

TWYFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

ST MARYS CHURCH 25th April 2007 AT 8PM

Present: Mr D Hymers (Chairman), Members of the Council-Mrs L Dane, Mrs S Harriott-Kerr, Mrs B Ditcham, Mrs J Robinson, Messrs J Jarvis, J Bowley, N Crush, R Mantel, J Rowe, J Fort and C Smith. Members of the public - 24.

In attendance Mr J March Clerk, District Councillor Mr S Conway and 1 member of the press.

Apologies –District Councillor- Mrs D Tomlin

1.Mr Hymers reported on the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 11th May 2006

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, and 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 has continued to be a popular facility within the village. It hosts the village cricket team and a number of football teams. Following on from last year's renovation of the Wild Meadow area in the corner by Stanlake Lane and the railway lines we have this year extended the area to almost double its original size. This was done in conjunction with the bio-diversity office from Wokingham Borough Council. The Parish Lands committee continues to try to do what ever it can to promote good management of the lands it oversees in order to promote wildlife. In line with this we have installed 10 new bird boxes and 6 new bat boxes. I am pleased to report that an addition bench has been installed in Stanlake Meadow following a request from a resident at last year's Annual Parish Meeting.

King George's Field and Children's Playground. The project to construct a Skate Park and Ball Court area within King George's Field has final made progress this year. The main issue had been the funding and much work was put in by TVCMI and others to secure that funding. The Parish Council is being consulted by the project team on detailed issues such as lighting, CCTV, landscaping, etc as the project progresses. If all goes according to plan the first stages of construction will begin within the next couple of months. The project to renovate the younger children's section of the play area within King George's Field was complete successfully. The Parish Council managed to secure a grant of around £9200 from Awards for All towards the costs of those renovations. Maintenance work has continued in the older children's section of the play area. The roundabout in that area is about to be replaced as it now worn beyond repair after many years of service.

Burial Ground and Millennium Garden. Work has continued to keep The Millennium Garden a pleasant area for residents. Extensive clearance work has continued on the area at the bottom of the Millennium Garden, by the stream. This area has now been transformed from an overgrown area that was virtually impenetrable to a pleasant and relaxing area by the stream.

The allotments continue to be very popular. The London Road allotments are, as always, fully taken with no spare plots. The Hurst Road allotments are, for the first time in a very very long time, fully occupied with people on a waiting list. We are now looking to see if the area at the very bottom of the Hurst Road allotments can be returned to allotment use after many years of neglect. Continuing our commitment to the environment we have extended the Hazel Cops area at the southeast corner of the Hurst Road allotments.

Parish Ranger and Park Wardens. I would now like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Council to thank the Village Ranger, the Park Wardens, 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-Mr Jarvis reported on the activities of the year.

This is my first year as Chairman of this Committee and before reporting on the activities of the Committee I would like to thank the Members of this Committee for all the hard work and assistance I have received during the last year. In particular I would like to thank Mrs. Linda Dane, the Vice Chairman and previous Chairman of this Committee, whose help and assistance has been invaluable to me.

During the last year there have been over 100 Planning applications seen and commented on by this Committee with over 60 being acceptable. There were some 60 Planning Permissions granted by Wokingham Borough Council, 35 Applications refused and 15 Appeals on these refusals with most being dismissed by the Planning Inspector. It is very gratifying to note that the majority of our comments and objections were agreed to by Wokingham Borough Council with only a few of those we objected to being given Planning Permission.

Of the 35 plus Planning Applications we objected to the following merit specific comments.

Mulberry Mead and 35 Winchcombe Road. This site has seen many Planning Applications and during this year the Owner of the Site decided to omit one Dwelling, which was reasonably acceptable bearing in mind the comments of the Planning Inspector when the original scheme was dismissed on appeal. There are now 6 new Dwellings on this site, after the demolition of the Bungalow, which still appears cramped compared to other dwellings in the vicinity.

We are still awaiting the outcome of the second retrospective Planning Application for the Extension to Mulberry Mead as the first Application was refused by both Wokingham Borough Council and the Planning Inspector on Appeal.

There were some satellite dishes erected to the front of some dwellings in the Conservation Area which were felt inappropriate but the enforcement officer could not take action as there was no reliable evidence as to when they had been erected as they could be within the law. Details of all satellite dishes in the Conservation Area have now been taken so that if any new satellite dishes are erected there will be credible evidence that they have only just been erected. We will keep a watch on this matter and report any breaches direct to Wokingham Borough Council.

1 Station Road. This application was a gross over development of this small site especially on its impact on the Conservation Area and it was pleasing to note that this was refused permission.

63 London Road (The Hermitage). This application sought to obtain retrospective planning permission to convert a double garage into two one-bedroom rooms thus increasing the activity on this site for the bed and breakfast business. This application was refused permission by Wokingham Borough Council for unneighbourliness, increasing the business of bed and breakfast and failure to apply for permission in a conservation area. A new application is currently awaiting determination.

15-17 Westview Drive. This application sought to build a new dwelling in the back gardens of two properties but was refused permission by Wokingham Borough Council for over development.

Finally 55 High Street has sought permission for a change of use from an office to a health centre but as there did not appear sufficient information on use, parking and access, this has been returned to Wokingham Borough Council requesting this additional information.

The Committee has been very concerned at the changes occurring within the Post Office concerning collection times and possible closures of a substantial part of their network and will continue to press them for answers and proper information on Post Boxes.

The Twyford News, very ably edited by Mrs. Linda Dane is being taken over by Mrs Bridget Ditcham and Mrs Peck (a new councillor). We also note that following the withdrawal of our previous distributor, the Scouts have now taken over this task. There are spares on the table for anyone who wants one.

The Committee commenced the year asking Wokingham Borough Council about the Infants Play Area in Broad Hinton and when it would be opened. As of today's date, no answer has been forthcoming other than a nebulous comment that a consultation document on all Play /areas was about to be issued and this Play Area would have to wait until the completion of the Consultation. A whole year has been wasted waiting for this document.

5.Financial Report-Mr Mantel reported on- the sheet circulated showing the Council's budget for 2006-2007, the actual expenditure for 2006-2007 and the council's budget for 2007-2008. The headings on the l.h. side refer to the figures for 2006-2007 and the headings on the r.h. side refer to the 2007-2008 budget.

Our budget for this year remains the same at £ 55,300.

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 £ 18.64 this year instead of £ 18.81 last year for Parish Council expenditure, a decrease of 17 pence. The reason is that some more

properties have been built in the village. To this is added £ 139 p.a. for the Thames Valley Police, £ 50 for the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services and £ 1070 for the Wokingham District Council, making a total council tax payment for a band D property this year of £1277. Comparing the Twyford Parish Council Tax of £ 18.64 with the charges made by the other 17 Town and Parish Councils in the District shows us in position no. 12 with Woodley as the highest charging Council at £ 104.69 and Swallowfield as the lowest at £ 13.44. 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 3.36%. Our parish council tax went down by 0.9%

Looking at our total precept of £ 55,300, this is in position no. 10 with the highest precept of £1,029,678 in Woodley and the lowest precept of £ 4,750 in Remenham.

The Parish Council continues to use the income from its investments to assist local groups with grants. A total of £ 9,415 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.District Council matters-Mr S Conway commented on the change of name for Wokingham to Borough Council. He agreed with the Parish Council's view that this was unnecessary and a waste of money. He also agreed with the objections expressed about the proposed changes to social services provisions and is concerned that some elderly person may not get the service they need. A lottery bid has now been made for funds to provide a new library and thanked everyone for their support in the campaign for this. After a considerable amount of lobbying WBC have agreed to a feasibility study relating to the installation of a temporary CCTV camera on the station forecourt. Planning matters took up a lot of time during the year and he was disappointed that several planning refusals were allowed on appeal. He thanked the Planning Committee for their comments on applications as the planning officers take them into account and they help him make his case. In particular he thanked Mrs Linda Dane for her work on the Planning Committee as under her guidance they have had a significant impact on developments in the village. Her contribution will be missed now she is leaving the village.

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

As usual you have already heard of the main issues that have concerned the Parish Council over the last year. Last night I was very pleased to be able to attend the formal opening of the new Scout Headquarters and would like to congratulate all concerned on the achievement of an excellent project.

It is good to know that the long awaited, by some, ball court and skate park is about to begin construction. This seems to have been dragging on for most of the life of this Council and it will certainly not be completed before the next Council is in place. I fear that the new Library is likely to be at least as lengthy a saga, but at least the Borough, as we must now call it, Council has accepted that there is a need and has made a Lottery Fund application.

On the vandalism front is good to report that the graffiti overlooking Waitrose has at last been removed. Although not perfect, the quantity of graffiti and other vandalism has been much reduced this year, at least as far as the Parish Council is concerned and this helps to explain why we are the only Parish in the Borough which has charged a reduced precept this year. However, it will not do to be complacent; there have recently been several outbreaks of serious anti-social behaviour in the village, which the Council is inclined to attribute largely to the failure, once again, of the police to provide anything like the service we pay them for. Our Area Beat Officer, Stuart Loudwell, has been posted away and not yet replaced, leaving not only Twyford, but also three other parishes bereft of police cover for most of the time. Nevertheless, their precept has increased by 5%, the maximum the Government will allow. The Parish Council will continue to put pressure on the police to provide us with a proper service.

