

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON 6TH MAY 2004 AT 8PM
IN THE CHURCH ROOM, WEST WYCOMBE**

PRESENT: Cllrs Mrs J. Smith (Chairman), R. Seymour, M. Gerrard, Mrs C. Dakin,
Mr D. Callaghan, Mrs A. Harris Mr N. Harris (National Trust)
Mrs S. Henson, Clerk District Cllr Mrs J. Teesdale

Sir Edward Dashwood, PC Andy Mc Donnell, Mrs A Cobb and 23 members of the public

APOLOGIES; Cllr F Downes

The Chairman, Mrs J. Smith welcomed everyone present and then gave her annual report.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2004

The Parish Council started off the year last May needing a new Councillor, to make up our compliment to seven. Mr Danny Callaghan who lives in Bradenham Road joined us, and he has proved a very willing, interested Councillor. There is so much to learn and take in, but both he and Alisa Harris, who live in West Wycombe Road, and joined the Council later in the year, have impressed us with their enthusiasm. Alisa joined us when Alison Wood resigned through pressure of work.

Alison had been with the Parish Council for a long time, and is much missed. We thank her for all the reports from the School and the Church she has given to this meeting over the years, as well as all the time and energy she has given to the Parish as a whole.

The Parish Council is kept busy trying to keep things running as smooth as possible in the Parish. They don't always run as well as we would like, and we feel very frustrated at times. I am sure you are all wondering when the Puffin Crossing in West Wycombe Road will be finished. Well, we are too! BCC miscalculated the size of the traffic signal box, to be placed there, and are currently looking to have another one made to measure that will not be knocked by lorries. The only good thing about the crossing situation is, that we haven't been asked to pay for it yet!

We do have a very good working relationship with BCC. Just a few Fridays ago Mike Knight, who looks after all the Highway contracts for the Wycombe area for Bucks County Council, toured round the Parish with us, for us to point out some of our concerns, and ideas for the future. Through that meeting he has had some of our "grips" and gullies dug out and cleared immediately, to help with drainage problems. We talked about altering "Reg's Island" slightly so as to allow vans and lorries to negotiate the top of Church Lane without damaging the banks. The new signs on the white gates have been done and the old ones taken away, and we have just learned that we are to receive help in funding for new lights on Chorley Road which will mean the whole of the road will have street lights, and not the gap of darkness after the Garden Centre that is there now. We would like to renew the lights in The High Street sometime soon too, and we have found that if we can put some money into a project, BCC are more likely to look on it favourably, and hopefully, we can get things done.

A resident in Bradenham Road asked if that road could have white gates as a traffic calming measure. It was going to cost about £1170 and we would lose the large signs that are already there, because we couldn't have both. We canvassed opinion, and found that most people would rather leave it as it is, so that is what we have done.

We have reported numerous water leaks, lighting problems, and holes and loose covers in the roads and pavements, overgrown hedges and trees, (Chapel Lane and West Wycombe Rd are places I can think of that needed that sort of help) The bad state of the hoardings on the old BRS site in West Wycombe Road have been something that Sharon has made a great deal of noise about.

We have asked BCC to help us find solutions to calm the traffic on the roads in the Parish, especially Bradenham and Chorley Roads.

Currently there is a speed review being carried out on all roads in Wycombe District, and there is a hope that it will recommend a 40 miles an hour speed limit for the roads just mentioned. We are also suggesting that all of the A40 through the Parish should be 30 miles per hour.

You will have seen the "no right turn" sign at the top of Chapel Lane; this too is something we have talked to BCC about for some years. It is an experiment to see if it does alleviate the problems at that junction, and help the flow of traffic.

We monitored a Speed Indicator Device ("SID") during the year, which showed us what speed people were doing, and many motorists were surprised when they saw their speed register on the screen. They then put their foot on the brake!

We have made sure that the bus stops have timetables on them.

We have objected to BT removing the phone booth at the Pedestal, people allowing their children and dogs to not show respect when in our Burial Ground, someone letting their livestock run on the highway, and Wycombe General Hospital's proposed plans to close the Maternity Unit. We have spent quite a lot of time trying to get the Pedestal Garage to move their cars from the bus stop and other places that inconvenience people.

We also objected to Banner Homes plans to build first 52 houses then 45 houses at the end of Copperfields. Cllr Callaghan spoke for us at WDC's planning meeting. As did our District Councillor Jean Teesdale, and the Planning consent was refused. We feel sure that there will be houses built on this site one day, but we are looking for the best possible design to suit the area, and so far we don't think the developer has taken into consideration the nature of area, and traffic and parking difficulties.

The Parish Council have worked closely with our local area beat Officer Andy McDonnell when we have had any trouble in the parish, including parking by the School. We have had some anti-social behaviour and vandalism problems in the Parish. We all know how distressing this can be. (My own house was pelted with eggs in the early hours of Monday morning). We consulted youth workers at WDC and the Police, and have recently put a survey form in every house in the Parish so that we can work out just where and what the problems are, and from that, we hope we can work out a way in which we can all help to tackle the problems.

Andy McDonnell is leaving us for pastures new, and we would like to wish him well in his new job, and thank him for all the work he has done for us in West Wycombe.

I have learned our new Caretaker Beat Officer is to be PC Iain Bryce and we look forward to meeting him.

We also lost Charles Pugh, our National Trust representative this year. He was particularly helpful when we were dealing with planning, and other NT related problems. We are pleased to welcome Neil Harris from the NT and hope he enjoys his time with us. Neil knows West Wycombe well because he was Warden here for some while.

I don't know if any of you have noticed how well WDC are looking after the St. Lawrence Church yard? I think they are doing a very good job. As you will know the Parish Council had taken over the maintenance from The Church for the last year, using the same man who had worked for the Church, because we had to give WDC a year's notice so they could fit it into their budget. We decided after much discussion some time ago, to pass the work over to WDC because they have the men and the machines and the experience to do a good job for us there. St. Lawrence Churchyard is a beautiful place, but it does have many old walls, headstones, roots and overhanging trees, which all bring their own problems.

We gave a contribution to the Church to help restore the Church Room roof this year.

We had some new fencing and a composting area set-aside in the Burial Ground to put the Burial Ground grass cuttings in.

We have attended courses, conferences and seminars on Quality Parish Councils, Planning, Council Law, Anti-Social behaviour, Standards, AQA for Clerks, Transport and the Tranquil Project and WDC's Imagine the Future, to mention just a few.

We regularly attend Wycombe District Association of Local Councils and Bucks County Council's, Wycombe Area committee meetings.

I am on the Executive Committee of Buckinghamshire Association of Local Councils, and on Wycombe District Council's Standards Committee, as a Parish Council representative.

These all help us to be part of a wider council community, to learn from, and often to give advice to other councils, and place West Wycombe in a good position to be taken notice of when decisions are being made.

I would like to thank Jean Teesdale and Ann Snelling, our district Councillors, for all their help this year and to thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their support, and their time and dedication to West Wycombe.

Sharon, our Clerk is one of the best Clerks in this area. In fact we know she is the best and we don't need bits of paper to tell us she is!

So Sharon, please accept these flowers as a small token of our appreciation for all you do for us, and the Parish.

Thank you for organising tonight for us too.

Other Parish Council's have been known to try and poach Sharon from us!

But I like to think that because she, like the rest of us on West Wycombe Parish Council, live in the Parish, and want to keep it a good and pleasant place to live. We know that things can't always stay the same, because nothing stands still for ever, but we do our very best to make what changes there are to be, enhance and improve our Parish.

PRESENTATION OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT

We started the year with a good balance as £10,000 of this was allocated towards the final bill for our puffin crossing. The Precept was £24,000; again £10,000 of this was for the crossing. We still have not paid for this, as you will have seen that due to technical problems with the site the job has not been completed.

We have a savings account with the Bank of Ireland and this has produced £590 in interest. We have received £595 in burial and memorial fees, however with the burial ground costing us on average £2500 to maintain this will never really pay for itself year on year. As a Parish Council we were bound to try to provide such a facility, and when you hear of the problems and costs which many people outside the parish face when burying their loved ones, we are very glad that we took advantage of Sir Francis' offer of a 999 year lease on the land. We extended and repaired some of the stock fencing and created a fenced in compost heap. The remaining amount of money was, for this year only, to cover the cost of grass cutting at St Lawrence Church. Wycombe District Council has now taken over this cost.

The AQA refund is related to a qualification, which the Clerk is undertaking and as she was one of the Pilot Clerks for the course, part of the fee was refunded. As a Parish Council we have not decided whether we want to go for a new Quality Status which is being 'sold' by the government, however if we decide to go ahead when we meet the qualifying status i.e. no co-opted councillors, then we have to have an AQA Clerk.

Parish Councils are allowed to claim back all VAT which is paid.

S137 is a category of payment, which Parish Councils can make to organisations within their community, and in this case we give £50 each year towards the Senior Citizens Christmas Party and outings.

The Parish Council pays for all the costs relating to the School Crossing Patrol by the garden centre. Bucks County Council pay for the one in the High Street.

Training was a higher figure as we had new Parish Councillors, new legislation and new reference books, which had to be purchased. As a legally constituted body many of the books we have to use are extremely expensive.

REPORT FROM THE WESDT WYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE ON THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

Cllr Downes was not present and Cllr Mrs Harris gave his report

General

It is always a pleasure to be able to report success and this year is no exception. At the end of my fifth year as the Council Representative on the School Governing body, I am pleased to be able to report on yet another year of high achievement and continuing success.

As in past years, the key factors in producing this success have been the continuing commitment and dedication of staff, the sound leadership of the head teacher and the ready involvement of parents both individually and through the PTA

As I reported last year, Alison Cobb took over as Head Teacher in April 2003. She has now completed her first year and continues to lead an outstandingly good school. She has quickly established her own style of leadership and we look forward to being part of a continuing success story.

Finance

For the last two years, I have been able to report a balanced budget and I am pleased to report that once again, we are looking at a satisfactory financial position. Naturally, the school could always make use of a higher level of funding but this year we have benefited from increased funding from central government and also from the LEA targeting Key Stage 2 and bringing the Schools budget to the full amount of government grant.

Academic Results

Academic standards remain consistently high across all levels within the school and over the last four years they have regularly attained standards well above the National Average in English and Mathematics and above average in Science.

This high performance has to be seen against an increasing number of pupils on the SEN register. At present we have 42 on the register of whom 4 are Statemented. Last year we had a total of 37.

Of the 30, Year 6 pupils who sat the selection papers, 4 have obtained grammar school places and a further 5 were borderline and have requested reviews. This result is slightly lower than last year but exactly in line with expectation. .

Catchment areas and Admissions Policy

As you will remember, last year I reported on the County Council review of catchment areas. The review concluded that the West Wycombe should be included in the catchment area for Princess Risborough School. This conclusion has now been approved by the County Council and will become effective in 2005

Staffing and numbers on roll

At the start of the Spring Term this year the number of pupils on roll was just over 200 which is about the same as last year.

Full time teaching staff remains at seven, plus the Head Teacher.

Conclusion

The school continues to produce a high level of academic achievement in a friendly and supportive environment. With a steadily improving financial position the Governors and Staff are looking forward to the continuing success of our village school.

REPORT FROM WEST WYCOMBE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Cllr Mrs Carole Dakin is the Parish Council representative on the association and gave the following report.

The village hall is thankfully a very busy place and hardly a month goes by when some part of the hall is either being repaired or painted. This year has been no exception.

One of the biggest jobs was the restoration of the floor in the main hall, this gave us a few problems, but the end result seems to be satisfactory, although it is wearing down quicker than we hoped. We found rubber conduits for users such as the Antique Fair, who, for safety reasons used to use sticky tape to stick their cables to the floor, which lifted the varnish off of the floor. Now the cables run through the conduits. We also fitted some more electric sockets in the hall to help the situation.

After the floor was finished the curtains and stage curtains were cleaned, and the black stage curtains were repaired too.

The Committee decided to make the downstairs of the hall a no smoking area, and this should help keep the curtains fresher too. Wycombe District Council has supplied a waste bin with a place for cigarette stubs, which is outside the front door.

Sir Edward, our President, gave us £500, which we put towards the heater we had to replace under the stage. He also supplied the Christmas tree, as he does every year, and we are most grateful for this, as it makes the Village look very festive! We plan to buy more tree lights for this coming Christmas.

The water heaters in the changing rooms have just been replaced, as was the water heater in the kitchen early this year. In addition the hole made by the wasps in one of the changing rooms has been repaired and the rooms have been painted.

The upstairs windows are a worry, because they will cost a lot of money to replace, but we felt it was a job that could be put off for a while if we did a good touching up and painting job now, so this was completed before Christmas.

The Playgroup asked for, and has been given permission to hang two display boards in the hall for displaying the children's work.

The Committee decided not to raise our hire rates this year, but we will have to talk about increases for next year as our costs are continually rising i.e. increased cost of refuse collection, cleaning, utilities, general maintenance to name but a few. We still have problems with certain people refusing to pay their parking fees, no matter how many times we appeal to them and this of course doesn't help our finances.

Sue Palmer has worked hard in the gardens to make the outside of the Hall look much tidier. We hope to plant some shrubs in the spring. Sue keeps the Hall pristine, and we are indebted to her and Maureen Plumridge for the every day running of the Hall.

We have had a few changes on the Committee, Pam Kent stood down this year from The Parish Council, and therefore this committee and I joined, in her place. Cllr Jean Teesdale is now our Wycombe District Council representative, Charles Pugh, was our

representative from the National Trust but he has now left and hopefully his replacement will join us shortly.

To finish I would just like to say a big thank you to everyone who gives up their time to make the Community Association a success and we look forward to your continued support to keep the village hall a place for everyone to enjoy and be proud of.

REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL TRUST

Mr Neil Harris has joined us during the year as he has taken over from Mr Charles Pugh. He reported that the gate at the top of the hill will be functioning once the electrical storage system of a solar panel and battery has been fully tested. It will open and close at set times and there will be certain keyholders. It will open automatically if a car is on the hill after the official shutting time. Once this is in operation the surface of the hill will be broken up and levelled. This process will also be used on the footpath across the hill to the school. He stated that this work will necessitate restriction to the hill and that plenty of advance notice will be given. It is hoped that the path across the hill could be levelled during half term.

Mr Harris was asked if the National Trust would consider granting a piece of land to allow a pavement to be created up the side of the hill.

REPORT FROM OUR ABO PC ANDY MCDONNELL

Andy reported that he will be moving to Gerrards Cross at the end of May and that PC Iain Bryce, currently ABO for Hambleton Valley, will add us to his beat list.

A chart of crimes carried out in West Wycombe was shown with Violence Against the person crime increased from 2 to 4, robbery from 0 to 1, burglary in dwellings from 2 to 6, burglary not in dwellings 2 to 4, auto crime reduced from 20 to 17, criminal damage reduced from 10 to 9, other crime increased from 20 to 36. He emphasised the importance of local people reporting any incidents and encouraged everyone to complete the antisocial behaviour forms delivered to every home in the Parish.

REPORT FROM SIR EDWARD

As Sir Edward asked everyone to be vigilant, as he had had lambs die and livestock let on to the road by people leaving gates open and cutting barbed wire. He stated that he had a relaxed attitude to people walking over his land, but he would have to consider locking gates if this happened again. He stated that there were just 2 concerts taking place in the park this year.

LAUNCH OF THE PARISH PLAN

The Clerk, Cllr Mrs Smith and Cllr Mrs Harris had taken photos of all areas of our parish and these along with maps were put up in an exhibition for everyone to study. Cllr Danny Callaghan gave a short talk on the Parish Plan and explained that he was not a shopping list but possibly a wish list as to how we want to see our Parish develop over the next 10 years; identifying needs, problems and issues affecting our residents. He asked for volunteers to come forward and make up a committee, which would initially create the questionnaire, which would go to all homes in the Parish. We had a good response to this with 11 people coming forward.

Everyone was given the opportunity to ask questions and then joined in light refreshments.