

**Minutes of the Shipton under Wychwood Annual Village Meeting held at 7.30pm on
Tuesday 28th April 2009 in the New Beaconsfield Hall.**

PRESENT: Maureen Bailey, Pat Bannister, Cllr. Hilary Biles, J. Charlwood, Paul Chantry, Cllr. Malcolm Cochrane, Cllr. Jo Cook, Phillip Crosson, Emma Earl, Fred Evans, Marian and Gordon Gillet, Aelfthryth and John Gittings, Jason Glennon, John Hartley, Gordon and Christine Halliday, Jeremy Harris, Cllr. Neil Jagger, Diana Johnson, Cllr. Jill Mavin, Cllr. Robin McConnachie, John Mehrstens, Philip Mehrstens, Laura Mencia, Jane Murphy, S. Pettit, Brian Rigby, Cllr. Rodney Rose, Janet Shackle, Liz and John Shannon, Jeremy Spencer, Keith Townley, Cllr. Alan Vickers, Peggy and James Walmsley, Fiona Walthall, Rosie Waterman, Cllr. Mike Watson, Sue Williamson, Joy Wiseman, Kay and Brian Young

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Liz Clarke-Watson, Margaret Hartley, Camilla and Hamish Harvey, Anne Matthews, Duncan Spense, Stuart Williamson, Jonathon and Belinda Willson, Sylvia Vickers.
2. **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 8 April 2008:**
The minutes had been displayed on the website and notice boards and were not read out. It was agreed unanimously that they were a true record and were signed by the Chairman.
3. **Chairman's Report - Cllr. Alan Vickers:** Cllr. Vickers summarised the activities of the Parish council during the year. A new Clerk, Angela Barnes, had been appointed after the retirement of Alice Burns. Eleven meetings had been held, and the precept had been set at £18,000 for 2008/09 with a proposed increase to £18,750 for 2009/10. The precept remains at a lower level than neighbouring villages. The economic downturn was reflected in fewer planning applications – 21 as opposed to 38 in the previous year. The largest element of expenditure was grass cutting, but the appointment of Green Scythe had achieved a reduction of 20% in costs.
The legacy of the 2007 floods still remains and all three Wychwood Parishes took part in meeting with representatives of all the utilities and local government organisations concerned with the results of the floods, chaired by David Cameron MP. The benefit of direct contact with Thames Water had already been demonstrated in an analysis of the problems of Blenheim Cottages and the solution of a sewage problem near the Cricket Club.
Three planning issues have presented problems. Firstly the Costcutters site, which remains undeveloped. Secondly proposals for the installation of a large poultry unit at Four Winds Farm are causing concern. Thirdly the Tennis Club Pavilion on the New Beaconsfield hall site. The Parish Council has remained neutral, leaving the Tennis Club and the New Beaconsfield Hall Committee to reach an agreement. However, the Parish Council is responsible for the land on which the proposed pavilion would be built and such common land would have to be the subject of a de-registration application by the Parish Council.

This has been a divisive issue and the ill-feeling caused within the community is a matter for regret. As a personal opinion the Chairman stated that he felt that the Tennis Club could achieve most of what they needed through a solution based on use of space within the Hall. This could be done rapidly and at little cost, but the Tennis Club were not persuaded. The Chairman also believed that the Club seriously underestimated the level of feeling in the Parish with regard to their proposals. The situation is therefore;

- 1 The Hall Committee had approved the broad lines of an agreement by the narrowest of margins
- 2 The previous planning application had lapsed and a new application will move the location of the structure further along the bank, and there are indications that there will be fresh objections from residents
- 3 If the new planning application is granted the Parish Council will carry out its stated intention of applying for deregistration. Each household in the Parish will be contacted to give them the opportunity to comment on the proposal to de-register. This is necessary to protect the Council from any future accusations of a dereliction of duty in representing the interests of Parishioners. Results of this consultation will accompany the application. In the event of a majority of parishioners withholding their approval for this course of action there would be no point in submitting an application.

