

TWYFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

ST MARYS CHURCH 11TH MAY 2006 AT 8PM

Present :Mr D Hymers (Chairman), Members of the Council-Mrs L Dane, Mrs S Harriott-Kerr, Mrs B Ditcham, Messrs, N Crush, R Mantel, J Rowe, J Fort, B Rogers and C Smith. Members of the public 20

Apologies – Councillors- Mr J Jarvis, Mr J Bowley, Mrs G Wright and Dr M Garrard. District Councillor- Mrs D Tomlin. PC Stuart Loudwell.

1.Mr Hymers reported on the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 12th May 2005

2. Matters Arising-none

3.Parish Lands Report- Mr Rogers reported on the Land Committee's activities for the past year: The Parish Lands Committee is responsible for the management of all of the Council's property. This includes the allotments at Hurst Rd and London Road, Stanlake Meadow and its pavilion, King George's Field including the children's playground, Twycombe Lodge, Jubilee Corner, the Burial Ground and Millennium Garden. The Committee also oversees the work of the village ranger and Park Wardens.

Stanlake Meadow.

Stanlake Meadow has continued to be a popular facility within the village. There have been a number of fairs take place which have been well received both by the community and by the fair operators, who have asked for repeat bookings. We have endeavoured to distribute the fairs between Stanlake Meadow and King George's field to try to minimise disturbance to nearby residents.

A small group of travellers gained access to Stanlake Meadow in the past year, which is an issue that we have not had to deal with for some time. They were moved on quickly and relatively little damage was caused, though costs were incurred in clearing up debris left behind.

The Wild Meadow area in the corner by Stanlake Lane and the railway lines has become somewhat unkempt and lacking in flowers. In conjunction with the bio-diversity office from Wokingham District Council we have embarked on a plan to enlarge that area and cultivate it more actively as a Wild Flower Meadow.

A stile was introduced into the hedge along Waltham Road where a gap had developed. This has proved to be somewhat controversial but we hope that it is a convenient access point for a good number of people.

King George's Field and Children's Playground

The Skate Park project has made progress this year. Detailed plans were submitted for planning permission by TVCMI and Groundworks. Much more information on the final proposed layout and features has been given. This has allowed us to make better predictions of the potential ongoing running costs.

A project has been started to make improvements to the Children's Play area within King George's field. This project is still at a very early stage and potential designs are still being sought and considered.

Work has been carried out to try to improve the condition of the hedges and encourage native species of plant to thrive both here and at Stanlake Meadow. This work has been carried out with the help of the Friends of Ruscombe Wood, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their continued help and support.

Twycombe Lodge continues to be a good source of income. It is managed by Pike Smith and Kemp, on behalf of the Committee. There are three tenants who all have local roots. This year needed maintenance has been carried out on the building, such as redecoration both inside and out.

Jubilee Corner

The installation of CCTV by Wokingham District Council at Jubilee Corner seems to have resolved the vandalism problems there. In the past repeated vandalism has resulted in benches being damaged to the point where they have been beyond repair.

Burial Ground and Millennium Garden

Work has continued to keep The Millennium Garden a pleasant area for residents. Extensive clearance work is has been carried out on the area at the bottom of the Millennium Garden, by the stream. Unfortunately spaces in the Burial Ground are almost exhausted.

Allotments

The allotments continue to be very popular. The London Road allotments are, as always, fully taken with no spare plots. The Hurst Road allotments have continued to grow in their popularity. They are now at an unprecedented level of occupancy in recent times. A major water leak at the Hurst Road site resulted in a major unplanned expenditure and extensive ground works being carried out to replace old corroded pipe work.

Parish Ranger and Park Wardens

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Council to thank the Village Ranger, Mr O'Brien, the Park Wardens, Peter and Sylvia Hughes, and our cleaner Tim Clark, for their hard work and dedication throughout the year.

Finally I would like to thank John March, the Clerk for all his hard work and all the members of the Committee for their contributions this year.

4.Planning and Amenities Report-Mrs Dane reported on the activities of the year.

The pressure to squeeze more houses into Twyford continues – in the last year the Committee has commented on some 25 planning applications to build over 60 houses on eleven different sites in the village. I am pleased to say that most have been refused by the District Council but some have gone to appeal so the future is still in doubt.

