

# TWYFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

**Loddon Hall, Twyford 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023  
AT 8PM**

Present: Mr R Abeywardana (Chairman), Members of the Council – Mrs E Ashley, Mrs B Ditcham, Mrs L Jarvis, Mrs H Winder, Mrs S Wisdom, Messrs M Alder, M Andrea, J Bowley, M Bray, J Jarvis, R Mantel, C Wickenden & T Winchester.  
Borough Councillors: Mr L Ferris & Mr S Conway.

Members of the public – 74.

In attendance: Mrs L Moffatt, Clerk & Mrs L Povey, Deputy Clerk.

Apologies:

Parish Councillors – Mrs T Ramsden.

Borough Councillor – Mr W Smith.

Resident – Mr F Newman.

Over 15 local clubs and organisations had set up tables showcasing their groups.

**1. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2022** – Noted.

**2. Parish Lands Report** – Mr Bray reported on the Parish Lands Committee activities this year.

The day-to-day running of the business of the Parish Lands Committee is effectively carried out by the Clerk's Office in the capable hands of Lucy Moffatt and Lynn Povey. However, without the help and ideas and enthusiasm of teams of volunteers the village of Twyford would be less interesting and less beautiful.

At Stanlake Meadow, the copse has been cleared and maintained by the Friends of Stanlake Copse group with the help of CROW (Conserve Reading on Wednesdays). Ian Butterick and his team of volunteers have created a dead hedge with waste materials culled from their maintenance work within the copse. They have dug a pond to encourage insects and other wildlife to exploit the habitat.

Rebecca Howard and her team of volunteers continue their work of maintaining and watering the new trees planted during the previous tree-planting sessions. And replacing the small number of casualties.

Wildflower beds are cultivated at King George V recreation ground, Stanlake Meadow and at the Old Bath Road entrance to the village. All as the result of initiatives presented by Gemma Alford and Emma MacDonald and their teams of planters and waterers. To this list of volunteers, I have to mention Stephen Loyd who has provided advice, on species selection, and maintenance regimes on all the projects.

Twyford is fortunate in having residents who come forward with suggestions to enhance village life. And the willingness to get involved in implementing their suggestions. The council is very happy to support these volunteers. Which they do so at little cost to other residents. The council is appreciative of their work.

The council continue to support Twyford Growers and the work it does in providing a safe stress-free environment for those with anxiety issues. Christina Hughes Nind and her team of volunteers do an excellent job, and we thank them. We also acknowledge the support of Ruscombe Parish Council in this initiative.

The council are investigating options for upgrading or replacing Stanlake Pavilion. An architect was engaged to investigate this matter and consulted with interested parties and users of the facility.

During lockdown a number of similar facilities within the surrounding area were visited by the committee. This matter is ongoing, and we are currently working with the sports clubs to progress the project however significant funding would be required.

The council is also investigating improvements to the Skate Park at King George Field. This follows an approach by users who commented on the condition of the facility and suggested it should be improved. The committee is in the early stages of its investigations.

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

Good evening, my name is Bridget Ditcham, I am one of the 8 Parish Councillors on the Planning and Amenities committee who meet monthly to progress items which come within our remit. These include commenting on planning applications in our village, highways and lighting as well as being aware of national developments regarding planning. We also have responsibility for the Neighbourhood Plan, more about that from Charles later, and Twyford in Bloom.

Residents are welcome to attend our meetings which are held on the first Tuesday of every month here in Loddon Hall.

All details of our meeting agendas, minutes and reports can be found on the TPC website. In the next few minutes, I will talk about some of the 'highlights' of the last year.

Planning applications for our village average 7 a month. We make formal comments using our local knowledge and forward these to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) who make the decision.

The Bridge Farm outline application is the largest application of the last 12 months. Our objections to this outline plan from the developers is based on highway and pedestrian access, highway safety across the A4, proximity to the flood plain. We presented our objection both in a formal written response and a presentation at the WBC Planning meeting.

Unfortunately, WBC accepted the application. Now we plan to work with the developers on the detailed plan. We will use the power of the Twyford Neighbourhood Plan which we hope to take to referendum in the next few months. The plan details the type of housing needed in our village as reported by residents in the 2019 survey.

The village took part in the Thames and Chiltern in Bloom initiative again this year and thanks to the great efforts of businesses and many hardworking volunteers we were delighted to receive a number of awards, we are even more delighted to see the attractive improvements to our village by their efforts.

