

Minutes of the Monthly Parish Council Meeting held on 18th March 2008
in the recreation ground pavilion at 8.30 p.m.

Present: Mr S Lilly (Vice Chair) Mr. M. Ricketts Mr J Fisher
Mr G Taylor Mr R Thomas Mr D Hayter
Mr D Marsh Mrs D Boughton-Waite Mrs M Turner (District Cllr)
Mr R Waite (District Cllr)

Apologies: Mr F Trembl Mr C Lamont (County Cllr)

2 members of the public.

Mr Lilly took the Chair in the absence of a Chairman.

The first hour of this meeting (from 7.30 to 8.30) was closed to the public, under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 on the grounds that the prejudicial matters for discussion were not in the public interest, as they related to the Council Chairman, who had tendered his resignation. Minutes from that meeting were recorded separately.

1. Minutes of the previous meeting (PC/02/08)

The Minutes from the February meeting were amended where necessary, and signed as a true record. Mr Taylor left the meeting at 8.40pm.

Mr Lilly invited Dr Hughes to speak at this point, as a representative of Keep Harwell Rural.

Dr Hughes referred to the recent SODC Consultation on Greenspaces; this document outlines a plan for a country park near Didcot. Both KHR & HPC had responded to this document, but there are still concerns, eg that funding issues could mean that spending on infrastructure is given lower priority, and that the proposed site of the country park could overlap areas earmarked by SODC for housing, so that housing development could be pushed elsewhere (eg into Harwell).

After discussion, it was agreed that HPC would contact the press with a view to ensuring that press coverage of this issue is as full as possible. Mr Hayter volunteered to be the spokesperson, and to keep the Council and KHR advised of progress. Dr Hughes left at 8.55 pm.

Mr Taylor returned to the meeting at 9.00 pm.

Mr Pickles had asked to address the Council on the subjects of the allotments and road safety; Mr Lilly invited him to speak at this point.

Mr Pickles was concerned that if the burning area is removed from the allotments site it would discourage residents from taking on plots which required a lot of work, as some items, such as perennial weeds, cannot be composted. There are also concerns that compost heaps without wire mesh can encourage rats. Mr Ricketts explained that some tenants have added compostable material to the burning area in the past. Mr Fisher mentioned that the Council is keen to see a Tenant's Group set up so that concerns could be collated and brought to the Council's attention, but that feedback so far from tenants on that idea had been disappointing. Mr Pickles agreed to ask tenants again. He was also concerned about speeding traffic in Grove Road, and poor visibility at the corner of Grove Road/High Street. Mr Fisher explained that the Council is still trying to improve road safety throughout the village, but that OCC's guidelines make it a slow process. The Clerk had already passed Mr Pickles' concerns to OCC. PCSOs to be asked to monitor traffic speeds in Grove Road. **ACTN: C**

Mr Pickles left at 9.10pm.

2. Matters Arising – a) Affordable Housing – it had not been possible to arrange a meeting with Ms Kennedy of ORCC. She is to be asked to the April meeting.

b) Consultation replies/ meetings attended – Mr Ricketts had prepared a response to the SODC Greenspaces Consultation; Clerk to send copies to all Councillors.

Minutes of the meeting re: Steventon reservoir have been received; Clerk to send copies to all Councillors.

No-one had been able to attend that meeting, or the last Didcot Forum.

3. District Councillors

Mrs Turner and Mr Waite had provided a list of businesses/organisations which had attended the Flood Protection Products Fair on 7th February.

ORCC had prepared a flyer re: affordable housing; it may be possible to include some of the information in Harwell News.

VWHDC has raised its Council Tax rate by 4.99%. Grants to parish councils and community organisations are to be reduced, but HPC should still receive a small cleansing grant in the next financial year. Charges for green bins are to be increased to £33 per annum; green waste will be composted. Residents are encouraged to use the Harwell post office at Curie Avenue in the light of closure threats in the area.

Mr Hayter reported that green box collection lorries are still causing damage to verges; to be reported to Mr Mackay. Complaints received in the office from other residents indicated problems such as black sacks being left out for long periods, and rubbish left by green box collectors. These have already been reported, and Environmental Wardens are to investigate.

4. Planning Matters

Formal Notice of Permission has been received in respect of;

HAR/9479/6 Erection of single storey ground floor extension to rear at Harrow House, Burr Street, for Dr Moreton.

HAR/2737/12 Erection of single storey timber framed orangery at Almshouse Farm, High Street, for Ms Rabinovich
& HAR/2737/13-LB

HAR/19966/1 Demolition of shed, erection of 2 detached dwellings with garages, improvements to existing access & provision of additional parking spaces for Blenheim Terrace & Burr Street at Land rear of Blenheim Terrace, Burr Street, for Bellwood Homes.

2 new Applications have been received as follows;

HAR/20463 Addition of dormer window & roof windows to garage roof, addition of bulls eye window to flank of house, erection of single storey bay window to rear, new porch canopy to front at Rose Cottage, Gaveston Road, for Mr Purrott & Ms Mathews.

HAR/6046/2 Removal of existing extension & building to rear & garage. Erection of single storey extension to rear with loft conversion & new garage to front at Eunice, Didcot Road, for Mr Mitchell.

The Council asked that neighbours' comments are borne in mind by Planners.

VWHDC has given permission for the following Work to Trees;

Fell & remove 1 Horse Chestnut & 1 Sycamore at Wellshead House, for Mr & Mrs Allen.

OCC has written to confirm it does not own the Bargain Stone. Clerk to inform English Heritage etc that the Council has assumed responsibility for the stone for the benefit of the parish. **ACTION:C**

Mr Lilly will attend a briefing held by OCC re: Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement on 10th April. **ACTION:SL**

5. Financial Matters – a) Receipts & payments cashbook for Jan/Feb 2008 - The cashbooks were signed as a true record. Mr Lilly had checked petty cash and done bank reconciliation.

b) Request for funding WRVS/Root & Branch – no money is available at this time.

c) New van – Mr Taylor had looked at several vans with the groundsmen and conferred with other councillors; the best model available is a 2005 Suzuki pick-up, a later model of the existing Bedford Rascal, with a slightly larger engine, cost around £4500, plus road tax and ply-fitting (around £375 total). £300 will be taken off the cost as part exchange for the old vehicle. In view of current Health & Safety priorities, the Council agreed that the new van should be purchased as soon as possible, instead of waiting for the new precept, meaning that reserves of around £3000 will have to be used. Clerk had obtained a data check which showed nothing untoward. Mr Taylor proposed that the van be purchased without delay, seconded by Mr Thomas, carried unanimously.

d) Appointment of Internal Auditor – Mrs Roberts was appointed to this position.

e) Grant application – Clerk had applied for sports equipment to the value of £700 from npower (Didcot Power Station) since the last meeting; there was very short notice and therefore no time to discuss this at the present meeting before submitting the application, however, all Councillors had been informed before the application was sent.

6. Matters relating to Council Owned Lands

a) Employment contracts – employment contracts for the grounds staff were signed. Mr Ricketts asked that if they are made public, personal details are omitted. Mr Lilly wished to record thanks to Dr Beswick for his help in producing the documents.

b) Allotments – clearance of burning area – this item was discussed with Mr Pickles earlier, but Councillors felt that tenants had a responsibility to dispose of their own green waste rather than rely on the Council to dispose of it. Mr Lilly to ask whether VWHDC's tipping charges could be waived if the PC continues to dispose of such waste at recycling points. **ACTION: SL**

c) Tennis/Bowls Clubs -lease – Mr Lilly has now met representatives of both clubs, and both have received a copy of the draft lease. Both Clubs are happy to agree to a similar lease; terms to be discussed by L&R Committee, Mr Lilly to provide assistance. **ACTION: SL, L&R**

d) Dilapidated stable – an independent valuation has been carried out by Carter Jonas; the stable/land is valued at £3250. Mr Lilly to contact the purchaser again to finalise the sale agreement. Notice of intended sale to be placed in press. **ACTION: SL,C**

e) Rec - matches – OPFA has confirmed that the referee has final say where inclement weather/poor ground conditions may render it necessary to call off sports matches.

Bollards – various quotes have been obtained; referred to Lands Committee. **ACTION:L&R**

Van access- various quotes have been obtained; referred to Lands Committee. **ACTION:L&R**

Wallingford Dog Club – a draft agreement to send to the Club was agreed.

Feast Committee – the Council granted permission for the Feast Committee to use the recreation ground for Harwell Feast on 26th May, and for the Clerk's office to be used by the Treasurer.
Gate spring – Mr Hayter and the groundsmen have now fitted the new spring.

f) New pavilion report– referred to Lands Committee. Slade Son & Taylor had written to inform the Council of several Title Documents held at their office; Council confirmed the documents should be kept in the solicitors' safe. **ACTION:L&R**

g) Health & Safety queries – Council agreed to ask for more guidance on H&S issues, starting with VWHDC. Thames Water had replied that it does not test for Legionnaire's Disease. Risk Assessment to be carried out shortly.

h) Cemetery – trees – nothing has been received so far from VWHDC.

Mower – Mrs Boughton-Waite proposed that a new Hayter recycler mower be purchased for the cemetery, from West Garden Machinery at a cost of approximately £609. Other quotes were for a Toro deck mower, £679 from West Garden Machinery, and verbal quotes from B&Q/ Homebase of around £500 for a smaller mower; having spoken to the groundsmen, these would not be powerful enough for the cemetery. Proposal seconded by Mr Thomas and carried unanimously.

Memorials – referred to Lands Committee.

i) Lands policies / Council responsibilities – referred to Lands Committee.

7. Environment – a) Footpaths – Mr Ricketts reported that he had met OCC Rights of Way Officer Mr Sylvester to discuss the possible closure of Footpath 6, as it is obsolete and dangerous in places. The cost of closure could be in excess of £3000, and permission would be needed from all landowners either side of the path. As landowners are responsible for dangerous parts of the footpath, Council agreed to try and make them aware of the problem, possibly by including a notice in Harwell News. The Council would support an application for closure of the path, but at this stage cannot justify the financial outlay to apply for a closure on its own.

b) APM date – Clerk to ask whether Freeman Hall is available on 22nd May. It was felt that Friday 23rd May was unsuitable as it is the start of a Bank Holiday weekend. Dr Delfosse to be asked to the APM to give a short update on the new pavilion project.

c) VWHDC – Youth in the Vale nominations – to be placed on the notice board.

d) ORCC primary schools review – ORCC has written to remind parish councils of the OCC review of primary schools. Some highly rated schools may still be under threat of closure.

8. Any Other Business

Harwell Royal British Legion has applied for short road closures on 27th July, to hold 2 parades to celebrate Anniversaries. HPC may be able to help with signs.

Didcot CAB has set up an information point at Harwell School; PC details to be supplied.

Representatives are wanted for the VWHDC Standards Committee.

The dog bin in The Holloway has been replaced.

Mr Ricketts reported that the road signs near the recreation ground in Wantage Road are obscured.

The meeting ended at 10.30 pm.