

TWYFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

**Loddon Hall, Twyford 24th April 2024
AT 8PM**

Present: Mr M Alder (Chairman), Members of the Council – Mrs E Ashley, Mrs B Ditcham, Mrs J Jagger, Mrs S Wisdom, Messrs M Andrea, J Bowley, M Bray, F Newman, C Wickenden & T Winchester.

Borough Councillors: Mr L Ferris & Mr S Conway.

Members of the public – 51.

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

Apologies:

Parish Councillors – Mrs L Jarvis & Mr J Jarvis.

Organisations – Twyford Roundtable.

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

1. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 19th April 2023 – Noted.

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

The Lands Committee deals with the running, maintenance and any matter concerning land owned by Twyford Parish Council. And includes the Burial Ground, Jubilee Corner, the Millenium Garden, Stanlake Meadow, Hurst Road Allotments and London Road Allotments.

The day to day running of the business of the Parish Lands Committee is carried out by the Parish Clerk, Lucy Moffatt and assisted by Lynn Povey. Chris and Paul are also employees of the Parish Council receiving their instructions from the Clerk.

Contractors are used to carry out regular maintenance of the Parish's green spaces, which is now in the hands of a single contractor. At the Pavilion, on Stanlake Meadow, a contractor is used to clean the building; and another for Legionella testing of the water system.

Space at the burial ground will become an issue in the not-too-distant future and may require investment to provide alternative methods of interment, which would be restricted to ashes. The burial ground records have been digitalised, and these are available to be accessed from the Parish Council website.

The allotments at Hurst Road and London Road are fully subscribed with waiting lists for both sites. Ways of increasing plot availability by splitting plots into smaller units are being considered as well as the possibility of purchasing or leasing more land.

The Parish Council continues to support the work of 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.

The Council continue to investigate options to replace facilities at Stanlake Pavilion. The working group now includes representatives from the Cricketers and Footballers who together with Councillors are firming up their ideas and requirements.

Following an approach from users of the Skate Park at King George V Field the Council began investigating replacing the existing facilities. The Council invited tenders for this work and received replies from potential contractors. Last week three contractors made presentations to the Council to demonstrate their competence and to answer questions. The Council will select the successful bidder shortly and detailed design work will follow consultation with skate park users.

Many suggestions are received from residents to improve the ambience of the village. And the Council are happy to assist the volunteers who come forward to implement those suggestions. In particular we would like to thank the following people who help the Council keep Twyford an attractive place to live.

Emma and Gemma with wildflowers at KGV Field and at the entrance to the village near Bridge House. A wildflower information board has been provided at KGV Field – It contains illustrations of insects drawn by children attending schools in the village.

Rebecca and friends who helped plant trees at Stanlake Meadow and who have taken responsibility for watering them until they are established. And the continued help and advice given by Stephen, generally.

Ian and his team of helpers who maintain the copse at Stanlake Meadow.

Gavin and Steven who maintain planting at Polehampton Corner and the Burial Ground and, Prabha who maintains planting at Jubilee Corner.

At KGV Field the commemorative brick pillars at the Wargrave Road entrance have been renovated. And repairs have been made to the Equipment and surfaces in the children's play area. The equipment has also been repainted.

Polehampton Charities have provided blue Chatty benches, one each at KGV Field and Stanlake Meadow, to encourage social interactions. And grant money has been used to purchase three new picnic tables at Stanlake Meadow.

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

Good evening, I am Bridget Ditcham the present chair of the Planning and Amenities Committee, I will present the annual report on behalf of our committee.

The Planning and Amenities Committee has the responsibility of reviewing and commenting on the Planning Applications for both individual and large-scale development projects submitted to WBC. We report on Highway, footpath and lighting issues, street furniture owned by TPC, WBC, commercial enterprises i.e. shops or bus companies. In all these aspects we use our local knowledge as residents of Twyford elected by residents as Parish Councillors. We also are kept informed of National Planning issues and implement this information.

The P and A Committee together with Parish Lands has the responsibility for overseeing the Twyford in Bloom initiative.