I must make a mention of plans for this year's Twyford in Bloom – To celebrate the Coronation of King Charles, a Grass Labyrinth is being constructed on King George V Field, work on this will occur next week. Our hope is that it will provide fun for all, some will enjoy racing around it, for others it can be a walk of meditation. A summer venture is to ask businesses, organisations, and individuals to prepare and display a decorated wheelbarrow and place it somewhere on the route the In Bloom judges will follow on judging day at the end of July.

Please visit our website to see details of the rest of the work undertaken by the Planning Committee during the year 2022-2023.

Finally, I would like to thank our Deputy Clerk, Mrs Lynn Povey, for her efficiency, patience, and determination in all the work of our committee.

**4. Neighbourhood Plan Report** – Mr Wickenden reported on the Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Progress in the last year**

The team has made fantastic progress since our last report to the Parish. In the last year we have:

- Published the draft Neighbourhood Plan.
- Published a set of Design Codes for development in the village.

- Submitted the Plan to 'Regulation 14' Consultation.
- Delivered the Plan and ancillary documents to Wokingham Borough Council.
- Gone through the Planning Authority's (WBC) 'Regulation 16' consultation.
- Had the Plan inspected by the UK Planning Inspectorate.
- Negotiated amendments and published the final plan.
- We have also produced a plan for the regeneration of the village centre which we have shared with WBC.

### The Plan and its aims

The Neighbourhood Plan is concerned with the development of the village and seeks to manage the impacts of new development within Twyford Parish. It covers the period 2018 to 2038 and sits below the Borough Local Plan and is an integral part of the planning system and will be used to inform decisions on planning applications in the Parish. At its heart the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to achieve the following:

- To ensure that Twyford retains its village character and allows current and future residents to develop the village in a sustainable and sympathetic manner.
- To mitigate the impact of traffic and encourage active travel (walking, cycling, public transport etc.).
- To encourage the use of alternatives to motor car journeys to the station.
- To ensure that Twyford retains its retail hub and encourage footfall in the centre.
- To ensure any development is sympathetic to the village and existing important features are retained through a set of Design Codes.
- To help tackle the lack of appropriate affordable housing in the Parish, to encourage the use of First Home schemes and ensure that any new development is carbon neutral or better.
- To ensure that we provide the facilities we need to support our population, including health, education, and community activities.
- To increase the greening of the Parish and to ensure that flood mitigation schemes are developed along with rewilding where appropriate.

### What happens next?

We are on the final leg of a 5-year journey to deliver a Neighbourhood Plan for Twyford. However, there are still crucial steps to be taken to ensure we do that:

- WBC Executive meet tomorrow to approve the plan. We can then set a date for the Parish wide referendum to be conducted by WBC and Electoral Services team.
- In the run-up to the referendum the Parish Council will be seeking to explain the plan to as many residents as possible to ensure a large turnout.
- The referendum is a simple yes or no majority vote but its important that as many people as possible participate. A low turnout will be taken as a lack of interest.
- IF we don't vote it will be taken as a sign by developers and the Planning Authority that we as residents don't care about our village. A large turnout gives us a voice.**

This is a profoundly important moment for the future of our village. We mustn't let this opportunity fall through our hands. It's incumbent on all of us in this room that we don't lose our voice so please help us get the word out once we have the referendum date firmly established.

Finally, I would like to thank the Neighbourhood Planning Working Group and Lynn Povey, Deputy Clerk for their hard work and determination.

### 5. Financial Report – Mr Bowley reported.

It's the job of the Finance and General purposes committee to oversee the finances of the Parish Council, as well as the policies and procedures it uses to operate.

The largest yearly job of the committee is to compile the annual budget for the council. This is an amalgamation of the budgets coming from the other committees. The work these committees are

doing on behalf of you, the residents of Twyford, continues to expand year on year, and so their budgets have increased in line with this expanded work.

Based on these expanded budgets the Finance committee decided to use £20,000 of reserves to lessen the impact on the Parish Council's portion of the council tax whilst allowing the committees to continue their valuable work.

The full details of the budget can be found on you chairs and will later be published on the Parish Council website. There you can see a detailed breakdown of the areas the council spends money on.

Whilst the council receives income from rentals and donations, the majority of the budget income comes from the Parish Council's proportion of the Council Tax. This year, for a band D property, the annual charge is £50.35. This is an increase of £8.32 from last year. Across the whole tax base for Twyford the rise in the Parish Council's portion of the Council Tax is 19.8%.