Most of the applications were for new houses at the rear of existing dwellings in Wargrave Road. An appeal hearing was held recently on applications for 12 houses or 5 houses at the rear of 86 to 94 Wargrave Road. An application for 7 houses at the rear of 62 and 64 Wargrave Road was refused only to be followed by another for 8 houses.

With all these applications the Council is concerned about access on to Wargrave Road which has seen a 70% increase in the number of dwellings with access on to it in the last 20 years and no improvement to the road itself. The Council is also concerned about the lack of parking and the detrimental effects on the surrounding area.

The application to build two blocks of flats on the corner of London Road and Springfield Park caused a great deal of concern amongst residents. It was refused by the District Council and the appeal hearing is now awaited.

Another site that has caused a great deal of upset to local residents is the development at Mulberry Mead. After a long battle, permission was given for four dwellings on the site. The developers started work and then purchased the bungalow at 36 Winchcombe Road and applied first for 7 houses on the combined site, then for 6. These have been refused and the developers have announced their intention of going to appeal. Residents were concerned about traffic with the site access so close to the junction with Waltham Road. There were also concerns about the height of the proposed dwellings and the very small gardens as well as the lack of on-site parking. In the meantime work has continued on the site – the bungalow has been demolished and a large extension has been built on the side of the existing house as well as a double garage. The swimming pool has also been filled in. The Parish Council has supported local residents in urging the Enforcement Officer to take action and we have been advised that the developers have been told to submit a planning application for the works to the existing house. Unfortunately they are allowed to carry on working there in the meantime.

An application, which greatly concerns the Parish Council, is the proposal to build three-storey flats in The Grove alongside Jubilee Corner. The Council is concerned that this will have a serious effect on the plant life in the public garden and has also commented on the lack of parking in an area where there is inadequate parking for residents already. In addition, the proposal for an archway to access the parking area will mean any delivery vehicle will have to park on double yellow lines. The first application for this site was withdrawn, the second was refused and the third has been withdrawn.

Work has started on building flats behind the old post office – an application that the Parish Council strongly objected to, largely on traffic grounds.

Two other ongoing issues are the attempts to put two houses behind no. 7 New Road, which has already been refused on appeal, and 2 houses at the rear of 1-3 Westview Drive. Both applications are very cramped. Most recently a fresh application has been submitted to build on the end of Montreal Terrace. An earlier application for three storey flats was refused and the latest proposal is for a terraced house. The Parish Council has objected because the proposal is out-of-keeping with the Conservation Area and the proposed new dwelling does not match the existing Victorian terrace and has parking in the front garden.

On Transport issues we are sorry but not surprised to see the end of the Twyfordlink bus service. The service had to end when the subsidy ran out and the service had failed to become commercially viable.

Along with many residents the Parish Council expressed strong objections to the proposals to curtail the train service from Twyford Station in December 2006. We are pleased that some of the cut services have been restored but are continuing to press for all the lost services to be retained. Our argument is that this community has been built around the train service and the railway authorities should be looking to improve it even more, rather than cut it. Cutting the service will only mean more people using their cars.

There is a glimmer of hope that the Crossrail project will after all start at Reading instead of Maidenhead. This is the result of pressure from all sides, including the Parish Council, our MP Theresa May and the District Council.

A recent District Council proposal to assign part of Springfield Park as parking for resident parking permit holders living in Waltham Road was very unpopular. Waltham Road is not the only place in the village where residents have no private parking. There are residents of Springfield Park itself who have nowhere to park off-road. The Parish Council and our District Councillors were in agreement that the idea was not practical and could be divisive.

On the Amenity side, the Parish Council and District Council have shared the cost of a new sign at the junction of London Road and Loddon Hall Road, indicating the community centre and the recreation ground, as well as the Youth Centre and the Scout Hut.

The bus shelter in Wargrave Road, on the far side of the roundabout has been repaired recently after the panels became brittle and were easily broken.

Two new street lighting columns have been put up in the last year – one in the footpath between Wensley Close and London Road was erected by the District Council but will be maintained by the Parish Council, and one has been erected in Loddon Hall car park to provide better lighting to the approach to the recreation ground. This will also facilitate the working of the CCTV system in the area.

The Parish Council has joined with other local authorities to protest the proposed closure of Townlands Hospital in Henley. Negotiations are continuing to establish a long-term role for the hospital. There is concern that concentrating all local hospital services on one site in Reading at Royal Berks Hospital and disposing of land to other uses is very shortsighted.