A major achievement this year has been the formal adoption by of the Twyford Neighbourhood Plan. This was led by Charles Wickenden and took many years of work by Councillors and knowledgeable, hardworking enthusiastic resident volunteers. The Neighbourhood plan gives us far more control over building development in our Parish. A copy of the plan is available online and in the library. Now the plan has been adopted we benefit from receiving a larger percentage share of the Community Infrastructure Levy. This will give us increased finances for Twyford projects. The P and A Committee use the Neighbourhood Plan policies to comment on each planning application whether for new builds or extensions.

In our monthly meetings, on average, we review and comment on 8 applications. These are mainly for house extensions or alterations, occasionally for an individual new build. We have not received an application for a large-scale development since our last report when we had commented on the Bridge Farm Development. There has been no further progress on this.

We own approximately 170 streetlamps mainly on the estates. We are responsible for the upkeep of these. The remaining streetlamps are the responsibility of WBC.

Martijn Andrea of our committee has taken the lead on the Speed Watch group just set up in our village so look forward to reading about this on our website.

As mentioned earlier we are very fortunate to have very active involvement from volunteers in Twyford. In the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Speed Watch volunteers and also with the successful Twyford in Bloom initiative which year on year is making Twyford more attractive, more environmentally aware and a healthier place to live.

For more information regarding volunteering involvement do visit the website as well as the stands here tonight.

On behalf of all the members of the P and A Committee I would like to thank our Deputy Clerk, Lynn Povey for her very thorough and conscientious work and the patience over the last year.

4. Financial Report – Mr Wickenden reported.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee is responsible for the finances of the Council as well as the procedures and policies that we operate by.

The most important role of the Committee is to compile and recommend the annual budget to the Council. This is an amalgamation of the budgets coming from other committees as well as staff related and administrative costs the council bears. Many of these costs have risen again this year as the work they are doing on a day-to-day basis on behalf of Twyford's residents continues to increase.

The budget details are found on your chairs. As you can see our expenses have increased substantially, by 23%. The major increases are in salary costs, KGVR, Stanlake and playground maintenance costs as well as 2 projects that we believe are necessary to begin now to ensure the future of our village centre and amenities. We have also increased our budget for community engagement building on the success of the King's Coronation and our Annual Village Fete event and we hope to continue to develop our activities in the village in 2024-25.

Our income has increased marginally. The major increase is in burial charges and allotment rents although we have tried to keep this increase to a minimum.

We also successfully applied for funding, jointly with WBC, from UK Shared Prosperity Funding. We secured £5,000 worth of kitchen equipment for Loddon Hall and £5,000 towards seating, tables, and PA for community events. We actively seek contributions from official and charitable bodies to help fund improvements in the village when the opportunity arises and will continue to do so.

The Council has made the decision to stop subsidising our annual budget from reserves. We have made this contribution over the last couple of years to reduce the impact of rising expenditure on the precept, that is the amount residents pay via council tax to fund the Parish Council. It means we have eliminated the 20k contribution to the budget from reserves as well as budgeting for an 8k repayment back into our capital account. This, along with the expenses mentioned before, has the impact of raising the precept which has risen by 44% year on year.

The reason we have taken this decision is because, in the opinion of the councillors, we don't see increased funding for village infrastructure and maintenance coming from local or central government for several years to come. We don't want to just manage the decline of our community and will resist this to the best of our ability. Every year that we take from our reserves reduces our capacity to invest in improvements and consequently, manage our infrastructure such as our parks and environment efficiently, to invest in the life of the village and help those organisations that are performing valuable charitable work in the parish. It also makes the stopping of funding the precept from those reserves in the future an even more painful exercise than it is now.

The precept for 2024-2025 for a band D home will therefore be £72.54. This makes us the 9th largest parish precept in the Borough where we were 11th last year. For reference the highest band D precept in the borough is £106.69 for Woodley Town Council and the lowest is Barkham

with £26.45. Our neighbours are Charvil at £79.76, Ruscombe at £45.59, St. Nicholas Hurst at £50.91 and Wargrave at £104.51.

