

TWYFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

ST MARYS CHURCH 12TH MAY 2005 AT 8PM

Present :Mr D Hymers (Chairman), Members of the Council-Mrs L Dane, Mrs J Robinson, Messrs, N Crush, J Jarvis, R Mantel, J Bowley and Dr M Garrard. Members of the press-1. Members of the public 18. PC Stuart Loudwell and Police Community Liaison Officer George David.

Apologies – Councillors- Mrs G Wright and Mr J Rowe. District Councillors-Mrs A Drake, Mrs D Tomlin and Mr S Conway.

1.Mr Hymers reported on the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 28th April 2004

2. Matters Arising-none

3.Parish Lands Report- Mr Bowley 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 it's 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 continues to be a popular facility. The addition of goal posts for informal football playing has proved so popular that we have recently moved them to allow the ground to recover from goalmouth wear.

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.

Unfortunately vandalism has continued to be an issue. There have been a number of incidents of graffiti and a break-in to the shed at the rear of the pavilion. This resulted in the loss of equipment for the Cricket Club. On the advice from the local police officer, Stuart Loudwell, we installed streetlights to provide further lighting around the building, as the existing lighting was proving inadequate. Since the installation there have been no further cases of vandalism.

The cricket club is now entering its third full season since its move to Stanlake Meadow in 2003. The move has proved to be a very successful one.

King George's Field and Children's Playground

Following the two most recent cases of arson, which resulted in the destruction of the Scout HQ and the Tennis clubhouse being completely destroyed, and damage to Loddon Hall the Council took the decision to install a CCTV system around Loddon Hall. The system monitors these sites. Additionally it covers the Children's Playground and the front car park. The system has already been used a number of times to supply evidence to the police.

The Skate Park project has made little progress this past year and the council still awaits detailed plans. This project is being driven by TVCMI and so the Council awaits further progress.

A valuable contribution was made by the Friends of Ruscombe Wood (FORWOOD), to improve the area in the North West corner of the field. The project included the planting of shrubs and trees as well as general tidying of that corner. The outcome has been a vast improvement to the aesthetics of that corner of the field. I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm thank you again to the volunteers from FORWOOD for the effort they put in on this project.

Twycombe Lodge continues to be a good source of income. This is managed by Pike Smith and Kemp, on behalf of the Committee and we have three tenants with local roots. This year needed maintenance has been carried out on the building. This includes replacing the soffits and fascias with uPVC, and renovation of the bathroom.

Jubilee Corner

Sadly there continues to be repeated vandalism resulting in benches being damaged. There were three occasions where the damage was to such an extent the benches had to be removed for repair. The Committee deplores these attacks and is determined to ensure that this area continues to be an asset to the village. Under a scheme driven by Stephen Conway there is going to be a CCTV camera sited by the edge of Jubilee Corner. Hopefully this will deter the vandals.

Burial Ground and Millennium Garden

Work has continued to keep this a pleasant area for residents. Bulbs have been planted and general maintenance carried out to keep the gardens looking nice. More extensive work is planned for the area at the bottom of the Millennium Garden, by the stream. Unfortunately though the spaces that are available for burials is almost exhausted.

Allotments

The allotments continue to be very popular. The London Road allotments are, as always, fully taken with no spare plots. A recent installation of a major sewer was conducted at the London Road allotments with no disruption to the allotments themselves. This was thanks to the Clerk of the Council persuading Thames Water to tunnel under the allotments rather than excavate them. The Hurst Road allotments have grown in their popularity. They are now at an unprecedented level of occupancy in recent times. Clearance work has been carried out to allow new plots to become usable again. There are currently no plans however to clear the area at the bottom of the Hurst Road allotments. We intend to leave this area as a wild nature area. Again vandalism has proved to be an issue at both sites. There have been a number of cases of sheds being broken into and tools stolen. At the London Road site there have also been incidences of arson, resulting in several sheds being destroyed.

Parish Ranger and Park Wardens

This year our Park wardens have been trained to issue on the spot fines for those people allowing their dogs to foul Stanlake Meadow and King George's field. I am happy to report that so far they have found it unnecessary to go to these lengths to persuade people to be responsible and place their dog waste in the bins provided.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Council to thank the Village Ranger, Mr A O'Brien, the Park Wardens, Peter and Sylvia Hughes, and our cleaner Belinda Bovingdon, 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 Committee has been busy as usual this year with many Planning applications to consider. Most are straightforward extensions but some appear to be over-ambitious, trying to cram as much as possible on to the site, with little regard for the effect on neighbours. Frequently the applicant is advised to submit a reduced scheme acceptable to all parties. It is a shame that people are wasting time and money on this especially when it causes ill feeling between neighbours.

More significant applications which received permission this year include the development now underway of four houses in place of one at 103 Wargrave Road. The original application was for 6 new houses on the site.

Yet to start is a development of two small dwellings in Gas Lane. The Parish Council had objected to the proposal on the grounds that the site was not suitable for residential use being alongside the railway line, and opening on to a busy road without footways, but it was approved by the District Council.

An application to build flats in The Grove, alongside Jubilee Corner was withdrawn when the applicant learned that permission was unlikely to be forthcoming, but a very similar application has recently been submitted. The Parish Council had objected to over-development, lack of parking, and the detrimental effect on Jubilee Corner and the Conservation Area. An application for 13 dwellings to the rear of 86-94 Wargrave Road was also withdrawn with the proposed access being unacceptable to the highway authority. A few days ago a revised application for five dwellings on the site was submitted.

Two applications for new dwellings that were refused following Parish Council objections included a proposal to erect 2 new houses at the rear of 7 New Road and a proposal for 8 dwellings on the site of Serangoon in Byron Road. Local residents are to be congratulated on their hard work in getting the Byron Road application refused. The Parish Council had objected to the access, and to the over-development of the site. More recently an application for two dwellings has been approved for the site in Byron Road. A revised application for New Road has again been refused. The Parish Council had objected to both applications because of the poor access arrangements, the likely noise nuisance from the A4 and the proximity of the public open space in Malvern Way.

More recently an applications to demolish the bungalow at no. 36 New Road and build two large houses was refused; and a proposal to demolish two bungalows on the corner of Springfield Park and London Road and build two blocks of flats has been submitted. The Parish Council has objected to both schemes on the grounds of over-development and in particular the proposed heights of the buildings. In the case of the flats proposal, there is also concern about the access so close to a busy junction and the Infants School. An application to extend the housing development in Lincoln Gardens to the rear of 46 and 48 Wargrave Road, gave less cause for concern with only inadequate parking being raised as an objection.

One proposal that has remained of concern is the continuing efforts by Century Galleries to obtain planning permission for a five-storey block of flats plus office and storage space at the rear of the old Post Office in the High Street. The result of an appeal is awaited but a revised application for a reduced scheme has been submitted.

Lastly on the subject of housing developments you will all have been aware of the initial consultations on a plan to build a Care Village of over 100 dwellings for the elderly on land adjoining Bridge House Nursing Home. The land is not currently designated for housing but has been put forward by the owners for the District Council to consider as part of its review of available land for housing developments. The District Council intends to produce a report on the subject in the autumn, which will be the subject of formal public consultation. The Parish Council has objected to the proposal to change the designation of the land because such a change would not guarantee that the land would be used in the manner currently proposed. The fear is that all or part of it could be sold to other developers who might want to build an even greater density of housing and sell it on the open market. The applicants have assured us that this will not happen but the Parish Council prefers to see stricter control maintained over any development of the land.

The Parish Council has other concerns over the proposed development including the traffic likely to be generated by the development and the access on to the High Street, and about the effect of the natural environment close to the river.

An application that was not a housing development was the retrospective proposal for an advertisement hoarding outside the post office in London Road. This met with fierce objections from the public and was refused by the District Council. The subsequent appeal was also dismissed and we are pleased to note that the offending hoarding was quickly removed.

The current structure plan for Berkshire is only valid until 2006 and Wokingham, along with all other local authorities in the South East, is currently producing a new plan to control development up until 2026. Recently the Parish Council commented on the proposals from the South East Regional Assembly setting targets for housing development in the area. The Council was very unhappy that the Regional Assembly is proposing that the Wokingham/ Reading area should take a higher level of development than other parts of the south east – at least as high as the present level, if not higher. The rationale for this appears to be that this is the most economically vibrant area in the southeast. The proposal ignores the high cost of housing here and problems such as severe traffic congestion and water shortages. It also fails to take into account the likely availability of land in the area. The Parish Council has sent in strong objections to this high level of development.

As part of this process of preparing a new plan, the District Council is producing a whole series of consultation documents and surveys covering all aspects of future development and the Parish Council sends in comments on each of these.

On highway matters, we are very pleased that after considerable pressure from the Parish Council, the traffic lights are at last working as well as can be expected given the volume of traffic using the roads.

New 30mph speed limits have been introduced in Wargrave Road, London Road and Hurst Road but there have been complaints about the lack of enforcement,

which have been passed to the police. The District Council is also currently introducing a 50 mph speed limit along the A4 through Twyford.

The Parish Council and District Council have agreed to share 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.

There has not been much activity with regard to footway lighting in the last year. A damaged column in the footpath to Orchard Estate was replaced and an additional column is being 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 Council organised two litter picks in the last year. The first, in April, was well attended but the second in October was not. In practice, thanks to the Village Ranger, there are not many places in the village which suffer badly from litter and most of these are alongside busy highways where it would not be safe to organise a public litter pick. For this reason, we have not organised a litter pick this year. Following the suggestion of a resident, the Parish Council approached the District Council who arranged for a one-off collection of Christmas trees in January, which proved very popular. Our District Councillors will probably tell you about plans for an experimental collection of green waste in the Colleton Drive area of the village which started in April.

Sadly, the funding for the Twyfordlink buses is running out earlier than hoped. The District Council plan to continue a limited service until the end of the school term in July. Plans to provide a school service in the future and use the vehicles for a commercial service that is not subsidised are still being considered.

Finally, we have again produced two issues of Twyford News this year – there are spares on the table for anyone who wants them along with some copies of the Directory. Unfortunately St Mary's Church managed to change their email address the day after the directory was printed which is a pity! If anyone is interested in helping produce the next Twyford News I would like to hear from them – you do not have to be a Parish Councillor.

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 2004-2005, the actual expenditure for 2004-2005 and the council's budget for 2005-2006.

Our budget for this year shows an increase from £ 54,500 to £ 55,300. The same 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 £ 19.02 instead of £ 18.75 p.a. for Parish Council expenditure, an increase of 27 pence. To this is added £ 126.28 p.a. for Thames Valley Police, £ 46.17 for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services and £ 1006.62 for WDC, making a total yearly payment of £ 1198.09. Comparing the Parish Council Tax with the charges made by the other 17 Town and Parish Councils in the District shows us in position no. 11 with no. 1(Woodley) as the highest charging Council at £ 96.87 and no. 17(Swallowfield) as the lowest at £

10.75. Therefore we are comparatively one of the lower spending councils in the District. The average increase across the 17 Parish and Town Councils is 4.83%. Our increase is 1.4 %.

Our total precept is in position no. 10 with the highest precept of £ 944,786 in Woodley as No. 1 and the lowest precept of £ 3,750 in Remenham as no. 17.

The council continues to use the income from its investments to assist local groups with grants. A total of £ 4,245 was given in grants.

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

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

6.District Council matters- No District Councillors were able to attend because, due to it being moved for the General Election, the Annual Meeting of Wokingham District Council clashed with this meeting. In their absence the Chairman read the following report from District Councillor Stephen Conway.

Twyford has only two full district councillors and Mrs Drake who covers Hurst and part of Twyford following the boundary changes that came into effect last year. Dee Tomlin serves on the Highways Consultative Board and I am a member of the Development Control Committee and the Scrutiny Committee. There are fewer council committees than there used to be, as decision making is now largely concentrated on the single –party council executive. Nevertheless, your district councillors have been able to work with council officers and within the council chamber to defend and promote Twyford's interests,

Much of my time is spent dealing with planning applications, some of the most contentious of which have already been reported to you by Linda. Very often both the parish council and your district councillors are fighting a rearguard action against unwanted and unsuitable development. Sometimes we are successful, other times we are not. Unfortunately, even when we are successful, local decisions can be overturned on appeal by government inspectors. But, despite the frustrations, we need to keep fighting on this front, if we are not to be faced with even greater development. I should like to thank Linda and the other members of the planning and amenities committee of the parish council for their detailed comments on all applications in Twyford. Without their help the fight would be even more difficult.

Turning to other area, we have consistently lobbied for better funding for Twyford's schools, which have suffered a serious funding shortfall in recent years. We have also been trying to persuade the council to resist the proposal to downgrade the Henley branch line to a so-called community railway. The implications of this change, were it to go ahead, would be serious for Twyford. Community railways are meant to be locally funded. Given the limited moneys available to the district council this could well mean a reduced service or higher fares. Either way, it would almost certainly result in more current branch-line commuters deciding to drive to Twyford and catch the Paddington train there. This would only increase the congestion and parking problems in Twyford, especially in the roads near the station.

Much of my time over the last year has been devoted to securing the funding necessary for the introduction of CCTV cameras in the village centre. As progress on this was reported in the latest edition of Twyford News I don't need to say much

more. What I would like to do, however, is to repeat my thanks to all those who assisted in furthering the project, especially the parish council, the Twyford Village Centre Management Initiative and the local businesses who generously responded to my appeal for financial assistance.

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. 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 as you have heard although there has been no visible progress on this, matters have moved on in the last year as far as the Parish Council is concerned. The Council agreed at its meeting last June to permit the construction of a skate park and hard court area in King George's Field, subject to certain conditions. The next move is for Twyford Village Centre Management Initiative to put together a funding package and, together with Groundworks, the contractor, to apply for planning permission, which has just been done.

The subject, which has exercised the Council most over the last few years, has been vandalism. Last year I mentioned that the Council was considering the installation of CCTV to cover the Loddon Hall/King George's Field area. In July the Council agreed to do this, placed the order and the system was operational at the end of February. The cost was considerable, though reduced by contributions from the District Council, the Community Association and Ruscombe Parish Council. It will have an effect on our Council Tax bills in the future, although this should be offset by a fall in vandalism costs, which I am happy to say are lower by about one third. We have also installed additional lighting at Stanlake Meadow, so far with favourable results. The Council is very pleased that its initiatives and example in this area have helped to persuade the District Council to install CCTV in the village centre.

Graffiti continues to be a problem in the village, although both the Parish and District Councils do their best to remove it when it appears and this has had some success this year. Unfortunately, the owners of the London Road building which overlooks Wellington Square and of Apsley House at the heart of the village have failed to respond to repeated requests from both councils to clean the display on their walls. As the law stands, we are powerless in the matter and these irresponsible companies, Workmans and Kimberley Securities will go on scarring the village and undermining all our efforts.

There has been some advance on the policing front. As you will know the Police Station has been refurbished and it is intended to have it staffed with volunteers. The police have appointed a Community Support Officer, Mr George David, for Twyford and Wargrave who is here this evening and we look forward to liaising with him. You may have read in the Advertiser about a proposal from the Police to appoint a second CSO, if Parish Councils and other bodies were prepared to fund it. The newspaper report was the first the Council heard about it and although we have now received a letter from the police, it is very thin on detail, especially about costs, and we are seeking further information before considering the issue. However, I believe that Thames Valley Police still have a lot to do to restore public confidence in their ability to deal with local crime and justify yet another huge increase in their precept.

Two related issues for the future have recently been concerning the Council. We were consulted on a proposal to make the Henley Branch Line a Community Railway. Once again, the information we were given was not very helpful when it

came to practical details like the impact on service levels and cost and again, we have requested further information. To our annoyance we were not consulted about Crossrail, although the proposal to terminate the new line at Maidenhead would have a serious effect on our rail service, which could certainly not continue at its present level. We are in the process of drawing attention to this omission.

Finally, I should report on the make up of the Council. During the last year six councillors have resigned, in most cases because they were leaving the village. Replacing that many councillors has not been easy and I thank Messrs Fort, Jarvis and Rowe for coming forward. That still leaves us with three vacancies to fill. All of you here tonight obviously have an interest in the work of the Council and the government of the village and I appeal to you to consider putting your names forward for co-option to the Council. The procedure is fairly painless and the minimum duties amount to two evening meetings per month. We are now able to pay expenses for baby-sitting costs, although we do not pay ourselves an attendance allowance. If you would like to know more please speak to one of us after the meeting or contact the Clerk for written details.

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.

Thank you all for coming tonight. I will now take questions from the floor for about half an hour, after which coffee will be served.

8. Questions from the floor.

- 8.1 Mr Yates, Hurst Park Rd – asked who was responsible for the area outside Simmons and Lawrence and what could be done to tidy it up. Mrs Dane replied that the owners had been written to and asked to clean up the area but no action has been taken to date,
- 8.2 Mr Yates, Hurst Park Rd – asked who is responsible for the drain at the end of the walkway by J W Greens as it floods when there is heavy rain. Mr Hymers said he would ask the planning and amenities committee to investigate ownership and ask for it to be cleared.
- 8.3 Mr Yates, Hurst Park Rd - asked if the signs notifying the new 30MPH speed limit around the village could be removed. Mr Hymers replied that the District Council had already been contacted and asked to remove these and other unwanted signs.
- 8.4 Mr P Minton, Amberley Drive complemented the Parish Council on the excellent condition of Stanlake Meadow and KGVR. He asked about the CCTV camera by the bank in London Rd, which appeared to have exposed connections. Mrs Dane explained this was a temporary camera erected by the district council to monitor the traffic at the crossroads.
- 8.5 Mrs B Smith New Rd - asked about the powers of the dog warden and what fines they could impose. Mr Hymers explained they could issue an on the spot fine of £50 to persons who allowed their dogs to foul on council property. However, their instructions were to warn person first and to date it has not been necessary to issue any fines.
- 8.6 Mrs S Pitman, Hermitage Drive - asked if the grass cutting contract has been changed as after a recent cut there was a lot of grass left on KGVR. Mr Hymers replied that there has been no change and it has always been the practice to leave grass cuttings on the field.

- 8.7 Mrs Elderfield, Chaseside Ave – asked what is happening about the notices left on the pavement by the tyre company in The Grove, particularly the one outside the Almshouses. Mr Hymers replied that the district council had been asked to inspect this but no action could be taken unless they were causing an obstruction
- 8.8 Mr Smith, Springfield Park - asked about other signs causing obstructions around the village, as they were particularly difficult for visually impaired persons. Mr Hymers replied that the same rules applied as for the signs in The Grove.
- 8.9 Mr Yates, Hurst Park Rd – asked if the parking places in Hurst Rd near the bend at the rear exit of the station could be moved further up the road to reduce the hazard for traffic coming round the bend. Mrs Dane replied that it was very difficult to get the district council to move parking spaces due to the costs involved.
- 8.10 Mr Smith, Springfield Park – commented that the present road markings in Springfield Park allow two opposing lines of traffic to have right of way, which could lead to an accident. Mr Hymers said he would ask the Planning and Amenities Committee to look at this and ask for the situation to be rectified.

The meeting closed at 8.46pm