

HARWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.30 p.m. in Harwell Village Hall on 19th May 2005

Councillors: Mrs J. P. Blissett (Chair) Mr. S. Lilly (Vice-Chair) Mrs P. Staples
Mrs A. Fisher Mr. L. F. J. Mulford Mr. D. Hayter
Mr. R. Thomas Mr. M. Sedwards Mrs M. Turner Mr. A. Jenkins
Apologies: Mrs D. Boughton-Waite

1. Chairman's Report

Mrs Blissett explained that it had been a difficult year for the Council. Administrative problems culminated in December 2004 with the dismissal of the Clerk. Since December the Council, together with its previous Clerk, have worked to restore stability.

Mrs Blissett extended the Council's thanks to the following:

- a) Keep Harwell Rural, for all the work by its members over the last year; particularly for representing the Council at the Local Inquiry
- b) UKAEA for a very generous donation of £1,000 towards upgrading play equipment
- c) The Gardeners Club for work on the memorial garden
- d) Mr. & Mrs D. Levey for all their work with the Harwell News
- e) Those involved with the recent footpath walk

Mrs Blissett listed ongoing projects as follows:

- a) Upgrading the play area - the Council will continue its search for grants towards this project. A resident commented that equipment for 2-3 year olds would be most useful.
- b) Fencing the extension to the cemetery
- c) Creating an official website
- d) Search for affordable housing – 2 sites have been excluded, a 3rd site is being researched. Residents asked various questions regarding this site, but it is too early in the negotiations to release details. It was confirmed that the Orchard Way site, although not one of those excluded, is not a priority at the present time.
- e) Council surgeries will start in June, where residents may attend and air their concerns. These will be run for a trial period of 6 months.

2. Presentation by the VWHDC Environmental Warden

Mr. D. Coates explained that he covers a large area, dealing with car removal, fly tipping, fly posting, graffiti, noise nuisance and irresponsible pet behaviour. The last of these, relating particularly to dog fouling, is the most time consuming; it is very difficult to prove, has a maximum fine of £1,000 and requires input by residents to catch offenders. Pest control concerns, relating to rats, were raised by residents; this is not within the remit of the Environmental Warden but Mr. Coates agreed to pass on these concerns to the pest control department. Light pollution from Milton Football Ground was also mentioned.

3. Presentation by VWHDC Crime and Disorder Partnership representative

Ms. E. Hayden reported on the role of the Partnership, and in particular the area in which she specialises, drugs and alcohol. A recent survey of Oxfordshire residents ranked drugs as only 10th in its priority list of concerns. Another survey placed nearly 50% of class A drug users in Oxford city, with only 8% in the Vale; these figures correlate with police arrests in Oxfordshire.

About 40% of all crime and hospital entry can be attributed, directly or indirectly to alcohol, particularly domestic violence and assault. The Partnership is approaching schools and arranging test purchasing to stop under age purchases of alcohol. There is also a lobby to introduce age cards for 16-19 year olds.

There are projects in Didcot (Opening Doors) and Abingdon (Resource Centre) offering help to drug and alcohol users. Ms. Hayden explained that, as with the Environmental Department, the Partnership has a large area to cover. Generally problem areas are brought to the attention of the Partnership by the public or from study of monthly crime statistics.
4. Harwell Bypass

Dr. A. Hughes gave an outline of current concerns regarding traffic levels; in the next 10 years it is anticipated that traffic through the village will double. It will be necessary to lobby for a bypass, if it is what residents want; the Council needs to establish which option best meets residents needs. Mr. N. Staples ran through the various bypass options and asked attendees to complete a survey form. The A34 is reaching saturation; an additional slip road would solve the local traffic problem but the Highways Authority will not agree to any measures encouraging further traffic onto the A34.

There will be a traffic survey this summer to try to establish the effect of a bypass on our local shops. Volunteers were asked to contact Mrs Staples.

Destination of traffic is important. Developers carried out such a survey but will not release this information. OCC will be carrying out its own traffic model and details should be available next year.
5. Bus routes

In past years Harwell had a good bus service. With the need to remain cost effective, surveys were carried out by the bus companies and certain routes through Harwell were not considered viable; one service was cut and another reduced to run every hour. Mr. Lilly is persisting with his fight on behalf of the Council to improve our services. It was stressed that, if residents do not use the buses, then they will most certainly lose services. Timetables are to be provided at the Post Office for distribution and it was also suggested that timetables are printed in the Harwell News from time to time.
6. Any other business
 - a) A complaint was made regarding the poor state of the parcel of land next to the allotments. The Council is considering a change of use to return this parcel of land to allotments.
 - b) A resident suggested replacement of the 'No dog' sign on the play area gate.

The meeting, attended by approximately 60 parishioners, ended at 9.30 p.m.