Based on Band D, this places Twyford at number 11 in the list of Parish Councils within Wokingham Borough. With Woodley being number one, with a charge of £109.75, and Barkham being number seventeen with a charge of £26.18.

Comparing the local Parishes of Wargrave, Ruscombe, Hurst, and Charvil, Twyford is in the middle of them. With Wargrave at £99.77 for a Band D, and the lowest being Ruscombe at £49.29, only £1.06 less than us. Full details of all the bands and charges across all the parishes can be found on the Wokingham Borough Council website.

The committee has continued to recommend grants to organisations that benefit you, the residents of Twyford, under the Council's Section 137 powers. The total of the grants distributed in the last financial year was £4,700. With grants being made to ARC Youth Counselling Service, Wokingham Job Support, Me 2 Club and Citizens Advice Wokingham, as the major ones. All of which provide us with information about the number of Twyford residents who benefit from the services they provide.

The committee also recommended using money from the council's reserves to fund items such as: Platinum Jubilee Street Party in the Park event, bailiffs to remove the unauthorised encampment, to replace the Stanlake tyre run and information technology upgrades.

## **6. Community Events & Engagement Report – Mr Alder reported.**

The Community Engagement Committee (CEC) is the new title for the former Fete Committee. It reflects the aim of the TPC to improve its engagement with the community in a wider range of activities and events. It also aims to assist, facilitate, or organize as appropriate, in order to improve life in our community.

Over the past year we have been able to organise events that had been suspended during COVID. We organized the village fete on Stanlake Meadow. It was well attended and after the difficulties of COVID and the cost-of-living crisis, a pleasure to see so many enjoying the event. We also were able to raise funds for some local charities.

We have increased the frequency and visibility of our meet your councillor events. We now aim to hold these monthly. These have proved to be popular, enabling councillors to obtain valuable feedback and information on issues of interest to our residents.

We have increased our social media presence, both in use of our website and Facebook amongst other options. The intention is to further expand the use of these types of media. However, we are aware that we have substantial numbers who do not use or have access to these types of information channels. We will continue to use traditional methods, such as leaflets, posters, or local print media as appropriate, for dissemination of the important information. In particular important items, such as information on the impending referendum on our Neighbourhood Plan, will use all of our methods to ensure the best possible turnout.

For the future, we wish to continue to work with local organisations to develop the relationships we have for our mutual benefit and that of the community. We have a wonderful community with lots going on, some well-known some less so. By working together with these, using each other's knowledge and skills, we hope to be able to make life better for all who live in Twyford.

Finally, I would like to thank the Clerk, Lucy Moffatt, Lynn Povey, Deputy Clerk, and all of the village volunteers – Thank you.

## **7. Twyford Twinning Association – Reported by Mrs H Evans.**

The Twinning Association has been working hard to promote membership and encourage more twinning activities now that we are not restricted as we were in 2020 and 2021.

One of our great successes with our links with Cuincy in Northern France is the link between Comets football club and Cuincy AC. Last year we had another tournament in Cuincy in June and the Comets again took away the Twinning Cup. I was able to visit Cuincy with the team and took the opportunity to visit their new library, their Médiatheque, and delivered the English books we had been collecting for their library. They were delighted with the selection of children's and adult books we donated. At the same time, they presented me with the sketch book we had given them for their artists to fill in. This is here for you to look at.

Last year we also invited people from Cuincy to our Jubilee weekend. Three people came and we had organised a traditional Jubilee tea followed by a BBQ. They then took part in the Donkey Derby the following day.

In March this year we held a party in Loddon Hall to celebrate 5 years of being twinned with Cuincy. This was a great success with around 45 people in attendance and some new members were signed up making our membership now a total of 43. I was asked to record a podcast for RG10 which is available on the RG10 website.

We have invited people from Cuincy for the King's Coronation in May. Their Mayor, Claude Hego and his wife Dominique are coming over for a few days. We will take them to the event at Stanlake so do come and say Bonjour.

This year there will be two football events: Comets U13 team are travelling to Cuincy in June and their team from Cuincy AC will be coming to Twyford on 7<sup>th</sup> July. They are coming in a 50-seater coach with some parents, coaches, and some of their Twinning committee members. A trip to Windsor is planned and a social event in Loddon Hall on the Saturday evening. The Twinning cup match will be played on Sunday morning (9<sup>th</sup> July) at 10.00 and we will have Waltham St Lawrence band to lead the teams onto the field. All welcome!

There are also plans for another visit to Cuincy by Twyford's High Voltage choir, this time for Armistice Day this November. A joint concert with their Melodie Choir is planned.

