

# Stinsford Parish Council

**Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on Monday 10 June 2024  
at 7:00pm in The Old Library, Kingston Maurward College**

**Present:** Mr Michael Clarke (Chair), Mrs Sarah Pattison (Vice-Chair), Mr George Armstrong, Ms Sue Escott, Mr Kevin Henville, Mr Edd Maynard and Mr Justin Morris

**Also in attendance:** Mr Stephen Webb (Chair of Governing Body of Weymouth College), Dorset Councillor David Taylor, and Miss Kirsty Riglar (Clerk – attending remotely).

## **52. Apologies for Absence**

52.1 There were no apologies for absence received.

## **53. Declarations of Interest**

53.1 Mr Maynard declared a personal interest in the agenda item regarding the merger of Weymouth College and Kingston Maurward College by reason of being an employee of Kingston Maurward College.

## **54. Merger of Weymouth College and Kingston Maurward College**

54.1 Mr Webb, Chair of the Governing Body of Weymouth College, provided the Parish Council with an update on the proposed merger of Kingston Maurward College and Weymouth College. He explained that both colleges were fairly small and had experienced significant financial difficulties in the recent years. The proposed merger was intended to build a more financially resilient future through combining the strengths of the two organisations and reducing competition in the further education sector locally. He considered that this was a positive move for the educational offer in the Dorchester area.

54.2 Members of the Parish Council and Councillor Taylor expressed their concerns about the decision not to appoint one of the current Principals to the post of principal of the merged college and the impact of bringing in an interim manager without knowledge or experience of the area on the transition into the new organisation. Whilst unable to discuss the outcome of the interview process, Mr Webb confirmed that the panel had included representatives of both colleges. He acknowledged that there were very different cultures in the two organisations and he considered that there was an advantage in someone independent with a proven track record of different types of college being brought in to start the process of building the new merged organisation.

54.3 The Parish Council expressed its concern that there had been a lack of proactive engagement with it or consideration of the impact of the proposed merger on those who live and work in the parish. There had been no mention of the impact on public access to the Kingston Maurward gardens and animal park or the management of the estate, historic parkland and its buildings. The public consultation had focussed solely on the educational aspect and there had been no acknowledgement of the community asset provided by Kingston Maurward. Mr Webb explained that there was nothing in the plan for the first three years of the merged college in relation to this as the principal focus on improving financial resilience would be curriculum management. He considered that when detailed analysis of the estate was undertaken, there was likely to be a focus on the educational provision value of the assets.

54.4 In response to a question about how the views submitted through the public consultation process would be adequately considered given the proposed publication

of the outcome on 27 June was so close to the implementation of the proposed merger on 1 August, Mr Webb explained that representatives from both governing bodies had been involved in all discussions to date through the joint board and it was anticipated that they had already considered a lot of the issues that may be raised. There may be further comments made which had not yet been considered but he was confident that there would be sufficient time for this.

- 54.5 In response to a question about the emerging Dorset Local Plan and the mention in the options and issues document of Kingston Maurward College as a strategic asset, Mr Webb confirmed that the merged organisation was likely to be open to those sort of proposals.
- 54.6 In response to a question about the Governing Body of the merged college, Mr Webb explained that this would be drawn from representatives of the governing bodies of both colleges and it was anticipated that an independent Chair would be appointed early in the merger.
- 54.7 In relation to the Dorset Studio School, Mr Webb confirmed that there was no change proposed to the relationship once the merged college was implemented. The Parish Council outlined the ongoing concerns about the issue of traffic management and road safety in relation to access to the Studio School and in relation to the proposed development of the new building. Mr Webb welcomed this and asked that more information about this be sent to him for consideration.
- 54.8 Mr Webb invited the Parish Council to outline what it was looking for from the future college. This was:
- (i) understanding of the importance of the college as an employer within the parish;
  - (ii) the continuation of the vibrant public resource currently provided by Kingston Maurward;
  - (iii) the protection of the historic park and garden;
  - (iv) the provision of high quality education at Kingston Maurward, building on its current successes, and for it not to be a de facto annexe of Weymouth College; and
  - (v) further development of the higher education provision already in place at Kingston Maurward.
- 54.9 The Chair thanked Mr Webb for attending the meeting and providing an update. He asked that the Parish Council continue to be updated on the progress of the proposed merger over the coming months.

*Mr Webb left the meeting at 7:55pm.*

## **55. Public Participation Time**

- 55.1 Whilst there were no members of the public present, the Parish Council received a letter from Mr and Mrs Bailey, residents of Stinsford, regarding the noise impact of the College's current tractor and telehandler training area and requesting that consideration be given to relocating this. It was noted that an alternative area of hardstanding would be required for this activity and that weather permitting use of the current area was minimised during the spring and summer months. It was **resolved** to raise this issue once again with the College and to approach the joint steering group overseeing the merger about the identification of an alternative area which would impact less on local residents.

## **56. Dorset Council matters**

- 56.1 Councillor Taylor reported that he hoped to have more information about the costings for the repair of the River Path and Bockhampton Bridge for the next meeting.

- 56.2 The traffic problems on Slyer's Lane were raised once again, specifically in relation to the recent short notice closure of the roads for repairs about which residents had not been informed by Dorset Council. Councillor Taylor undertook to take this up with the relevant officers.

## **57. Approval of Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24**

- 57.1 The Clerk introduced the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2023/24 for approval before it was published to comply with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The Parish Council also considered the report of the Internal Auditor which set out a conclusion of substantial assurance but made seven recommendations.
- 57.2 It was **resolved** that:
- (i) the report and recommendations of the Internal Auditor be received and progressed;
  - (ii) the Certificate of Exemption be signed by the Chairman and submitted to the External Auditor;
  - (iii) the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) be approved;
  - (iv) the Accounting Statements (Section 2) be approved;
  - (v) the period of public rights commence on 14 June 2024 and end on 25 July 2024 and notice of this be published on the parish noticeboards and the Parish Council's website; and
  - (vi) the Internal Auditor's fee of £53.33 be paid.

## **58. Planning applications**

- 58.1 P/VOC/2024/02581 - Greenwood Grange, Henchard, Access to Hardys Cottage, Higher Bockhampton DT2 8QH - Make alterations to convert existing tea rooms into 1No. holiday cottage removal of Condition 2 under planning consent 1/E/03/002098

It was **resolved** to defer consideration of this application pending further information.

- 58.2 P/FUL/2024/02716 – Dorset Studio School, Kingston Maurward, Dorchester DT2 8PX - Retain the hygiene facilities granted under P/FUL/2021/01224 (temporary permission)

It was **resolved** to support this application.

## **59. North of Dorchester Garden Community**

- 59.1 The Parish Council considered the implications for the proposed Garden Community development of the purchase by Dorset Wildlife Trust and Natural England at land at Lyscombe. The publicity about this had emphasised the nitrogen capture and nutrient mitigation rationale for this purchase based on 3,700 properties. This was the approximate number proposed for the Garden Community. Significant concerns were expressed about the use of both public and charitable monies for the acquisition of the site and the offset methodology.
- 59.2 Mrs Pattison drew attention to a target stakeholder engagement by Dorset Council on a draft annual position statement on the five year housing supply which stated that this was ahead on build projection. There was no mention of the North of Dorchester Garden Community in the statement but it was difficult to understand how the figures worked without this. Councillor Taylor reiterated that he was seeking clarification

about the position in respect of the Local Plan development and the Garden Community from officers and the new Portfolio Holder.

**60. Date of next meeting**

60.1 It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Monday 8 July 2024.

The meeting concluded at 9:00pm.

**Chairman..... Date.....**