

Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council

The Annual Parish Meeting was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 13th May 2009 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, Mrs J Nudds and M Stevenson with G Russell in attendance. Also present were District Cllr John Cotton, Lorraine Lindsey-Gale, representing County Cllr John Howell MP and ten residents.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were accepted from Cllrs Chris Hill and Mark Williams, Mrs Susan Jupp and Mrs Libby Vettiwinkel

2. Minutes of the Meeting dated 7th May 2008

These Minutes, which had been circulated before the meeting, were taken as read, approved and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

3. Chairman's Report

Cllr Bryan thanked the members of the Council for their hard work and support over the past year. He thanked both County Cllr John Howell and District Cllr John Cotton for all their help. He congratulated John Howell on his election as Member of Parliament for the Henley Constituency. He also thanked Geoff Russell, Parish Clerk, for his work and support.

The Chairman went on to thank all those residents of the village who have been supportive and, in particular, who work diligently to keep areas of the village tidy and attractive for residents and visitors alike. He mentioned those who look after the Abbey closed church yard and said that the Parish Council would like record a public vote of thanks to Eileen Olleson for many, many years of devoted attention to the Rose Walk and Frank Norman for his long service tending the garden by the Lychgate, coupled, of course, with all the other volunteers who help in those areas.

Cllr Bryan stressed the importance of good communications between residents and the police and encouraged more support for the Neighbourhood Watch scheme. Following changes to the bus services some residents have complained of a lack of clarity and organisation of the new services. The Council had organised a meeting in October for bus users to meet the public transport representative from the County Council. The outcome was two extra services on the Wallingford route and Cllr Stevenson prepared a set of timetables to try to clarify the services available. These had been printed by the County Council and made available at the village post office.

Among the planning applications that had been considered by the Council in the previous 12 months had been some very significant projects, including the redevelopment of two important sites - The Chequers and Kruzcko's Yard - and a plan to build a new dwelling on land opposite the entrance to Bishop's Court Farm. It is likely that all of these areas will look very different within the next few years.

In the Parish Play Area the wooden climbing frame, which was installed nearly 20 years ago, has had to be removed in the interest of safety. The committee responsible for

its replacement is close to reaching its target of £23,000 and the new frame will be fitted in the near future.

Two meetings have been held in the village concerning the proposals for an 'Energy from Waste' incinerator at Sutton Courtenay. One was organised by the group which opposes the scheme, the other by the company which has made the application. That had been followed by a trip to view the Sutton Courtenay site, new waste reclamation facilities in Reading, an incinerator near Maidstone that is already in operation, and the site on the Isle of Sheppey where the bottom ash from this incinerator is dumped. The application process is ongoing and the Parish Council would continue to do its best to be well-informed about the arguments on both sides of this controversial subject and ultimately make its contribution to the planning and permitting consultation processes after giving the matter very serious and detailed consideration.

Despite the Parish Council's best efforts with parking cones and signage the centre of the village is still occasionally used for event parking. We take very seriously the need to keep access to all parts of the village clear for emergency vehicles and in future intend to work more closely with the local police team so that those who cause obstruction to the highway as a result of their thoughtless parking may find out just how severe the fines for this can be.

On the positive side Cllr Bryan was able to report that the refurbishment of the Bridge End car park is now complete and that a new street light has been installed on the path from Drayton Road to Martins Lane, by the old cemetery gatehouse building. This should benefit users of the path, particularly late night users of the bypass bus stops, while others will be helped by the new cycle stands that have been supplied and fitted courtesy of the County Council at the end of Drayton Road near the footpath leading to the bus stop on the northbound side.

Potholes in Watling Lane have been filled but, due to the unfavourable weather conditions when the work was done, some more work will be needed where the new infilling has been dislodged.

Cllr Bryan said that the Council has for many years wanted to find a piece of land that was nearer to Dorchester Abbey than the Recreation Ground and which could be used for temporary event parking. At long last and thanks to a benefactor who wished to remain anonymous the land next to the sewerage works at the end of Dorchester Bridge had been made available to the Council on a 125 year lease at a 'peppercorn' annual rental. Land adjacent to this has been sold to The Hurst Water Meadow Trust.

The Council's piece of land will be known as 'Abbey View Meadow' and is much nearer to the Abbey than the Recreation Ground. It can be used as a temporary event car park for not more than 28 days without planning permission. The rest of the time it is for the use of the village for any reasonable recreational purpose. An agreement will also be made to satisfy the requirements of the fishing club. Some work is required before the field is in a fit state for cars to be parked on it but it is planned to have use of this new village amenity by the summer of 2010. This has been a major achievement on behalf of the village as it also protects that edge of the village from any future development. The Chairman said that his sincere thanks go to the anonymous benefactor. He hoped that many future generations of village residents will reap the benefits.

In closing his report the Chairman said that he would like to thank his 'invisible' member of the parish council staff, Helen Russell, who writes up the minute book by

hand every month and shows great patience whenever he telephones the Clerk at what he was sure were some inconvenient times. While there was a possibility in the future that the Minutes would be kept solely on computer, for the time being the Parish liked to retain the traditional style of a bound Minute Book.

4. Draft Accounts for year ended 31st March 2009

In the year just ended the Council's total receipts had exceeded the Council's total payments by £5,340 despite the Council paying £10,000 towards the cost of the Bridge End resurfacing and adding £1,660 to the contributions from Watling Lane residents, amounting to £4,660, to pay for repairs to their road surface.

5. Any Other Business

Several residents complained about the nuisance of noise from the motor cyclists who meet every Monday night. After a period in which the problem had been less serious it had returned as an even greater menace.

Cllr Mark Stevenson said that he had a project to put solar panels on the roof of the village school. The cost would be c. £40,000 but a government grant would pay half.

Meeting closed at 8.05 p.m.