

TWYFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

ST MARYS CHURCH CENTRE 27th April 2016 AT 8PM

Present: Mr R Mantel (Chairman), Members of the Council – Mrs E Ashley, Mrs B Ditcham, Mrs L Jarvis, Messrs M Boniface, J Bowley, D Fergusson, J Jarvis, R Morris, C Smith, C Wickenden & T Winchester.

Members of the public – 38.

In attendance 1 member of the press & Mrs L Moffatt, Clerk.

Apologies – Councillors Mr M Bedford & Borough Councillor Mr L Ferris.

1. Mr R Mantel presented the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 22nd April 2015.

2. Matters Arising - none

3. Network Rail – Mr Howard Elliott Project Engineering Manager & Mr Anthony Odea Senior Project Engineer spoke about the electrification of the railway line and the works they have done to preserve listed Brunel bridges. A copy of the presentation will be made available to members of the public.

Mo Elderfield spoke about the high speed rail route going north of Birmingham and raised concern about digging up of the green belt.

Ian Livesey asked why the electrification wires were not more ornate as he had seen abroad. The speakers responded that the ornate wires are not as reliable.

Stephen Conway asked about the reliability of the new design and would they still work through gales and storms. The speakers reported that they have worked on modifying the system in order to eradicate the known faults on design and manufacture.

A resident asked why overhead wires were used. The speakers responded that they are safer to maintain and more efficient.

A resident asked how secure are the electricity supplies? The speakers reported that there is a main supply and a backup and electricity usage has dropped a little.

Merv Boniface asked about the impact on the countryside and why so many trees have been cut down. The speakers responded that they have only cut back trees to keep them away from the masts / wires.

Richard Morris raised concern over the Brunel bridge along Stanlake Lane which has been concreted. He highlighted the other Brunel bridge in Ruscombe asking if it could be re-enforced and re-clad in brick to preserve it. The speakers said that they have learned from their mistakes and are trying to preserve the listed bridges.

A resident asked what the electrification will do for the steam trains. The speakers responded that they will not be banned.

A resident asked what measures are being taken so that the energy usage does not affect the Twyford residents. The speakers responded that 25,000 volts comes from Didcot with Acton as the reserve.

4. Parish Lands Report – Parish Lands Report

The Parish Lands Committee is responsible for managing all of the council's land and property. This includes Stanlake Meadow, King George V Recreation Ground, Jubilee Corner, the Burial Ground, and the two sets of allotments. The Committee also oversees the work of the Village Ranger and Park Warden.

During this year we have installed a new aerial runway on King George V Recreation Ground. This has proved very popular. The field itself continues to be popular with a wide variety of people. From dog walkers to families. Throughout the year the field has hosted a number of village events. The Youth Centre Colour Run, the Bonfire Carnival, the Bear Festival, the Scout Donkey Derby. This year we refurbished the tennis court surfaces. They now sport a lovely blue colour. The ball court, skate park and play areas continue to be well used. To help keep it this way we are planning a project to refurbish the toddler side of the play area.

Our other major outdoor facility is Stanlake Meadow. This is the home of Twyford Cricket club and Twyford Comets football club. Both of these continue to go from strength to strength. Last summer saw our first Village Picnic event. This was to officially open the outdoor fitness equipment we installed in January 2015. We are grateful to our MP, Theresa May for conducting to official

opening. The event was such a resounding success we intend to make it a regular feature of village life. In deed planning for this year's even is well under way.

After many years Yellow Brick nursery decided to close down and no longer operate from the sport pavilion on Stanlake Meadow. However the pavilion is still used by the cricket club and the football club. In addition we are discussions with Coleton school about them using it for one of their after school clubs. With this reduced usage we took the opportunity to redecorate the interior and refurbish the kitchen.

It is unfortunate that during this year the field was temporarily occupied by travellers. This resulted in considerable expense. Firstly in legal and court fees. Then in extensive clean up costs after their departure. To try to prevent such an occupation taking place again we have installed a height restriction barrier at the carpark entrance.

We have continued our efforts to plant more trees. Not all of these have been as successful as we would have liked. Recently Network Rail have had their second attempt at planting hedging plants. This second one to try to hide the new construction that has been done just the other side of the fence on the top of the embankment. Let's hope this one is successful. Much will depend on the coming weather.

Both sets of allotments have continued to be popular. Occupancy has remained high across both sites. The London Road allotments, as always, have continued to be fully taken. We re-erected our banner for the Hurst Road to try to fill the remaining open allotments. Let's hope it is as successful as last year when we put it up.

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

5. Planning and Amenities Report – Mrs B Ditcham reported on the Planning and Amenities Committee's activities for the past year.

