

Dorchester-on-Thames Parish Council

The Annual Parish Meeting was held in the Village Hall on Tuesday 3rd May 2016 commencing at 7.30 p.m. The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Chris Hill presided; also present were 22 residents and District Cllr John Cotton with G Russell in attendance

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale, Rob and Val Ballantyne.

2 Minutes of the Meeting dated 19th May 2015

It was agreed that these Minutes, having been distributed at the meeting and posted on the Village website, should be taken as read and they were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

3 Chairman's Report

The Chairman, Cllr Chris Hill, described the various changes to the membership of the Council that had taken place in the previous 12 months. The year had started with a vacancy which had been filled by Cllr Oliver Margison. Early in 2016 both Claire Andersson and Sue Graney had resigned from the Council due to their other commitments. These two vacancies had been filled by Cllrs Rob Ballantyne and Viviane Quirke. The Council now had its full quota of eight members, three of whom were newly appointed.

The Chairman then reviewed the Council's main activities over the previous 12 months which included the continuing development of the Neighbourhood Development Plan; support for the campaign 'Parishes Against Gravel Extraction' (PAGE); dealing with 43 planning applications; and lobbying against any changes to the Green Belt status of the Parish.

The Parish Council is responsible for managing the Recreation Ground, with the assistance of the Sports Club, and the Allotments with the assistance of the Allotments Society. It takes direct control of grass -cutting and tree maintenance in public spaces, including the Closed Abbey Churchyard, manages the Cemetery and the Play Area, and works together with the County Council to maintain footpaths etc. The highways issues with which it is most concerned are parking and speeding and it does what it can to facilitate public transport opportunities for all residents.

In addition to promoting its day-to-day activities through 'Dorchester News' and the Village website the Council also helps to promote tourism through special signage and printed guides for visitors.

The Chairman concluded by thanking the Vice-Chairman, Mark Williams, and all the other councillors for their invaluable assistance throughout the year. His report would be published on the Village website and in 'Dorchester News'.

4 Draft Accounts for year ended 31st March 2016

Geoff Russell, Clerk to the Council and Responsible Financial Officer, presented the Council's draft Receipts and Payments Account for the year to 31st March 2016. Copies were distributed to the meeting. The figures will be subject to audit on 15th June, after which the Council's accounting records will be available for inspection by any resident. The Council had decided to maintain its Precept for 2016/17 at £42,280, the same as in the previous year.

5. Presentations:

Reporting on the activities of PAGE, John Taylor said that compared with the forecast requirement for gravel that had been published back in 2009 the figure had been reduced from 2.1m tonnes to just over 1m tonnes. In fact, this is still too high

with PAGE arguing for a reduction to 600k tonnes. The County Council had not consulted properly and this could be a key flaw in its case. There is no early prospect of the matter being resolved and while there is no agreed strategy in place it is open to any would-be operator to submit a planning application. This has already happened at two sites in this area including one at Clifton Hampden.

John Taylor said that support from the Parish Councils within the PAGE group is still required. He asked that Dorchester-on-Thames continues to contribute £1,000 p.a. The key to achieving success for PAGE is an agreement about the required demand. This is something that the County Council has refused to discuss with PAGE which is expected to incur criticism from the Inspector in due course.

Richard Winslet, the area co-ordinator of Neighbourhood Watch said that more than 50% of the village is covered by local Neighbourhood Watch schemes but more volunteers are needed if this is to grow. Electronic alerts are available via <http://www.thamesvalleyalert.co.uk> with the scheme open to all.

District Councillor John Cotton spoke about the forthcoming reorganisation of local government in Oxfordshire. This is going to be the subject of considerable debate but Cllr Cotton's preference was for a new 'unitary' authority based upon District Councils. Cllr Cotton explained the new system for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Once the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Development Plan is in place this would produce significant sums which the Parish Council will receive to invest on infrastructure projects. In the Parish of Berinsfield the development plans are so ambitious that their impact is likely to spread benefits far beyond the immediate boundaries of the Parish and Dorchester will undoubtedly benefit.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.40 p.m.