 members objecting 1 member in favour

Full transcript of comments submitted to LPA can be viewed Appendix 1 attached to these minutes.

### **391/25 TO APPROVE MINUTES OF FULL COUNCIL MEETING**

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the Full Council Meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 as printed / circulated were a true record – and they were duly signed by Cllr Chris Zapata.

(Confidential Minutes to be reviewed / approved during Closed session at end of meeting).

There were no matters arising.

### **392/25 WARD COUNCILLORS**

Reports given by Ward Cllrs Cheryl Kirby, Ben Stokes, Marilyn Palmer and Louise Harris can be found – Appendix 2 attached to these minutes.

### **393/25 CONSULTATIONS**

- Strategic Investment Plan Consultation – Western Gateway  
After due consideration – it was resolved no need to respond to consultation at this stage. There was no detail put to the improvements planned for Westerleigh Junction and they aren't due to be looked at in this phase of work.

### **394/25 LILLIPUT PARK TREE WORK 2025**

Members reviewed redacted details of 3 quotes that had been received in relation to tree works that were required at Lilliput Park following arboricultural survey last year.

Clerk confirmed that all 3 companies had received the same information / brief – and as such had been reluctant to go back to company B regarding their plans for removal of waste timber – as others had picked up on this and detailed.

There was a question as to whether work would be carried out fully if the company didn't need access to neighbouring gardens – but members were reassured by comment Cllr Paul Hulbert made regarding work processes.

After due consideration it was RESOLVED to employ company C to carry out the work.

Clerk confirmed that this was Wildwood Tree Care Ltd.

### **395/25 OFFICIAL OPENING OF CHAMBERS / OFFICE**

Members had reviewed report – and guest list – no amendments / additions to be made. It was agreed to keep it simple – so soft drinks / tea and coffee only.

Cllrs Chris Zapata, Jean Thomas and Adrian Hutton agreed to sit on the Working Group – and Clerk confirmed that the invitations would be sent out as soon as possible.

### **396/25 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

Date of APM had been agreed – week previously – Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025. Members had read Clerks recommendations regarding speakers and after due consideration it was agreed to go with all 3 speakers – as they would compliment each other – and ensure that they spoke for no more than 20 minutes. Ensure plenty of time for networking at end.

Speakers agreed – Paul's Place, Junior Park Run and DofE / Culverhill School.

### **397/25 DODINGTON PARISH BAND – BRASS ON GRASS**

It was noted that the preferred date for Brass on Grass wasn't going to work – as bands conductor – was on holiday.

As such band had offered up the following weekend – Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2025. After due consideration – it was agreed to go with 20<sup>th</sup> July – but due to limited number of members being available to help out – to hold the event on the site of the hall / school. It was suggested that office cancel Martial Arts that evening so that there isn't a rush at the end.

If weather fair – band to play outside – if not – they can play inside. Hall to be open for use of toilets and for serving refreshments.

### **398/25 ADVERTISING IN YATE AND SODBURY VOICE**

It was agreed that the advertising the previous year had been successful – and there was budget to continue with this (cost for the 3 months just under £300).

Due to limited lead time – advert for February was agreed as 'Hire our Facilities'...with regards March and April – Cllr David Fitt suggested that article / advert should concentrate on what Dodington PC do for their local parishioners and what they offer. This was duly agreed – and it was felt this could be repeated on Website and Newsletter – to reinforce the message.

### **399/25 HALL HIRE**

After due consideration it was approved to offer hall Free of Charge to Project Dragonfly – as it is a good way for parish to support such a worthy cause – that they have supported over a number of years.

### **400/25 TRAINING PLAN 2025**

Cllr David Fitt informed members of courses that ALCA offer – and encouraged his colleagues to have a look at the website. In the meantime Clerk would ensure that each individual councillor had a login so that they could access the information Clerk and Cllr David Fitt stressed importance of training and keeping up to date with legislation.

