

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 25th May, 2016 at 7.30 p.m.

Present:

The Chairman of the meeting Miss Ruth Mander, (Chairman of Marcham Parish Council) and 5 members of the Parish Council

Cllr. Richard Webber, (County Councillor)

Cllr. Mrs. Catherine Webber (District Councillor)

Mrs. Viv. Hutchinson, Headteacher Marcham Primary School

Guest Speakers: Mr. Richard Harding, Project Executive and Ms. Jane Birks Project Manager from the Oxford Flood Relief Scheme project at the Environment Agency.

10 members of the public.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from parish councillors William Cumber, and Peter Steere, and also from parishioners James and Jennifer Allan and Christine Denton.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th May, 2015

These minutes had been circulated and read by parishioners attending, and approved as a correct record of the meeting.

3. Guest Speakers : Mr. Richard Harding and Ms. Jane Birks – Environment Agency

Mr. Harding outlined the history of flooding in the Oxford area including Botley Road and its properties which had been badly affected on several occasions. There were 3 stages to the Oxford Flood Relief Scheme, the first was de-silting and local works, the second was the building of the flood relief channel and the third was the longer term position of 80-90 years time for further measures. Strategies were reviewed every 5 years. There had been a review of the hydrology in view of more frequent flood events. Schemes, whilst originally funded by Government, were now partner funded. The design and build stage would cost £120m. Mr. Harding explained the flood relief channel scheme, the modelling downstream which was to be checked independently, with a third check being undertaken by a consultant appointed by the Vale of White Horse District Council, future maintenance, funding and process for achieving planning consent.

Ms. Birks then spoke about the Abingdon Scheme. The river Ock catchment covered 240sq.km. A key tributary was Sandford Brook. The options were do nothing, create small scale storage for Sandford Brook, or large scale storage for both Sandford and river Ock. Modelling was being undertaken which would be finished within 2 months, consideration was being given to using the Wilts/Berks canal as a bypass. Modelling was being updated for this and consideration given as to how the models interacted.

Only a handful of properties were possibly affected by the River Stert and it was unlikely that there were feasible options to resolve all situations. A low wall was the proposal to protect ground floor properties at St. Helen's wharf.

Questions and statements were then put:

1. What was the involvement of insurance companies in the funding of flood schemes?. No insurer contributed to the scheme.

2. Floods had taken place in 2007 and yet 9 years on flood modelling was still awaited. Properties in South Abingdon had been flooded and the model for the river Ock was out of date, yet the Oxford model had been fully updated. A request was made to spend money where it was most needed. Of the £120 million spent in Oxfordshire, approximately £500,000 was on modelling.

3. If there were a need to move more water across the flood plain, then it would need to be wider and deeper. To what extent were planning applications integrated into the modelling? All developments should be flood neutral, and it was down to the planning authorities to determine.

4. How did the modelling plan ahead for climate change and more extreme events. The modelling increased the flows at set periods e.g. by 2080 where an estimate of 30% increase had been allowed for. A series of “what if” scenarios were then worked through.

The Chairman re-ordered the agenda to receive the reports from Cllrs. R. and C. Webber

4. District Councillor Report – Cllr. Mrs. C. Webber

Cllr. Catherine Webber had been re-elected in 2015. The main issues over the previous year had been planning and housing. Pye Homes had agreed to construct some bungalows on the site at Willow Farm. Other developers in the village had been less responsive to the request for bungalows. She referred to air quality in Marcham and the various questions that she had been putting to the District Council. She continued to press the Vale of White Horse District Council on air quality issues. In regard to the community facilities there were still some obstacles but it was hoped that the planning application would go to committee fairly soon.

A member of the public stated that the bungalows at The Willows development by Pye Homes had been sold before they had gone onto the open market. Cllr. Webber would investigate that claim.

5. County Councillor Report – Cllr. R. Webber

Cllr. Richard Webber stated that potholes in Marcham were beginning to be repaired. Issues in regards to Sheepstead Road and poor repairs, were known to the County Council. Concerns had been raised with him regarding speeding traffic on the A415 and how this could be reduced. He referred to Unitary Authority status which may be coming to Oxfordshire with two or more of the District Authorities merging. £200,000 was being spent on reports, and 2 reports had been commissioned which seemed a waste of money, as both the County and District Councils were undertaking reports.

