

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON 12TH APRIL 2007 AT 8PM IN THE CHURCH ROOM, WEST WYCOMBE**

PRESENT: Cllrs Mrs J. Smith (Chairman), Mr R. Seymour, Mrs C. Dakin, Mr D. Callaghan, Mrs A. Harris, Mr F. Downes, Mr N. Timberlake. Mr N. Phillips (National Trust)
Mrs S. Henson, Clerk

Dist Cllrs Mrs J. Teesdale and Mr I McEnnis

25 members of the public, Sir Edward and Lady Lucinda Dashwood, Mrs C. Burslem, Chair of Governors, West Wycombe CC School, Mr Pat Martin Chairman of BALC, Mrs Beverley Cope, Churchwarden West Wycombe PCC, Mr D. Winterburn, Bucks Free Press local correspondent

APOLOGIES; Cllrs Mr Richard Pushman, Mr David Davies, Mrs Barbara Wallis and Irene Thompson, CEO of NALC

The Chairman, Mrs J. Smith welcomed everyone present and then was interrupted by Chairman of Wycombe District Council, Cllr Mrs Jean Teesdale who announced a surprise. West Wycombe Parish Council celebrates its 20th year in existence and Cllr Mrs Smith has been a Councillor for all that time and Chairman of the Parish Council for 18 of those years. She has worked tirelessly for her community and represents the Parish Council on the WDALC, is on the Executive of BALC, sits on Wycombe District Council's Standards Board, attends the BCC Local Area meetings and the Rural Forum as well as attending regular training sessions. She has been the driving force of the Parish Council, encouraging the Clerk in her AQA training in order to put West Wycombe Parish Council forward for Quality Council Status, which was achieved in October 2005. A presentation of a watercolour miniature of West Wycombe Hill by local artist, Kathleen Hudson and a bouquet of flowers was made by Cllr Mrs Teesdale.

Chairman's Annual Report 2007

This last year we have been waiting to see what benefit the Local Government White Paper would mean for Parish Councils. The one thing that seems to be emerging is that Parish Councils will be able to take over some of the jobs that the County Councils do for us at present. This is called Devolved Powers. We have had talks with Bucks County Council and because we are a Quality Parish Council we are able and very much want, to do jobs such as clearing gullies, grips and drains when we have flooding problems rather than wait for the County Council to do it for us. At present they only do these particular types of jobs once a year. That, often, is not enough in this Parish. We will be given a set amount of money per year to facilitate this programme which will obviously be strictly audited. We have talked to our neighbours Piddington and Wheeler End Parish Council and plan to share jobs and contractors with them where we can, to reduce costs. Just last month we followed Piddington and Wheeler End Parish Council's good work clearing their path towards West Wycombe by using the same contractor to clear our stretch of pathway along the A40 as well.

This is what the government led GC2C (Getting Closer to Communities) is all about.

One of our biggest projects this year has been the new street lights on Bradenham Road and the High Street in the Village. We worked very closely with Jacobs Babbie, BCC contractors, to make sure the lighting was sympathetic to our surroundings, choosing the lamps in the High Street for instance. We have wanted these new lighting schemes for some years but it took much negotiation on our part to get a large portion of the cost of the High Street lighting paid for by BCC and WDC. We are indeed very grateful to both these authorities for their contributions. The Bradenham Road lighting we alone paid for.

One important element of the whole lighting plan was to install safe permanent sites for two Christmas trees and their Christmas lights. We were racing against time in the end but we did manage to achieve our aim to have both trees in the Village lit this year.

Sir Edward Dashwood supplied the trees.

We were not very impressed when it poured with rain and thundered on both the days we were putting up the lights and then taking them off the trees again because we got soaked to the skin both times!

The Christmas lights caused a great deal of discussion amongst our residents, some people hated the blue ones but most people liked them and we still have enquiries from people who travel through West Wycombe asking where we purchased them.

Early last year we had a presentation by the Neighbourhood Watch Association and through this a number of schemes in our area have been set up.

We continue to maintain the Burial Ground and have plans to improve the car park and paths because of new burial ground laws regarding health and safety for walking surfaces. Some of the trees have had to be replaced this year.

Over the last four years we have consulted with the BCC travel team to keep a bus service through our parish especially on Bradenham and Chorley Roads. We have had many meetings over the years some hosted by ourselves and eventually The Rider on Call Service started. This scheme was originally Government funded for 3 years but the money ran out after two years and BCC have been funding for the last year. This service has now come to an end but we have managed to settle on another scheme which starts on the 16th of April.

We planned and paid for some of the cost of the new path leading to the school.

We belong to other organisations and regularly attend their meetings. They are The Wycombe District Association of Local Councils and the Bucks Association of Local Councils. I am on the Executive Committee of the Bucks Association. We always attend the Local Area Forums run by BCC and the Rural Forum organised by WDC. This keeps us in touch with other councils and new ideas and we are able to pick up valuable information that can help us run the council efficiently.

I am also on the Wycombe District Council's Standards Committee as a parish council representative.

We attend training sessions to keep ourselves up to date with all the new legislation and changes to things like planning. For instance, by July all planning applications will have to be submitted by email and then passed on to parish councils by email. Anyone can go into the planning website at Wycombe.gov and look at plans but of course not everyone has a computer! Parish Councils will have to comment by email. We will have to print off the plans by investing in an A3 printer and/ or projector and screen, if necessary, to look at plans and to show the public as we do now. Up to now all plans have been paper, easy enough to read and they are posted out to us.

But this is progress!

Or is it?

The district councils have been told that they have to change to this way of doing things but most parish councils think that it will cost the parishes more money and paper instead.

We spend a good deal of our time deliberating over planning applications and although it feels sometimes that our concerns are not always listened to, overall they are. Local knowledge counts for a great deal.

We knew for instance when the very first plans came in 9 years ago for the proposed new houses at Copperfields they would cause awful problems not only for the present residents but also because lots more traffic would be coming out on to West Wycombe Road. We objected strongly then, even managing to get the plans turned down but unfortunately the builders won their appeal and most of the things we worried about then have come to fruition. We always knew homes would be built on this site but hoped for a scheme that fitted into environment a little easier. This particular planning application has taken much of our time over the years.

Because we have always been concerned about the pollution in the Parish, especially in the High Street, WDC have placed a pollution monitor in the Village Hall car park which over the next 3 years will record the levels of pollution and if it is as high as we think it is we may be able to use this information to help us with traffic management in the future.

Last year I mentioned we had to put together an Emergency Contingency Plan. We did do some initial work on this but I have to say we owe Sharon our Clerk an immense dept of gratitude

because she has put in an enormous amount of time and effort to get our plan ready and accepted by WDC. Very few other parish councils have managed to do this.

It was also very pleasing when our Annual Report newsletter won first prize as best in Buckinghamshire. Sharon organised the printing of this newsletter with all our individual reports in it.

Sharon is paid for the job she does for us but is worth her weight in gold. Without her ferreting away to find vital bits of information for us so that we can make decisions, items at meetings would take much longer to progress.

Her accounts are always immaculate. Her minutes are always accurate.

Over the years she has built up good working relationships with the officers at WDC and BCC which ensures we get the best attention.

We certainly appreciate her and her hard work.

We would like to thank Mike Henson for looking after our website and to ask that our residents use the website to advertise their events and organisations.

I would like to thank Nick Phillips for his continuing support of this parish council and being part of our team. Mr Phillips is the National Trust's Property Manager for West Wycombe and it helps us to have him come to our meetings to answer any questions relating to the Village and the countryside.

It is twenty years since this West Wycombe Parish Council was first formed.

There was a parish council here some 55 years before then but it fell by the wayside in the 1930's.

A referendum was held in the 1980's to see if people wanted to be represented at local level by a parish council and I hope we have fulfilled the expectations of the residents of West Wycombe since then. All the Councillors during this time have worked hard to try and make life in West Wycombe Parish as comfortable and safe as we possibly could.

I am the only founder member of that original Parish Council still serving and I can honestly say that it has been a steep learning curve at times but always worthwhile and interesting and never dull! It has certainly been a privilege to have been the Chairman of West Wycombe Parish Council for the past 18 years.

In my opinion parish councils work best as a non political group of people and we have always worked well as team. We don't always agree with one another but we do respect the other person's point of view and are ready to listen. I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their interest and dedication to the Parish Council. They are all unpaid and put a lot of time and effort in to ensure West Wycombe residents get the best service possible.

We are grateful to Jean Teesdale and Ian McEnnis our District Councillors for attending our meetings and representing us at WDC when we have issues with planning applications. Although Frank Downes is a West Wycombe Parish Councillor he is also our County Council representative and he works hard to keeps us up to date with all BCC news and initiatives.

We would also like to thank the regular members of the public who turn up to our monthly meetings without fail, in all weathers. We really do appreciate your support.

I have said before that we try and keep an eye on everything in the parish but we can only react to situations if we know about them. Unfortunately we cannot be everywhere so we rely on you, our residents, to be our eyes and ears and to tell us when things are not quite right. We may not always be able to help but we often know someone who can.

