

Minutes of the Monthly Parish Council Meeting held on 10th July 2007
in the recreation ground pavilion at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Dr K Beswick (Chair) Mr. M. Ricketts Mr J Fisher
Mr G Taylor Mr R Thomas Mr F Treml
Mrs D Boughton-Waite Mr S Lilly Mr C Lamont (County Cllr)
Mrs M Turner (District Cllr)

Apologies: Mr D Marsh Mr D Hayter

The meeting was attended by 2 representatives of Thames Valley Police, who were invited to address the meeting before any other discussions took place.

1. Reports from Police/County/District Councillors

PC Steve Lynch is Harwell's Beat Officer, operating from Wantage Police Station. He will be the area Beat Officer for the next 2 & a half years. Along with PCSOs (PCSO Tim Deane was also present), he will focus on promoting awareness in schools, including cycling proficiency schemes, and tackling local problems. A recurrent problem seems to be speeding; PCSOs now have a speed reading device, however, there is only 1 such machine in the Vale area. There are suggestions that PCs put towards the cost of a machine for village volunteers to operate. Drivers caught speeding would receive warning letters. Harwell does not yet have a representative on the NAG, although 2 Councillors have attended such meetings in the past. The NAG meets every 6 weeks, with the next meeting on 13th August at Milton Park. The Council agreed it would be a good idea to send a representative to these meetings. Mr Taylor asked what could be done about other problems, such as anti-social behaviour and drug-related problems. PC Lynch advised anyone with concerns to report them, but said it was not always possible to respond quickly, eg an emergency call would take priority. Dr Beswick thanked the officers for attending; they then left.

Councillor Waite then addressed the meeting.

There have been complaints about weeds from residents in Vale Housing Association properties around the village; the Association is to investigate.

Concessionary bus fare schemes will only be valid for local routes at off-peak times.

A Community Involvement Event was held on 3 July in Didcot, but was not attended by anyone from VOWHDC.

Mr Waite will be meeting regularly with Mr Mackay, one of VOWHDC's Deputy Directors, responsible for waste and leisure. 1205 tonnes of recyclable material and compost were collected in May – recycling seems to be increasing in the district, however residents are still opposing the £29 annual fee for a brown bin. Plastics are still proving difficult to recycle, mainly due to high costs involved.

Mrs Turner mentioned a Section 59 ruling which covers anti-social behaviour with vehicles – loud music played in parked cars would be covered by this ruling. Repeat offences could result in seizure of the vehicle by police.

Mr Gilbert from Planning had provided an update on Great Western Park; Section 106 agreements are still to be decided. A meeting of a delegated group comprising the Chair and Vice-Chair of Planning, and local members has been set for 26th July.

The footpath on Wantage Road is overgrown in places – Clerk to write to residents.

Mr Lamont reported that he had attended a local government association conference; items discussed included affordable housing, health and social care, and hopes for improved powers for local councils. An employee of OCC had been shortlisted in the Council Worker of the Year competition, with a design for a portable speed-reading device.

The County & District Councillors then left the meeting.

2. Minutes of the previous meetings (PC/05/07, 2 co-option meetings, PC/06/07)

Minutes of the May meeting and 2 co-option meetings were signed at this meeting as true records. Mr Ricketts wanted an amendment to the June Minutes to show dissatisfaction with the printed Audit document (item 4a). To be amended and signed at the next meeting.

3. Matters Arising from previous Minutes – a) Affordable Housing

One of the landowners of the preferred site had written to Mrs Blissett, suggesting that the land was undervalued. After discussion, Dr Beswick suggested this was still the best site for Sovereign Housing to push for.

b) Code of Conduct

Not all Councillors have looked at the new Code. Clerk to copy paragraph 12a to all Councillors.

Deferred to September meeting. ALL

c) Local Sponsorship Fund

East Hendred PC is still trying to arrange a meeting to discuss the Fund. It was agreed that all Councillors consider what Harwell would want from the Fund before meeting the other PCs. ALL

4. Planning Matters

Formal Notice of Permission has been received, in respect of;

HAR/5371/4 Erection of single storey side extension at Little Dell, Church Lane, for Mr & Mrs MacArthur.

HAR/20085-LB Proposed repairs to party wall at Thatch Cottage, Reading Road, for Mrs Lewis.