Cllr Oliver Lodge made comment that some of the Pop Up Meeting sessions that SGC arrange are too early (Cllr Louise Harris agreed with this and she has been stressing that for a long time). Ward Cllr Ben Stokes stated that the sessions are offered as videos that can be watched back at a time to suit. Cllr Oliver Lodge stated that this isn't ideal for some people if they have learning disabilities (it can be seen as hostile), Clerk to mention this to training and development team at SGC.

### **401/25 ITEMS TO REPORT**

- Cllr Paul Hulbert informed members that he is pretty overloaded with work currently not helped by knee injury – as such he won't be volunteering or taking on any extra activities for the Council – and he may be sending apologies to some meetings.
- Cllr Karl Tomasin mentioned the proposed new supermarket for Yate – that YTC will be commenting on as plans have been published.
- Cllr Jean Thomas asked when planting outside shops was to be undertaken – Clerk confirmed that this would be by the end of month – plan is to get wooden containers made first and then following week place them and get planted.
- Cllr Oliver Lodge gave apologies for CL&E meeting and also informed members that

- the consultation feedback regarding the A432 cycle lane had been published.
- Clerk thanked members that gave of their time on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> to help with tidying / clearing office. Made such good progress that no need to meet on 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Clerk informed members that she, Liz and Cllr Karl Tomasin had met with representatives from Junior Park Run at QEII and that there would be a full report for discussion at CL&E meeting.
- Liz is starting to work on Newsletter for distribution in April 2025.

*Meeting went into closed session for approval of Confidential Minutes (from 13<sup>TH</sup> January 2025) and to cover off Staffing Matters. Remaining Ward Councillors and MOP left.*

**402/25** Staffing matters are minuted confidentially

As there was no further business the meeting was closed at 9.10pm – with Chair thanking everyone for attending.

Next meeting of Full Council – 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025

Signed .....Chair

Date 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025

## **APPENDIX 1**

### Comments to SGC regarding Planning Application P24/03001/F.

Dodington Parish Council have been engaging with the applicant during the pre-planning stage, and as documented this has led to some changes within the final proposal that has been submitted to LPA.

Dodington Parish Council are supportive of renewable energy and such projects. However, after careful consideration at their full council meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025 resolved to OBJECT to the application as it currently stands.

Members feel that it is difficult to make a decision – given that some information / evidence is currently lacking (as pointed out by SGC Officers in their responses). They would also like more information and clarification as to what will happen upon decommissioning of site in 40 years and what will come of the ‘Community Area’.

The area’s that Dodington Parish Council have most concerns over are:-

- Loss of Biodiversity
- Impact on Greenbelt Land
- Visual Impact – in particular in relation to historical and cultural preservation
- Flooding and drainage issues
- Economic Concerns
- Not clear how the community fund will be managed – and if it is to be index linked. Feel that as it stands at less than £5k / year of operation there is little if any benefit.

As landowners of Wapley Bushes Nature Reserve – the council would point out the following:-

- 1) On application form under section regarding ‘Biodiversity and Geological Conservation’ the applicant has answers NO to both (a) and (b) (a – protected and priority species and b- designated sites / important habitats or other biodiversity features. It is felt that this should have been ticked YES....(see comments below regarding Community Area)....

#### **Comments on the Community Area**

The proposed community area in the north east corner of the western site would be too small to provide a substantial and lasting contribution to ecological diversity. A more reasonable proposal would be to increase this area to run from the eastern tip of the Wapley site down to Pool Farm, increasing the tree planting area and hence the biodiversity net gain of the project.

Four species of bats (protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017) have been identified along the edge of the site nearest to Wapley Common. There is academic evidence that the flight pattern of bats is affected by solar panels - “Bats are avoiding solar farms and scientists aren’t sure why” by Gareth Jones, Professor of Biological Sciences, University of Bristol  
<https://environment.blogs.bristol.ac.uk/2023/08/10/bats-are-avoiding-solar-farms-and-scientists-arent-sure-why/>

As noted in the applicant’s Ecological Impact Assessment, “A study assessing the impacts of solar panels on bat activity (Tinsey et al., 201321) reported that six of eight species/species groups recorded were negatively affected by solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, suggesting that they may result in the loss and/or fragmentation of foraging/commuting habitat.