On some issues such as air quality, planning and waste collection, one authority rather than 2 as at the moment, would have been able to resolve the issues more easily. Currently each County division had 10,000 – 12,000 people. A new unitary authority would have 8,000 residents per member. More roles would need to be devolved to Parish and Town Councils.

A member of the public asked about the timescale for the unitary authority. This would be included in the next round of budgets for the County Council. The District Council’s study would be published in June, with the County Council’s study published in July. By early 2017 a model that was likely to be acceptable to the Department of Communities and Local Government would be available.

A question was asked about holding a referendum to see if residents wished to have a unitary authority. This was unlikely in order to save money.

6. Marcham Primary School

Mrs. Viv Hutchinson, Headteacher of the school, had been in post for 8 years. There had been significant changes in education over that time. The school was part of the Global Learning Programme. The Programme had several aims focusing on the children thinking about making the world a better place, and it deepened their curriculum knowledge. 17 goals had been introduced to schools, including sustainable development goals. The Programme finished in December.

The children had been on various outside visits to Youlbury, Abingdon Hospital, Sheldonian Theatre Oxford, and Winchester Science Centre and Planetarium. In turn they had been visited by the Baptist Church, the Fire and Rescue Service, and the Mayan workshop. The children were involved in a range of extra activities such as running, poetry competitions, math challenges, and music. She placed on record her thanks to the dedicated governors, and enthusiastic Parent Teachers Association as well as those that assisted with cycle proficiency and those that provided the links to the Church.

7. Parishioner of the Year Certificate

The Chairman referred to the Parishioner of the year certificate which had been awarded to Dr. Marjorie Evans for her service to the community over many years. Knowing that Dr. Evans would not be in attendance at the meeting, the Chairman had presented the Certificate to her at her home two days prior to the meeting. The Chairman read the citation on the Certificate.

8. Parish Council

Miss Ruth Mander gave a report on Parish Council matters. 2 Councillors Samantha Turney and Colin Bough had resigned. Peter Steere who had moved into the village to Harding Way had been co-opted to fill one of the vacancies, and one vacancy remained. The Chairman outlined the criteria that had to be met to be a Councillor and invited anyone interested to contact the Clerk.

The Chairman referred to 19 planning applications considered by the Parish Council, ranging from quarry excavations and new housing development to single storey extensions and dormer windows. Reference was made to grant applications, and grants awarded. Also to road names and the need for new names owing to the new housing developments taking place. A request was made for anyone with suggestions for new street names to contact the Clerk.

The Chairman mentioned the number of voluntary hours spent by Councillors dealing with parish matters, such as planning enforcement, fly tipping, burning of waste, rights of way paths and allotments. Councillors had also attended training courses on the Code of Conduct, planning and the role of Councillors and Chairmanship.

She placed on record her thanks to the County and District Councillors Richard and Catherine Webber, Parish Councillors and Clerk for their support over the previous year.

9. Parish Council/Burial Committee/Parochial Charity Budgets

In the absence of Mrs. Christine Denton, Secretary of the Parochial Charities, her report on the charities' accounts was read out. This showed quarterly dividends of £7 and sums of £12 being given to Marcham Primary School and £4.05 to Frilford Welfare Trust. A balance of £24.29 was carried forward. A disproportionate amount of time was spent on the charity given the sums involved.

The Chairman presented the budget for 2016/17 for both the Burial Committee and the Parish Council. The accounts for the year ending 31st March 2016 were in the course of preparation and audit.

A question was raised as to why money was taken from reserves and the balances run down each year. The balances were only £33,000 and with plans for new community facilities there was a likelihood that more funding would be required. Each year the precept had increased yet in about 3 years time reserves would have disappeared. The Chairman stated that the Council could not keep high amounts of unspent reserves, and would be questioned by the auditor if it did.

Ms. M. Lewis, editor of Marcham and District News asked that a grant to the village newsletter as shown in the Council's budget not be identified separately as a grant to that organisation, but one total grant sum for various organisations be shown.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business

The chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.50 p.m.

Refreshments were then provided for those wishing to stay.

Signed..... Date