Happily, during the year there were many achievements:

- 1 New signs to reduce confusion with regard to addresses in Ballards Close and St. Michael's Close, which had caused problems for emergency services, will be installed soon.
- 2 Supporting the local surgery when the dispensing pharmacy service was under threat.
- 3 Gaining an award recognising the contribution of volunteers in the village from the Village of the Year competition.
- 4 Pressing for the repair of the fence by the Littlestock Brook bridge where there was a danger of children falling into the brook. The Council are still pressing for action on the wall by the Evenlode Bridge where similar potential dangers exist.
- 5 Formulating ambitious plans for the refurbishing of the playground, led by Councillors Cook and Cochrane.
- 6 Identifying problems on the banks of the Evenlode after walking the main routes with representatives of the District and County Councils.
- 7 New public transports routes and more convenient timings for residents, largely due to the efforts of Cllr. McConnachie
- 8 Carols on the Green raised £433 for the maintenance of the fabric of St. Mary's.
- 9 A faculty has been granted to allow the strewing of ashes on the bank in the closed Churchyard. This may ease the pressure on the new burial ground where lack of space threatens to become a serious problem as Shipton becomes a centre for the care of the elderly.

The website averages 1200 hits per month and the number of welcome packs distributed had stabilised at approximately 20 per year. The Parish Emergency Plan is available on the website. There are still some specialised skills and equipment missing and the Chairman would be pleased to be contacted by anyone who could offer assistance.

The chairman thanked all the Parish Councillors for their hard work during the year, and also the District and County Councillors for their support. In conclusion the chairman reminded the meeting that Parish Council elections would be held in 2010, and anyone interested in standing should talk to any members of the Parish Council about what is involved.

4. County Councillor's Report: Cllr. Rodney Rose:

Cllr. Rose had held the seat as County Councillor for the Wychwood division for 12 years, and Community Safety had always been a particular concern. This had been marked with an invitation to become the Oxfordshire Member of the SEFireRescueControlCentre. This project – not one that the County Council wanted – will go live in 2011 and it has to be made to work to ensure the safety of our communities. After spending a year on the project Cllr Rose was anxious to see it through to the end, and was currently leading a dispute with Department of Communities and Local Government over the imposed, non-negotiable cost of the new Control Centre of £1.5M per annum for 25 years.

The Community Safety Committee, which Cllr Rose chairs, was preparing a strategy on readiness for a possible flu pandemic, where the loss of many key workers would present great problems.

Local issues play a great part in a councillor's workload, and in the Wychwoods one outstanding issue was the need for sheltered/extra care housing with the attendant problem of finding a suitable site on which 40 units can be built.

The February meeting of the Full County Council had set the annual budget and the increase of the County Council precept would be 3.75%

5. District Councillor's Report – Cllr. Hilary Biles:

West Oxfordshire District council's share of the Council tax for a Band 'D' property in 2009/10 had been set at £78.57. As a percentage it is an increase of 4.9% but in money terms it is an increase of £3.69 a year or 7 pence per week. West Oxfordshire District council is one of the leading authorities in the Country for providing low-cost value for money services. The District Council's portion of the overall Council Tax bill is only £1.50 per week for each household. This includes waste and recycling collections, leisure centres, housing and planning. We are also one of only a few councils who provide free car parking in all our car parks.

We, like many local authorities, are facing immense financial pressure from price inflation, falling income from planning and housing related activities, interest rate falls and an extremely 'poor' settlement from Central Government. We are able to cushion the impact by making efficiency savings and using our reserves to make sure the Council Tax stays as low as possible.

I am sure you will want to know about our investments in Iceland. We have not been found to be negligent by the Audit Committee – some Council's were. We are still hoping we will recoup that money and the signs are good. This has had no impact on the Council Tax. At £78.57 West Oxfordshire District Council's rate is less than half the national average of £163 and is the lowest of all five Oxfordshire District Councils. The highest charge is Oxford City at £258. Our share of the overall tax bill is approx 5.5%

I am pleased to say that the new hospital and Care home in Chipping Norton has been started and is scheduled for completion in autumn 2010. The new Care and Nursing Home in Shipton is now finished. We will have 6 beds for local people in that home through Social and Healthcare.

West Oxfordshire District Council is sharing a Chief Executive with Cotswold District Council on a trial basis and is looking at sharing back office services in an effort to save more money.

I continue to fight for the Extra Care Housing we were promised when Langston House closed and I know that sites have been looked at and moves are being made for a site in Milton.

I have served on the planning committee for the last 7 years but I have found that as a Cabinet Member with a very broad brief – Health (which now comes into nearly everything we do) Leisure – covers much more than the Leisure centres, eg Play Rangers, out of school activities etc, Arts, Tourism – huge in West Oxfordshire and Children and Young people – which covers everything from teenage pregnancy – children in Care. In fact everything that affects children, I have asked to come off that committee.

Government keep introducing more tiers of committees and I find I just cannot do it **all**. I have tried!!!

Because of my portfolio I also represent West Oxfordshire on Oxfordshire Wide Boards. These are Supporting People – which I chair. This deals with housing related support funding for vulnerable groups such as the mentally ill, the elderly (extra care housing etc) the learning disabled, probation, domestic violence to name a few.

I also sit on the Children and Young Peoples board which deals with anything to do with Children and Young People. I am also on the Health and Wellbeing Board (self explanatory) Tourism South East, and the Better Health Care Forum – which looks into how we can keep the services at the Horton Hospital. You can see that I have a full Diary – which is why my husband is now the keenest fly fisher in the Wychwoods!!! I do not see a great deal of him. He is extremely supportive of my Council work and I just couldn't do it without him.

I continue to deal with many issues concerning local residents and I am always available to anyone. I will add, any time of the day, as many times I get called out at times other than the normal working day. I still enjoy my work – even the difficult bits that are a challenge. I love a challenge!!

6. Report from Allotment Sub- Committee – Cllr Jill Mavin:

Cllr. Mavin reported that with 48 allotment holders the site was thriving and the appearance of the area had greatly improved. There were 10 new plot holders this year and 2 new water troughs had been installed. The road surface needed attention and this would be the main objective next year. The new gate had improved security.

7. Report on Play Area, Recreation Field and Grass Mowing – Cllr. Jo Cook:

Cllr. Cook reported that the plan for the play area represented a complete update and refurbishment. WODC had pledged £20K and the Parish Council £11K. The remaining £13K needed to be raised from other sources. Local children had played a part in selecting the new equipment and the safety surfaces. The new grass cutting regime was working well and Cllr. Cook thanked all the residents who regularly pick up litter helping to keep the village clean.

8. Report on Transport – Cllr. Robin McConnachie:

Ahead of the County Council review of bus services, the Parish Council had undertaken a survey of transport needs in the parish in conjunction with ORCC, and was well prepared to lobby for improvements. Thanks were due to everyone who helped on this and other transport issues, particularly John Gittings.

Bus Services: Although the Charlbury rail bus now only operates morning and evening, the new X8 service makes better and more frequent connections with rail services throughout the day although at the cost of going to Kingham. There is a regular service to Chipping Norton, providing an alternative route to Oxford and access to Banbury and Stratford. There is also a new Sunday service (the 233) between Witney and Chipping Norton every 2 hours during the day. The number of stops in Shipton has been rationalised and are more clearly identified. There is a tight timetable to get to Kingham for trains but adjustments will have to wait until after the summer line closure.

Rail Services: Pressure from active rail action groups in Oxford, aided by local and national politicians, resulted in better timekeeping on the Cotswold line, but First Great Western have also suppressed an early evening stop at Shipton and returned to using old turbo rolling stock on well used trains. There will be problems in summer (and again in 2010) as the line will be closed for work on installing a new platform and footbridge at Charlbury and the double tracking of parts of the route. The almost certain introduction of a new route to London by 2013, Chiltern via Bicester, will provide much needed competition for FGW.

Being a member of OCC's Consultative Committee enables the Parish Council to keep abreast of proposals for all types of transport and it is important to bear in mind the many parishioners who do not have the use of a car, and also to remember other road users including pedestrians. Of particular interest are questions of transport access to key sites such as hospitals and the impact of street closures in Oxford.

