

Minutes of the Annual Assembly of Local Government Electors for the Parish of Marcham duly convened and held in Marcham Primary School, Marcham on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2008 at 7.30 p.m.

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**Present:**

The Chairman of the meeting Mr. Denton Chairman of Marcham Parish Council and 7 members of the Council. Cllr. I. Brown (Oxfordshire County Council), joined by Cllr. Ms. J. Hanna (Vale of White Horse District Council)

Guest Speaker: Mr. G. Gough, Emergency Planning Officer, Vale of White Horse District Council.

21 members of the public.

The Chairman commenced by welcoming all who had attended.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

One apology for absence had been received from Parish Councillor Mrs. C. Ricketts.

**2. Presentation from Marcham Society on the Jubilee Paths' Leaflet**

Mr. and Mrs. Dunford from Marcham Society explained the history and ideas behind creating additional permissive paths in the parish owing to the lack of circular routes. They explained their discussions with the landowner and decisions on where the paths could be sited. Successful applications for funding followed to the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment, Innogy, Vale of White Horse District Council and Marcham Parish Council. A working party of 20 people had installed gates and bridges. A leaflet with a plan and explanations of the routes of the path had then been produced with a copy to every household in the parish with further copies available at selected outlets.

**3. Presentation of Community Service Award**

The Chairman thanked Mr and Mrs. Dunford for their presentation about the paths and referred to the fact that they had been selected to receive the 2007 parishioners of the year award. He read the citation on the certificate and duly presented them with the framed certificate.

**4. Marcham Parish Council Report**

This report was given by Mr. Cumber, immediate past Chairman of Marcham Parish Council. He referred to the few powers of the Parish Council and mentioned the impact of the flooding in the village in July 2007. The Parish Council had produced an information booklet to assist those affected by flooding. The flooding had curtailed the County Council's traffic trial including a temporary footway around the bends on the A415. The proposal that a footway might become a permanent feature had been abandoned. New bollards, however had been installed alongside the edge of the footway in front of the 10 new houses on the South side of the A415 and also at the junction with Mill Road.

The Parish Council had supported the refurbishment of the children's play area and the formal opening was planned for 10<sup>th</sup> June. The Parish Council too had been involved in supporting the intake into the school of all eligible village children as some had been offered places elsewhere. He referred to the formal administrative business of the Council and mentioned the new Code of Conduct, the audit process, and the new review of effectiveness of the audit

which had to be carried out. The Council was planning a website which would be available shortly. He listed the consultation documents that the Council had received and mentioned the training courses attended by members. He placed on record his thanks to Cllr. Iain Brown, the County Councillor, Cllr. Jane Hanna the District Councillor and also the Clerk. He thanked the members of the Parish Council, in particular Marjorie Evans who had completed 25 years on the Parish Council and presented her with a picture in recognition of her service.

### **5. Guest Speaker – Mr. G. Gough**

Mr. Gough spoke about his role as the District Council's emergency planning officer, and the 3 statutory roles the Council had in relation to emergencies, housing for the homeless, the environmental health issues in cases of contamination, and the Building Control role in regards to building safety. He focused on the advice given to individuals on flood defences, and the statistics of the village flooding again. He mentioned that the District Council had a duty of care towards all the district including visitors as well as residents. Effort went into where life was at risk rather than property. This meant that the worst areas were given the higher priority as more people were affected. The difficulties today were not traditional fluvial flooding, but pluvial flooding e.g. 32mm of rain had fallen only today in Stanford in the Vale. Many agencies were always involved - private owners, riparian owners, the County Council, Environment Agency, Thames Water. He offered to provide the details of a professional who could undertake an appraisal locally and to assess whether the purchase of a river gauge would be worthwhile.

He then answered questions regarding early warning systems of an automatic level gauge. He suggested that in Marcham's case last July in the early hours of the morning the streams had been flowing, but then the lake at Denman College overflowed, and early warning system would not have predicted the lake overflowing. He accepted that it was, however, useful in some cases. He confirmed that emergency planning had no role in regard to ordinary planning, other than in cases where developers may need to take into account flood remediation measures in their schemes.

The Chairman thanked him for his presentation and Mr. Gough then left the meeting.

### **6. Minutes of the Last Annual Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2007**

These minutes had been circulated and read by parishioners attending. There were no objections and these were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the proceedings.