The Planning and Amenities Committee is made up of 8 Council members, we meet on the first Tuesday of the month every month. Our responsibilities include considering all planning applications submitted for the Parish of Twyford to WBC, responsibility for street lighting and footway lighting in some areas of Twyford, having regard for the highways and footpath surfaces and requesting improvements. We aim to be informed of developments and changes in the wider area which will impact on our Village. The Planning Committee reports to the full council such amenities as schools, traffic regulations, and utility company works in the area, library, police and emergency services. As you can see we have a very broad brief.

Since April 2015 we have considered 100 planning applications and commented to WBC using our local knowledge and considering observations made by parishioners. The number of new builds has decreased this year due to the lack of land in Twyford. In the instance where there are new Buildings, as in Winchcombe Road, the new regulation means that these generate funding – a community infrastructure levy –CIL funding which is to be spent to benefit the community. This funding can be shared by neighbouring areas so if funding was generated in Ruscombe or Charvil by new building it could be used to benefit the wider community of local villages. This has not been seen in practise yet!

One of the important plans we have considered this year is the work to make safe the 16 century building in the village centre which fronts onto the High Street and backs onto Butchers Row. The work required is essential and has to be carried out both sympathetically with the building and area and with care for pedestrian and vehicle safety a very busy road. The conservation Officer for WBC is very involved in this application.

There is change to the way in which our committee inspects planning applications, until now we have received printed paper plans which as chairman I have been able to view and inspect prior to sharing and discussing the plans at the meeting with other councillors. Due to change in which WBC receive plans now we have to view these online. This creates a difficulty as we will have purchase a screen and projector and arrange for use of the internet in Lodden Hall where we meet.

The Parish Council is continuing with the replacement of lighting with energy efficient LED lighting as the old bulbs require replacement. The initial difficulties I reported last year have been resolved. Development in local areas – Wokingham and Bracknell- is causing traffic problems in our village as there are an increasing number of people using Twyford Station there is an increase in traffic congestion and car parking. These issues are of great concern to the parish council and we are frequent discussions with the WBC. There is no easy solution, we believe that a combination of methods is required ,the creation of extra parking could in fact increase road use. The use of park and ride system and an increase in public transport at peak times could help; as could a rescheduling of the Henley trains to correspond with the Paddington trains could encourage more Henley, Shiplake and Wargrave commuters to leave their cars at home. The use of parking officers will help to encourage less inconsiderate and dangerous parking in our residential streets. We have attended and noted information on flood plain development along the waterways and possible affects inappropriate development outside our area could have in Twyford. We also have concerns regarding the danger of councils being permitted to build on green belt land. For the last 2 years the P and A committee have reported on the development of our website –now I can report with confidence that we have cracked it –almost! We have appointed a professional company and your new website will be up and running.

We are very pleased to work with TVP and congratulate them on the success of the hanging basket scheme of last year which certainly was an amenity to our village , this year's scheme looks to be even bigger and better and the parish council has order of 16 an increase on the 4 we had last year.

Thank you to all who took part in the annual litter pick organized by the P and A committee we had a great turnout and collected lots of rubbish – it had been windy the previous week! We would like to thank Sue Goddard who has been the Twyford Adopt a Street Volunteer for many years but has recently moved away. Thank you to Chris and Gerry Wise who have taken over this role and to all the volunteers who keep the village litter to a minimum. Mr. and Mrs. Wise are very keen to hear from other potential volunteers.

I would like to like our clerk, Mrs Lucy Moffatt for her efficiency in dealing with the work of the planning and amenities committee.

6. Financial Report- Mr Fergusson reported.

May I start on behalf of the Chairman of the Finance Committee, with our thanks for the clerk and Finance Committee members for their hard work during the year.

I refer you to the sheet of paper circulated showing the Council's budget for 2015-2016, the actual expenditure for 2015-2016 and the council's budget for 2016-2017. Please note that the headings on the left-hand side refer to the figures for 2015-16 and the headings on the right-hand side refer to the 2016-17 budget.

Our expenditure was £105,841 against a budget of £106,742 with income of £46,605 against a budget of £46,845 . Our net expenditure was £59,236 against a budget of £59,897.

Our total budget for 2016-2017 is £112,532, we have a predicted income from rents and fees of £38,695 and we are precepting for £67,797.73. This precept is an increase on the previous financial year primarily due to the loss of rental income from Stanlake Pavillion.

The budget means that the owner of a band D property pays £22.89 this year. To this is added £166.96 for the Thames Valley Police, £61.27 for the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services, £24.92 Adult Social Care and £1,270.39 for the Wokingham Borough Council, making a total council tax payment for a band D property this year £1,546.43.