9. Report on Financial Management – Cllr. Mike Watson:

Cllr. Watson reported that the introduction of the Scribe accounting system meant that costs could be allocated and finances monitored in greater detail. Two reviews of finances had been carried out with the full council during the year. The year ended with an operating surplus of £5,569 in line with the Council's aim to maintain a surplus while investing in improvements in the Parish, and to build up a reserve to respond to unexpected demands. In the last year this encompassed improvements at the allotments and investment in the Shipton Volunteers. The financial affairs of the Council are well run with any significant expenditure being brought to the council for approval. Grass cutting remains the largest single expenditure at £5,500 (ex VAT) in the year. A three year contract has been agreed with Green Scythe on favourable terms that will provide a predictable cost in future years.

The precept level remains one of the lowest in the area and the Council intends to maintain the precept at a competitive level. In the coming year the major call on reserves will be the investment in the new equipment for the play area, with a donation of up to £11,000 to the project. The Council relies heavily on the goodwill of volunteers to sustain the local environment but there are times when professional assistance is needed. The council is committed to striking a balance between achieving a low precept and maintaining the parish to a high quality.

10. Report from Shipton Volunteers Sub-Committee: Mr Paul Chantry:

The Shipton Volunteers now number 61 and 28 members have earned their Volunteer Sweatshirts. Sponsorship in the first year was provided by the Rooflight Company and this year Tall Trees Care Home will take over the role. Their generosity, and the support of the Parish Council, has enabled a wide range of projects to be undertaken. The regular clean ups around the parish have continued plus a major clear up of Mawles Lane and Chapel Lane, cutting back undergrowth, dead wood and clearing ditches. Wildflower gateways have been sown on verges on the Burford Road and the railway bridge on the Chipping Norton road. A tree pruning weekend at Diggers Wood, led on to a similar event on the allotments and re-staking of the trees on the Recreation Field. The compost bins built on the allotments from re-cycled wood are being well used.

The next major project will be the improvement of Church Path and there are many minor tasks which are regularly undertaken. In all the Volunteers have given over 1000 man hours to the community. In the future some storage will be needed and a chipper/shredder would also be a great help. Thanks were expressed to all the Volunteers.

11. Report of the Shipton United Charities: Mr. Tony Nock:

The object of the charity is to relieve either generally or individually persons resident in the parish of Shipton under Wychwood who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress. Balances held at the HSBC Bank together with National Savings and Petty Cash amounted to £5,045.78. Shipton Evergreens had decided to call it a day and had contributed £750.00 for use by the charity.

During the year the charity had made the following contributions; Chipping Norton Hospital £150; Wychwood Day Centre £200; Lawrence Home Nursing £150; Wychwood C of E Primary school £150; Wychwood Youth Club £200 and Coffee Mornings £100. The gifts were in recognition of the services provided by the organisations to parishioners of Shipton during the year. The trustees believe that they are administering the funds available to them in the best possible way to meet their aims.

12. Reports of the Lady Reade Educational Foundation: Mr James Walmsley:

The purpose of the charity is to provide money to assist students with purchase of books or other educational materials who have finished secondary school and are entering higher education. Grants are available to students who are resident in Shipton, Milton, Bruern, Lyneham, Leafield or Ramsden – representing the ancient parish of Shipton when the trust was formed.

Ten applications for grants had been received – 4 from Shipton, 3 from Milton, 2 from Leafield and 1 from Lyneham. Seven grants of £100 each had been made and the remaining three will be awarded on confirmation of further education places.

Balances at the bank are £749.73 and the Committee were grateful for the local support they receive. They would also be making a wider range of requests for support in future to sustain this valuable contribution to the young people of the parish.

13. Report of the Shipton under Wychwood Village Hall and Recreation Field Charity: Mr. Gordon Halliday:

There had been a change of Manager at the Hall with Lee Wyatt-Buchan replacing Alice Burns. A deficit for 2007 meant charges were increased and greater efforts have been made to place the Hall on a business footing. Hall usage has increased by 15% against a target of 5%; committee room usage has increased by 14% against a target of 5% and the accounts are £4000 above target.

United Sustainable Energy carried out a survey and consideration is being given to installing a Ground Source Heat Pump, so efforts are being made to obtain grants for this conversion. The activities at the Hall continue to flourish despite increased charges and the hall Committee are grateful for the support of the Parish council which allows some community groups to pay reduced fees. There are over 26 clubs and groups that use the Hall regularly and 65 gym members.

