

TWYFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

ST MARYS CHURCH 21st April 2010 AT 8PM

Present: Mr R Mantel (Chairman), Members of the Council - Mrs B Ditcham, Ms S Doughty, Mrs S Harriott-Kerr, Messrs D Hymers, J Jarvis, J Bowley, N Crush, B Rogers, C Smith, S Clark, M Shepherd and A Dimmock. Members of the public – 27.

In attendance Mr J March Clerk and Borough Councillor Mr S Conway.

Apologies – Councillor Mrs K Peck.

1. Mr R Mantel presented the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 14th May 2009.

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 its pavilion; King George's Field including the children's playground, ball court and skate park; Twycombe Lodge; Jubilee Corner; the Burial Ground and Millennium Garden. The Committee also oversees the work of the Village Ranger and Park Warden.

Stanlake Meadow is a popular facility within the village. It hosts the village cricket team and a large number of youth and junior football teams. Continuing our desire to improve the lands and facilities we own we have started a project to see if certain areas of Stanlake Meadow football pitches can have their drainage improved. An issue that became significant due to the periods of heavy rain we have suffered over the last 12 months. The pavilion on Stanlake Meadow continues to require considerable sums to be spent on maintenance. This is because the building has reached an age where the original fixtures and infrastructure are starting to fail.

We received a generous donation from WBC of around 20 trees and hedging plants. These were gratefully received and planted around Stanlake Meadow and King George's Field. We used them to improve the overall general amenity and fill holes in the hedge lines.

King George's Field and Children's Playground. The Skate Park and Ball Court area within King George's Field have proved to be very popular facilities.

We continue our commitment to providing play facilities for children within the recreation ground and as part of this we are near to completion of a scheme to replace the multi-log unit as this is reaching the end of its lifespan. As part of this project we have taken special notice to consider disabled access and usage. The works should hopefully commence in the next month or so.

At the edge of the recreation ground is Twycombe Lodge. For many years this has been rented out to local people. This has provided a good source of income for the Parish. However, like Stanlake Pavilion, the building had reached an age where extensive refurbishment was required. A project has now been completed to completely refurbish Twycombe Lodge, including a full rewire, replacement bathroom suite, carpets and decorating throughout. This should allow us to restart the income from the building.

Burial Ground and Millennium Garden. Clearance work has continued at The Millennium Garden in order to keep it a pleasant area for residents. The Burial Ground as it currently stands is almost full, with only a hand full of vacant plots. We feel strongly that we would like to continue to provide a place of rest for Twyford residents so we are going to extend the Burial Ground to the area below the beech hedge that currently forms the end of the Burial Ground and the top of the Millennium Garden.

Jubilee Corner. The planting in Jubilee Corner had become tired and drab so a project was undertaken to completely replant the beds. This should help to maintain it as a pleasant place to sit and relax.

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 continue to be fully occupied with people on a waiting list. In order to try to provide for the people on the waiting list extensive clearance work was carried out at the bottom of the Hurst Road allotments to reinstate some 14 plus allotments. The area of land had become overgrown and derelict and had been used as a dumping area for many years. We have benefited from leasing land to the construction company carrying out the replacement of the railway footbridge. They have carried out works to make hard standing either side of the railway entrance. They have also carried out remedial work on the road

running round the allotments. Their final contribution was to replace the damaged and corroded gate.

Village Ranger and Park Warden. On behalf of the council I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Village Ranger, the Park Warden, and our cleaner, for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. Finally I would like to thank the Clerk, John March, for all his hard work and all the members of the committee for their contributions this year.

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

This is my first year as chairman of the Planning and Amenities Committee, I thank all members of the committee for their hard work and in particular Mr John Jarvis, vice chairman and previous chairman of this committee for his detailed knowledge in planning matters.

Since April 2009 we have discussed 77 planning applications and given our comments to WBC. WBC have given permission in 58 instances and refused 13. Some decisions have gone to appeal and one notable application has a deferred decision. In general applications continue to be made for new housing in the Wargrave Road, we have noted an increase in requests for change of use of garages into habitable accommodation and conservatory extensions continue to be popular. The application which would have the greatest impact on our village is that for a continuing care community village at Bridge House. This application came before us at the November meeting, which was attended by 21 members of the public. The plans were scrutinized by the committee and the letters and comments of residents taken into consideration. Whilst we accept that there is some need for additional care for the elderly and in particular for Alzheimer sufferers we objected to the scheme on the following grounds. We consider that the risk of flooding would be increased by the run off of water from the buildings and paved areas; the complex is very large and dense; there are 3 storey buildings which are generally out of character with the area; there would be a considerable increase in traffic to and from the site on an already busy road; pavements into the village are too narrow for use by wheel chairs and electric buggies; and there would be a considerable impact on the demographic mix of our village. As you may be aware this went before WBC in March and a decision was deferred.