Cuincy has a very active cycling club and they have invited us to visit them so this is another activity which may take place this year.

The committee endeavours to encourage as many links with our Twinned village of Cuincy as possible. We would love our schools to get more involved as this is an area we struggle with. However, any activity which could result in visits between the two villages is to be welcomed.

## **8. Borough Council matters – Reported by Borough Cllr Lindsay Ferris.**

This is a report from your Twyford borough councillors on the main borough council developments affecting Twyford since May 2022.

We have been busy helping residents with a great variety of problems, from housing to social services and school places to financial help during the cost-of-living crisis. But there are three major items to update you on.

First, the new parking schemes that we requested back in 2019, as a way of tackling commuter parking in various parts of the village, are finally moving towards implementation. First versions of

the schemes were put out to public consultation last year and revised versions, taking account of public comments and suggestions, should be unveiled in May. These will then form the basis of a Traffic Regulation Order, the formal instrument that makes new parking restrictions legally enforceable. Discussions continue, meanwhile, with the rail authorities about expanding capacity at the station car park.

Our second major item to report on is that the electoral commission is currently reviewing the boundaries of the wards on Wokingham Borough Council. This year's borough council election is therefore likely to be the last fought on the current boundaries. As the commission wants three-councillor wards of roughly equal population, Twyford is likely to be put in a new ward of Twyford, Ruscombe and Hurst. The new boundaries will come into force in all-out elections on the new boundaries in May 2024.

Finally, the big news of the year, of course, is that we are finally, after many years of waiting, getting our new library. My ward colleague, Stephen Conway, as many of you know, began the campaign for a new library and I know he is delighted to have played a part in pushing it over the finishing line by persuading the new executive to find the money required from developer contributions. A Twyford Library Project Board, of which Stephen is a member, meets regularly to monitor progress and discuss next steps. Work has begun inside the Old Boys School Building and we anticipate that the library will be ready to open its doors early next year.

That we are able to bring the historic Old Boys School back into use owes much to the commitment of the Polehampton Charity and particularly to the vision and determination of the late Dave Turner, who championed the site for the village's new library.

**Reports by Borough Cllr Lindsay Ferris & Cllr Wayne Smith.** Cllr Stephen Conway & Cllr Wayne Smith did not submit a report.

## **9. Chairman's Review of the Year – Mr Abeywardana reported.**

I am so pleased with the work that we have supported in the village this year. My key highlights have been:

### **The work in Stanlake Meadow**

It has been wonderful to see the continued maintenance of Stanlake Meadow by Friends of Stanlake Copse with the help of CROW under the co-ordination of Ian Butterick. We are very grateful for the hard work and dedication of Rebecca Howard and her team of volunteers in maintaining and watering the new trees that have been planted during the tree planting session. Thank you also to Stephen Lloyd for his ongoing support and advice.

Our support for **better mental health in the village** through the development and support of Twyford Growers – a gardening for good health scheme at the Hurst Road Allotment. We have been lucky to work alongside Horticultural Therapist, Christina Hughes-Nind and her team of volunteers, to develop the initiative.

**Twyford in Bloom**: I am always impressed by how attractive the village is and we were all delighted to receive a number of awards as part of Thames and Chiltern in Bloom. Thanks to Gemma Alford who with the support of Emma Donald cares for a number of wildflower areas around the village and Chris and Gerry Wise who co-ordinate the Adopt a Street Volunteers.

The fantastic work on the **development of the Neighbourhood Plan** which, we hope, will ensure that Twyford retains its village character and allows current and future residents to develop the village in a sustainable and sympathetic way.

**Our support for local organisations** such as ARC Youth Counselling Service, Wokingham Job Support, Me 2 Club and Citizens Advice Wokingham.

I have been delighted by our **proactive approach to dealing with the cost-of-living crisis**. We delivered a leaflet to all residents setting out local organisations that can assist during this challenging period of time. We have also worked closely with Citizens Advice to provide local advice to our residents via the Citizens Advice van.

## **Now moving onto our Community Events:**

I was delighted with the success of the village fete which was well-attended and enjoyed by all. We have had **better outreach by the Parish Council** with the community by holding meet your councillor sessions in the village centre; it has been a real pleasure meeting the community and responding to any queries / concerns.

**Finally, the upcoming Coronation Event** on 6 May with a live screening of the coronation and viewing of a children's movie (Encanto). This is an event that has been organised in partnership with Twyford Together and Twyford Beer Festival. We are thrilled that Boxset will be performing at this event. We hope to see you there!