Enlarging the community area would avoid negative effects on the bat population over Wapley Common and the Nature Reserve.

This section of the site is also part of the range of the local deer population (roe deer and muntjac deer) who are frequent visitors to nearby land. Proposals cover access for smaller mammals up to badger size but not deer – indeed there is mention of installing deerproof fencing. Deer were not considered in the Ecological Impact Statement.

**Conclusion: Unless the community area is expanded there will be negative effects on valuable species on Wapley Common and the Nature Reserve and in nearby countryside.**

Whilst the application has tried to demonstrate that there will be a Biodiversity Net Gain – this relies upon post construction enhancements – by which time certain habitats will potentially have been lost and be difficult to encourage back (even with efforts outlined). It is during the construction phase in particular that there will be risk to wildlife – and that environmental costs will be the highest. It isn't clear how the enhancements will be monitored for the duration of the project – and if they aren't managed / monitored then they are unlikely to have desired impact.

As outlined by members of Wapley Bushes Conservation Group – there are protected species on adjacent land – and no such report has been undertaken regarding these.

Members appreciate that applicant has tried to demonstrate 'special circumstances' for releasing and using greenbelt land – but due to the impact on listed buildings locally and views from historic sites (Dyrham Park in particular) the solar farm will have a negative impact on the area, particularly due to the size of the site near Mousewell Farm.

As well as owning Wapley Bushes Nature Reserve – Dodington own and lease allotments on Besom Lane – and manage the Burial ground at St Peter's Church – and are all too familiar with the flooding that impacts the lower end of the lane on a regular basis. Members feel that the application is dismissive of this evidence of flooding and that further investigation should be undertaken before a decision taken. As well as flooding at the lower end of Besom Lane – the drains by Pool Farm have been known not to cope with significant rainfall – and often both entrances to Wapley and Allotment site 1 is flooded – with residents in Wapley Rank being very concerned for their properties, again highlighting need for this to be properly investigated.

Finally, looking at Economic Concerns – as well as the uncertainty around the community benefit funds, members feel that the long-term local employment effects of this proposal are negative, with only 0.5 FTE on site jobs created as against the loss of agricultural and livery jobs.

The LPA are working on an updated Local Plan currently – however – the existing Local Plan which is valid until 2027 highlights Key Issues for South Gloucestershire Council which they see as being a complex and diverse area.

There are 8 Core Strategy Key Issues that then feed into the Sustainable Community Strategy Priorities – Our Place, Our Economy, Our Communities and Our Health.

Briefly looking at 3 of these issues,

Key Issue 1 – Reducing and Adapting to Climate Change

Key Issue 5 – Improving Existing Communities

Key Issue 7 – Managing the Environment and Heritage

Both Issue 1 and 7 feed into Our Place – conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment. This application doesn't conserve the natural environment – and the enhancements that are being proposed don't overcome the negative impact that such a scheme would have on the rural part of Dodington Parish. Hence members resolving to OBJECT.



## **APPENDIX 2**

### Ward Councillor Reports

**Cheryl Kirby**

#### **South Gloucestershire Council Dodington Ward Councillor Report**

**20<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

##### Food Survey

SGC are wanting to hear from residents and business on issues around food. The feedback will help SGC to work jointly as part of their newly forming South Gloucestershire food partnership to improve how food is made, sold and used.

And, to encourage you to complete this short survey, there is a prize draw where someone may win a £25 voucher.

##### Ride Along with the Police/Andrew Pound

Presently arranging to join PC Andrew Pound on one of his shifts, just to see what his day is like around our area.