The average council tax for a band D property across the borough higher at £1,580.11.

This puts Twyford at position no.14 with the highest council tax for a band D property being Woodley at £1629.19 and the lowest Swallowfield at £1,542.74.

(Looking at our total precept of £67,797.73 this is in position no. 10 with the highest precept of £1,039,607 in Woodley at no. 1 and the lowest precept of £10,266 in Ruscombe at no. 17.).

The Parish Council continues to use the income from its investments to assist local groups with grants. This year the council has made grants to Relate Berkshire, Citizens Advice, Keep Mobile and Link Visiting Scheme. A total of £1,310 was given in grants this past year.

7. Borough Council matters – Reported by email from Mr Lindsay Ferris.

I was planning to attend the Parish Council AGM until yesterday when I discovered that a Planning Application that I had asked to be listed (at 80 Hurst Road) is to be taken at the April 27th WBC Planning Committee Meeting which commences at 7pm at Shute End. I will therefore be unable to attend the AGM as I will be at Shute End speaking on this particular planning application. I would therefore ask if you could kindly let people at the AGM know I am at the Planning Committee in Shute End on behalf of Twyford residents.

The last twelve months has seen a considerable amount of activity in Twyford. The planning applications for the Community Hub/Library were submitted a number of weeks ago. I met with the Planning Officer at WBC in March to ascertain her views on the applications and last week I asked for an update of where the application currently stands. She advised that she has asked their Agent to provide more details with regards to parking and trees/landscaping and further elevational details. She has also agreed to an extension of time until 19th May to allow for submission of further information. I shall continue to do all I can to help secure planning approval.

I have for the last 9 months been working with the Hare Hatch Sheeplands Campaign team to see if an equitable solution can be found to the longstanding planning issues at that site. A petition signed by over 8000 people was presented at the last WBC Full Council Meeting. I believe the petitioners are still awaiting a response.

Commuter parking and inconsiderate parking in general continues to be one of the most significant issues in many parts of Twyford. A Commuter Parking Working Group was set up in the autumn to assess the impact of commuter parking at all 7 of the Railway Stations in WBC area. I am a member of that Working Group. Any solution to Twyford's parking problems will need to involve a number of coordinated activities. Firstly there is a need to expand Car Parking capacity at Twyford Station, secondly there is need to provide suitable protection for residents from commuters who do not, or cannot use the car park and thirdly we need to find ways to reduce the number of vehicles coming to Twyford Station. On the first point, GWR have recently submitted a pre-notice indicating that they plan to extend the existing car park by 38 spaces. This is of some use, but will not meet the needs when Cross-rail opens in a few years. Therefore additional capacity is still required. On the second, WBC has agreed to my proposal to introduce Civil Parking Enforcement (this should be implemented in May 2017). From that point, control of parking will reside entirely with WBC and would not require Thames Valley Police to enforce. Thirdly I have been speaking with the Executive member for Highways to see if a combination of Park & Ride with connecting bus services in the morning and evening rush hours to connect with these busy trains can be introduced.

I am sorry I was unable to attend, but if anyone wishes to contact me I would be more than happy to answer their questions or take up issues on their behalf.

Borough Councillor Mr John Jarvis

The Wokingham Borough Council had a very difficult time this year setting their Annual Precept as the Rate Support Grant from Central Government was initially reduced by 50% from approximately £12M to £6M. After intense lobbying by the Leader of the Council this was countered by a one off payment for 2 years of £2.1M. This year and next year are difficult but when this one off payment stops Wokingham Borough Council will have to find an additional £2.1M of savings. Wokingham Borough Council are looking at innovative ways to both carry out our Services and to fund these shortfalls in our income.

Following a requirement for additional housing in the South East of England from now until 2036 Wokingham Borough Council are required to plan for an additional 800 to 900 houses per year throughout this period. We are currently investigating all possible sites in the Wokingham Borough and expect this draft plan to be produced this fiscal year. I would ask you to note that there may be a requirement to allocate some Green Belt land for housing to make this possible.

Wokingham Borough Council has set up a number of separate companies, such as Optalis, Wokingham Housing and Loddon Homes, to manage parts of the business of the Council. The intention being to produce a surplus for the Council to offset some of the costs of services and to maintain a low Council Tax. I would note that Wokingham Borough Council is one of the major land owners in the Borough and as such has a large reservoir of property to develop. This will be good for the future prosperity of Wokingham Borough Council and the residents. I would note that as a Chartered Surveyor I have been made a Non-Executive Director of Wokingham Housing Limited. My remit from the Council is to drive this business to expand and make a surplus.

