



Dorstone Parish Council Update – September 2011

Planning

- Extensive and detailed discussions have been held with local residents, the Applicant and Planners over a proposed agricultural development at Brickleys on Sydcombe Lane. The Planning Department has now confirmed that the application is approved subject to various conditions on the future use of buildings, landscaping, materials used and landscaping. Concerns about the condition of Sydcombe Lane have been referred to Highways staff.
- Regular reports have also been received on developments on Dorstone Hill which are being investigated by the Planning Department as no planning permission has been given. The Parish Council is closely monitoring the situation.

Parish Plan – Speed limits

Herefordshire Council's Highways Department (contracted out to Amey) have been asked for progress reports on the introduction of speed limits on the B4348 and within the Village Area. Parish Councillors take the view that this is taking an extraordinary length of time to progress, given that speed checks carried out in 2010 indicated that speed limits were required. Our views have been made known to the officials responsible and hopefully early progress will be made. We will continue to press the Council for early action.

Herefordshire Council – cut backs

The Council has been consulted on two proposals resulting from cutbacks in Council expenditures.

1. **Bus services** - where questionnaires were posted on the bus stop in the village for users to complete. In our case it now appears that no service is at risk of being cut.
2. **The closure of the Mobile Library Service**, - John Platts has held discussions with regular users to determine their views on possible alternatives. As a result those users who have no means of getting to the branch library in Peterchurch Church will be able to make a twice monthly visit on a Wednesday at 2.00pm with transport being provided by volunteers. A list is available in the DFR for Parishioners willing to volunteer to drive and if anyone wishes to avail themselves of the service please contact John Platts (550150).

Donations Policy

The previous Council adopted a Donations Policy and allocated £500 which can be given to voluntary organisations providing services to the Parish. Applications will be considered at our October meeting. Any organisations interested in making an application should contact Chris Hendy or Simon Gaze.

Faster Broadband

Earlier this year we carried out a local survey of Parishioners views on faster broadband – in fact we were ahead of the rest of the County in undertaking this work. In order to estimate the demand for faster broadband questionnaires are now being sent out to thousand of homes and businesses across the County to gather evidence for the demand for superfast broadband. As this is being handled centrally is likely that you may receive one of these questionnaires which Herefordshire Council feel are vital in proving the case for faster broadband. Whilst it may be irksome to complete a second form we would urge you to do so as it is vital information in persuading likely Bid Applicants (such as BT & Virgin) that it is worthwhile spending millions on pounds on this investment in Herefordshire.

Queen's Jubilee

Plans are being drawn up nationally to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne in June 2012. We are therefore arranging a local open meeting in the Parish on October 19th at 8.00pm in the Village Hall to discuss whether Parishioners wish to celebrate this event and if so, to form a committee to organise the local celebrations.

Budget/Precept 2012-13

Part of the approach of the newly elected Council was that we wished to be as open as possible with respect to the workings of the Parish Council. A key part of this is to discuss with Parishioners the budget of the Council and the level of precept which Parishioners pay as part of their Council Tax. Therefore we will take the opportunity of the open meeting on October 19th to explain the existing budget and precept and to provide an opportunity for Parishioners to have their input into the Budgetary process for 2012-13 financial year. In addition we will be arranging two informal sessions in the DFR not only to explain the finances of the Council but also to give Parishioners an opportunity to raise any other issue with members of the Council.

Housing Survey

We have been informed that a housing survey will be carried out in the near future by Herefordshire Council. The Parish Council has not been party to this decision. We will let you know further details when they become available.

Water Testing

Results have been received for water quality tests carried on the Pont-y-Weston stream in August. Further clarification on these results is being sought from the Environment Agency.

Consultation Issues

One of the lesser known functions of the Parish Council is to represent Dorstone's views on a number of important topics where organisations such as Herefordshire Council, or national organisations ask for views. There are 3 important current issues where our views have been or are being sought:-

1. Locality Working – this is an initiative from Herefordshire Council aimed at improving local services at reduced cost, by having services such as social services and planning locally based. Initially the Council was seeking to group Parishes together in a Partnership arrangement and one was proposed for the Golden Valley. We and other Parishes expressed the view that this could possibly have led to another tier of administration and it is pleasing to note that Herefordshire Council has dropped this part of their proposals. The Council is however asking all their service departments to have certain staff designated as providing a service to 9 locality areas within the County, the Golden Valley is one of these. A senior Manager has also been named to oversee the service providers in a particular area and to act as a point of contact if there are problems. In our case in the Golden Valley the Council's chief finance officer David Powell has been nominated as the senior Manager for the Golden Valley, duties which he will undertake in addition to his existing responsibilities.
2. Local Development Framework (LDF) – this is the long term plan for the County with important implications for planning and housing. Briefing meetings for Parish Councillors on the latest version of the LDF are being arranged in the next month.
3. Parliamentary Boundaries – The Boundary Commission has announced proposals to change MP constituency boundaries. This involves moving the two Golden Valley wards from Hereford to an extended constituency from Ludlow and Leominster to Ewyas Harold. The Parish Council will be considering this change at our next meeting but Parishioners also have the opportunity to directly comment by visiting the Boundary Commission web site

<http://consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/have-your-say/>

Colin Thomas
Chairman