

PARISH OF RADNAGE

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 14TH MAY 2010 IN RADNAGE VILLAGE HALL AT 8 PM

Present: Councillors: Ms E Fynn, Ms C Nellis, Mr L Perring, Mr W Pilbeam, Mr R Pitcher and Parish Clerk: Mrs G MacKenzie.

Also present: Cllr C Watson and 11 members of the public.

Apologies for non attendance had been received from Cllr M Blakstad, Cllr A Gardner and Cllr F Downs.

1. Welcome and Chairman's report.

Cllr Fynn welcomed everyone present and explained that she would be chairing the meeting in the absence of Cllr Blakstad who was away from home on business. Cllr Fynn introduced the members of the Parish Council, the Clerk, Cllr Chris Watson (WDC) and Mr Mike Chadwick (Stokenchurch and Radnage Community Action Forum) to all in attendance. She then read the report received from Cllr Blakstad (copy attached to these minutes).

2. Presentation of the Financial Statement.

The Clerk explained that following a 'high spend year' in 2008/2009, with an overall deficit of £6,354.97 being reported, the Council had designed a budget for 2009/10 to produce an overall surplus of £1,740 in order to strengthen the balance sheet. This had resulted in the finalised accounts showing an actual surplus of over £2,000 including a number of 'windfalls' during the period involved: a donation of £664.13 for the Playground Fund from the 'old' Youth Club, the donation of £540 from John Tribe on relinquishing his allotment land, also for the Playground Fund, and the receipt of £1,060 from the District Councillors' Ward Allocation.

The Village Hall had enjoyed mixed fortunes. The booking fees had unfortunately fallen back to below £7,000, some £500 below expectations, although benefitted from the District Councillors' Award, which has paid for some of the replacement windows; and the ongoing involvement of the Fundraising team. Due to these factors the Village Hall budget was underspent. Further improvements to the Village Hall, following the building of the patio have included the new kitchen, a project that would not have been possible without the efforts of the fundraising team. The 2009/10 budget allowed for transfers of £3,000 into the Village Hall Fund and a further £500 into the Playground Fund. Allowing for the increases in the Hall Fund (+£6,500) and the Playground Fund (+£1,704.13), this means that the General Reserves(which are in essence held as the deposit account) have increased by around £2,000. The Council's overall objective was therefore achieved.

The Clerk advised that she had appointed in January as the new Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer and asked that a record of thanks be given to Ian Blaylock for his patient and kind assistance in helping her to prepare the accounts for this year.

3. Individual reports from Parish Councillors.

a. Village Hall.

Cllr Fynn reported on the Village Hall, (*this being a précis of her report – a full copy of which is available on request to the Parish Clerk*). Cllr Fynn advised that the Village Hall is the biggest asset managed by the parish council. A great deal of time, energy and money is spent both by councillors and by volunteers on keeping the hall in reasonable repair and carrying out improvements as and when money is available.

For much of the year the hall has been used every day of the week. Regular hall hires include karate, fitness training, pilates, Women's Institute, mothers and toddlers, the winter lunch and friendship clubs, and of course parish council meetings. In 2009/10 the hall was also hired for

weddings, christening and birthday parties, fundraising events, BBQs and pig roasts, a carol service, a Christmas Fayre, and two company conferences.

During the past twelve months much work has been done, despite a reduced budget. The parish council prioritised its wish list and chose those projects which would protect the fabric of the building, keep the hall open and safe for hiring, reduce future running costs where we reasonably can, and make the hall more attractive to potential hirers. Cllr Fynn advised of the rolling maintenance programme had been started in replacing the windows in the hall and of the new kitchen installation that had been made possible due to the energy and major fundraising efforts led by Kay and Ian Brown. Future hall projects are included in the five-year strategic plan: replacing the remaining old windows and doors; soffits and guttering at the back of the building; redecorating both halls; a new bar where the old kitchen is now; an enclosed storage area where the bar is now; curtains and blinds for the windows; a secondary heating system; resurfacing the car park; and installing an audio-visual system.