The Financial Report

The RFO had issued copies of the accounts to everyone present and briefly went through them. We contributed £5000 to BCC for the new lighting scheme in the High Street, West Wycombe and a further £3000 for the footway from the school; we paid £12407.76 for the new lights for the remainder of the Bradenham Road; we paid a total of £2000 for the purchase of Christmas tree lights, creating two permanent base fixings with covers, waterproof sockets and the hire of the cherry picker; the internal and external audits cost £300; Insurance increased by £30 to £796.84;

we have our own telephone line for which we received refunding from Hambleden and Piddington & Wheeler End Parish Councils; salt for the salt bin; tree works to create visibility of the High Street lighting; we cleared existing and created new grips in Towerage Lane to stop the flooding occurring near the Cricket Meadow; we paid £300 for the Annual Report but won £200 to set against this; we made a donation to West Wycombe Brass Band and also one to the Thames Valley Air Ambulance and paid the Community Association £200 to allow us to use their waste bin for our Burial Ground rubbish; we have replaced some of the trees in the burial ground and made an easier pedestrian access. We have also received a refund on electricity used for the Air Quality Monitoring unit from Wycombe District Council and a refund from Piddington & Wheeler End Parish Council for the use of our office equipment.

The Section 137 figure includes all the preparatory work for the Christmas trees as well as the purchase of the lights and electricity consumed. Section 137 also includes the refreshments for the Annual Parish Meeting and a contribution to the Old People's Party Fund.

The RFO gave people the opportunity to ask questions.

Report from the West Wycombe Community Association by Cllr Roger Seymour

I am happy to report that the Village Hall is in constant use.

The Hall is used every morning in term time by West Wycombe pre School Playgroup and almost every evening by regular groups who have used the Village Hall for many years. We certainly value their continued usage of the Hall and do our best to make sure the facilities are clean and safe for them to enjoy. We have to thank Jane Temple, our letting secretary and cleaner, for the many casual lets such as children's parties, as she will take time to show the prospective clients around the Hall. We have seen an increase in level of people using the Hall for parties of late.

We are proceeding with plans to extend and alter the Village Hall. We hope to widen the staircase to enable a stair lift to be installed and to make the kitchen larger and more convenient and to rearrange the toilets to provide a second ladies toilet and a toilet for the disabled at the front of the Hall. The plans are almost ready to be sent in to Wycombe District Council Planning Dept. Then if they are passed we will have to set about finding ways to fund the project.

Obviously we didn't want to double up on painting etc while the building work is going on so we have put our usual painting and maintenance work on hold until we know exactly when and where the building work will start. We are aware that the Hall does need some attention and will be doing some work on it over the Easter Holidays. The main Hall floor needed to be resealed this last summer, which was quite an expense.

The Parish Council has taken over the responsibility of the Christmas tree and a new permanent position has been made in the car park with a secure electrical box.

There were many comments about the Christmas tree this year which because it is in our car park is good publicity for the Hall too.

Wycombe District Council asked if they could place a Pollution Monitor in our car park to the rear of the Village Hall. We felt this would benefit the community and the unit was officially opened on January 9th. The electricity bills for both the tree and the monitor are paid for by the Parish Council and Wycombe District Council respectively.

The car park continues to be difficult problem for us to solve. We have had complaints from the people who hire the Hall that they cannot park in the car park and we have had complaints from the residents of West Wycombe who pay to park here that other non paying people are taking up their spaces. We have threatened to clamp the non payers but as yet have not done so, mainly because it will cost us money to do so but I think the time is fast approaching when we will have to take firm action.

Graham Wood our Treasurer spends a great deal of time chasing up the residents payments.

I know I mentioned in my report last year the Bucks County Council were interested in putting their mobile Library van into the Village Hall car park but unfortunately the vehicle was too large to get into the car park and now uses the garden centre car park.

Whilst I am talking about our Treasurer I must thank him for all the hard work he does to make sure our finances are up to date and in good order.

I would also like to thank Marion Brown our secretary for all the work she does to make sure our minutes are correct and that our meetings run smoothly.

I must thank the whole of the committee for their continued support of the Village Hall. Without their interest it would be impossible to keep the Hall running in the way it does and to keep it going for future generations to enjoy.

