

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 20th May, 2009 at 7.30 p.m.

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).

Revd. Richard Zair, All Saints Church, Marcham. The Ven. Eddie Shirras, previous incumbent All Saints Church and Revd. Pamela Shirras.

Guest Speaker: Mr. N. Burroughs, principal planner, Vale of White Horse District Council. 40 members of the public.

The Chairman commenced by welcoming all who had attended.

1. Presentation of Community Service Award

The Chairman read the citation on the certificate as per the appendix to these minutes and paid tribute to The Ven. Eddie Shirras and Revd. Pamela Shirras for their work in the parish. There had been a surprise presentation to them at a lunch earlier in the month. The Chairman formally presented them with the certificate. They spoke and thanked the Parish Council and everyone for the award, and spoke about their life in the village.

2. Guest Speaker: Mr. Nicholas Burroughs

Mr. Burroughs, a principal policy planner, at the Vale of White Horse District Council explained how the Local Development Framework would take over from the existing Local Plan. The Local Plan had been one document, but the Development Framework was a group of individual documents which could be revised on an individual basis when necessary. The key issues covered in the Local Development Framework document, which was a broadbrush document, were housing, transport/new roads, employment, community and leisure facilities and retail shop and other business opportunities. Policies had been drafted as to where the District Council would prefer to locate these features. This core strategy had been out for consultation earlier in the year. A detailed "Managing Development" supplementary planning document would be going out for consultation from 27th May for 6 weeks. The aim was to publish the final draft complete Development Framework document in January 2010.

Most facilities, including housing, had been concentrated in the larger areas such as Wantage, Abingdon, Grove, Faringdon, Botley and the Western edge of Didcot.

Employment centres would be focused on Harwell and Milton Park. A SCOTS (Southern Central Oxfordshire Transport Study) study had taken place and there were plans for improved public transport, cycling and walking. The District Council was pressing for a Marcham By Pass, and in relation to Housing, Marcham was identified as a larger village where the policy restricted development sites to no more than 15 houses.

Mr. Burroughs answered questions from the public on the aspirations in the documents for a bypass, the outcome of which was dependent on the ability of central government to pay, the sustainability of housing in one area and employment in another, the A34 being at capacity, and clarified points on the housing policies for Marcham. Marcham was identified as a "larger" village where no more than 15 dwellings would be permitted.

3. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Parish Councillor Mrs. C. Ricketts and parishioner Ms. J. Davies.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th May, 2008

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. One parishioner did ask that the citation on the Parishioner of the Year Certificate be fully reproduced in the minutes. It was noted that the full wording was on the website of the Parish Council.

5. Business Arising

A question was asked about the progress of installing a new footway on the Southern side of the A415 from the new houses in Packhorse Lane to the start of footpath 9. The Chairman advised that consideration had been given to a path on the northern side behind the properties emerging in Sweetbriar. The landowner on the Southern side had been approached, but he had not supported donating land to the County Council. It was suggested that the landowner could build the path and retain the ownership. The Chairman advised that the Parish Council would look at this issue again.

6. Marcham Parish Council Report

The Chairman outlined the key issues in which the Parish Council had been involved over the past year, these included a litter pick arranged by Keep Britain Tidy with volunteers from the village, plans for a hardstanding for the recycling bins at Howard Cornish Road, improvements to the steps at the war memorial, and a grant awarded by the Vale of White Horse District Council towards a flood gauge. Community Service volunteers had cleared the path to the Cemetery and the Burial Committee had undertaken clearance work in the Cemetery. The Council had been talking with the Post Office Authorities and premises owner regarding the retention of the Post Office service in the village and it was also keeping the bus service under scrutiny which was currently under threat of being reduced to hourly. The Council continued to fight to stop HGVs through the village and was sending a representative to a meeting in July regarding plans to send traffic through Marcham should the A420 be closed for any reasons. The Chairman placed on record his thanks to fellow councillors, to Mr. David Walton for the website, to Ms. Meriel Lewis for MAD News and for taking the minutes at the Neighbourhood Action Group meeting, to Linda Martin Clerk to the Council for her efforts, and to Iain Brown and Jane Hanna as County and District Councillors for their attendance at Parish Council meetings and efforts over the past year.

7. Parish Council/Burial Committee/Parochial Charity Accounts

The Parish Council's and Burial Committee's budget had been presented to the parishioners attending. The Clerk explained the content of the documents, and audited balances as at 31st March 2008 and unaudited balances as at 31st March, 2009. The Parochial Charity accounts were presented. These showed small grants having been made to local organisations.

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

Cllr. Hanna, on a personal note, advised those present that she and her partner had adopted a daughter a few months ago. Also in regard to press articles relating to M.P.s expenses, she confirmed that as a local councillor she had not claimed expenses. On District Council matters the Vale of White Horse District Council charged £112 council tax, whereas the average tax elsewhere in the country was £163. She confirmed a new contract for waste services had been agreed. This would commence in October 2010. The contract was joint with South Oxfordshire District Council and would increase recycling rates. The District Council was opposed to the reservoir until the case for one had been established, and Thames Water had currently down sized the reservoir in its planning. In regard to planning policy it was thought that new houses north east of Wantage would have less impact on Marcham than further development in the town of Abingdon. In regard to development planning she had received concerns about a large dormitory building planned for Cothill School. The proposals by the Anson Trust and future facilities of the village would be an important issue. She had established a group and would consult parishioners when the application was lodged. She had been assured by the Anson Trust that there would be time for proper village consultation. She referred to being a member of the County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This had considered the closure of the pharmacy at Marcham Road Health Centre. The pharmacy had now been saved. The Chairman thanked Jane Hanna for keeping a keen eye on local issues.

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

Cllr. Brown stated that he had nothing to declare on expenses. He had received complaints from local people regarding the press information concerning M.P.s expenses and would be speaking with David Cameron this week. As far as County Council business was concerned he referred to the planned reservoir South of Marcham which had been postponed for the time being. He stated that Ministers might accept it as part of Thames Water's Water Resources Management Plan. He supported the devolved budget for weed spraying with funds being given by the County Council to the Parish Council. Potholes had been an issue for villagers which he had raised on many occasions with the County Council. The By Pass was not on the horizon and he felt the A415 needed to be upgraded. This was the main route when the A34 was blocked. He paid tribute to the dedication of Parish Councillors and School Governors who were volunteers. He answered questions from the public concerning the need for a weight limit on the A415.

Questions on the recycling changes and the requirements for weekly collections for food waste and the needs or otherwise of large brown bins that take "green" waste were raised. These were directed to Cllr. J. Hanna District Councillor. Thanks were given by the public Cllr. Hanna for her efforts in helping ensure the pharmacy at the Marcham Road Health Centre remained open. It was understood that it would become a main pharmacy for distribution and the problem was now parking. Cllr. Hanna would take up this issue.

10. Marcham CE Primary School – School Governors' Report

Mrs. Viv. Hutchinson, Head Teacher gave the report. An Ofsted report had been published in October 2008. This confirmed the school was "satisfactory" to "good" and had identified areas for improvements. It had also undergone an inspection by the Church under the Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools scheme. The school received a good report. The school had focused on a pond area which was a quiet area and undertook collective worship.

Building work had taken place at the school. The car port had been turned into a classroom extension and a further classroom was under construction as an additional 28 pupils were expected in September 2009. The children had been involved in many activities and clubs within the school and had made several visits outside of the school. A new interactive library system had been purchased and a book amnesty was being held. An appeal was made for volunteers to help organise the new library system. The school benefited from community support and the Head Teacher's thanks were placed on record to the Church, Parent Teachers Association and the Governors.

10. Neighbourhood Action Group

The Chairman of the meeting gave a brief report on the work of this group. Mr. Denton was also Chairman of the NAG group. It had been established as a structure to try and improve community policing, and to identify residents' concerns. Mr. Denton introduced P.C. Jimmy May, one of the Police Neighbourhood Team for Marcham. He was responsible for the Police Community Support Officers in the area. The PCSOs had an office in Duffield Place. The recently appointed Police Inspector Andrew Boyd supported greater Police presence in the community. It was noted that a PCSO Laura Schmid was going to attend the village café to give a talk about safety. P.C. May spoke briefly about his police work in the area and the demands made given that there were 12 Parish Council areas which were covered from the Abingdon station. It was always a question of prioritising. Mr. Denton placed on record his thanks to Meriel Lewis as the minute secretary for NAG and who had developed a NAG website. He referred to the Home Security booklet which had been delivered to houses and offered advice as to keeping doors locked with keys removed, as some UPVC doors were easy to unlock.

11. Revd. Richard Zair

The Chairman introduced to the meeting and welcomed Revd. Zair who was the newly appointed incumbent at All Saints' Church, Marcham.

12. Any Other Business

Buses

Concerns were raised by those attending that the Stagecoach bus service no. 31 was going to run hourly and not half hourly with effect from July. It was suggested that the Parish Council should start a petition. The Chairman asked for a show of hands for those who objected to the reduction in bus service. All those present raised their hands. A public meeting arranged by Stagecoach was being held on Thursday 21st May at the Guildhall, Abingdon. Representatives from the Parish Council would attend.

Anson Trust proposals - Consultation

Concerns were raised that the village had not heard what was happening about the Anson Trust's proposals for new recreation facilities. A request was made that the Anson Trust should be fully open with the village about its plans. The Chairman advised that delicate negotiations were taking place, the economic climate had changed, and the Anson Trust would go to the village in due course. There would be consultation before the planning process. One resident read the definition of a Trustee from the dictionary. He asked that a referendum of the village be sought. The chairman invited Colin Bough, a Director of the Arthur Anson Memorial Trust Ltd to speak.

Mr. Bough stated that there had been a long delay over the signing of the land option for land to the North of the village. The Directors, more than 2 to 3 years ago had said that there was no future for the Institute. That was still the case. The plan was to sell the Institute and the proceeds would be used to provide better facilities. Part of the Anson field

would be sold for housing and some would remain open space. In recent times land values had changed considerably. The Directors had considered the options. The village needed good facilities, and the Institute could not be turned into good facilities. The Trust was still thinking about the best possible way to go forward, but the money involved at the present time was not the same as before. Until there was a deal sorted with someone there was no money available. The intention was to pursue the plan as originally intended.

Various points were made by those attending. Concerns were raised that the Anson Trust would sell off the Institute and not consult with the village themselves. Similarly if contracts were signed between the Trust and another body how could the village be involved. Consultation it appeared would be down to any new owner. It was stated that it was in the interests of the Anson trust and the developer to ensure that the village was behind the proposals. The view of the village was therefore important. A statement was made that the Parish Council should lead the village against the proposals. Various statements were being called out and a request made that the Chairman bring the meeting to order.

The Chairman took no further points and thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.20 p.m.

Refreshments were then provided for those wishing to stay.