We are delighted to be going into Twyford infant and primary schools to present each child with a Coronation Mug to mark this once in a lifetime occasion of King Charles III's coronation.

Further, you can purchase one of these mugs for £7.00; they are available tonight and will also be available at the coronation event.

I hope that you are all pleased with our work over the last 12 months. I look forward to the council continuing to make Twyford a better place for all to live in.

## **10. Public questions.**

Mo Elderfield – Chaseside Avenue

- What is happening with Bridge Farm?
  - Mrs B Ditcham confirmed that TPC submitted their objections following receipt of a planning application notice. These objections were also presented to WBC at their planning meeting where outlined planning permission was granted. Twyford Parish Council to engage with the developers on the detailed plan to incorporate the Twyford Neighbourhood Plan.

Jean Poulter -

- What are the plans for EV Charging points?
  - Mr L Ferris confirmed that Twyford have been allocated two points with one being in Station Road.
  - Mr C Wickenden confirmed that reference is given within the Twyford Neighbourhood Plan however the plan outlines the desire for more sustainable travel.

Sally Gillard – Wargrave Road

- How are residents informed about events?
  - Events are announced via; leafletting, RG10, Meet Your Councillor Sessions, noticeboards, social media and on the TPC Website.

James Pennington – Jarvis Drive

- What is the definition of 'capital' on the finance report?
  - Mr J Bowley confirmed that the report outlined the budget & precept.
  - Mrs L Moffatt advised that all account details can be found on the TPC website.

Simon Gibbs – Wargrave Road

- It is very difficult for a wheelchair user to get around the village - Are there any plans for improving the pavements?
  - Mr L Ferris confirmed that this has been raised but will take the issue again to WBC.
  - Mrs B Ditcham confirmed that TPC has a quarterly meeting with WBC Highways Officers and will raise this at the next meeting in May.

Joyce Potter – Greenfinch Drive

- What is to be done about speeding down Wargrave Road & London Road?
  - Mr L Ferris confirmed that speeding forms part of the responsibility of the police and as a council they can only erect the speed indicators. Mr L Ferris is to continue

discussions with the police and to provide Twyford Parish Council with the contact details for the local police officers.

Mick Yeates –

- What is the update on the Station Car Park?
  - Mr L Ferris confirmed that a decked car park is being pushed and provided an overview of the local parking restriction resolutions that WBC will be bringing into force.

Ruth Hulley – Sonning

- A suggestion to assist with speeding, would be for Twyford to have a Speed Watch group as this system has worked in Sonning.
  - Mr R Abeywardana thanked Mrs Hulley and asked the Clerks to note the suggestion.

Barbara Smith – New Road

- Will photo IDs be required when voting at the Twyford Neighbourhood Plan Referendum?
  - Mr C Wickenden confirmed that the process is the same as a normal election and that it is carried out by Electoral Services.

Geoff Pilgrim – Colleton Drive

- A suggestion for next year's meeting would be to use a microphone for the reports and for public questions enabling everyone to hear what is being said.
  - Mr R Abeywardana thanked Mr Pilgrim and advised that the use of a sound system would be looked in to.

Wargrave Road resident

- People have to walk in the road due to overgrown hedges – what can be done?
  - Mrs B Ditcham advised that this can be reported directly to WBC who will write to the person the hedge belongs to following investigations and request that it is cut back. If actions are not taken as a result of the request, then WBC will carry out the works and charge the owner/business.

Mr R Abeywardana continued his report with the closing statements:

### **Become a Councillor**

As May marks the end of our electoral four-year term, we have a few councillors stepping down, including Roy, Teresa, Helen and I. Although Helen is hoping to be co-opted in May.

I would like to invite Bridget to say a few words – Mrs B Ditcham gave a short resume and thanked the outgoing councillors for their hard work and dedication and closed by wishing them luck in their future endeavours.

Recently, there was an uncontested election, and 13 Councillors will start their new term of office in May. However, we have two vacancies for the council this year and if you are interested in becoming a councillor, please do get in touch. The Council is the tier of Local Government closest to the people and understands the community. We strive to provide excellent facilities for our residents in Twyford and are always open to fresh ideas.

### **THANK YOU**

Finally, before we end, thank you to all of the councillors, the clerk (Lucy) and deputy clerk (Lynn) for their exceptional work over the last year.

And thank you for all of your excellent questions and engagement.

The meeting closed at **9.08 pm** and was followed by a networking/social session over cheese and wine.