My last point is the most important point for the residents of Twyford Village and is about the disproportionate amount of commuter car parking using the Station. South West Trains appear to understand that Parking and Commuters using Wokingham, station are inextricably linked and they are currently erecting a multi storey car park at Wokingham Station to take this additional traffic. However Network Rail and Great Western Railway have failed to grasp the importance of this link and have blocked a Multi Storey Station Car Park in Twyford. I understand this is partly due to Network Rail's funding criteria and the shortness of Great Western Railway's franchise. This internal wrangling is unacceptable as Twyford residents are suffering every week day from their short sightedness. Wokingham Borough Council are fighting to get this rectified so that the residents of Twyford Village can use their estate roads for their visitors and normal business without being confounded by the presence of hundreds of commuter cars parked in their roads.

I promise the residents of Twyford and the Twyford Parish Council that whilst I am a Borough Councillor I will fight tirelessly to end this injustice.

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

During the last year Mr Charles Wickenden and Mr Richard Morris expressed an interest in the Parish Council and were co-opted. Both bring experience to the Council, Mr Charles Wickenden having served in the past on Charvil Parish council and Mr Richard Morris has been a Twyford Parish councillor before.

The Parish Council ongoing participation in a working group to further the project of a Community Hub has progressed this year to a planning application now being made. It is to be based in the old Polehampton School, which will include a new library. The important question of funding has not yet been resolved. Time will tell if this will become viable. Ideas being discussed include new housing on the existing Polehampton car park and the site of the existing library and History Society hut being turned into a car park.

The Council still has 2 vacancies so if you are interested please speak to me, the clerk or any of the councillors.

Also my thanks to our clerk for so ably assisting the Parish Council in its work and to all the councillors for giving their time to look after the village.

Any questions

9. Questions from the floor.

Mo Elderfield of Chaseside Avenue asked for an update on the Community Hub.

Mr Mantel responded that additional reports are required for the planning application. He reported that discussions on funding have not yet commenced.

Mike Yeates of Hurst Park Road asked about the allotment income of £6,000 against the £3,200 spend. Where does this money get spent? Why does the rent go up every year? Why are there so many uncultivated plots? He also reported that the hedge along the Hurst Road needs cutting back a foot as it reduces the width of the pathway.

Mr Bolwey, Chairman to the Parish Lands committee responded that there are only 4 unlet plots. The Council's view of uncultivated plots differs to Mr Yeates. The committee will look at the hedge.

Gerry Wise of Wessex Gardens asked who owns the area of grass near gas lane as its currently being used for commuter parking. He also raised the need for a litter bin in this area.

The clerk responded that Wokingham Borough Council own this area of land and the police cannot issue parking tickets because there are no double yellow lines on the road. The clerk is due to meet with WBC to arrange a quote for bollards which the Parish Council would need to install at their cost if they wished.

Borough Councillor John Jarvis reported that there are plans that this area of verge will be used as a turning circle for the park and ride buses.

Bill Sanders of Broad Hinton reported commuters using the allotment car park.

Ian Livesey of Hilltop Road said that the Parish Council have not grasped that double yellow lines strangle smaller shops. He suggested that with 33 unused allotment plots the Council could resolve the parking issues by offering 200 parking spaces at a charge of £6.10 per day. This would bring in an income of £318,000 a year less managing costs and would be for the benefit of the village.

Mr Bowley reported that the Council have been approached to offer land for commuter parking on the allotments however it is not the will of the Council to do so.

Stephen Conway of Arnside close gave a vote of thanks to the councillors who are volunteers and give their time up freely.

Barbara Smith of New Road reported 12 potholes on Amberley Drive between Troutback Close and Willow Drive and many show the metal grids underneath.

Mrs Ditcham reported that there are regularly reported to WBC.

Mr Street of Hurst Park Road asked how the Parish Council pursue matters with WBC. Pot holes on Hurst Road have been marked up but never dealt with. He commented that the Parish Council should forcibly pursue. He commented that WBC are happy to pursue Sheeplands and the Parish Council should push WBC in these matters.

Mrs Ditcham, Chairman of the Planning and Amenities committee commented that the utility works in the area have not helped.

Borough Councillor John Jarvis reported that there are WBC funds for these repairs and there will be further allocation of funds however the repairs are prioritised.

Barbara Smith asked how many drivers and cyclists make insurance claims from WBC for damages from the roads.

Mr Stafford of Station Road reported street lamps on Waltham Road and Hurst Road that are not working. Theses should be reported to WBC.

**The meeting
closed at 9:30 pm.**