

# TWYFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

ST MARYS CHURCH 30<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2003

AT 8PM

Present :Mr D Hymers (Chairman), Members of the Council-Mrs L Dane, Mrs G Wright, Messrs, N, Crush, J Fort, M Garrard, K Hogg, T LeMare, R Mantel, B Rogers, M Stillman. District Councillor- Mr S Conway. Members of the press-1. Members of the public approximately 28.

Apologies – Councillors-Messrs J Bowley, R Dean, R Thomas. District Councillors-Mrs C Ferris and Mrs D Tomlin, Residents-Mrs S Pitman.

1.Mr Hymers reported on the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2002.

## **2. Matters Arising-none**

The minutes were then signed as agreed .

**3.Parish Lands Report**-Mr Fort reported on the Land Committee's activities for the past year :

### **RECREATION GROUND**

Discussion with the promoters of the skatepark project have continued during the year; there have been various changes to the original concept. At the end of August the Council arranged a public consultation at which members of the interested public were able to view the designs and layout of the project and submit comments. The exhibition was well-attended and the public made many constructive comments about the scheme which it has considered carefully. The Committee has not committed itself to approving or rejecting the project and is currently awaiting further information and details of the final design from the promoters. At the time of preparing this report the Committee is uncertain about whether the project will go ahead or the final form of its design.

In keeping with its policy of maintaining and improving the Council's facilities, the Committee decided to carry out an extensive refurbishment of the tennis courts, which were last resurfaced in 1988. After obtaining estimates, the Committee commissioned contractors to carry out the work at a total cost of £27,500, including replacing the fence; they finished the work in March.

Towards the end of the year, the Committee decided to add new items of equipment to the childrens play area to improve its amenities, as well as maintaining the existing equipment. The Park Wardens, Mr and Mrs Hughes, as well as the Clerk, frequently inspect the equipment to make sure that it remains safe and in a good state of repair.

### **TWYCOMBE LODGE**

The Committee has continued to let out this property and to follow a policy of maintaining it in good structural condition with suitable amenities so that it remains an attractive house for prospective tenants. In keeping with this approach, the Committee has recently decided to replace the carpets at a cost of £1,800 and to carry out various other repairs. However, the rents received are substantially more than the related expenses and are a useful addition to the Council's income.

## **STANLAKE MEADOW**

The re-siting of the existing football pitches I referred to in my previous report took place during the year, as did the erection of the purpose built storage shed to accommodate football and cricket equipment.

As with the Recreation Ground, throughout the year the Committee has used contractors for regular tasks, such as cutting the grass and hedges in order to maintain and improve the appearance of the Meadow.

## **ALLOTMENTS**

During the year the appointed contractor cleared a large area of the overgrown land at the Hurst Road Allotments and there was also encouraging interest from prospective users, resulting in the letting of several new allotments, most of which had been abandoned for several years.

During the year the Committee also considered using part of the Hurst Road allotments as a car park to relieve the traffic congestion around the Station, but this would require the involvement of outside parties to meet the substantial expense involved and at the moment, this is no more than a suggestion for the unused part of this land.

It remains the Committee's policy to let as many of the allotments at Hurst Road as possible.

The London Road allotments continue to be fully let.

## **BURIAL GROUND & MILLENIUM GARDENS**

The Committee continued to carry out the required maintenance for these attractive areas of land. Most of the new trees planted in the Millenium Garden seem to be thriving.

## **JUBILEE CORNER**

The flowers, shrubs and trees planted in 2001 have continued to do well and this area has become an attractive amenity at the centre of the Village.

## **OTHER MATTERS**

The appointment of Mr Joe Locke as Village Ranger in May 2002 has been a great success and the Committee has been very pleased with the enthusiasm and ability he has shown in carrying out his duties.

The Park Warden, Mrs Sylvia Hughes, continued to do valuable work in both Stanlake Meadow and the Recreation Ground, including in particular keeping litter under control and encouraging responsible behaviour from members of the public. On behalf of the Committee, I wish to record its gratitude for the sterling efforts of these employees.

Finally, thanks were expressed to the Clerk, Fiona Penn, and the other members of the Committee for all their efforts and hard work over the past year.

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

Once again this has been a relatively quiet year for Planning applications.

Development of the rear gardens in Wargrave Road continues despite one Planning Inspector declaring that allowing an appeal on one site would not create a precedent for such development. In the same report he referred to another development already completed saying that the new development was acceptable because it would be similar.

Examples of this process are the allowing on appeal of applications to build three dwellings to the rear of 75 and 77 Wargrave Road, and 6 dwellings to the rear of 68 to 74 Wargrave Road. These applications are nearly opposite each other and each will create a new access on to Wargrave Road. The Parish Council's objections on traffic grounds were over-ruled.