Cllr Fynn thanked the volunteers and the fundraising team for all their support and contributions towards the Village Hall improvements saying that it was impossible for her to say how much we appreciate their help, advice and sheer hard work. Particular thanks go to Ray Barratt, Rob Blois, Lew Perring and Simon Watts for their work on the new kitchen and a very special thank to Kay and Ian Brown for researching and applying for grant and organising fund raising events to make the work that has been done possible!

b. Open Spaces.

Cllr Pitcher reported that the Open Spaces around the village were managed jointly between himself and Cllr's Perring and Pilbeam – a team effort that appeared to work well. Cllr Pitcher advised that the grass cutting contractor had been retained for a further year and that he had received compliments about the standard and periodicity of the cutting now taking place. He reported that following considerable interest, most of the allotment plots were now taken with 21 tenants in place over the 4 separate sites. There was no waiting list at present. Grazing licences on 3 allotment fields were in place. He advised that no further action had been taken to improve the village ponds but this subject was still an ongoing initiative that would continue to be raised.

Cllr Pilbeam reported that the burial ground was continually being monitored and was being mowed successfully. He reminded everyone that the War Memorial was the responsibility of the Parish Council and not the Royal British Legion and that a new front wall had been installed and that the gates and rear hedging had been improved. He was liaising with Mr Ian Blaylock on producing a map of the common and charity land within the village which it was hoped would be available for display later this coming year. Cllr Pilbeam advised that he had attended meetings of the South West Chilterns and Marlow Local Area Forum on behalf of the Parish Council – this Forum being a voice between BCC and the Parish. They had funding opportunities available on occasion so attendance at these meetings was a vital link for the community. He added that he had a personal hope that it might be possible to reinstate some of the village ponds in the future.

Cllr Perring continued the Open Spaces report advising that he had attended a meeting about the new town centre and proposed traffic routes in High Wycombe. He had attended a planning workshop which had been very informative and interesting. He advised that following the discovery of some asbestos on a site within the village, he had been instrumental in managing the disposal of the asbestos which had proved a straightforward process. He reported that he continued to regularly inspect and sweep the bus shelters and that the waste bins had been moved to more effective locations. The notice board opposite the school had been resited and a new notice board was going to be made and placed on the straight part of the end of Green End

Road replacing the one on the bend at the top of Hatch Lane. In addition, Cllr Perring advised that he carried out minor electrical repairs and other small DIY jobs in and around the Village Hall. Together with Cllr Pitcher he had chopped and removed a fallen tree by the school saving any expense to the Parish Council. He had also got agreement from the Parish Council to return to calling the allotments off Green Lane, 'City Allotments' – their original title.

c. Playground.

Cllr Nellis reported that regular checks on the Children's playarea continued to be made and that minor repairs were carried out at little or no expense. The annual ROSPA inspection was carried out and following some recommendations in their report, the height of the hedge alongside the road was reduced. New dog signs prohibiting them in the children's playground had been erected and a new barrier had been installed in the gap in the hedge onto Common Road. Mrs Zoe Smith had agreed to chair the newly formed Playground Action Group in an attempt to begin fundraising and a replacement programme for playground equipment.

4. Open Forum and reports from other bodies.

a. Stokenchurch and Radnage Community Action Forum (SRCAF)

Mike Chadwick reported that the household questionnaire sent out had proved to be a very useful survey and gave a lot of valuable feedback on a variety of local issues. He had gained useful knowledge on how the levels of Council worked which enables him to offering input during his frequent attendance at Parish Council meetings. He acknowledged that the survey involving public transport in rural areas had not particularly benefitted Radnage residents with only a limited service from the Village, although links into nearby Stokenchurch had improved. He reported that the traffic speed survey had been useful and recommended Parish Council representation at future meetings of the Neighbourhood Action Group as these meetings were led by Thames Valley Police and might therefore give an opportunity to raise issues concerning speed and other related topics in the future.

b. District Councillor Report.

Cllr Chris Watson began his report by thanking Mike Chadwick and his colleague Mr D Cripps for their work as part of the SRCAF. He followed this by congratulating the current Parish Council and all the volunteers for the work they have done within the parish. He said that it was good to see the Village Hall improvements taking shape and thanked the efforts of the fundraisers. Cllr Watson advised that following the recent General Election, MP David Liddington had returned and was to become Minister for Europe although he was sure this would not affect his constituency work.

He reported that WDC are concerned with expenditure and are reducing overheads by cutting staff at senior and middle management levels, mostly being achieved through natural moves. They continue to maintain services and are keeping Council Tax in line with inflation. He said that it was good to see the local Precept being used wisely.

The new stadium location and plan is still a couple of years away and may or may not be in Booker and a planning gain could mean that the proposal would be self-financing. The new ski centre has been approved at Abbey Barn and the traffic plan is to send traffic around the town centre, doing without access via Abbey Way. The new Railway station plans have been approved which will result in new facilities and provide a hub for transport services in the town. The Handy Cross commercial centre is due for improvement work, including plans for a new swimming pool facility. The Swan Theatre is due for major refurbishment, due to be started any day now.

c. Open Forum.

Ian Brown offered his general observation that the Parish Council was working well, aided by huge contributions from volunteers. He expressed his gratitude to Cllr Fynn for regularly emptying the

dog waste bins – not the most pleasant of jobs! Ian Blaylock offered his thoughts that the present Council is bringing an element of stability to the Parish Council affairs. He then went on to say that the traffic monitoring scheme had cost the Parish Council £300 and had showed widespread abuse of speed limits within the village with little or no improvement over the past 2 years. Cllr Perring advised that our most recent contact with Thames Valley Police through PCSO Ling had resulted in us providing a copy of the speed data for their attention and that random speed checks had been carried out in the local area by the Police over recent months in an attempt to reduce offenders. This was mentioned at the recent Crime Prevention meeting that was held in the village school. Ian Blaylock suggested that a Community Speed Watch kit be purchased and Cllr Fynn agreed to include this item on the agenda of the next Parish Council meeting. Mike Chadwick commented that the Neighbourhood Action Group, mentioned in his report, was an ideal forum to follow up the matter of speeding problems.

It was asked why the last known public telephone had been removed from the village. Ian Blaylock recalled that a letter had been sent to homes some considerable time ago advising that BT would remove this phone through lack of income. As it is believed that there was no real objection raised at the time, BT had gone ahead with their plan to remove the telephone.

The recent Crime Prevention Meeting held by Thames Valley Police had not been widely published throughout the village although the Parish Clerk had attended in the hope of gaining useful information for members of the village. The Clerk advised that she had been promised a small stock of publications and leaflets for further dissemination but this had not yet been delivered. It was recognised that the Neighbourhood Watch system seemed to have lost its momentum – again the Neighbourhood Action Group might be a useful tool for making these thoughts known.

Mrs Z Smith commented that she thought the Parish Council was doing a good job and wished to add her personal thanks to Cllr's Pilbeam, Pitcher and Perring for their voluntary contribution to various jobs around the village.

The subject of Wards Pond was raised, seeking an update on the situation regarding the Pond. Cllr Fynn advised that Bucks CC have completed a full survey of the drainage system at Wards Pond and have agreed to accept responsibility for their maintenance after some minor maintenance has been carried out to one of the catchpits. It has also been arranged for a one-off pond clearance of Wards Pond to be carried out by Bucks CC thereafter it becomes the responsibility of the Parish Council.

Comments on the lack of public members attending this meeting were aired, some suggestions being that this must indicate that all is well in the parish – the opposite seemingly being the case when attendance is high! It was suggested that attendance at this meeting should be encouraged, and Ian Brown offered his help with a mail drop if this would be considered useful for the future.

There was a request for a disabled persons parking bay at the Village Hall. Cllr Perring agreed to look into this. The Village Hall car park is recognised as not being very easy to walk on, particularly in the dark. Assurance was given that the resurfacing of the car park was on the Parish Council radar for when money is available.

Minutes of this meeting will be considered for approval at the next meeting of the Parish Council. The meeting concluded at 21.10 hours and followed with an opportunity for electors to view the improvements to the Village Hall and other amenities together with plans for future development. Cllr Fynn thanked everyone for attending the meeting.