Another area where the lack of police activity is having a noticeable effect is in parking enforcement. There are still occasional problems with vehicles parked opposite Highfield Court during the day and although we have asked them several times we have had no response from the Borough Council about providing No Waiting restrictions here. We have also had a complaint about all day parking at the top of Broad Hinton and have passed that on to the appropriate people. More generally on the parking problem, we are trying to persuade the Borough to undertake a full review of the various Residents Parking schemes in the village, as it is clear that a number of anomalies have crept in and in the interests of fairness they need to be addressed.

I would like to give an update on the questions, which were asked from the floor at last year's meeting. I have already mentioned the parking problem, where the slow reaction of the Borough Council has meant that no action has been taken. As far as speeding is concerned, the Council has suggested to Wokingham that vehicle activated signs should be installed in Wargrave Road, where we feel the speeding problem is greatest. We believe that some funding should be available for this, since a scheme for Ruscombe was withdrawn. The Council has successfully taken action over the number of developer's signs around the village and there are now fewer of them. We are aware that this is a continuing problem and will continue to address it. We have provided an additional seat at Stanlake Meadow. The Council decided to take no action over the pigeons at the allotments and have received no further complaints.

This meeting marks the end of the four-year term of this Council; elections will be held on May 3rd and I urge you to cast a vote in the election for the Borough Council. There will be no poll for the Parish Council since only 11 people put their names forward and were thus elected unopposed. This is an improvement on four years ago, when we only had 9. This means that we will need to co-opt 4 councillors. If anyone here would like to consider joining the Parish Council and contributing to its work I would be very glad to talk to you after the meeting about what is involved. Five councillors have stood down from the Parish Council, four of them for personal reasons. I would like to formally express my thanks on behalf of the village to Mr Fort, Dr Garrard, Mrs Robinson and Mrs Wright and I hope that they will consider serving again at some future date. The fifth councillor to stand down is Mrs Linda Dane and her retirement from the Council is because she and her husband are moving away from the village to a new home in Warwickshire. Linda has contributed enormously to the life of the village in the 35 years she has lived here, both through the Parish Council and in many other village organisations. It would take too long to list all the ways she has contributed, so I will mention just two of the key roles she has taken on the Parish Council. Linda joined in 1973 and has served continuously since then. Almost immediately she became part of a team which began Twyford News and she has been its principal editor ever since – you have just received the 80th issue with a record 40 pages, carrying as always its lively combination of information and interest. She joined the Planning and Amenities Committee and for many years served as its chairman. Her meticulous attention to detail in reviewing with the committee every plan brought before the Council and making carefully reasoned objections where necessary has meant that the village is a much more pleasant place to live than it would otherwise have been. We will miss her detailed knowledge of the planning process and her long memory of what has been tried in the past. Mr D Hymers then made a presentation from the Council to Mrs Dane on behalf of the village.

8. Questions from the floor.

- 8.1 Mrs J Gathergood Wagtail Close expressed her concerns about the all day parking in Wagtail Close which creates access problems and asked why the parking restrictions are not being enforced. Mr Hymers replied that the Planning and Amenities Committee are looking at residents parking schemes and they will also consider what action can be taken on this problem.
- 8.2 Mrs B Reid London Rd asked why the PCSO stands for long periods in London Rd near the newsagents and is not patrolling around the village. Referred to the Planning and Amenities Committee to follow up.
- 8.3 Mrs B Reid London Rd asked if a safety crossing could be installed on the London Rd entrance to Waitrose. The existing signage is not really appropriate and there is a serious risk of an accident. Referred to the Planning and Amenities Committee.
- 8.4 Mr B Savage London Rd was concerned about the developments in the adjacent property to his, which is in the conservation area. No action appears to have been taken by WBC regarding the unauthorised activity that has taken place. Mr Conway reported that the WBC Enforcement Officer is currently taking action in an attempt to rectify this situation.
- 8.5 Mr Allen Hurst Rd expressed concern about the speeding in Hurst Rd and asked if anything can be done about it. Mr Jarvis reported that the WBC Highways Committee have had a meeting where proposals to review the speed limits throughout the area were discussed together with proposals to improve speed limit signage. It is hoped further action will be taken in the near future.

The meeting closed at 8.47pm