##### Greening Your Home

A 90-minute online session is being held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February via Zoom, to cover practical ways to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, and explore funding options for upgrades, within residents' homes.

The address is: [https://orlo.uk/Greening\\_Your\\_Home\\_4JWXx](https://orlo.uk/Greening_Your_Home_4JWXx)

##### Check your Eligibility for Benefits Calculators

This is to encourage people to check whether they are receiving everything that they may be entitled to.

The address is - [https://orlo.uk/Benefit\\_Calculators\\_jbkDn](https://orlo.uk/Benefit_Calculators_jbkDn)

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**Ben Stokes**

#### **South Gloucestershire Council Ward Councillor Report**

It might be worthwhile mentioning a pop-up event to give background to some of the activity and powers of SGC Trading Standards on **Thursday 23 January 2025 at 6:30pm :**

[Click here to join the South Gloucestershire Council Trading Standards Services Pop-Up meeting](#)

Ben wanted to draw members attention to 'One Network' which is an online portal that has details of all roadworks. It is quite useful – but sometimes can be slow to be updated once works have been completed.

On 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025 SGC are going to review their 10 year NHS Plan.

Aware that it was on agenda – Ben pointed members to the Western Gateway Consultation.

Also SGC are doing some work and are looking for volunteers that have low vision – sight issues to work with them.

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### **Louise Harris and Marilyn Palmer**

Wanted to bring members attention to next stage of Local Plan Consultation – which will be released formally by SGC mid February and consultation will start at the end of February 2025.

The next stage is known as the Reg 19 consultation.

The first thing to understand is that this is not like previous consultations, where the Council could keep it open as long as it liked and could hold as many events as it liked, and take responses in any form including eg petitions.

The whole process is now strictly controlled by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regs 2012.

Cllr Chris Wilmore has asked officers if we could organise a briefing for town and parish councils about the process, as it is very different.

There are two particular limits that will affect people – the timescale and the format / wording of comments.

1. Timescale: The legal rules (Reg 35) require a six week consultation, no more, no less. We anticipate it starting on 28<sup>th</sup> Feb, and running for six weeks. Apart from the statutory consultees the duty is to 'make the plan available for inspection' – which can be by publishing on the website and making it available at any place or places the council think appropriate. So this is quite a formal limited process. Comments sent in before the start date do not count and ones sent in after the closing date do not. This is not the Council's choice, the rules are strict.
2. Wording of comments; All comments duly made at this stage go to the inspector who will be examining the final version. The Inspector's sole question is – whether this plan is 'sound'. The NPPF explains what this means. It means
  - a. Positively prepared – that includes how it addresses unmet need for other authorities (and in our case why we don't have room) but also that it does deliver the government's target
  - b. Justified – this is more of a judgement call as it looks at whether the strategy is appropriate, considered against reasonable alternatives based on proportionate evidence (so the inspector is not saying 'starting from zero I would have done something different' but 'is this a reasonable solution to the challenge')

- c. Effective – is it deliverable and have the cross boundary issues been addressed by a statement of common ground
- d. Consistent with national policy

There is a standard form objectors have to use, supplied by the Planning Inspectorate and they have to decide which of those they are saying about a particular policy. From past experience, you sometimes have to be a bit creative about how to explain which of the criteria your concern falls under. Here is the link to the form the inspector appointed has told s Glos it has to use – the final version will be badged as S Glos but will look the same in substance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/model-representation-form-for-local-plans/model-representation-letter-for-local-plans>

Planning Aid has a really good checklist for groups on ‘ how to make comments’ [How do you submit formal representations? – What is your question about?](#)

Cllr Chris Wilmore and her colleagues are encouraging any groups, Town and Parish Councils that they are in touch with to get familiar with those rules now, as six weeks can fly by.

The key though is that they do not have to include every last bit of evidence they want to use. The more they include the better, but a well worded marker in the sand can raise the issue – you just need to do enough to ensure you convince the Inspector this is an issue that really needs further discussion.