

Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council

The Annual Parish Meeting was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 5th May 2010 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, M Stevenson and M Williams with G Russell in attendance. Also present were District Cllr John Cotton, County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale and 7 residents.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were accepted from John Metcalfe

2. Minutes of the Meeting dated 13th May 2009

These Minutes were taken as read, approved and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

3. Chairman's Report

Cllr Bryan introduced Richard Winslet, recently appointed as village Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator. Richard would be talking later in the meeting.

The Chairman said that if residents wished to retain bus services through the village it was important that they should make use of them and encourage others to do so too.

The Council has been supportive of the redevelopment of the site around the Kruczko workshop and a good scheme has eventually been approved. The Council supports the work of PAGE and will continue to provide finance for its campaign to prevent gravel extraction in this area. Anti-social parking continues to be a problem. The Parish Council's plan for a second off-road event parking site by Dorchester Bridge will be operational soon. The poor surface of Drayton Road is due for repair in the coming months. The new drainage scheme in Queen Street and High Street had proved to be working well. The County Council had paid for this work in full.

Cllr Bryan thanked members of the Council for their hard work and support over the past year. He thanked both County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale and District Cllr John Cotton for all their help, those residents of the village who have been supportive and, in particular, those who work as volunteers in many different ways to make the village such a pleasant place to live. The Chairman also thanked Geoff Russell, Parish Clerk, for his work and support and Helen Russell for hand-writing the Minutes.

4. Draft Accounts for year ended 31st March 2010

The Clerk presented the Draft Receipts and Payments account for the period 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010. The Council's total receipts had exceeded the Council's total payments by £8,730. The efforts to raise money for new play equipment had been extremely successful and most of this expense had been covered by donations and grants. The Parish Council had itself made a loan to the Village Hall to pay for a new central heating system and this had been repaid in record time.

The Council's cash reserves earn very little in interest these days but the Council has no plans to increase the Parish Precept in the foreseeable future.

5. County Councillor's Report - County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale

The single biggest issue for the County Council over the past year has been where to build an energy from waste incinerator. The Council's preferred bidder is Viridor, who will build at Ardley near Bicester. This situation is not yet resolved since WRG still have the option to seek planning permission for an incinerator at Sutton Courtenay.

The County Council supports the protection of the Oxford Green Belt at Grenoble Road, south east of the City and local opposition to the development has been strong and united. The Secretary of State has now conceded that insufficient consideration was given to reasonable alternatives to the proposed urban extension and although precise details are still unclear it is unlikely that the plan will go ahead.

As County Councillor for seven Parishes threatened by gravel extraction I will continue to do all I can to help them protect their environment from destruction. This possibility is being driven by a regional target that significantly overestimates demand. The pressure to open new areas for extraction should and must be challenged. This is not the right area for gravel extraction.

The review of speed limits will lead to changes soon. On the A4074 there will be a new 40mph limit from the Dorchester turn towards Shillingford and on the A4015 in Clifton Hampden and Burcot, where a suggested rise of limit from 30mph to 50mph was rejected, the order will be revised to implement a 40 mph limit.

This year the County Council has provided funds for a series of training and speed awareness events for motorcyclists. The initiative for this involvement came from the H Riders Club committee who are based at the H Café on the Berinsfield roundabout. They are very aware and concerned about the rising number of complaints from local residents about noise and dangerous driving. Training days have been supported by the Police, the Fire Service, the Advanced Motorists Association and the County Council.

In addition to being appointed 'Motorcycle Champion' for the County, I sit on the Planning & Regulation Committee and the Growth & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee and have just been elected 'Deputy Leader Backbench'. This role makes me the Leader of the 42 backbench Conservative Councillors and their representative to the 10 Cabinet members. It also entitles me to attend Cabinet meetings.

The Cabinet has just appointed me 'Heritage Champion' for Oxfordshire. I am delighted to take up this position, particularly in light of the PAGE campaign and the potential threat from gravel extraction to nationally important archaeological remains in the Dorchester, Warborough, Benson area. Apart from my very local concerns I look forward to the opportunities this appointment may give me to fight for heritage issues across the County.

6. District Councillor's Report - District Cllr John Cotton

The District Council's activities are many and varied but really there are four key areas. The change to refuse collection by 'wheelie bin' has resulted in an amazing increase in the recycling rate: from 40% (already good) to 70%. This means that the cost savings which were estimated to be £500k could be £150k more – this is out of a total Council budget of £7m so the impact is significant.

The merger of the management teams at South Oxfordshire and the Vale of the White Horse has saved between 30-40 staff and new joint supplier contracts have also produced savings. The District Council has again frozen its share of Council Tax.

In planning there are to be significant changes. The policy is likely to be a preference for smaller-scale developments spread around the District rather than big developments confined to a few areas.

7. Neighbourhood Watch

Richard Winslet explained the new structure for Neighbourhood Watch. The scheme was started in the '80s with the aim of making communities safer. It is 'police-supported' rather than 'police-run'. In Dorchester-on-Thames there are 22 co-ordinators with three deputies in support. This covers some 62-65% of the village so there are some gaps and the aim is to build coverage to more than 70% or even 80%. Local communications can and should be improved. The 'Ringmaster' system is fine but sometimes it is 'broad-brush' rather than local. By becoming area co-ordinator he has been able to find who is involved and to improve communications.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.28 p.m.