HAR/20096 Alteration & extension to existing dwelling at Chequers Cottage, Wantage Road, for Mr & Mrs Coombes.

Notice of Work to Trees has been received as follows;

GF/KAP PD/18/01/31 Fell 1 x horse chestnut at Leigh House, High Street

Notice of Receipt of Application has been received in respect of;

HAR/7924/1 Change of use from agricultural/grazing land to burial ground at Land adjoining Broad Acres and the cemetery, The Cleave, for Harwell PC.

2 new Applications have been received, as follows;

HAR/18035/1 Demolition of existing dwelling & outbuilding, erection of new dwelling & garage at Trescove, Didcot Road, for Mr & Mrs Heason.

The Council had no objections, but asked that neighbours' comments be borne in mind by planners.

HAR/16731/3 Demolition of 2 houses, squash courts & tennis courts, erection of hotel, leisure club, spa & bar (Re-submission) at Land north & south of Curie Avenue, for Four Pillars Hotels & UKAEA.

The Council objected to this application as existing sports facilities will be reduced; there is no provision for squash facilities at all. The Council also asked that 150 family membership places at the leisure club are made available to local people at a favourable rate, should the development take place.

5. Financial Matters – a) Receipts & payments cashbook for June 2007

Bank statements have only just arrived; this item was deferred to the September meeting.

b) VAT & PCs - Mr Ricketts had asked for clarification of the VAT procedure.

c) Bank problems – Alliance & Leicester have not yet added the new signatories to the bank accounts, and have now asked for replacement forms. Mr Lilly proposed that enquiries be made into changing bank accounts, preferably using a local branch. Seconded by Mr Thomas, passed unanimously.

d) Cost of Broadband – Dr Beswick, Mr Marsh and Mr Ricketts have looked into this matter, and also discussed computer security. It was explained that BT provide a good package, with back-up files included; USB keys would provide more secure data storage than floppy disks. Computer security will also be required; Mr Marsh to recommend a package. Not including the security package, changing to Broadband will cost approximately an extra £100 per annum. Mrs Boughton-Waite proposed the Council change as soon as possible to using Broadband; seconded by Mr Lilly, carried unanimously.

e) Request for funding – Oxfordshire Assoc. of the Blind – no funds are available at this time.

f) OCC grass cutting grant – a grant of £2396 will be paid at the end of the season.

6. Matters relating to Council Owned Landsa) Recommendations from the L&R Committee – i) Pitch fees, inc East Hendred Boys FC

Mr Taylor reported that East Hendred Boys FC is happy with the suggested £270 per team, to include all matches and 1 training session per team per week. A pitch to be marked out on the rugby field. Mrs Boughton-Waite proposed that the fees be set at £270 per team; seconded by Mr Treml, carried unanimously. The teams may need the pavilion, but will not use the showers. Mr Ricketts to include in the Harwell News information about the teams. MR

The L&R Committee had not completed discussions re: fees for Harwell Village FC. Mr Taylor proposed a total of £750 for Harwell Village FC's 2 teams, plus a refundable breakages deposit of £100, based on the Club's estimate of up to 30 games and 1 training session per week, on Thursdays. Showers should be hosed down after use, pavilion left tidy, no boots to be cleaned in the shower area, pavilion not to be used on Tuesdays because of Council meetings; permission should be requested for use of pavilion for cup games on Tuesdays if needed, there would be no extra charge for cup games. Mr Ricketts felt the increase was too great; Mrs Boughton-Waite proposed these fees and conditions be instigated, seconded by Mr Thomas. The matter went to a vote, with 6 members in favour and 1 against. Carried by majority vote. Mr Fisher was concerned that use of the facilities should be monitored to ensure there is no misuse, and further improved when necessary.

Mr Lilly proposed leaving the fee for the Aunt Sally pitch at £25 for the season, seconded by Mr Thomas, carried unanimously.

No payment was received last year from the Rugby Club. Dr Beswick was keen to ensure that fees for all clubs using Harwell facilities should be roughly in line. Mrs Boughton-Waite proposed an increase to £30 per game, seconded by Mr Thomas, carried unanimously. Mr Lilly suggested a fixture list should be provided by all teams.

ii) Showers - In spite of inquiries, no further quote for the electrical work could be obtained. Mr Lilly proposed that the quote for £598 + VAT be accepted, and the firm asked to do the work. Seconded by Mrs Boughton-Waite, carried unanimously.

iii) churchyard gate/bus shelter/fence on rec – Mr Lilly proposed that the L&R Committees recommendations be accepted as follows;

Accept R H Fencing's quote for £75 + VAT to replace gate post & re-hang gate.

Accept R H Fencing's quote for £466 + VAT for re-fixing the bus shelter at Rowstock.

Ask R H Fencing to provide a quote for a stile instead of a gate in the wooden Wantage Road fence.

Accept R H Fencing's quote for £345 + VAT to re-site the gate into Wantage Road and create a new gate from the interior fence so that van access is possible from Wantage Road.

Seconded by Mr Thomas, carried unanimously.

b) Allotment rent review – the Clerk explained that a rise in rent was agreed last year (PC/09/06), but was too late to be implemented until next September. A rise of £1 per annum will be imposed from September 2008.

c) Tennis/Bowls Club leases – Mr Lilly to look into this matter and negotiate with the L&R Committee. SL

d) Old Stable, Freeman Orchard – The prospective purchaser has provided a valuation of the land. Mr Lilly to organise the Council's valuation by the District Valuer. SL

e) Goundsman's position – a complaint had been received about one of the groundsmen. Dr Beswick to investigate, but the Council made it clear it is happy with the grounds staff to date.

f) Fire safety – Mr Ricketts had completed his assessment in the pavilion. Concerns raised as follows; the electric heaters need to be tested, an electric water heater in the kitchen area is not working, the Clerk's office only has 1 exit, a smoke alarm should be installed in the hallway.

7. Environment – a) traffic signs on Reading Road – no progress has been made in this matter since it was last raised. Mr Lilly suggested OCC be asked to install a larger warning sign if no funds are available for flashing signs. Mr Ricketts suggested the same for Didcot Road. Clerk to inquire.

b) Bus service review – Mr Lilly has written to OCC on behalf of the Council protesting at cuts in funding which could jeopardise bus services through the village. UKAEA's subsidy for routes 32 & 33 will remain, but new EC regulations may mean bus companies have to provide more drivers to cover rest periods. Mr Lilly to attend a meeting next week. SL

c) changes at UKAEA – Mrs Boughton-Waite was concerned that changes involving personnel at UKAEA may lead to losses in funding for decommissioning. She would like to join the Liaison Committee to help monitor the situation.

8. Any Other Business

OCC is carrying out a review of External Transport posts, and wants the Council's opinion. Mr Lilly to consider a suitable reply. SL

Didcot CAB's AGM is on 16th July. No-one from the Council is able to attend.

SODC is hosting another Community Forum Event in Didcot on 12th July. Mr Ricketts to attend on behalf of the Council. MR

A study of the provision of Traveller's sites is asking for the Council's views on such sites in the VOWHDC district. Mr Ricketts to draft a reply. MR

VOWHDC is awarding grants for countryside improvements. Dr Beswick suggested a scheme to provide a footpath along the A4185 at the end of the Holloway. Clerk to make inquiries.

Thames Valley Police Open Day is at Sulhamstead on 11th August.

A request has been received to temporarily remove a memorial bench from the cemetery for essential repairs. Council had no objection.

Dr Beswick suggested holding an Ideas meeting to discuss future plans for the village. Date to be decided.

Mr Ricketts reported the holes on the recreation ground have not been filled in, and pieces of metal have been left on the bank. He also suggested Nightingales be asked to remove the works traffic signs now that the new offices have been completed at Princes Manor Farm, and that OCC be asked to

remove the crossing patrol sign near the pedestrian crossing on the High Street. One of the bus shelters at Rowstock has been damaged; Clerk has already spoken to the groundsmen about this matter.

Mr Ricketts has completed the recording of 85 years of PC Minutes onto discs, which were given to the Clerk for storage. Mr Ricketts suggested that older Minute books be lodged at Berkshire Records Office.

Mr Thomas reported the hedge from the rear of Tyrells Close has still not been cut back. Clerk to send reminder.

Mr Fisher suggested a meeting to involve the youth in the village, to sound out their ideas for the future. Council agreed this would be a good start to involving young people. Mr Fisher said it may be possible to hold a musical concert on the recreation ground later in the year. An article to be put in the Harwell News.

Mr Treml has put forward some Health & Safety concerns for councillors to consider. To be discussed at next meeting.

ALL

The meeting ended at 10.00pm.