One other issue the Committee has taken up this year concerns the younger children's play area in Broad Hinton, which has been closed for the past 18 months. There is a problem with the site, which is very wet and difficult to maintain safely. The District Council is considering a proposal to provide facilities for younger children within the play area for older children at Broad Hinton. The Parish Council is pressing for this to be carried out as quickly as possible.

Finally, as usual we have produced two issues of Twyford News this year – there are spares on the table for anyone who wants one.

Lastly my thanks go to all the members of the committee and our clerk for their support.

5. Financial Report-Mr Mantel reported on- the sheet circulated showing the Council's budget for 2005-2006, the actual expenditure for 2005-2006 and the council's budget for 2006-2007.

Our budget for this year remains the same at £ 55,300. The sheet shows on the reverse the expenditure under the heading vandalism, not all of which can be covered by insurance.

The budget means that a band D property pays £ 18.81 instead of £ 19.02 p.a. for Parish Council expenditure, a decrease of 21 pence. The reason is that some more properties have been built in the village. To this is added £ 133 p.a. for Thames Valley Police, £ 48 for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services and £ 1036 for WDC, making a total yearly payment of £1236.

Comparing the Parish Council Tax of £18.81 with the charges made by the other 17 Town and Parish Councils in the District shows us in position no. 11 with Woodley as the highest charging Council at £ 102.74 and Swallowfield the lowest at £ 10.69. Therefore we are comparatively one of the lower spending councils in the District. The average increase per council taxpayer for parish council tax across the 17 Parish and Town Councils is 3.3%. Our parish council tax went down by 1.1 %.

Looking at our total precept of £55,300 this is in position no. 10 with the highest precept of £ 998,690 in Woodley and the lowest precept of £ 4,250 in Remenham.

The council continues to use the income from its investments to assist local groups with grants. A total of £ 5,025 was given in grants this past year.

I would also like to acknowledge gratefully the help given by Ruscombe Parish Council towards the running cost of the Recreation Ground, the provision of the new CCTV in the Recreation Ground and the Loddon Hall car park.

May I conclude with my thanks for the Clerk and Finance Committee members for their hard work during the year.

6. District Council matters-Mr S Conway reported on the following: His main interest is planning matters where he tries to prevent unsuitable developments. He thanked the Planning and Amenities Committee for their input and comments, which help him make his case. However, although a number of applications have been refused a large number go to appeal where local influence is minimal. There is continual pressure for more development in Twyford in existing areas which causes problems in places such as Wargrave Rd. Hopefully the Local Development Framework being developed by WDC will support large new developments on sites such as Arborfield Garrison which will both take the pressure of local development and generate support from the developers for infrastructure improvements.

Another issue is the settlement boundary, which WDC are considering moving. If this happens it will allow development of the proposed elderly persons village adjacent to Bridge House Nursing Home. He is campaigning to prevent this happening.

He has submitted a petition in support of the residents of Wessex Gardens and Colleton Drive to get WDC to upgrade the private sewers to allow them to be adopted. Unfortunately to date this has been unsuccessful.

He has also supported the local objections to proposed changes to the railway timetable.

His most successful project was the installation of CCTV in the village centre where support was negotiated from WDC for the installation and running costs. He is also pressing the railway authority to install CCTV on the station forecourt.

His latest project is to try to get a new library on the J W Greens site. A petition has been submitted with support from both Twyford and Ruscombe Parish Councils and negotiations are taking place.

7. Chairman's Review of the Year-Mr Hymers reported-

As usual on these occasions the previous speakers have dealt with the main achievements of the Council over the last twelve months, leaving me with little to add. In any case, I think it is fair to say that the last year has been a fairly quiet one as far as the Parish Council is concerned.

I usually begin writing these reports by referring to last year's to see if there is any unfinished business. The first item in this category is the proposed skate park and ball court in the Recreation ground. Up to the end of March there was still no significant progress, although Mr Bowley and I have attended meetings at Wokingham to move the issue on and planning permission has been granted. Since the end of March we have been given further essential information which will help the Parish Council in its discussions as to whether to allow the project to proceed and this decision may well be taken in the next few months. However, issues over funding have still to be resolved. The subject which has exercised the Council most over the last few years has been vandalism and I am happy to report that the Council and the village in general has experienced much less this year. It is impossible to be certain why this might be the case, but our own installation of CCTV at Loddon Hall and the District Council's installation in the village centre must have a bearing, while more policing by the new Community Support Officer and the closure of J.W. Green's may also be relevant.