Part of the brief for the new manager was to introduce new classes, with an emphasis on activities for young people. There is a new painting class for children and a Rock school for 8 to 18 year olds.

The hall continues to be an important social venue for the parish and the trustees, many of whom have been associated with the project since fund raising began, are always anxious to attract new members.

14. Reports from Wychwood C of E Primary School; Mr. Duncan Spense:

Mr. Spense was unable to attend so the report was read by the Acting Clerk. The school roll stands at 277. There are 2 classes in the Foundation Stage Unit, 3 in Key Stage 1 and 6 in Key Stage 2. The attendance level for the past year was 96% and a Health and Safety audit rated the school as excellent.

The staff room has been extended and a medical room has also been created which doubles as a small office – all made possible through internal alterations to make better use of space. There is more work for next year replacing the hall floor; refurbishing the toilets; improving disabled access and reducing energy costs. Parking near the school is a perennial problem and the introduction of a ‘Walking Bus’ is being considered for September.

The school continues to maintain close links with the local community and also has raised significant sums for charities of all kinds. The school also plays host to the Cherubs nursery breakfast and after school club and a wide range of other after school activities are organised including Recorders, Netball, Craft, Girls Cricket, Church Group, Choir and Film Making. The PTA continues to play a vital role in raising funds for school activities and keeps the swimming pool operating smoothly. The school hopes to achieve Healthy School status this year. The cooks provided 21,409 meals (not including those for Leafield Primary) and were runners up in the ‘Best School Meals in Oxfordshire’ Competition.

Academic achievement has continued to improve, with Year 6 SATs results being good in all three subjects. KS1 and Foundation stage children showed improvements over last year. Children are encouraged to take part in sports and arts activities.

15. Other Matters for Discussion:

a) Police activity: PCSO Krysten Tyrer: PCSO Tyrer was not able to attend and her report was read by the acting Clerk. In the year there were 61 reported crimes in Shipton. Criminal Damage 17 cases; Burglary 2 cases; Assault 6 cases; Arson 2 cases; Harassment 4 cases. There were also problems with inconsiderate parking in the village in general but particularly near the school. The local police rely on help from the public reporting suspicious occurrences and all reports are welcome.

b) A361 Committee: Mrs. Peggy Walmsley: The A361 Committee has worked for 3 years to prevent excessive speeding through the village and to divert heavy goods traffic away from the area. Much had been achieved and now the group maintain a watching brief, but are still anxious to receive reports of traffic problems. The group are proposing to play an active part in establishing the ‘Walking Bus’ and were currently helping to recruit the 40 volunteers needed to make the project viable

c) Tennis Club Pavilion: Mrs. Carrington expressed concern at the reference to the Tennis Club plans by the Chairman, which she felt implied a threat to their actions. The chairman reiterated that the Parish Council was adopting a neutral approach, but he had expressed a personal view that the Tennis Club had under-estimated the extent of opposition. The consultation with the whole parish would be needed and it was a matter for regret that the problem could not be resolved more easily. Cllr. McConnachie reminded parishioners that since the introduction of legislation in 2006 it was illegal to build on common land and a very clear case for public benefit would have to be made in order for de-registration to take place and, as the Tennis Club was a private club, this may be difficult.

d) Speed Limits: Mrs. Shackle asked Cllr. Rose whether a Home Zone with a speed limit of 20mph could be created near the school. Many other counties were more generous than Oxfordshire in their interpretation of the legislation allowing lower speed limits. Cllr. Rose indicated that a complete re-evaluation of speed limits in rural areas was taking place at OCC and he would give his support to the creation of a 20mph limit near the school.

e) Illegal Parking: Mr. Croxson asked what action was being taken to deter illegal parking on the A361 and other residential roads in the area, as a result of events being held at the Hall. Mrs. Halliday informed the meeting that the Hall Committee were requesting that organisations expecting large numbers of cars at events were to organise properly marshalled parking. Repeat offenders would not be allowed to hold further events at the Hall.

There being no other questions the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 20.55 hours.