

**DEMOCRATIC HALF HOUR
SUMMARY OF SPEECH NOTES READ TO COUNCILLORS AND RESIDENTS AT THE
PARISH COUNCIL MAIN COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24TH SEPTEMBER 2024
AUTHOR - GEORGE DUNN**

(The Clerk has agreed to place these notes onto the website)

one of the uk government's 7 principles of public life is "openness" with the advice that holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner.

now you are all parish cllrs and hold the heavy responsibility of a public office and openness and transparency must be uppermost in all your dealings.

so i saw with dismay that a meeting was held in a private residence on 14th august 2024 with no prior notice to the public. this is especially surprising since you state that "*as your parish council we strive to involve as many residents as possible in decision making*" yet no public notice of this meeting held in a private residence in august

this meeting was held to discuss matters relating to clapps mead - a field graciously bequeathed by the grafton family in 1938 to the village for the benefit of all the village. and yet no one from the clapps mead playing field committee was present nor even invited. at least 2 resolutions arising from that meeting are apparently to be passed by this council at this meeting.

at this same meeting the notes record an "it was agreed" heading to 9 paragraphs and yet no motions had been notified and no record of voting etc was recorded.

costs appear to have been allocated for "play area inspection" and yet no costings were shown or recorded.

"it was agreed" that some of the play area is "not appealing"!! and should be replaced. not appealing to whom and on what basis is not recorded.

"it was agreed" to ask bridport town council for play area insurance cover - costs to be reimbursed. agreed by whom and no costings shown.

"it was agreed" that the volunteers policy will be adopted on the 24th september at this meeting. agreed by whom and no voting record.

openness and transparency is somewhat lacking.

this prompted me to look at the volunteer policy - which i consider to be disgraceful and an insult to the good intentions of any public spirited villager who would consider volunteering for small remedial works to keep maintenance costs down and therefore be less of a drain on the parish precept. especially when this new policy contains a vast level of bureaucracy / risk assessments / direction from a parish council supervisor etc etc. i don't think so. but i'm afraid that the "over-reach" of this policy is breathtaking and i for one will not countenance going through the totally unnecessary process being imposed by this council. i ask every cllr to carefully consider the ramifications of implementing this policy before voting yes to its adoption because i truly believe that you will not get volunteers which will then lead to unnecessary additional costs for the council and therefore for all village residents.

this then brought me onto your policy for memorial benches and trees - which i must say is one of the most officious and uncaring policy statements that i have ever seen.

the sheer extent of "control" that this pc seeks to impose upon the use of clapps mead (an area bequeathed by a village family to the village and for the village).

your policy seeks to control the very nature and even the wording of heartfelt memorials to the memory of loved ones replacing them with a clinical and cynical policy which appears to be aimed solely at raising money for the council. £1750 for a bench / £500 for a tree and for only 10 years - and i actually find this offensive.

i looked in clapps mead yesterday morning

a tree to the memory of kate geraghity.

a bench donated by the wi in memory of pam and tony fuller with a plaque "a devoted couple who gave so much to their community"

the top piece from an earlier bench salvaged by volunteers and carefully fixed to the fence around the play area simply saying "clarice 1917 - 2001". of course this would be removed by the proposed policy under the 10 year rule.

the blue bench within the play area repainted and partially restored by volunteers saying "in memory of pauline marie shaw 1912 - 1986 devoted wife and mother"

also to be removed under the 10 year rule.

and what of the 3 pic-nic benches and a litter bin donated by focm a few years ago painted and maintained annually by volunteers - are these also to be ditched under the 10 year rule.

again i ask all cllrs to carefully consider the ramifications of this policy before voting.

i note also that this pc are ignoring nalc guidance regarding correspondence which states "correspondence to and from the council should normally be dealt with by the clerk not the chair". previously rigidly applied not so now it seems.

also i notice in today's agenda that the pc has now chosen to ignore a precedent set over many many years in this pc that for openness and transparency the costs of all payments made during the period are listed in the agenda - not so in this agenda where the public is told simply that they have been signed by the chair / authorised by email.

openness and transparency ???

and finally i note that a grant request has been received from the village hall to help with the replacement of the original salt glazed clay sewerage pipework.

i ask cllr rb as chair of the vh what is the current balance of the vh funds.

i believe it is in excess of £20,000 in which case surely this should be paid from the vh funds and not from the public money of the precept.