Our other activity has seen the completion of a review of our policies as well as a programme of training for our Parish Councillors in best practice, good conduct, and chairmanship.

We have made grants to many charitable organisations and voluntary groups operating in the village.

Additionally, we have recently agreed to make a £15000 contribution to the new library to ensure that it can start life with new furniture.

In 2023-2024 the following grants were awarded:

- £100 CLASP which is a local learning disability training group.
- £200 Twyford Round Table.
- £300 Wokingham Job Support.
- £400 Keep Mobile - which supports those who have difficulty using other means of transport.
- £400 Parenting Special Children.
- £450 Link Visiting Scheme.
- £1,000 Twyford Twinning Association.
- £1,500 ARC Youth Counselling Service.
- £1,500 Age UK - Twyford Growers horticultural therapy group.

We will continue to support voluntary groups which do such valuable work in the village.

Finally, I would like to thank our Clerk and Deputy Clerk, Lucy & Lynn for the work they do in ensuring that the council operates to the high standards demanded by the law and best practice in the public domain. The Parish Council would not be able to operate without the diligence of all our staff and I thank them for their work in the last year.

5. Community Events & Engagement Report – Mr Alder reported.

The last year has been busy, with a number of events that the Committee is responsible for. These aren't the only events that occur within the village, as other organisations, such as the Scouts and Twyford Together, to name but two, have long standing events as well. Our aim is to compliment not compete with any of these events, all of which add to the great community spirit which exists in Twyford and makes it such a great place to live, work and visit.

We started off with the party to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III in May. The event was by all accounts a great success. The hard work of all involved in making the weather dictated last minute change of venue from Stanlake Meadow to Loddon Hall, was rewarded by the sight and presence of the amazing numbers of people that came along to enjoy the event throughout the day. A big thanks to everyone, volunteers, employees, performers, and the public who attended in such numbers and with such enthusiasm. It all made it such a memorable and amazing atmosphere on the day.

Our next major event was our annual Village Fete in August. Unlike the Coronation Day, we were blessed with a beautiful summer's day. The fete was opened by our own VIP, Roy Mantel, to mark his retirement from the council after some forty years of service to the community. Roy, a keen motor scooter fan was presented with a book on his favourite brand of scooter. The fete had a good mixture of events, stalls and entertainment were all well patronised. The event continues to grow in popularity.

The positive reactions to these events and others held around the village demonstrated an interest from the community in having a range of community events. It is the intent of the Committee to continue to work to enable the provision of a range of events in the future. These can range from those organised by TPC, or in partnership with others, or facilitating others where there is the demand and the resources to do so.

6. Twyford Twinning Association – Reported by Mrs H Evans.

Twyford is twinned with a small town in France called Cuincy. It is not far from Calais and therefore very easy to arrange visits. Our Twinning Association is now 6 years old, and we have made some excellent contacts in Cuincy with a number of visits each way.

Last year we welcomed Cuincy's Mayor Claude Hego and his wife who joined us for the Coronation celebrations. They enjoyed the party in the park which had been hastily moved to Loddon Hall due to the awful weather. However, the rain held off in the evening for long enough for them to enjoy a BBQ in the garden.

In June, Twyford Comets U13 footballers were once again invited to Cuincy and played for the Twinning Cup which they won (again). Both parents and children had a great weekend with a number of visits to the local area as well as football of course.

In July, Cuincy at last came to Twyford in a 52-seater coach! Due to the pandemic their last visit was cancelled so apart from signing the Twinning agreement, this was the first time a large group from Cuincy had visited Twyford. It was for a football tournament organised by Twyford Comets. A massive amount of planning had taken place before this event and the Comets team worked really hard to make this weekend a success. A number of the Cuincy Twinning Committee also came, as well as the Under 13's footballers, their coach's, and some parents. As well as football, we had a trip to Windsor, BBQs, and a buffet on the Sunday before they left. I must congratulate Comets on making this weekend a great success. Our visitors were particularly impressed that we managed to get an ex-prime minister (Theresa May of course!) to visit us to present the Cups. Oh, and Twyford won the cup (again!)

In November, the High Voltage choir, led by Jacky Crossman, visited Cuincy for a very successful joint concert with their Melodie Choir. This visit also included a visit to the British WW1 cemetery in Cuincy where Martin Alder laid a wreath, and a march through the town to the French memorial. Those participating also managed to fit in a visit to one of their English classes as well as much socialising of course.

A coffee morning was held in late November at St Mary's church hall.

Turning to our plans for 2024, Comets Under 13s footballers will again be returning to Cuincy in June to play in a tournament with AS Cuincy Football team. We have been trying to persuade other clubs to visit at the same time and are delighted that a few tennis players are intending to visit and play some tennis with Cuincy tennis club. Thanks to Ludo for arranging this.

The Cuincy footballers are also intending to return to Twyford in July to play another tournament with Comets footballers.

We are actively seeking other ways of linking with Cuincy and would really like our local schools to be more involved. We are very grateful for the support of the Parish Council which enables us to continue to support our twinning activities.

7. Borough Council matters – Reported by Borough Cllr Lindsay Ferris.

This has been a busy year on the Borough Council.

I want to highlight a number of Twyford matters.

First, we are now on the verge of opening of our long-awaited new library. Many people deserve thanks for this - the late Dave Turner and the other Polehampton trustees, the public of Twyford for supporting our campaign, and the new administration at WBC for finding the developer contributions to cover the outstanding funding. The new library will open in May, shortly after the local elections.

I want also to note the new car parking schemes approved and soon to be implemented (when the weather allows the yellow lines to be painted).

Stephen and I have been working with GWR on a range of Station-related matters and a very constructive meeting with a senior manager last week. In the agenda are secure cycle storage, implementation of the planning permission to add 50 spaces to the existing car park, better cycle, pedestrian, and bus access to the station, and better security in the station and its car park.

We have also been working to help local businesses, securing outdoor seating for Rural Pie, and changes to the car park arrangements to the rear of the shops on London Road.

Cllr Stephen Conway & Cllr Wayne Smith did not submit a report.

8. Chairman's Review of the Year – Mr Alder reported.

I will not repeat the detailed contents of the reports of the Committees which make up the Twyford Parish Council. I will just try to summarise the high points of the year.

The council made a significant step forward last year, in getting its Neighbourhood Plan adopted. This was delivered by a working group of the Planning and Amenities Committee, which has as part of its remit, working to ensure the best balance between the inevitable changes that developments and alterations to buildings in the village cause and the desire to retain the most desirable elements that make up the character of the village. The Neighbourhood Plan now gives us a much stronger position when dealing with development matters in our community. I would like to offer a big thanks to those involved. It was a huge amount of work for a large number of people, all of whom gave freely of their time in order to deliver this on behalf of the community.

A part of the Committee's remit is being part of Twyford in Bloom. This did very well again, obtaining a Silver Gilt award for the Small-Town category and winners of the Regional Award for Heritage. Best of all, the village continues to look amazing thanks to the activities of the participants in keeping our public areas neat, tidy, and appealing places to be. That is whether it is the High Street, the public spaces in the centre, or our larger spaces such as Stanlake Meadows and KGVR. Thanks to all of those that take part and support their activity, it is much appreciated.

The Community Engagements Committee organised a Coronation party in May this year to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. This was by all accounts a very popular and well received event. The work involved was at times a bit stressful, not least when forecast monsoon conditions forced a change of venue at very short notice. The reward was seeing so many having a great and memorable day. Thanks to all who were involved in either delivering it or enjoying it. It added to all those other great things that go on in Twyford and which we encourage and support in whatever way is appropriate.

The Parish Lands Committee has a number of tasks. It works away on both day-to-day business and future projects. Now, one project, the replacement of the time expired Skate Park in King George's Field, is rapidly approaching the point at which it will proceed towards execution. I must add that the involvement by some of the users in consultations earlier this year was amazing. The numbers of interested young people who spent an evening confidently giving their ideas and extensive knowledge of the subject to a bunch of rather mature councillors, was very welcome and inspiring for the future of the village. It is just one of the tasks and projects that the committee is working on as part of a vision for Twyford.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee looks after our finance and budgets. What we can do as a parish council is limited to what we can pay for and also how we pay for it. We have income, reserves, and occasionally grants to draw from. However, these different sources can have conditions attached as to how these may be used. Hence not spending something from a source of funding obtained for one purpose, may not necessarily free up their use for another purpose. The FGP report explains how and why we reached our decisions on our budget and precept this year.

I hope that this gives a flavour of what we have done over the last year.

9. Public questions.

James Pennington – Youth Centre

- Is there an update on the Skate Park in terms of funding and timescales?
 - Mr T Winchester confirmed that TPC are well positioned with funding and are exploring fundraising & grants. Mr Winchester also outlined that it is hoped that the works will commence in the autumn.

Malcolm George – Hermitage Drive

- Can you explain the £9500 on the Finance Report for the Village Centre Project?
 - Mr C Wickenden highlighted the aims of the village centre project of which is to make Twyford more pedestrian friendly and to increase footfall which in turn supports local businesses. The Parish Council were able to arrange for an initial report to be completed through the levelling up funding grant received which included changing road surfaces, removing street furniture, and looking at the east to west arm of the crossroads. Mr Wickenden confirmed that following a meeting with WBC where the report was presented, a requirement for further surveys was raised. Funding for additional surveys is not available through WBC or grants therefore costs have been factored into the budget to allow projects works to continue.

Merv Boniface – Harrison Close

- Request for an update on the Climate Action Plan 2020/21.
 - Mrs B Ditcham confirmed a collaborate partnership over the air quality within Twyford with WBC and West Berks Council and that the statistics show great improvements over the last 3 years. Mrs Ditcham also highlighted the monitoring stations at the crossroads and outside schools which measures particles within the air. Results when published can be found on the TPC website.

Mo Elderfield – Chaseside Avenue

- Where have the bins gone from Loddon Hall Car Park and Park?
 - Mr L Ferris confirmed that WBC retracted the motion to remove bins within the Borough. Mrs L Moffatt advised Mr Ferris that the car park bin has indeed been removed – Mr Ferris to arrange its return/replacement.

Mr Jagger – Wensley Close

- Air Quality, Anti-Social Behaviour (parking on pavements, graffiti), Plans for village CCTV
 - Mr L Ferris advised to report incidents to the ASB Team and police.

Geoff Pilgrim – Colleton Drive

- Raised the lack of CCTV within Twyford following the withdrawal of funding by WBC.
 - Mr L Ferris advised that WBC are looking to replace the CCTV within the centre as well as improve that at the station.

Sally Gillard – Wargrave Road

- Raised broken glass within KGVR especially at the skate park.
 - Advised to reports incidents to the police, PCSOs, ASB team as this allows them to build a picture of the activity.

Reg Thomas – London Road

- Why was the bench on the London Road (outside the London Road allotments) removed? Request for one to be put in its place.
 - Mrs L Povey advised that the bench did not meet standards therefore WBC removed it from highway land. TPC and WBC to look into the possibility of having a new bench installed in this location.
- Objects to Twyford being used as a car park and that cars shouldn't park on the pavement.
 - Mr L Ferris advised that new traffic regulation orders are going up around the village.

Maria Bright – Orchard Estate

- Agreed that broken glass is problematic and reinforced the need to report each incident.

The ASB contact details to be made more visible on the TPC website.

Mr Alder continued his report with the closing statements:

Become a Councillor

We currently have two vacancies for the council – 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

Before we invite you to explore the clubs/organisations that have joined us tonight, I would like to thank all of the Councillors for their dedication and hard work over the last year.

I would also like to give thanks to you, for your questions, engagement, and attendance tonight.

The meeting closed at **9.30pm** and was followed by a networking/social session over cheese and wine.