The Planning and Amenities Committee consider issues with highways and lighting. There has been an ongoing problem with the road surface in Springfield Park, which we hope will soon be resolved. The deteriorating road surface on Station Road has also been reported. Following a number of requests we asked WBC to consider the feasibility of making Station Road one-way. In order to get an accurate picture of opinions Twyford Parish Council is carrying out a survey of opinions, you will have received the survey form in the spring edition of the Twyford and Ruscombe News.

Three of our lampposts have been knocked down this year, one at the corner of Arnside Close, one in Orchard Estate and another on Winchcombe Road. In one instance your council was unable to trace the driver so the bill has been paid from our funds.

This year we have seen the completion of the new play area in Broad Hinton and The Starlings Children's Centre, both of which are WBC schemes, which are being well used.

Our station footbridge has eventually been completed but there is an issue regarding the lift which is closed when the station is unmanned thus causing great problems for disabled passengers and those with heavy luggage, we are in discussion with the rail authorities.

The Public Conveniences in Polehampton Close were closed last year and we understand that there are plans to demolish the building. WBC set up a Local Loo scheme, which at present is not entirely successful particularly for those with mobility problems.

The Litter Pick in March was well attended and a deal of rubbish removed.

We have participated with the TVP (Twyford Village Partnership) in the construction of the Parish Plan, which we fully endorse.

This year has seen a change in the Twyford News, now it is the Twyford and Ruscombe News. Finally I would like to thank the Clerk, John March, for his excellent and efficient work throughout the year.

5.Financial Report- Mr Crush referred to the sheet of paper circulated showing the council's budget for 2009-2010, the actual expenditure for 2009-2010 and the council's budget for 2010-2011. He pointed out that the headings on the left-hand side refer to the figures for 2009-2010 and the headings on the right-hand side refer to the 2010-2011 budget. The budget for this year will be going up from £ 58,500 to £59,552. An increase of 1.8%.

The sheet of paper shows on the reverse the expenditure under the heading vandalism.

The budget means that the owner of a band D property pays £ 19.91 this year instead of £ 19.68 last year for Parish Council expenditure, an increase of 23 pence. That is an increase of 1.2%. The reason is that the tax base in the village went down. To

this is added £ 154.30 p.a. for the Thames Valley Police, £ 55.66 for the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services and £ 1199.24 for the Wokingham Borough Council, making a total council tax payment for a band D property this year £ 1429.11.

The average council tax for a band D property across the 17 Parish and Town Councils in Wokingham Borough is £1467. This puts Twyford at position no. 14 with the highest council tax for a band D property being Woodley at £1862.49 and the lowest Swallowfield at £1423.69.

The Parish Council continues to use the income from its investments to assist local groups with grants. Recently the council has made grants to the local Help the Aged, Keep Mobile, Readibus and the local Citizen Advice Bureaus. A total of £ 5181.23 was given in grants this past year.

I would also like to acknowledge gratefully the financial help given by Ruscombe Parish Council towards the running cost of 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. Borough Council matters- Borough Councillor Mr S Conway reported on the following: He thanked the parish Council for their support, particularly the Planning Committee for their detailed reports on planning applications. The Bridge House planning application decision has been deferred to allow the applicants to consider the possibility of a smaller scheme and to provide more information on the disabled access facilities. Parking problems in Wagtail Close were raised at the Annual Parish Meeting two years ago and finally new parking restrictions have been put in place to overcome the problem. Residents in Wessex Gardens are now asking for a similar scheme and a petition has been submitted to WBC. He has attempted to solve the cause of the problem by making attempts to get the capacity of the station car park increased and the parking charges policy to be reconsidered. There are on going discussions regarding a new library and although a few possibilities are still be considered the WBC Executive Committee have not included any capital provision for this in the current budget. Several discussions have been held with the police regarding ant-social behaviour and vandalism in Twyford and Ruscombe and the police are devoting more resources to this. He has recently been notified about the problems created by the new admissions policy at Colleton School and he is taking this up with WBC officers.

