

Stinsford Parish Council

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on Monday 8 April 2024
at 7:00pm in The Old Library, Kingston Maurward College

Present: Mr George Armstrong (Chair), Mr Michael Clarke, Ms Sue Escott, Mr Edd Maynard and Mrs Sarah Pattison

Also in attendance: Dorset Councillor David Taylor, Mr Kevin Henville (Prospective Parish Councillor), Miss Kirsty Riglar (Clerk) and one member of the public.

28. Apologies for Absence

28.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr Justin Morris and Mr Luke Rake (Principal of Kingston Maurward College).

29. Declarations of Interest

29.1 Mr Maynard declared a personal interest in the public consultation about the merger of Weymouth College and Kingston Maurward College by reason of being an employee of Kingston Maurward College.

30. Public Participation Time

30.1 In response to a question about the state of the disrepair of Stinsford Bridge and the bridleway in the area, Councillor Taylor provided an update explaining that he had spoken to the Senior Ranger (Central) earlier in the day. A recently fallen tree would be used to fill in the sides of the walkway and stones would be added to replace the damage to the bridge itself. Engineers had visited the site and details of the cost of the wider repairs were awaited for which funding would need to be negotiated. There remained some queries as to who owned the land and whether machinery could access the site.

30.2 There was discussion about the prospect of diverting the bridleway during the winter onto a permissive path on the Kingston Maurward side which would enable visitors to then connect to St Michael's Church without walking around Stinsford Farm and the estate roads.

31. Merger of Weymouth College and Kingston Maurward College: public consultation

31.1 The Parish Council considered its corporate response to the public consultation on the proposed merger of Kingston Maurward College and Weymouth College.

31.2 It was **resolved** to submit the following comments in response to the public consultation:

The Parish Council does not support the merger.

2.1 *The Parish Council disagrees that the proposed merger will deliver the best educational provision of education in the region.*

2.2 *The Parish Council is only able to suggest alternative arrangements as part of an open consultation the format of which enables engagement with all stakeholders and the public. The quality of this consultation is woefully inadequate. There is also no information provided in the consultation document as to the intentions beyond the organisational merger in August 2024. It is therefore not possible to*

provide an informed response as the Parish Council does not know what is proposed for the future.

We also have significant concerns about the lack of consultation with staff and the obvious pre-determination of a formal staff consultation.

The Parish Council was expecting an independently governed merger process but instead the actions have indicated a 'hostile takeover' placing greater emphasis on Weymouth College than Kingston Maurward College. Kingston Maurward College provides extremely valuable land-based educational opportunities for young people both in the Dorchester area and across Dorset and has proven its success and ambition, including the establishment of a university centre to support its higher education offer. This should not be disregarded and swept aside; there is no reassurance provided in the consultation document that the education currently provided by the College will continue to be offered and developed in the future.

Additionally, the Kingston Maurward Estate has become a public amenity asset at the centre of Stinsford parish. However there is no mention of the local community and residents or the impact upon them in the consultation document. As stakeholders in the future of the Estate, this is a significant omission.

The actions to date of the Joint Steering Group have undermined the consultation and Stinsford Parish Council has no confidence in it to take this process forward.

We look forward to receiving details of the outcome of this consultation in due course.

31.3 The Parish Council also considered a Motion proposed by the Chair:

On Monday 8 April 2024, Stinsford Parish Council was due to be addressed by the Principal of Kingston Maurward as part of the public consultation process that was to shape the nature of the Weymouth College and Kingston Maurward College merger.

Kingston Maurward is the largest employer in the Parish, one of the largest land managers, and central to the maintenance of the physical and cultural landscape of the parish. Its listed buildings, gardens and park are of national importance and its educational provision is of central importance to Dorset and the wider region.

In the last edition of Dorset Council's draft Local Plan, it was identified as an asset of strategic importance.

We learnt before the start of the meeting that the Principal of Kingston Maurward College has been told that his employment will not continue in the merged college if the merger takes place. This was before the public consultation process commenced rather than at the end.

31.4 In the light of this, it was **resolved** to pass the following motion:

This council has no confidence in the process of the Kingston Maurward – Weymouth College merger. It calls on the members of the Joint Steering Group who are supposed to be managing the process, to resign. By their precipitate action they have lost the legitimacy and authority to conduct both the consultation and the merger.

We call on the major stakeholders in Dorset educational provision (the Leader and Chief Executive of Dorset Council, the immediate local MPs, the Chair of Dorset NFU and the Chair of Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership). We ask them to act as 'honest brokers' to facilitate the recruitment of new boards who would be committed to act with

professionalism and in good faith as they oversee the merger. We also ask that the fullest range of stakeholders and especially the local community are engaged in a meaningful and realistic new consultation process.

We request that the issue addressed with some urgency for the sake of students, staff, and parents as well as the wider community in Dorset, and crucially for the legitimacy of the merger project.

32. Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan: public consultation

32.1 The Parish Council considered its corporate response to the pre-submission consultation on the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan.

32.2 It was **resolved** to support the content of the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan and to make the following comments:

- (i) Policy 1 – there was no mention of the impact of run-off of agricultural chemicals into the River Frome; and
- (ii) Policy 14 – the links between local parishes, sites of interest and Dorchester across the water meadows should be added.

33. Finance Expenditure

33.1 The following items of expenditure were **resolved**:

- HMRC (PAYE) (Quarter 4 2023/24) – £340.80
- Clerk's salary (Quarter 4 2023/24) - £391.80

33.2 The following payments made by Direct Debit were **noted**:

- HugoFox – Website – March 2024 – £11.99
- HSBC – Bank Charges – March 2024 - £10.00

34. Date of next meeting

34.1 It was noted that the Annual Parish Meeting of Electors and Annual Parish Council Meeting were scheduled to be held on Monday 13 May 2024.

The meeting concluded at 8:00pm.

Chairman..... Date.....