

Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council

Clerk to the Council: Mr Geoffrey Russell

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The Annual Parish Meeting was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 9th May 2007 commencing at 7.30 p.m.

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Ken Bryan, presided; present were Cllrs Mrs M Metcalfe (Vice-Chairman), M Day, S Gibbons, C Hill, Mrs J Nudds and M Stevenson with G Russell in attendance. Also present were County Cllr John Howell, District Cllrs John Cotton and Phil Cross, Chris Goodall, guest speaker, and ten residents.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were accepted from Cllr Mark Williams, who was absent on business, and from Mary Tame, who wished the meeting to note that her absence was due to the hazardous condition of the road surface in Bridge End.

2. Minutes of the Meeting dated 3rd May 2006

The Minutes were approved and signed as a true record.

3. Chairman's Report

Cllr Bryan thanked the members of the Council for their support and hard work over the past year and those residents of the village who have been supportive of this work. He thanked both County Cllr John Howell and District Cllr John Cotton for all their help and Geoff Russell, Parish Clerk, for his work and support.

Cllr Bryan said that because of criminal damage to the pavilion steel roller shutters were going to be fitted over the doors and windows. There has been a delay because this requires planning permission. He said that support for the Neighbourhood Watch scheme is vital and so is reporting to the police all incidents however minor.

The Parish Magazine has highlighted the threat to the village's bus services. It seems as though services will continue for now but they do need to be well used if County Cllr Howell is to be successful in arguing the case for future subsidy.

It has not been possible to find extra sites for off street parking. Two suggestions have been investigated during the year, both of which were opposed by local residents. The refurbishment of Bridge End car park is almost complete.

New visitors' information boards have been obtained with Hidden Britain funding and these will be installed soon. New direction signs to the village have already been put up indicating the route to the village from the bus stops on the bypass. A solar powered street lamp is to be sited at the top of the steps on the southbound side.

With the cooperation of the owners of the White Hart, which is gratefully acknowledged, work has been done to alleviate the flooding problems in Queen Street. This has brought about an improvement but not a total solution.

The children's play ground has now been refurbished with some modern and up to date equipment chosen after full consultation with the children, their parents and the school, who have all been involved in the assessment of the project from the outset.

This was not a Parish Council project (although some funds were donated by the Council) but the result of a very hard-working team who have raised the funds (in excess of £30,000). The driving force behind the committee and the coordinator of the installation is Stuart Gibbons, one of your councillors. We owe Stuart and his committee a vote of thanks for their hard work. Thank you, Stuart.

The first plaque has been installed in the cemetery building and there are another four or five on order. There is room for several hundred more.

Cllr Bryan concluded by thanking an 'invisible' member of the parish council staff, Helen Russell, for her writing up of the minute book and other records by hand every month and for the patience she shows when the Clerk is called upon to receive telephone calls at sometimes very unsocial hours. The Chairman presented Helen with a bouquet.

In response to a question Cllr Bryan said that he was hopeful that another site for event car parking would become available.

4. Draft Accounts for year ended 31st March 2007

The Clerk presented the draft Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31st March 2007. The Council had spent £2,880 more than it had received, the largest single item of expenditure being £10,000 which was the contribution towards the cost of resurfacing the car park in Bridge End and the repairs to the remainder of that road that will be undertaken in the summer.

Income was slightly up on the figure in the previous year. The provision of parking services on the Recreation Ground had earned almost £2,000.

5. Presentations:

County Council: Cllr Howell said that he would be inviting all Parish Councils within his division to assist in the bus service review over the coming twelve months. He said that the County had managed to get the annual rate of increase in its share of Council Tax down to 4% two years earlier than target but that despite this the quality of the services provided had improved as was confirmed by the Excellent rating that the County Council had recently received from the Audit Commission.

A resident asked if something could be done about the nuisance of noise from the boating lake especially the sounds of jet skis and the public address system. Cllr Howell said that he would deal with this matter.

District Council: Cllr Cotton said that a county-wide system of refuse collection and recycling may be introduced. The District's rate of recycling is already very high and many individuals should be congratulated for this achievement. Views about alternate weekly collections had been strongly communicated to him during the recent elections.

The Council's freeze on Council Tax has not come at a result of cuts in services provided; these have been maintained because of greater operational efficiency. The handling of calls by a centre in Coventry has been successful. The operators are well trained and well briefed and giving a good service.

6. Guest Speaker

Chris Goodall, author of 'How to Live a Low Carbon Life', was introduced by Cllr Stevenson. Mr Goodall said that there is now a lot of interest in starting small scale local neighbourhood carbon reduction projects. He knew of four Oxfordshire villages where individuals of all ages and from different social groups were coming together to pursue initiatives like car sharing, reducing need for lighting, using low energy bulbs and solar panels, promoting locally grown food and so on.

Members of the audience were invited to contact Mark Stevenson over the course of the next few days to see if a similar group could be started in Dorchester.

7. Any Other Business

None. Cllr Ken Bryan said that he was disappointed that so few residents had been at the meeting. He thanked all those who had attended and introduced Peter Pritchard who presented the Annual Report of the Hurst Water Meadow Trust.

The Meeting closed at 8.28 pm