

HARWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 8.00 p.m. in Freeman Hall on Thursday 29th May 2008

Councillors: Mr D Marsh (Chair) Mr. S. Lilly (Vice-Chair) Mr F Trembl
 Mr G Taylor Mr. J. Fisher Mr. D. Hayter
 Mr. R. Thomas
 Apologies: Mrs D. Boughton-Waite

Approximately 25 members of the public.

1. Chairman's Report/Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes from last year's meeting were on display in the Hall; they were signed as a true record by Mr Marsh. This year's Minutes will be made available shortly with interim approval. Mr Marsh began with thanks to parish council staff and councillors, district and county councillors for their efforts during the past year, as well as thanks to Dr Beswick who had resigned as Chair of the Council earlier in the year. Thanks were also expressed to Harwell organisations, which all make a contribution to the village, in particular the Garden Club for its work on the war memorial garden, and the new pavilion committee which has been working to draw up plans for a new building.

Some of the projects completed this year included the purchase of a new van for grounds staff, refurbishment of the pavilion showers, and improvements to the adventure play area. The Council has also continued to support a project for a development of affordable housing in the village; the current site under consideration is off Orchard Way. There are some concerns from residents which are being considered by the Council.

Mr Marsh thanked Mr Lilly for his continuing efforts to keep bus services running through the village; new timetables have been published which show improved services, and a new service has been introduced to Oxford.

The expansion of Didcot continues to be a concern, but no major developments have taken place in the last 12 months except the Inspector's Report which recommended even more housing in the area.

Mr Marsh thanked the former editor of Harwell News (Mr Levey) for his work on the newsletter, and thanked Mr Ricketts for his efforts as new editor. Mr Ricketts has also been involved in scanning archive material so that it is available electronically; many items, including the book "Harwell – Village for 1000 years" are now on the Council's website. Mr Marsh has looked after the website since it was first set up 3 years ago, and usage has increased steadily.

2. Affordable Housing

Mr Marsh welcomed and introduced Ms Anna Kennedy, Rural Housing Enabler at ORCC, Ms H Novelle, Principle Housing Enabling Officer at VWHDC, and Mr S Methven from Sovereign Housing. Mr Methven had put up draft plans for the Orchard Way site for villagers to inspect. Plans show 11 units of mixed types, including 1 bungalow, with 4 being shared ownership.

After a short suspension while plans were inspected, Mr Marsh invited questions from residents. One concern was that there are too few properties available for shared ownership, with most of the properties being solely for rent. Ms Kennedy suggested sending a second Housing Needs survey so that current needs can be re-assessed.

Other concerns included lack of parking space, builders' traffic along Orchard Way, and lack of control over who would be placed in the homes, (ultimately that decision would be taken by VWHDC). Mr Methven explained that no planning approval would be sought until the village is happy with the proposed development.

Following thanks from Mr Marsh, the affordable housing representatives left at 8.30pm.

3. Waste

Mr Marsh welcomed Mr D Wilson (Waste Services, VWHDC), Mr P Legge (Environmental Health, VWHDC), and Mr T Birch (Veolia).

Harwell is being studied by VWHDC as a model for waste being produced in the area; following on from the parish council meeting in January, Mr Wilson reported that green box collection figures were rising (4 tonnes per day in November 2007, though this figure includes Sutton Courtenay). Comparable landfill figures show there is more recycling rather than just more waste being produced. Uptake of brown bins is increasing. 2 suggested projects include a joint waste contract with SODC, which could ensure savings and help in meeting waste industry targets, and an OCC food waste processing plant to divert food from landfill. Progress reports will be sent to the parish council.

There had been several complaints about litter left behind by collection crews, locations at which bins and boxes were left after collection, and damage to verges by lorries. Mr Birch explained that crews are being trained and monitored to try to improve/avoid such incidents.

Mr Legge reported that 2 environmental wardens have been employed, to help tackle such issues as dog fouling and fly tipping. Some progress had been made concerning fly-tipping off Orchard Way. The waste incinerator being considered for Sutton Courtenay is part of a 25 year strategy to reduce landfill; OCC will have more details.

Following thanks from Mr Marsh, the 3 gentlemen left at 9.00pm.

4. Harwell School – cycle paths project

Mr Sutherland, teacher of Year 6 at Harwell Primary School, explained that Year 6 children have been putting together a project to improve cycling facilities in the area, with emphasis on safe cycling to and from Didcot and Chilton. The children have the support of several local organisations, and have considered several different ways to improve existing cycling facilities. Children who had been hoping to help with the presentation were on holiday, but a survey has been drawn up and will appear in the next Harwell News.

Mr Marsh thanked Mr Sutherland for coming; he left at 9.15pm.

5. New pavilion project

Mr J Govans gave a short presentation on the project. A consortium has been formed of the parish council, British Legion Club and various sports clubs, called “Harwell 2008”. Initial plans drawn up for a new building include an area for a Post Office, a new parish council office, and improved facilities for sports clubs and the British Legion. A Collaboration Agreement has been drawn up which ties in the consortium members up to the planning application stage, after which a new agreement will be required. A rough estimate of the cost of the building is £800,000. Ongoing running and maintenance costs would be arranged by the consortium after planning consent has been received.

Mr Marsh thanked Mr Govans for the presentation.

6. Old stable building

Formal notice that a possible sale of the old stable building in Freeman Orchard is pending has been given; details will shortly appear in Harwell News and Didcot Herald.

7. Any Other Business

There was one query concerning speed cameras on High Street. Mr Marsh explained that the Council has tried repeatedly to improve road safety throughout the village, but that OCC has its own guidelines. This matter is ongoing, with the Council having contributed to the use of a mobile speed camera for regular use in the village.

The meeting closed at 9.50pm.