Report from Mr Nick Phillips, Property Manager, The National Trust

Properties

Five properties have been refurbished and a further three are in the pipe line. There is no shortage of people wanting to live in the village. The Village Volunteer Group met several times during the year and two sessions were organised for general clearing up in Church Lane and along the High Street and Park boundary. We will continue to work on the appearance of the village and to that end; a large group of corporate volunteers will be coming to the village to assist with removing the special paint treatment on some of the houses which is now peeling and to assist with some of the gardens. We are aware that the external appearance of the village needs to be improved and we will continue to work again on the litter, undergrowth and other presentation issues.

Volunteers

Chris Hathaway has an excellent team of volunteers showing visitors around West Wycombe Park but there is still a need for more.

West Wycombe Hill

The Hill is still suffering from the results of regular anti-social behaviour and our warden has carried out a great job in picking up the results from syringes to televisions as well as grass cutting and hedge trimming. The amount of litter continues to increase year on year. In May it is planned that the surface of the West Wycombe Hill will be scarifying and then rolled to remove the potholes. It is also planned to erect stub posts to stop visitors to the hill driving all over it and churning up the grass.

Trees

A great deal of time has been spent over the last 12 months carrying out tree safety surveys and the necessary work will be carried out over the next few months.

Staff changes

A new Assistant Warden has been appointed and will join the team in the near future.

There never seems enough time to do all I would like to. I am however determined to see the village presentation improve. We have made steps in that direction this year but still have a way to go. The job has been made a little easier by the fact that I have been so well supported by both the Parish Council and the members of the village this year.

Report from Mrs C Burslem, Chair of Governors, West Wycombe Combined School

General

The school continues to remain popular with parents and still attracts many of its pupils from outside the catchment area. Usually the school is oversubscribed and there are sometimes waiting lists for some year groups. The school remains fully staffed, although we are still seeking a deputy head. The staff all continue to work hard on behalf of the school and to continue to improve children's learning. The School Plan identifies areas for development and outlines how progress is monitored.

Building work

Building work has now been completed and the school now benefits from an enhanced learning environment. A new Foundation Stage classroom and outdoor learning environment (funded by a grant from County through money available from central government) are a vast improvement to

the redundant swimming pool site. Whilst the new ICT suite (funded mainly by the school) will replace the old one and free up a room for music tuition and meetings of the school council. The extra classroom will enable one room in the Victorian building to be used as a library, replacing the current small library. A teachers' resource room will mean that storage of topic boxes and resources will be improved as well.

Security measures have also been improved and anyone visiting the school now has to enter via the entry phone system. This means the site is not accessible to passers by during the day and children can be kept safe.

Travel plan

The travel plan team continue to work on improving walking to and from school. Improvements include the new path and the travel plan shelter. The issue of parking remains a top priority and the school is constantly reminding parents to park in the garden centre car park and not to use the lower car park or Church Lane. The Go For Gold scheme also remains popular. Cycle training has been organised for Year 6 pupils again. The Junior Road Safety Officers attended a travel conference at Adam's Park with other local pupils to increase their awareness of travel issues.

PTA

We are very fortunate to have a supportive and active PTA who organise social and fundraising events. Over the last two years the PTA has been raising money to help fund the new ICT suite, which was a school funded project. All pupils benefit from the money raised by the PTA.

Extra curricular club

The school continues to explore opportunities for children to take part in sporting, drama and musical activities whenever possible. Clubs recently have included cricket, hockey, tennis, drama and street dance. The school is now part of the sports coordinator programme and is benefiting from expertise from the Royal grammar school and Borlase. We are pleased that the West Wycombe cricket club continue their support of the school and are grateful that we can use their outfield.

School council

The children elected to the school council are always keen to come up with ideas to improve their school and take their responsibilities very seriously. The school council is beginning to play a greater role in the running of the school; recently they were involved in the staff selection process.

Communication

As a school we are keen to be recognised in the community and to contribute to activities and events within the Parish. We try to have regular communication through CONTACT magazine articles and to get involved through links with the National Trust, church, library, cricket club and garden centre who all support us. You can keep up to date with all our news by logging onto our website and reading newsletters as well as accessing photographs of some of the activities that take place in the school.

Report from Mrs Beverley Cope, Church Warden, St. Lawrence and St Paul's Churches 2006-2007

We'll start on a cheerful note to say that there have been many success stories over the past year. We now have a lovely new guidebook to St. Lawrence's, with excellent colour photographs and interesting script, which, at £2.50, is proving popular.

In the summer various events took place in the parish as part of the Benefice Mission Week. We were joined in this venture by students from Cudsdon College training for ordination, who were most supportive and inspiring, as well as by Graham Claydon, a missionary from East London. A Flower Festival was held at St. Lawrence, with the theme of favourite hymns and, thanks to June Stanton, Ros Hilborne and their stalwart team this proved to be of an excellent standard, much to the admiration of the many visitors. Another feature of the Mission Week was the display of the Church Registers gathered from the archives that attracted a huge amount of interest from people tracing their ancestry of births, deaths and marriages in the parish. Some visitors from distant parts were very moved to find graves of near kin through this research.

Throughout the year there have continued to be several concerts including Lyra, the ever popular quartet of Russian singers, and the exciting launch and follow up concerts by the home grown West Wycombe Chamber Choir, who have rapidly built up an enthusiastic following. The next concert coming along will be a recital by a prominent pianist Myuki Kato, on 5th May.

Anyone who has not yet seen the Art Exhibition 'Jesus Laughing and Loving', which has been displayed over Easter in both churches, and would like to do so, please see me afterwards and we'll see what we can do!

We have recently bought 30 Bibles for the pews at St. Lawrence so that the congregation may follow the readings, and also we hope that these provide visitors with food for thought if they are seeking peace or inspiration.

The 5pm services on alternative Sundays at St. Paul's have currently been suspended in favour of an 8am service on every Sunday morning. This has been greeted with a certain amount of reservation by regular worshippers at St. Paul's.

I now reach the sad part of the report by acknowledging the fact that during this past year we have lost some very dear and eminent people from the church. After his courageous struggle with cancer, Don Varney sadly passed away. He had done an enormous amount of work for the parish churches over a very long period of time, and will long be remembered for his friendship and support. The same sentiments apply to dear Eric Stacey who also did so much work for the church, mostly behind the scenes and seeking no recognition or reward. Eric had been helping Malcolm Liddle, my fellow Church Warden, in the important task of repairing the wooden duckboards on two levels at the top of St. Lawrence Tower. We were also sorry to lose Dr. Michael Dods, who relocated to Cornwall. Michael was another workaholic who devoted himself wholeheartedly to church administrative tasks. A hard act to follow. Now, with Rev. Eric Nicholson and his wife Barbara moving to the North of Scotland, the remaining clergy team will be stretched to cover services in the Benefice.

On a different note, we would like to see more children and young people attending Church, but which comes first, the chicken or the egg? If we had volunteers who could spare the time to provide activities for the youngsters we could re-launch the Sunday school or start an after school club. Is there anybody out there?

Following completion of the roof and gutter repairs, an extensive and costly project, for which we are very grateful to English Heritage in particular for their generous grant, we have now been in a position to proceed with the plans to install toilets at St. Lawrence's. As with most of these ventures, this is proving to be a lengthy process. The Klargestor and drainage systems are already installed but we are waiting for the approval of amended plans by the Diocesan Advisory Committee before we can put out to tender so, in this case, cross your legs that this will happen soon!

The carved wooden panels from the East wall of the Chancel are currently being restored by the Local University, under expert supervision, and should be returned soon.

Some recent vandalism to the steps and wall outside the West entrance St. Lawrence's has been expertly repaired by a kind stonemason who was married at St. Lawrence's and he is also making a new cross to replace the one which fell off the West end of the roof of St. Paul's.

Finally just to say that we are committed to having St. Lawrence Church open, including the tower, every Sunday and Bank Holiday from Easter until the end of September, as part of the agreement with English Heritage, and also to help us meet the cost of the Parish Share which increases every year. We are very grateful for the volunteers who steward the church on these occasions and are always happy to receive further offers of help, as well as new members for the 'Friends of St. Lawrence' so, if any of you are looking for a new interest please do not hesitate to contact any of the West Wycombe personnel who's numbers are in the front of Contact. Thank you.

Report from Cllr Mrs Jean Teesdale, Chairman of West Wycombe Library Action Group

The Library officially opened in February this year after many months of hard work and I would like to thank all those people who have helped either as members of the Committee or through donations of time or money or books. John Lewis kindly redecorated the library and supplied one of the sofas and a fridge. This will be useful when we are able to start up our planned drop in coffee shop. Bucks County Council and Wycombe District Council made financial contributions and Sir Edward and Miss Barry kindly made donations of £500, with an agreement that they would make this an annual contribution. West Wycombe Chamber Choir gave 50% of the profit from their inaugural concert and West Wycombe Women's Institute have also made donations. Many members of the community signed financial pledges. Funds were raised though a Picnic in the Park by courtesy of Sir Edward, and several dances were organised to raise funds. Plans are in hand to organise other fund raising events as a large amount of money will need to be raised every year. The important thing is to keep this building available for all members of the community.

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