

# Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council

The Annual Parish Meeting of the Electors of Dorchester-on-Thames was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 5th May 2004 commencing at 7.30 p.m.

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Mike Smith, presided. All members of the Parish Council and the Clerk were present together with 16 residents, County Councillor John Howell, District Councillor John Cotton and Fl. Lt. Sara Lye.

1. Apologies for Absence

These were received from Chris Norman, Denise Boaden, Frank & Joan Blackwell and Mary Tame.

2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 9th April 2003

These were approved and signed as a true record

3. Matters Arising From the Minutes

There were no matters not already covered by the agenda for this meeting

4 Chairman's Report

Cllr Mike Smith welcomed John Howell, the recently elected County Councillor, and Fl Lt Sara Lye from RAF Benson. He thanked Mark Townson for taking on the role of Allotments 'manager'. The cycle barriers between Rotten Row and the Allotments had been moved to a new location at the request of Mr and Mrs Evans and the height of one side increased at the request of Shirlee Hazell. Children at the Village School have discussed the plans for new equipment in the Play Area and revised proposals incorporating their ideas would be displayed at the Village Fete in July.

The Parish Council's notice board on the outside wall of the Co-op store is being enlarged.

Two of the most difficult village problems continue to be the flooding of Queen Street and parking in the evenings and weekends. These are matters about which the Parish Council is regularly in contact with the County Council.

Cllr Smith regretted that there had been no progress with the redevelopment of the garage site at the junction of High Street and Bridge End.

5 Financial Statement for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004

The Clerk distributed draft copies of the Parish Council's accounts that gave details of receipts and payments. Net Income of £2,099.42 for the year was slightly down on the figure of £2,215.66 in the previous year. The Council's Precept for the year had been £25,000.00 (+£5,000) which had made possible major expenditure on the Recreation Ground, including nearly £3,000 of tree surgery and a new roof for the tractor shed which had cost £2,280. Discretionary

payments amounting to £3,702 included a donation of £1,000 to 'PAGE', the production costs of the Village brochure (£1,147 - much of which was subsequently recovered by donations from the PCC and local businesses) and a donation of £200 towards the production costs of "Dorchester News"

#### 6 County Councillor's Report

Cllr John Howell said that the major planning issues facing the County concerned the proposals for house building in the areas of Green Belt around Oxford and, of course, for sand and gravel extraction. He was hopeful that the campaigns against both would be successful.

Another issue of great importance was the provision of bus services, a matter which requires constant monitoring. Cllr Howell said that he is very much in favour of the Parish Plan process. He would like to work constructively with each Parish, not just when there are particular problems needing attention.

#### 7. District Councillor's Report

Cllr John Cotton said that the District is also very much involved with long-term planning issues especially regarding the location of new homes and the provision of affordable homes.

He described some of the measures which the Council is taking to improve recycling, including removing the restriction of green boxes to one per household. He said that the Council has set aside more money for schemes flood relief.

#### 8. RAF Benson

Fl Lt Sarah Lye described the activities at RAF Benson and said that recent speculation about the future of the base should not be taken as an indication that its closure is imminent. The Ministry reviews such issues as a matter of routine. In response to a question about height regulations, she said that, except when flying over large towns, helicopter pilots have discretion both as to the route and height they fly. On the whole there were few complaints from the Dorchester area. She said that visits to the base could be organised for those interested.

#### 9. Parish Plan

Cllr Mark Williams described the process that had led to the Parish Plan Questionnaire. Analysis of the detailed answers is currently taking place. Brian Oliver gave an overview of the results. There had been 278 returned questionnaires, which revealed that the average respondent was 59 years old and had lived in the village for 17 years.

Among the initial findings were the following. A typical Dorchester resident has had some personal experience of vandalism or petty crime but does not wish to have more streetlights. He/she uses local shops and services and is good at recycling rubbish etc. Although not keen to spend money on solving the village car parking there is support for affordable housing and for more tree planting. The vast majority of homes have at least one personal computer.

Canon Crowe commented that many youngsters with family connections to the village have already left to set up home elsewhere. It would be good if something could be done which helped them to move back.

Gilliam Johnson said that she thought the survey had been very worthwhile and congratulated all those concerned with the project.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm