

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON 27th APRIL 2017 AT 8.00PM IN THE CHURCH ROOM, WEST WYCOMBE**

PRESENT:

Cllrs Mrs. V. Smith (Chairman), Mr. N. Harris, Mr. R. Seymour Mrs. K. Cheshire, Mr. S. Cope,
Mr. P. Brown Mrs. S. Henson, Clerk

6 members of the public including Thames Valley Police

APOLOGIES: County Cllr Mr. D. Hayday

The Chairman, Cllr Mrs. Smith welcomed everyone.

Cllr Mrs Vicki Smith, West Wycombe Parish Council Chairman's Report for 2016/2017

I feel I have been saying it has been "a time of austerity for all councils" for some years now but it is still the case I'm afraid.

We decided to increase our precept for this coming year because we know Bucks County Council will soon not fund the money we receive from them for services/work they have devolved to us. Added to this is the possibility that the formation of the councils in Buckinghamshire will change and we may be expected to deliver more services.

Bucks County Council have applied to The Secretary of State to become a unitary authority which means they will be the only council for Buckinghamshire, there would be no district councils. The district councils have not taken this well as you can image and have put in their own application to join together to become two unitary authorities, one at the south of the County and one in the north of the County, with no county council in Buckinghamshire.

The Secretary of State was expected to give his decision in March but this has not happened as I write this and with the forthcoming General Government elections in June this could be put off for some time.

At present parish councils are not capped on how much they can charge their council taxpayers for the service they provide but County Councils and District Councils are capped by Central Government.

Most parish councils, like us, only have one member of staff, the parish clerk, who is usually employed part time, so it would be foolish for us to take on services such as social services, care of the elderly, children services, rubbish collections, highway repairs to name just a few of the services the County Council and the District Councils provide at present.

However we have taken on grass cutting on the road/pavement verges, sign cleaning and weed killing on the 30mph speed limit roads in our parish.

We always being asked why we can't get the speed limits lowered or enforce weight restrictions or traffic calming on the roads in our parish but these are Central Government National speed and road limits and Highway laws are difficult to change.

We know, as you all do, that the traffic and the size of the lorries, tractors, coaches and buses have increased through our parish over the last few years. BCC have been working on a freight strategy for Bucks so we wait to see what that brings forth.

The A40 through West Wycombe is the route designated by the police and The Highways Agency for when the M40 is closed and therefore cannot have any form of traffic calming. Keeping vehicles parked one side of the village High Street is the one way we try to stop vehicles speeding through this 18th century village. Anyone who lives on the High Street will tell you that when there are very few cars parked on the High Street, drivers take no notice of the speed limit and often race each other through the village. We are always aware of the potential danger of accidents to people and buildings. There is not an easy solution and West Wycombe roads are always on our agenda.

We have to remember too that the village was built when a horse and cart was the mode of transport and most of the homes and businesses now have at least two vehicles which have to be parked somewhere. We have no extra parking places to offer people. We own no land.

After being given a petition organised by a Chorley Road resident requesting traffic calming measures to reduce the speed of vehicles travelling along Chorley Road we and our Bucks County Councillor Darren Hayday, presented it to the BCC Local Area Forum Committee meeting in February because there was a hope that there could be some money in their small budget in 2018/19 to put towards a scheme. We have been told that almost any traffic calming measure could cost at least £20,000. The Parish Council would have to pay half, plus we would have to pay for a public consultation which would cost over £5000. The Parish Council is not in a position to fund this type of scheme. We have been proactive and have purchased a Speed Indicator Device, a Mobile Vehicle Activated Device to be precise, at a cost of nearly £4000 for Chorley Road. It runs on batteries, records data and can be moved to other roads in our parish. Our District Councillors have put £500 towards the cost of the MVAD. And we have asked residents to help run this device. Training took place on April 21st.

We were also asked to look at the trees in Rosemary Close as they were beginning to show real signs of wear and tear.

We asked Complete Tree Services to assess the situation and work on the trees took place on March 10th 2017 at a cost of just over £1500. Hopefully the trees will now stay healthy and last for many years to come.

We have been asked by two people to ban dogs on the Pedestal Playing Field because of dogs fouling that area.

We have put two dog poo bins at the field and noticeboards asking owners to keep their dogs on leads. One of our Councillors (and his wife) undertake a weekly inspection and litter pick of the playing field and confirm it is not a major issue.

We have always wanted people to be able to bring their dogs as part of their family activities there and haven't had any complaints from the football club who use the field so we decided to put the decision on hold and regularly review the situation.

There was a fire in one of the waste bins a couple of weeks ago possibly from a portable BBQ, disposed of in the bin. We have replaced the bin.

We are in the process of trying to sort out the broken bollards on the West Wycombe Road near Copperfields.

The bollards were broken down around Christmastime but trying to get information from BCC Highways or the police is proving difficult. We paid for the bollards to be installed initially and hope to put in an insurance claim to replace them as each one costs around £150 plus the cost of installing them.

We had the gripps (gullies) in Towerage Lane dug out again this year because heavy rain breaks up that road very quickly and floods the cricket meadow and the junction with the A40 if the water has nowhere to go. Bucks County Council has recently repaired the potholes in this road.

We have just ordered a new kissing gate for the sheep field / the Pedestal Field because the one there is in poor condition and sheep and dogs could easily get out of the field and onto the busy road.

We report non-working street lights, water leaks, blocked gullies, flooding, trees down and inconsiderate parking as part of our every day work plus anything that has a detrimental effect on our residents.

We have deliberated on many planning applications this year.

We have attended HS2 meetings again this past year and have an assurance that the A40 from the M40 Stokenchurch to the Pedestal roundabout and back will not be used for construction traffic unless there are extenuating circumstances. We have asked for police help to manage the traffic if this does occur. Unfortunately we haven't managed to get the same assurance for the A4010.

We attended meetings of The Wycombe Association of Local Councils; we attend planning training sessions with them and WDC and we attend meetings of Wycombe District Council's Rural Forum. Over 70% of land in the Wycombe District area is farmland.

We have a good working relationship with our local area Neighbourhood police team and attend police led meetings (Neighbourhood Action Group) involving parish councils around us to share information that helps us all.

My thanks to Cllr Jean Teesdale and Cllr Ian McInnis our Wycombe District Councillors and Darren Hayday our Buckinghamshire County Councillor for their continuing support of this council.

We would like to thank Mike Henson for managing our website and Tweets. It is very interesting website, not just parish council news, so please do look at it to find interesting articles on wider issues too.

Mrs Sharon Henson, our Parish Clerk, is the people to write to if you have anything you would like the Parish Council to consider or comment on. Sharon is our Financial Officer and she does all our office work. She provides the necessary information and financial statements for our monthly meetings so that we can move forward quickly with decisions and plans for the future. Her knowledge of our area and council law is second to none. She writes a monthly newsletter for us in the parish magazine where you can pick up our details. We appreciate all Sharon does for us and she is a very valuable member of our team.

Finally, I would like to say a "big thank you" to your/our West Wycombe Parish Councillors. They are unpaid and have worked hard for you again this past year. They make parish council meetings interesting and enjoyable with their ideas and varied views. We are in constantly changing and challenging times and we are often frustrated by the time it takes to get things done but get things done, we do! Almost all of our Parish Councillors are on other West Wycombe organisations giving up a great deal of their valuable time voluntarily to keep West Wycombe a safe, vibrant, welcoming place that residents want to live in and others want to visit.

Sharon Henson, Responsible Financial officer, Presentation of the Financial Statement

The Clerk/RFO issued a set of accounts to everyone present and gave attendees the opportunity to ask questions. We have spent the last twelve months trying to reduce our costs. We have re-negotiated the phone and lighting energy bills as well as taking the decision to cease our contract with the street lighting maintenance contractors. They appeared to be getting money for nothing and could not answer our questions about their activities. They always invoice for street lighting repairs and we have always reported faulty lights so we could not see a need to pay for a maintenance agreement that was costing around £3000 per annum. Our salary bill is lower this year as we have not had the extra work involved in the HS2 negotiations. We are building up reserves for replacement street lighting, replacement play equipment and the extra work we expect will come our way with all the budgets being cut by central government. We finish the year with £24,153 in the bank as our reserve. The accounts can be viewed on our website www.westwycombe.org.uk

Cllr Neil Harris, Head Ranger National Trust

Cllr Roger Seymour, West Wycombe Community Association

The Community Association is responsible for running the Village Hall. The Hall remains in a fairly comfortable financial position with monies coming from booking fees and the West Wycombe Summer Fayre which the committee, with the help of friends, run a tea tent. Bookings for the hall a good. Monday to Friday bookings are regular. Weekly, yearly and weekend bookings are remain strong.

With the financial position as it is we have been able to undertake some major projects. We purchased 120 new chairs and decorated the entrance hall and replaced the skirting in the main hall during the Easter holidays. Due to our regular bookings our major maintenance work has to take place during school holidays.

Other general maintenance takes place where and when we can according to our bookings.

Plumbing: We have replaced the hot water boiler in the kitchen; installed a new hot water cylinder and immersion heater in the roof space as well as undertaking other general plumbing work. We had a major blocked drain on two occasions and after expensive investigation and pressure jet work it was discovered that someone had flushed a tea spoon down the toilet. The spoon was eventually flushed out and the problem resolved.

Electrics: One of the old storage heaters has been replaced and the major heater had a new fan installed and it will be serviced in August. We continually replace light bulbs.

The hall floor was totally overhauled and was sanded and polished again and during the summer break will need further maintenance.

We have a contractor who carries out the regular cleaning of the hall.

Projects to be considered in the coming year:

Look at the cost of double glazing units.

Painting the changing room

Curtain rail replacement

Stage curtain replacement

The committee will have to prioritise these according to need and cost after all the day to day maintenance is completed.

Car parking still poses a problem with unauthorized users taking up valuable space.. We have a problem in the car park caused by a blocked soakaway, which with the help and co-operation of the National Trust will be resolved.

The committee is doing a good job in maintaining the hall in a good condition and looking after its finances.

Alison Rimmer, Church Warden, West Wycombe PCC

This year has been one of much activity. The event probably uppermost in people's minds is the departure of Reverend Nigel Lacey and his family after fifteen years as priest and then Rector of the West Wycombe Benefice. Nigel has been greatly missed by many people in both the congregation and the village community, but we are delighted that he and his family have settled happily into their new parish in Dorset. His departure meant that we would have a Vacancy for an unknown length of time, inevitably a time of uncertainty, but we are very thankful and excited that a new Rector has now been appointed and will be joining the Benefice in August. Reverend Dr Allan Barton is currently Chaplain to the University of Wales at Lampeter, and is very much looking forward to moving to Buckinghamshire with his wife Claire and four children.

One of the questions asked when Nigel left by someone living in the village was "Does that mean that services at church will stop until we have a new Vicar?" We are very thankful that there has been virtually no disruption to services, except for the early Holy Communion services reduced at St Paul's, by agreement with those who attend. In fact, we probably relished the challenge to show that it was 'Business as usual' and have been able to achieve this thanks to the huge support and experience of the Associate and local priests, Ministry Team and congregation members. The priests have also conducted six funerals, five weddings and twelve Baptisms. We have a weekly service and a lively and growing Sunday School at St Lawrence or St Paul's, a monthly service at Piddington and many seasonal services such as Harvest, the Pet Service, All Souls service, Carol Service, Christingle and Crib Service. There has also been a weekly Lent course and services on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day.

Our parish is part of the Wycombe Deanery which comprises 35 churches in the local area, and is led by the Area Dean Reverend Dave Bull who visits every Parish each year to meet with the Wardens and complete the various checks required. We have also been required to complete a Mission Action plan, outlining our achievements, the challenges that we meet, and our priorities as a Parish for the next three years. Two of our members attend the quarterly meetings which – thankfully – no longer pore over accounts and building matters all evening but invite local people to talk about their work in, for example, the Wycombe Homeless Connection, Interfaith Families, Missionary work in Brazil, and the General Synod. Within the Diocese of Oxford, there has also been a new Bishop and a new Archdeacon appointed within the last year, so there is plenty going on!

One of the major challenges that we share is the upkeep of four Church buildings – the weekly costs of this, together with the compulsory Parish Share to the Deanery, is nearly £900. Our architect Joshua Harrison has just completed the Quinquennial Inspection of St Lawrence church, with St Paul's inspection to come. The QI has revealed very significant needs for repair and restoration at St Lawrence, many of which we were already aware of, and this could amount to hundreds of thousands of pounds. This year has seen some very significant work completed in repairing part of the roof, and replacing two Nave windows and panelling damaged by the dampness. Joshua is pursuing bids for Grants and Awards, but we recognise that we also need to think very creatively about making the most of our buildings and moving up a gear to meet current needs; this is all work in progress as we speak. However, as huge a task it seems, we must not be downcast – church buildings have always had building issues and fabric worries, such is part of parish life and we must make the very best of what we have and always look to the future. We believe that God will provide – but we have to help a lot! We have a wonderful situation on top of West Wycombe Hill, a beautiful area and one that is so popular with locals and visitors alike, and are very grateful to the National Trust for their care and creativity. We also thank the village members who have contributed financially to the upkeep and repair of the Village Clock, and those who check it daily.

Groundwork for the new Children's Room will begin shortly, this has been another major task, which has met and jumped several major hurdles along the way. We are immensely grateful to those who have joined the Buy a Brick scheme, as well as those who have legacies to be used for the Room. It will provide a wonderful and bespoke setting for our children and young people. Quite apart from the fundraising aspect which of course is vital, the social events are vital and have been prolific. The monthly Coffee Mornings are now held in St Paul's and have included fundraising for Syria, via MSF and Shelterbox, the Sunday School are currently Cooking for Syria to raise funds, we also support the Children's Society and Christian Aid regularly. We have also held a Summer Garden Party, Bonfire Party, Festival of Christmas Trees and Christmas Readings evening, weekly Teas and Tower opening at St Lawrence from Easter to October and welcomed many choirs and orchestras who perform there. We feel very privileged to have the West Wycombe Chamber Choir in our midst and are delighted that they see S Lawrence as their performing 'home ground'. We have held Snowdrop and Daffodil Sundays in WW Park and thanks go to Sir Edward, and also the National Trust volunteers who have helped with these. We are also strengthening ties with WW Combined School who held their KS2 Christmas Concert there and have other plans to use the church for class visits. We thoroughly enjoy shared Benefice events and especially the Sumer Fete and Christmas Evening run by the WW Events Team, what wonderful occasions they are and we are so delighted to be part of them, Thankyou. So, a year of much activity. None of this would be possible without the work and dedication and hard work of the PCC and smaller groups. However we are hugely grateful to everyone who supports the life of our church community in any way, whether within the congregation or the local community. Many of these helpers are unseen, but their work is so meaningful, and thankfully the church life can extend beyond the buildings and into the wider community. It is a real blessing to be involved in the life of West Wycombe and Piddington, and Thankyou to everyone who works tirelessly to make the villages the fantastic places that they are.

Cllr Mrs. Kate Cheshire, West Wycombe Events Team

The year started with a celebration of her Majesties 90th birthday with a beacon on the hill. The weather was fantastic and at least 500 people enjoyed the wonderful view and roared as the beacon was lit by Sir Edward. Thankfully the plane scene crash from the recent filming of the WW2 romantic drama Allied had provided us with plenty of material to burn.

Over 4000 people enjoyed the beauty of West Wycombe Park for the Summer Fayre and car show. The events team had booked over 100 different stalls, activities, attractions and food providers and everyone had a great day. 140 vintage and veteran cars also added to the colour and variety and the ever popular tractor and trailer rides were packed out all day.

Our thanks as always go to those who helped set up and ran this event, our biggest one so far. In particular our marquee set up and site preparation team, two days of hard grafting is the backbone of the weekend.

The marquee also played host to the Summer quiz on the Friday night, with a staggering 18 teams all competing for the chance to win the VIP area. A great evening was had by all

The drawing in of the evenings heralded our Autumn quiz night in the Village Hall. Another successful evening, supported by our regular fans.

The Festive Fayre brought thousands of extra visitors to the village. Most businesses opened late, providing food, drink and opportunities for people to buy gifts for loved ones. Father Christmas made his customary appearance in Black Boy Yard and the whole village joined in the fun!

The New Year's Day walk was not blessed with good weather! The heavy rain reduced numbers but the hardy crowd enjoyed some of the excellent footpaths that surround the village, returning to the village hall for the customary cakes and tea, a fine reward for the dampness!

Last week hosted our final event of the year - the St Georges Day quiz, 12 teams entered and enjoyed a great evening.

We look forward to a full diary for the year ahead, starting with the Beacon on the Hill on 9th June.

PC 2272 Danny O'Driscoll, Thames Valley Police Neighbourhood Team

Marlow Police Station on Dean Street has now been sold and the team have moved to temporary accommodation at Marlow Football Club. We will be back in our purpose built police office in Dean Street in 12 -15 months times. We do not have a public counter at the temporary base; your nearest front counter will be at Wycombe Police Station.

Speeding remains a priority across the neighbourhood. Many residents of Wets Wycombe have recently contacted the team to express concerns regarding the speed of vehicles which are travelling along the Chorley Road and Bradenham Road in particular.

The team are currently planning a speed awareness operation to cover West Wycombe and Studley Green. This will involve officers completing speed enforcement patrols. We will give out further information including the dates soon via Thames Valley Alert and Twitter.

Twitter Follow us on ---**TVP Wycombe**

Thames Valley Alert Community Messaging –Thames Valley Police are committed to involving the community in the policing of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes. We believe that by improving the flow of information between the community and its police we can all make a greater impact in the prevention and detection of crime and anti-social behaviour. You are invited to register now to become a registered recipient of messages of information, crime alerts or witness appeals local to the area in which you live or work in a way suits your needs and lifestyle by email, text or telephone. Just register at www.thamesvalleyalert.co.uk

As a registered recipient you not only benefit from two way messaging but many also learn about those in the community who are subject to anti-social behaviour orders, help identify suspected or wanted criminals from the Gallery pages or learn about community groups, events or meetings in your area.

Please note this service is not for reporting crimes or incidents – to report these please contact Thames Valley Police on 101.

Anti-Social Behaviour – At this time there does not appear to be a significant problem with anti-social behaviour across the parish. Very few incidents are being reported. If you do have any issues or concerns please contact us on 101.

Crime Mapping- Serious crime in the parish remains very low. However there is no room for complacency from our team and I urge you to call 101 if you see something suspicious or 999 for crime in progress.

The Home Office national crime mapping website gives the public access to street level crime information as well as information on their neighbourhood Policing Teams, Neighbourhood Priorities and Events.

Long on to www.police.uk, type in your local postcode or neighbourhood name and then click on 'Find out More'

Marlow NHPT/Force restructuring – 1st June 2017 – The force is undergoing a restructure in the way that it delivers local policing. There will be a small reduction in frontline resources on Local Police Areas but the ethos behind the restructure is to provide the right resources with the right skills at first point of contact in order to be able to deliver a good service to the public and in particular to the most vulnerable in communities.

Summer burglary crime prevention advice –The team is reminding residents to be vigilant with regards to their home security as the weather gets warmer.

Most burglars are opportunistic and a property that presents itself as insecure is far more likely to be targeted than one which is properly secured.

As the weather improves it is important that you do not leave ground floor windows or doors open and unlocked unless you are in the room – it only takes a second for someone to enter your home and take things without you noticing.

Please take a moment to have a look at our top tips for keeping your property secure over the summer.

- Always close and lock your windows and doors when leaving your property – even a small open window could entice a burglar
- If you are in the rear garden make sure the windows and doors at the front of your property are secure
- Do not leave valuables on display through windows
- Any car or house keys should be out of sight and some distance from a window or door
- Ensure that any side entrance is secure,, locked and not easy to climb over, even when you are at home
- If you want to leave windows open while you sleep, fit window restrictors so that they cannot be fully opened
- Consider installing a visible security light or alarm to deter criminals
- If you are going on holiday make arrangements to make sure your house appears occupied whilst you are away. Put your lights on a timer and ask a neighbour to come and pick up your mail and draw your curtains. Could a neighbour park on your drive? Don't advertise the fact that you are on holiday on social media.
- Do not leave garden tools out in your garden for an offender to use to gain access to your property or a neighbours.

I can be contacted by 101 or my email address is: danny.odriscoll@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk
Or contact the team on: MarlowSouthWestRuralNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

Paul Baker and Andrew Stafford, Downley Dynamos Football Club

The Chairman reported that the club now had over 350 members and a waiting list. They have 70 coaches and administration staff. The Club has a good reputation in Bucks. They feel the arrangement with the Parish Council is working well and due to the success of the club they are looking at putting grass matting into the far end of the Pedestal Car Park at their cost. The Parish Council does not need to have a bigger car park which the football club appreciates. They still plan to place a set of sockets on the other side of the field so that the single goal post can be moved around to reduce wear and tear on the field. They reported that their grass contractor may be interested in carrying out maintenance of the whole field as they have decided to continue with the pitch grass cutting throughout the year as it makes it easier to maintain the pitch quality. The Parish Council will carry out their normal grass maintenance. Paul is due to stand down as Chairman and Andrew will be taking over.

We had no representation from West Wycombe Community Library, West Wycombe Pre-School or West Wycombe County Combined School

Cllr Mrs Smith invited everyone to stay for light refreshments.