

Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council

Clerk to the Council: Mr Geoffrey Russell

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The Annual Parish Meeting was held in the Abbey Guesthouse on Wednesday 3rd May 2006 commencing at 7.30 p.m.

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Ken Bryan, presided. All members of the Parish Council and the Clerk were present together with 21 residents, County Councillor John Howell, and District Councillor John Cotton.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were accepted from Denise Boaden.

2. Minutes of the Meeting dated 26th April 2005

The Minutes of this Meeting were approved and signed as a true record

3. Chairman's Report

Cllr Bryan thanked members of the Council and the Clerk for their hard work and support over the past year. He thanked residents for their support and mentioned Helen Russell for writing up the Council's Minute Book and other books of record.

Cllr Bryan said that various parts of the village have been targets for criminal damage and graffiti. He asked all residents to support the Neighbourhood Watch scheme and report all incidents, however minor, to the Police non-emergency number.

He regretted that there had been no progress in finding any extra event car parking capacity. Parking cones will continue to be used to try to keep the village roads open for access by buses and the emergency services. Measures are, however, in hand to improve Bridge End and to alleviate the problems of flooding in Queen Street.

The Village War Memorial has been refurbished with the assistance of a considerable sum of money raised by Don McGregor and other volunteers. Don had also been instrumental in getting the name of Wilfred Bumpass added to the memorial and his work was greatly appreciated by all.

New signs have been installed to mark the entrances to the Village on both Henley and Abingdon Roads - these signs also mark the correct boundaries of the Parish – a seat in memory of Cllr Mike Smith has been installed outside the Co-Op and the area known as ‘Waterloo’ is now being maintained as a pleasant place to sit by the Thame.

The X39 bus service along the by-pass has been upgraded and new bus shelters with solar lighting have been installed on both sides of the road. Some extra lights have been positioned to illuminate the paths leading to the bus stops with more lighting to follow on the south-bound side in due course.

The old cemetery gatehouse building has been stabilised and is now dedicated as a place of remembrance and a site for memorial plaques. The building has been rescued from continuous dilapidation and given a new life and a purpose for the future.

4. County and District Council Reports

The Meeting received the annual reports of both County Cllr John Howell and District Cllr John Cotton after which there was an opportunity to ask questions.

Cllr Howell said that the County is trying to maintain the level of local bus services. Within the next two years the X39 service is likely to be increased, with more late night buses and a frequency of one bus every 15 minutes during peak times. He confirmed that money has been provided in the current year’s budget for a new soak-away drain in the car park of The White Hart which would speed up the draining of rainwater from Queen Street. There is also money in the budget for a joint project with the District and Parish Councils to resurface the Bridge End car park. The cost of this project is £30,000.

In response to a question from Ken Jones Cllr Howell said that the rest of Bridge End is due to receive surface repairs and then a new top-dressing. Both Ken Jones and Douglas Algar pointed out that roads like Watling and Wittenham Lanes are in a dreadful state. Cllr Howell said that as ‘bridleways’ these roads did not receive a high priority for expenditure. It is possible that ‘community chest’ funds might be used.

Cllr Cotton said that across the District the early take up of the Council's offer of 'green waste' bins had been good. The initial target of 4,000 bins will be quickly reached and it is hoped that there will be 10,000 users soon.

The District Council has adopted a new Conservation Area Strategy for Dorchester which has also slightly extended the boundaries of the previous Area.

Cllr Cotton said that he was conscious of the concerns about community safety in many villages throughout the District. SODC is supporting the efforts of Thames Valley Police to recruit more Community Support Officers and Cllr Cotton is also pushing for mobile CCTV cameras that can be deployed to trouble spots as required. Chris Hill asked about the District Council's policy for the development of houses in what had previously been the garden of a private house. Cllr Cotton said that such proposals are always considered on a site by site basis. The Government is changing the planning guidelines which cover permitted densities of development and this may result in more allowable dwellings per hectare.

5. Draft Accounts for year ended 31st March 2005

Geoff Russell, Clerk to the Council, presented the draft accounts which showed that Total Payments for the year had been greater than Total Receipts by £652. There had been two unusual items of expenditure during the year, namely the repairs to the Old Cemetery Gatehouse building which had cost £11,209 and the refurbishment of the war memorial which had cost £930.

6. Other Presentations

a. 'Hidden Britain' Project

James Turner, the project manager funded by DEFRA, explained that the Parish has received a substantial grant amounting to more than £30,000 and set out the various projects on which this money is being spent over the course of the next 18 months or so. These include improvements to the Village website, visitor information literature, signage and the presentation of data on touch screen panels, and the copying and digital publishing of the Millennium Album

b. Parish Allotments

Mark Townson, the Parish Council's Allotments manager, said that there are 131 available plots on the Allotments of which 105 are taken and 26 vacant. Additional water

supply pipes have recently been installed. Mark said that the current allotment joining fee is £5 per year, which includes insurance, and that the annual rental of a half plot is £5. Allotment holders need not live in Dorchester.

c. Hurst Water Meadow Trust

Dr Peter Pritchard circulated copies of the Trust's annual report. He said that more volunteers will be welcome.

The Chairman thanked all those who had made presentations.

7 Any Other Business

There was no further business. Cllr John Howell and Cllr John Cotton proposed and seconded a vote of thanks to the Parish Council and this was passed unanimously.

The Meeting closed at 8.58 p.m.