1. An application to build on land in Lincoln Gardens generated a great deal of public interest. The first application was refused, but a second for 14 dwellings was approved. With the help of our District Councillors a better layout was achieved but the Parish Council's concerns about the effect on the Recreation Ground were not taken into consideration by the District Council.

2. More recently an application for 12 dwellings on the site of Castle House in Willow Drive was objected to on the grounds not only of traffic but also on the height of the buildings and the effect on neighbouring properties. This was refused and a second application for only ten dwellings is now under consideration.

3. The site of the chicken slaughterhouse in Hurst Road, received outline permission some years ago for 15 dwellings although at the time, the Parish Council expressed strong doubts as to whether an acceptable layout could be achieved for so many dwellings on the site, especially as part of it lies in the flood plain. Recently an application for the details of the proposed dwellings was refused because of the height of the buildings and a revised plan has since been approved by the District Council. The layout avoids building on the flood plain, but only just.

4. With these larger developments, the law allows the District Council to ask for contributions from the developers towards local amenities. The aim is to ensure that there will be sufficient resources to cater for the new residents and to prevent the cost of providing them falling entirely on existing residents.. The Parish Council is always asked for its ideas for such contributions, bearing in mind that they must be close to the proposed site and likely to be used by the new residents.

Usually much of the money has to be spent on highway improvements to accommodate the new development, but in the case of Lincoln Gardens it is likely that some money will be available for the Parish Council to use in the children's playground in King George's Field. The Parish Council has asked for the Hurst Road development to create a public open space with paths and tree planting at the bottom of the site and to extend the paths across the bottom of the adjoining allotments to provide a pleasant walk along the side of Twyford Brook.

5. A different kind of planning application is the proposal to build an indoor Sports Hall at the Piggott School for joint use by the school, the general public and as a cricket centre. The Parish Council had concerns about the outward appearance of the building and the movement of traffic around it have largely been addressed in a revised application now before the District Council.

6. Another application that aroused a lot of interest and objections from the public was the proposal to convert the shop at 1 Station Road into a Pizza takeaway. The Parish Council objected on the grounds of noise nuisance to neighbours and the lack of suitable parking. I am sure Stephen Conway will tell you more about this application which will now be the subject of a site visit by District Councillors.

7. As usual the committee has commented on a great many small applications including many conservatories – it is surprising there are still houses in the village without one; although we are starting to see applications for replacement conservatories now!

8. The committee has continued its work of maintaining the Parish Council-owned footway lighting. Every month councillors keep a watch on their areas and report any problems seen, including failing District Council lamps. The committee recently drew the District Council's attention to the lack of identification on many of its lights

and the very dirty columns making identification of others difficult. If you read your Twyford News recently, you will see we are asking for ideas for naming the path through the play areas behind Wessex Gardens and Broadwater Road as this would make it easier to notify the District Council of any problems with these lights as well.

9. This year, the Committee has been more concerned with highway matters than usual. Along with the TVCMI, the Committee has worked on the scheme for enhancements in the village centre, some of which are currently being implemented. The committee has also commented on various proposals for extended waiting restrictions in the village. The problem is that the commuters and others who park on our streets need somewhere to park, and introducing more waiting restriction is only moving the problem, not solving it. The District Council is currently looking at the parking problems in Wargrave Road, but the effect any new restrictions will have on Hermitage Drive and Sycamore Drive needs to be considered before any action is taken. Some of the people who park on our streets actually work in the village and provide us all with a service. We should not be driving them out.

10. Recently representatives from the Parish Council met with the Area Station Manager from Thames Trains with a view to obtaining improvements to the station such as reglazing the footbridge and finishing off the painting started some years ago. At the same time, we pressed for the long-promised extension to the station car park to be built. Although we were heard sympathetically, there were no promises made.

11. It is hoped by now you have all seen the new Twyfordlink buses running round the village. The service is the result of a lot of hard work by the District Council, the TVCMI and the Parish Council which resulted in a successful bid for funding for three years for the service from central Government. With the gradual withdrawal of services by Reading Transport, it is hoped the new service will be successful and will expand to replace the car on shorter journeys around the village.

12. The Council gets many consultation documents to comment on during the course of a year and is invited to attend many meetings. Although we cannot get to all the meetings we try to go to those that could be relevant to Twyford and to comment on most of the reports received. This year the subjects have been as diverse as housing supply, flood plain defences, parking strategies, the local structure plan, a possible third Thames bridge, waste collection and disposal, air quality, equality for the disabled, and telecommunications masts.