### **7. Business Arising**

There were no matters arising. The Chairman referred to two additional items which affected the parish. The first was a likely planning application by Hills Quarry Products for sand extraction East of the A338. Hills would be attending a Parish Council meeting to address members about this. The second was the nighttime closure of the A34 by the Highways Agency and the proposed diversion of traffic through Marcham. Following action by the Parish Council it was hoped that the traffic would be diverted around the Abingdon inner ring road. The A34 would also be subject to a 2 year project to replace the bridging at the Wolvercote flyover. This was being monitored to see if there would be traffic implications for Marcham.

### **8. District Councillor's Report – Cllr. J. Hanna**

Cllr. Hanna thanked the residents for their support and stated that she had had an enjoyable time working for Marcham. She had visited the homes of the flood victims in Marcham, and complemented Marcham in being proactive in producing an information pack. She referred to another big issue for the village which concerned the plans of the Anson Trust to

seek planning consent for housing on its recreation field and to construct new recreation facilities and village hall elsewhere. She promised she would represent the views of the village at the planning application stage. She had set up a small group to look at village consultation. This would organise a public meeting and would undertake a questionnaire. This would encourage debate and would give the necessary information for herself as District Councillor and the Parish Council to go forward to the planning meetings. She had also met with the Anson Trust and the Neighbours Around the Field group

At the District Council there was a joint working group looking at contracts for waste and delivery of green services at minimum disruption. Financially it had been a difficult year with central government's plans for the bus pass scheme costing £300,000 extra. She had received many complaints about the 9.30 a.m. start for the concessionary bus pass scheme particularly as other Districts had offered a 9.00 a.m. start. In addition there was a deficit on staff pensions of 4.9 %. The only option the District Council had was to increase Council Tax. This would mean a significant increase and the Council would be faced with capping. Health too was an issue of concern. She was a member of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and had raised the matter of the closure of the pharmacy at the Marcham Road Health Centre with the Clerk to the Committee.

### **9. County Councillor's Report – Cllr I. Brown**

Cllr. Brown commented that the County was generally underfunded by central government, there had been a 3.875% increase in council tax this year. Flooding had been one of the biggest problems in the county over the past year, and Thames Water's proposals for a reservoir were on going. Opposition groups were contending that a reservoir was needed. As far as elections were concerned, next year's elections may be deferred to June to tie in with European elections. On highway matters he expressed disappointment that the suggested footway around the bends had not come to fruition, but the County Council had not pursued the idea when more residents living on the A415 opposed the idea than supported it. Cllr. Brown stated he had been busy with Marcham Primary School ensuring that the School would be able to take in all the pupils from the village. He placed on record his thanks to the Parish Council, its Clerk and the editor of MAD News. He answered various questions regarding funding, blocked drains and un-repaired potholes.

### **10. Neighbourhood Action Group**

The Chairman gave a brief report on the work of this group. It was a group of interested people from different agencies that worked together to try and overcome village issues. An environmental audit had been done, photographs of problems taken and sent to the relevant agencies. The main priorities identified were speeding, parking and antisocial behaviour. There was generally a low crime rate in Marcham with 44 crimes being reported during the period April 2007 – March 2008. The current aim was to have more consistency from the Police.

### **11. Marcham CE Primary School – School Governors' Report**

Mrs. Viv. Hutchinson, Head Teacher gave the report. She had started as the new Head in September 2007, having 19 years teaching experience. There were 114 pupils on roll. She had arrived at a time of change with the pre-school being housed in the building with all children on one site. There was to be a large intake in September 2008 and various meetings had taken place to ensure places were available. However if the children were accepted more building work was required. The plan was to convert the minibus storage area to a classroom extension. Forms were being placed in MAD news so that parents could register their children early to give the school a better idea of numbers. From September 2008 the school would have 5 classes. The school had now achieved a "healthy school" status and received an "active mark" award. The children had been

engaged in a wide range of activities including trips out, sporting and maths challenges and visits from the Fire Safety Officer and mobile library. There were several after school clubs and the children had sung in the Royal Albert Hall. They had frequent contact and activities with the Church and were working to improve SATS results and attainments. She placed on record her thanks to the Church, the Parents Teachers Association, and the governing body for its support.

### **12. Any Other Business**

A question was raised about the possibility of extending the path on the Southern side of the A415 from the new homes towards the entrance to The Priory. The Clerk advised that the Parish Council had pursued this idea and that whilst some available land was in the ownership of the County Council, another section which would be required was in private ownership, the landowner had been approached who was considering the matter.

The Chairman thanked fellow members, the Clerk, Meriel Lewis as editor of MAD News, the District and County Councillors and Mr. Cumber for his stewardship of the Parish Council over the past 2 years. He then thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.05 p.m.

Refreshments were then provided for those wishing to stay.