

HARWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held in the village hall, Harwell, on Friday 15th April 2011 at 8.00 pm

Present: Mr D Marsh (Chairman, Harwell Parish Council), Mrs K Beswick OBE, Mr R Thomas, Mr G Taylor, Mr D Hayter, Mr J Fisher, Ms K Hawthorne, Mrs D Boughton-Waite, Mr M Ricketts (all parish councillors), Mrs M Turner (District councillor), Mr S Lilly (County councillor), approx. 40 members of the public.

Mr Marsh opened the meeting by welcoming residents. RPS & Taylor Wimpey had hoped to send a representative to give information about Great Western Park, but neither company had been able to send anyone. It is hoped that a separate meeting can be arranged for later in the year, so that they can still address residents.

Mr Marsh thanked those parish councillors who are standing down after the coming elections for their service to the parish.

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

The draft minutes have been available all year on the website. Mr Marsh signed the Minutes as a true record.

Item 5 on the agenda was discussed at this point.

Discussion re: adventure play area

Several residents had expressed concerns in the year at the state of the play area; 2 councillors had tried to raise interest in a working party to discuss possible improvements, and the council had obtained quotes for repairs, but had not proceeded with them as it was felt it may be best to wait for plans from the Sports Development Project, which is discussing ideas for the recreation ground (including a new pavilion building). Young people in the village had presented a petition to the council outlining their concerns about the play area, and some of them addressed the meeting with tentative ideas; the Our Street Corner youth project would assist with fundraising events. The area could be split into 2 zones for younger and older children, with a security fence, and a graffiti wall could be installed – possible costs for the project are around £10,000, although this is a low figure and may just cover replacement of existing equipment. Mr Lilly said he would be available to help with possible funding via OCC. Some residents admired the idea but doubted whether vandalism could be avoided even with security cameras.

Volunteers working with Our Street Corner were thanked for their efforts during the year.

2. Presentation on facilities at Great Western Park – postponed.

3. Chairman's Report

Mr Marsh reported on parish council matters during the year, such as finances, including the possibility of releasing funds from Reserves in the future towards play area refurbishment, staff, including thanks for their work during the year, thanks to Mr Pike for his long service until his recent retirement, and anticipating the arrival of a new member of the grounds staff, thanks to councillors and district & county councillors for their

efforts, thanks to the Youth Project for cleaning the war memorial, to the Garden Club for maintaining the war memorial garden, to the church for allowing Little Pippins Pre-School to use the church hall while its new building is under construction, to the Tennis Club for raising funds for resurfacing of the courts, to Keep Harwell Rural for advice on commenting on development plans for Didcot, to allotment tenants for forming a new committee, to Mr Ricketts for producing Harwell News, and to all residents who help with its distribution, including Mrs Staples who organises deliveries. Mr Marsh reported that usage of the council website (run by Mr Marsh voluntarily) has increased by around 20%, that recycling figures are up since the new waste collection had started, and that dog waste is still a problem, although responsible dog walkers were commended for picking up mess. Little Pippins was congratulated on the fact that its new building was almost ready. Ongoing planning matters included the possibility that 2300 more houses could still be built in Harwell parish beyond Great Western Park, with another 400 proposed for North Drive. There are still no boundary changes planned, which is likely to lead to administration problems for the facilities due to be built in Great Western Park, as sports facilities will straddle the boundary between Harwell and Didcot

4. Sports Development/ village hall projects

Mr Marsh explained that the Village Hall Management Committee had been considering options for the future of the hall; 3 basic options have been identified, namely stay at the hall and refurbish, stay at the hall and extend, or move to a new location on the recreation ground, possibly creating a new community facility jointly with the Sports Development Project. Trustees are due to make a final decision in May. The Sports Development Project is on hold until their decision is reached.

Information and a survey for residents had been circulated in Harwell News, and working groups had been set up to discuss all options. Start-up costs for either project would be required to cover legal expenses etc. Residents had several concerns, including the possibility that forthcoming sports facilities in Harwell within Great Western Park may affect any plans for sports development in the village, cost of moving versus staying put, feeling that insufficient canvassing had been done to ascertain residents' opinions, and suggesting that as the Village Hall Committee is not an elected body, it cannot therefore make such major decisions.

5. Adventure play area – discussed earlier.

6. Election candidates' forum – not required as no parish election is forthcoming (insufficient candidates).

7. Any Other Business

Mrs Turner expressed thanks to the council for its support for District and County councils and work on behalf of residents during the year.

Following thanks from Mr Marsh to all those attending, the meeting closed at 9.50 pm.