15. Twyford News has again appeared twice this year – there are spare copies for anyone who missed out. The newer members of the Editorial Team are full of ideas for improving it but as always, we very much welcome articles from residents. Lastly thanks were expressed to all the members of the committee and the clerk Fiona for their support.

**5. Financial Report**-Mr Mantel reported on- the sheet circulated showing the Council's budget for 2002-2003, the actual expenditure for 2002-2003 and the council's budget for 2003-2004.

The budget for this year shows an increase from £ 47600 to £ 53,600. The Ranger cost has increased from £5235 to £9,100.

The budget means that a band D property pays £18.33 p.a. for Parish Council expenditure, to which is added £106.24 p.a. for Thames Valley Police and £990.05 for WDC, making a total yearly payment of £1114.62 . A band D property is defined as a property valued between £ 68,000 and £ 88,000 as on April 1st., 1991.

There are also 4 higher bands (E - H) for more expensive properties and 3 lower bands (A -C). Properties in the higher bands pay more , up to 2 times for a band H property. Properties in the lower bands pay less, down to two-thirds for a band A property. In 1991 band A was defined as £40,000 or below.

Comparing the Parish Council Tax with the charges made by the other 16 Town and Parish Councils in the District shows us in position no. 10 with the highest charging Council at £94.18 and the lowest at £4.22. Therefore Twyford is comparatively one of the lower spending councils in the District.

The Council continues to use the income from its investments to assist local groups with grants and interest-free loans. A total of £3,290 was given in grants and £4,000 as an interest free loan. It would 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 upkeep of the Recreation ground.

**6.District Council matters-**Mr Conway thanked the Council for an opportunity to speak and began by describing the planning process at District Council level and the assistance the Parish Council gave in this area.

The hot potato issue in Twyford is parking and a main contributor is the lack of commuter parking at Tywford Railway station. Mr Conway outlined the possible solutions but conceded they were far from ideal.

Mr Conway reported on the success of Twyfordlink and the TVCMI work in the village.

Mr Conway also updated the meeting on the CCTV proposals and the likelihood of implementation for Twyford.

Finally he referred to the Electoral Commission and the disappointment felt by all in the ward.

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

As this was the last Annual Parish Meeting before the elections, Mr Hymers reflected on the last four years and the key achievements of the Council namely, The Cricket square and the decision to re-site it to Stanlake Meadow following the burning of the old pavilion at KGVF.

The skatepark project which was still ongoing.

Jubilee Corner and the Jubilee Clock both of which have been a great success.

The appointment of the Village Ranger to care for the Council's lands.

He then went on to the issues that were still of concern which were,

The graffiti and petty vandalism that the village suffers from.

The Electoral Commission's total failure to see Twyford and Ruscombe as a community.

The need for more people to come forward as parish councillors, currently there are five vacancies on the Council following a non-contested election.

Thanks were expressed to all those who had served as a councillor in the period especially Mr Thomas and Mr Fort who each had given over thirty years of service, and to the two Clerks Mrs Jacobs and Miss Penn.

**8.Questions from the floor.**

8.1 G Rogers from Paddock Heights-Expressed concern about the parking asking if the Council could convert some of the allotment land into a carpark and charge for it to recover the investment? Mr Hymers answered he was not sure if it was within the power of the Council but it would look into the suggestion. Mr Conway agreed WDC should be approached on this subject as well.

8.2 Resident-Hurst Park Road- asked if it was true that over £100,000 had been spent on the safer routes to school and had it had any impact at all? Mr Conway could not confirm the cost but agreed many people were not convinced of its effectiveness and longer was needed to assess the project. There was also a

debate as to where the pedestrian crossing should have been sited for maximum effectiveness.

- 8.3 Resident Wargrave Road-asked were there to be any new speed limits? Mr Conway said they had been proposed as 30 mph back in 2001/2 but were being phased in.
- 8.4 Mr Roberts, Winchcombe Road- asked about the marks on Waltham Road. Mrs Dane felt they were markings for BT but confirmed that resurfacing was taking place on the road shortly, although the existing road works in Hurst Road had still to be finished and she pointed this out to WDC who seemed unaware of it !
- 8.5 Mrs Spicer, Mallard Close- expressed concern about the proposed public path from the 32-36 Hurst Road development., and the impact it would have on the allotment area and the trees etc along the brook. Mr Fort and Mr Hymers assured the resident the allotment holders security would be protected and there would be a consultation once the plans were more formalised.
- 8.6 Mr Parkinson, Wargrave Road-asked about the plight of disabled commuters trying to park at the railway station longer than three hours when they have to pay. Mr Hymers suggested that Railtrack/Thames trains be contacted on the matter and agreed the Council could write to the station asking them to provide spaces for disabled commuters.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm