**Cheselbourne Parish Council**

**Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting**

**15th October 2012 at 7pm In Cheselbourne Village Hall**

**Present:** Mrs S. Widdowson (Chair)

Mr Bryan Bere

Mr Robin Armstrong

Mrs Tiggy Greenwood

Mr Leon Haynes

Mr Martyn Northover

**In attendance**: Mrs Judy Coleman Clerk, Mr Patrick Cook (County Councillor) Mr Paul Miracca – representative of the Higgins Family and several members of the public.

**1.** **Council precept** – Councillors agreed to keep this to £3000 for 2013

**2.** **Finance update** – Clerk explained that there is currently

£596.95 in the PC account.

**3.** **Rivers Arms Application:** Cllr Widdowson introduced Paul Miracca to the meeting. She then also explained to Mr Miracca and the floor that the PC did not agree with the plans and would like to see a larger area set aside for the ‘café/pub’. Cllr Widdowson also pointed out that should anyone wish to take a further look at the plans that they were displayed on the table. Cllr Widdowson then asked Mr Miracca to explain in more detail as to what the new owners of the property had in mind. Mr Miracca began by explaining that the Higgins family have bought Rivers Arms and whilst they were currently on holiday they had asked him, as their friend but also a property developer working from Wimborne who will administer all the contracts when work commences on the property, to speak to the PC. He then asked where local people went to drink – many pointed out that The Oak in Dewlish was the most popular but that all the villagers would like their own ‘local’pub. Mr Miracca explained that the current pub does not work as a commercial venue as it stands – he has spoken to breweries and found that there really wasn’t any interest in taking on the property but that he understood the importance of a pub within a village and that he has and will do so again, explain this to the Higgins family. He went on to explain that the catering side of the business is very much where they wish to go – their son and his family would be taking the business on and he already works in the catering/pub industry. However, he also understands the difficulties of running such a venture and therefore would like to also run the holiday cottage, live in the larger cottage while also running the ‘café’. He would like to use the café as an event run business i.e. Real Ale evenings, Cheese and Wine evenings, Bacon Sandwich Saturdays etc. Mr Higgins also runs a mobile Fish & Chip van and would like to take this around the villages. When questioned by the floor as to what sort of pub/café this would be and would it be available for a local darts team, Mr Miracca then explained that it would not be large enough for a darts team. Mr Higgins would like to put a blackboard outside explaining what event is happening each night so that numbers can be catered for. The family feel that it cannot be run simply as a ‘pub’ as it will not be viable financially. It was pointed out from the floor that the village had fought to keep the pub and that it may not change automatically from pub to café. Cllr Greenwood explained that the pub didn’t work as the previous owner had really taken it on as he wanted change of use therefore the village stopped supporting it. Cllr Greenwood also explained that West Dorset District Council will not give change of use easily and that the decision to do so would therefore not just come from the PC. A discussion was held where it was explained that a letter from Dewlish parish council had been sent to WDCC explaining that the ethos of a village pub was very important and that the ‘café’ idea will not work as it is too small and would not accommodate the villagers that may want to go. Cllr Bere pointed out that when the pub had previously been in use, the bar used to be full and asked why the accommodation could therefore not be above the property and the whole of the bottom floor could be used as a pub. He also explained that the villagers and others in the surrounding area wanted simple pub food in an atmosphere where locals would be comfortable and welcome. Cllr Greenwood explained that a previous planning wanted huge area for dining which would not have worked – i.e. 80 covers but that we have now gone from the sublime to the ridiculous to under 15 covers and that neither would survive. She explained that Cheselbourne is very much a family orientated village that wanted a family Pub. Cllr Widdowson suggested changing the accommodation to the floor above and making the ground floor as a pub, would be far more lucrative. Mr Miracca also agreed that the business plan as it stands would not work. It was pointed out that the plans for the café kitchen were far too small to cook properly. It was pointed out the The Blue Vinney and The Oak had also been run down but have now both been bought and are both very successful. It was also suggested that the name of the venue was not changed from ‘The Rivers Arms’. Cllr Armstrong explained that the whole idea of different venue nights would work but to do twelve or so covers in two sittings would not work for the village and that the idea is destined to fail. Cllr Cook asked if the Higgins family had been to West Dorset planners and explained what they wanted to do. Paul understood that their architect had had a great deal of difficulty in arranging a meeting with planners. Cllr Greenwood also questioned access for disabled people as at present there is none. Cllr Greenwood felt that the plans should also be looked at in regards to this matter. Mr Miracca also agreed that the right hand side of the development would work better as a pub and would go back and discuss this with the family and he will also speak to them regarding the village concerns and suggest that a package be put together that may be more palatable to the those living in the village. Cllr Cook explained that he was happy to feed back comments to Mr Hodges at WDCC and that he would suggest that the current plans are withdrawn and a more viable idea is put forward so that he and the PC would back the new venture and welcome the new family. Mr Miracca understood that while the sale had gone through and that the family had already bought the premises and that the new family would have to try and make the plans work and that it has to work mathematically. Mr Miracca asked for suggestions to be emailed to himself. Cllr Greenwood to action. Cllr Cook suggested that if they do not put planning in for larger than 35 covers it simply won’t work and that the development will not work financially. It was also explained to Paul that the village are fighting these plans because they know that once the pub use changes we will never get the pub back.

Cllr Widdowson wound up meeting and asked if the owners could now come and have a meeting with the PC. Cllr Widdowson then thanked Paul for attending.

**Date of next meeting: 3rd December 7.30pm**