7. Parish Plan – Twyford 2020 Mrs B Ditcham presented this:

She explained that the Twyford Village Partnership (TVP) has completed the majority of the work to produce this. Unfortunately their representatives Mrs K Peck and Mrs S Goddard who were due to present this are unavailable as they are still abroad as a result of the travel delays caused by the Icelandic volcano. As Mrs Ditcham is the Parish Council representative on TVP she is able to explain the background to the plan. The Parish Council endorses the plan.

It has been produced after wide consultation with organisations in the village and all residents were given the opportunity to comment on the following:

- Environment
- Social and Community Issues
- Transport and Accessibility
- Economy and Education.

This has resulted in a plan with 120 proposed actions.

She explained that the plan is useful because it demonstrates possible plans for the village for the next 10 years and is a basis for making grant applications, which TVP can make but statutory authorities such as the Parish Council cannot. More details about the plan are given in Twyford and Ruscombe News and it will be discussed at the TVP AGM to be held at 8pm on 29th April in St Mary's Church Centre. Walking maps of Twyford will also be launched at this time.

8. Chairman's Review of the Year-Mr Mantel reported-

We are starting the last year of this Parish Council as the full council comes up for election in May 2011.

The Parish Council has written to WBC regarding the resignation of the Youth Worker and is urging them to appoint a replacement as soon as possible.

Some of you may have seen the proposal for a footpath from New Rd Twyford to link with the existing Bridleway. At this stage this is only a proposal included in the WBC Rights of Way Improvement Plan and nothing has been agreed yet.

The Meet the Public meeting held on a Saturday morning every 2 months has been moved to the library as this was seen to be a better venue with more contact with residents.

I will now take questions from the floor for about half an hour, before refreshments are served, when you will have the chance to talk to Councillors informally.

9. Questions from the floor.

- 9.1 Mrs B Smith of New Rd raised concerns about the proposed footpath. Mr R Mantel replied that it is only a proposal in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and nothing will happen before further consultation takes place. Mrs Smith then raised concerns about blockages put across the bridleway near the A4 where she thinks car boot sales are going to be held. Mr R Mantel undertook to raise this with Ruscombe PC as it is in their parish. Borough Councillor Mr S Conway is aware of this and has asked WBC to investigate.
- 9.2 Mr B Savage of London Rd raised the problems of cycling and mobility scooters on the footpath and expressed his concern at the lack of action by the police. Mr C Smith the council representative on the Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) will raise this with them.
- 9.3 Mr R Sunley of Mallard Close asked if a site has been identified for the proposed fire station yet. Mr Jarvis explained that no information has been released about this as the project is currently on hold due to the shortage of permanent staff.
- 9.4 Mrs B Reid of London Rd thanked the council for tidying up Jubilee Corner. She raised concerns about the problems with youths playing football in the road and kicking balls at vehicles. The police have to be called on a regular basis. She said the problem seems to stop when the Christmas tree is erected can something be done on a permanent basis? The NAG representative will also raise this and the Parish Lands Committee will consider what can be done.
- 9.5 Mr G Wise of Wessex Gardens said that Stanlake Meadow gets very boggy in the NE corner and asked if a path could be installed for use by runners. The Parish Lands Committee will consider this.
- 9.6 Mrs S Pitman of Hermitage Drive reported the yellow lines in her road are fading and residents are ignoring them and asked if any enforcement action is taken. Borough Councillor Mr S Conway commented on the problems of enforcing parking restrictions, which has to be carried out by PCSOs who do not have much time for this. A possible solution is for WBC to create a Special Parking Area where they take on the responsibility for enforcement and their costs are covered by the fines they charge. However the initial problem is covering the costs until sufficient funds are generated from the scheme. Mr Conway will ask if the lines can be renewed and follow this up with WBC.
- 9.7 Mrs L Spicer of Mallard Close reported problem with water making the access road at Hurst Rd allotments very muddy. The Clerk explained the water comes from natural springs, which are very difficult to control. The Parish Lands Committee will consider if any action can be taken.
- 9.8 Mrs B Reid London Rd reported that since the yellow lines outside the dentists and vets in London Rd have been moved there is confusion over the parking restrictions. Borough Councillor Mr S Conway undertook to follow this up with WBC.
- 9.9 Mr B Savage of London Rd proposed a vote of thanks to the Parish Council for the work they do looking after the village.

The meeting closed at 8.54 pm.