On the related subject of graffiti, again this has been less of a problem. However, it is a matter of considerable regret that the village centre remains scarred by the inscriptions on the London Road building, which overlooks Wellington Square, and on Apsley House, which have remained untouched for the whole of the last year. The council will continue to try and persuade the dilatory companies involved, Workmans and Kimberley Securities, to remove the graffiti, although we may have to wait for the resolution of the J. W. Green's site.

On transport, you have already heard from Mrs Dane that there is a threat to our railway service, which is one of the factors, which makes Twyford such a popular place to live. We hope that First Great Western have seen sense over this issue, both as regards commuter trains and the off-peak services.

During the year, the long serving Twyford reporter for the Advertiser, Janet Warner, retired. Over the years she had been very helpful to the Council, particularly over matters of publicity, and the Council was happy to make a presentation to her to thank her for her years of service to the village.

Finally, I should report on the make up of the Council. This year we have had no departures from the Council and three people, Mrs. Ditcham, Mrs Harriott-Kerr and Mr Smith have joined us, meaning that for the first time for a long time we have no vacancies on the Council. We are now entering the last year of the present Council and I very much hope that a good cross-section of people comes forward for the elections, which will be held, next May.

My thanks go to all the Parish Councillors who have served this year and our Officials, especially John March, our Clerk, for the excellent job they have done in the last year.

8. Questions from the floor.

- 8.1 Mrs Harris Highfield Court raised the problem of vehicles parking in Waltham Rd on the bend and asked if 30mph signs could be installed to slow the traffic. Mr Hymers explained that they are not required in an existing 30mph area. District Councillor Mr S Conway has raised this issue with WDC Highways Department who will ask the police to check if the vehicles are causing an obstruction. The possibility of extending the existing double yellow lines will also be considered.
- 8.2 Mr G Pilgrim of Colleton Drive suggested the use of a part day ban on parking similar to that in Hurst Rd to prevent parking by Commuters. District Councillor Mr S Conway suggested one solution is to increase the size of the station car park where planning approval has already been given. He suggested applying pressure now the new rail franchise is in place.
- 8.3 Mr Yates, Hurst Park Rd - asked if vehicle activated signs could be installed to reduce speeding. Mr Hymers replied that this would be considered by the Parish Council.
- 8.4 Mrs B Dixon Amberley Drive asked what the difference is between vehicle activated signs and 30 mph signs as both serve the same purpose. Mr D Hymers replied that although 30mph signs cannot be installed, vehicle activated signs are permitted.
- 8.5 Mrs R Sunley Mallard Close remarked on the high cost of the safer routes to school scheme for Colleton School and asked if there are any records of improvements to road safety or on the number of children now walking to school and what conclusions have been drawn for the postal survey carried out some time ago. District Councillor Mr S Conway replied that he has taken this up with WDC who stated that no action was taken due to the low number of replies received,
- 8.6 Mr G Pilgrim Colleton Drive suggested that the scheme has had no effect judging by the number of cars illegally parked in the road. He also mentioned that recently the Police Community Liaison Officer has been taking some action in this area.
- 8.7 Mr Yates Hurst Park Rd expressed concern about the number of unwanted signs around the village. In particular those erected by developers. He asked if they could be removed. Mr Hymers replied he would ask the Planning and Amenities Committee to consider what action can be taken. Mrs L Dane asked for members of the public to report unwanted signs to the Parish Council
- 8.8 Mr G Pilgrim Colleton Drive asked if more seating could be provided on Stanlake Meadow to allow members of the public to sit and watch the cricket being played. Mr D Hymers replied he would ask the Parish Lands Committee to consider this.
- 8.9 Mr Yates Hurst Park Rd commented on problems with pigeons at the Hurst Rd allotments and asked if they could be culled. Another resident said a similar problem also exists at London Rd allotments. Mr D Hymers replied that he would ask the Parish Lands Committee to look into this.
- 8.10 Mrs L Spicer Mallard Close also has an allotment at Hurst Rd and said she would prefer if no action were taken to reduce the pigeon numbers.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm