

MARCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Marcham Parish Council held on Wednesday 8th April, 2009 in the residents' lounge, Duffield Place, Marcham at 7.30 p.m.

Present:

Mr. M. Denton (Chairman), Mrs. J. Allan, Mr. C. Bough, Mr. W. Cumber,
Mrs. M. Evans, Mr. D. Hutchinson, Mrs. C. Ricketts, Mrs. S. Turney, Mr. D. Walton
Clerk: Mrs. L. Martin
3 members of the public

- 2009/61 Apologies for Absence
Apologies for absence had been received from Mr. I. Charles, and also from Cllr. J. Hanna (District Councillor).
- 2009/62 Declarations of Interest
Mr. Cumber declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the agenda item relating to the Post Office in that he was a director of W. Cumber and Son (Theale) Ltd which owned the property. Mrs. Turney declared a personal interest in the agenda item relating to grass cutting in the play area at Longfields in that she had been the volunteer who had offered to cut the grass.
- 2009/63 Minutes of the meeting held on 11th March, 2009
These were agreed and signed as a true record of the proceedings.
- 2009/64 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th March, 2009
- The Gap – Grit Bin
Council noted an acknowledgement from the County Council regarding the installation of a grit bin. The matter was being investigated.
- Dial a Ride
Council noted that this scheme was a door to door service for those unable or who found it difficult to use public transport. Certain criteria had to be met and any application for membership of the scheme had to be supported by the applicant's G.P.
- Home Start
Council noted receipt of a letter from Home Start thanking the Council for its grant award.
- Oxfordshire County Council - A420 Contingency Plans for traffic diversion
Council noted that once all comments were received on the diversion proposals they would be in a position to address any concerns. Members were reminded that the Highways Agency had agreed to install signs on the A34 providing early information as to problems on the A420, so larger vehicles would find alternative routes rather than use the A415.

Litter Blitz

Mr. Denton gave a report on a litter blitz that a volunteer group had undertaken. Over 20 sacks of rubbish had been collected. He wished to place on record his thanks to Marcham Cubs, Mr. Bough and Mr. Durrant for clearing ivy on the wall in North Street, and to Mr. Cumber for clearing the refuse.

2009/65

Public Participation

Post office/Shop

Mr. Cumber under s. 12(2) of the Code of Conduct, as a director of the company which owned the building, made a statement. He stated that the shop was on the market for letting as a lock up shop. He was working with Post Office Ltd to try and secure a temporary Post Office service until such time as a tenant for the shop was found, when the situation could be reviewed. He was meeting with the Post Office Authorities to discuss the situation.

Post Office/Shop

A resident expressed great concern at the attitude of the Parish Council in regards to the way the closure of the Post Office had been handled. He felt that the village was being destroyed, also similarly in regards to the Anson Trust, its future proposals and the closure of the Institute. He suggested that the Parish Council together with the District Councillor and County Councillor could have brought pressure to bear to keep the shop open. He suggested he was being fed false information. He referred to the lack of publication by the local press of his letters. He referred to the Anson Trust's proposals, the loss of the open field off Morland Road and the loss of the Institute. He suggested that the M.P., the County Councillor and the Vale of White Horse District Councillor too should become involved in the village matters. He stated the local people were desperate for help and they relied on the councillors to assist.

The Chairman, Mr. Bough and Mr. Hutchinson responded. They stated that the Parish Council had not sat idly by and had been in correspondence with the Post office Authorities. The Council was not linked with the Anson Trust, and there was certainly no plot to prevent publication of any correspondence in the local press as had been suggested. The publication was under the control of the editor. The resident was invited to speak individually to members outside of the meeting.

2009/66

Planning Applications

a) Decisions on previous applications

MAR/18688/1 Proposed timber decking and iron railing to first floor bedroom doorway to form flower box area.

12 Anson Close

Permitted

9th March, 2009

b) Applications dealt with prior to the meeting

Mr. Hutchinson spoke in regard to the following application and confirmed the Council's comments sent under delegated powers. He, together with Mrs. Allan, had attended a meeting with the principal and bursar. Part of the site was on landfill so relocating the building may be difficult. During pre-application consultation with the Vale of White Horse District Council, the current site had been the District Council's preference.

MAR/61841/38 Erection of two storey boarding accommodation block and associated car parking

Cothill House School

For: The Cothill Trust

Comments: Council felt that the development was unsympathetically close to the terraced private dwellings, some of which were grade II listed. The proposal could well be overbearing and dominant for these properties being only 5.5 metres away. There was some concern regarding the vehicular access crossing the public footpath.

Extraction of sand – Revised entrance at A338

Upwood Park

For: Hills Aggregates

Comments: Council had no objections

c) Applications for consideration at the meeting

MAR/3579/2 Proposed two storey side extension

64 Howard Cornish Road

For: Mr. M. Fern

Comments: Members initially had been concerned about the possibility of overlooking and need for additional car parking. After a site visit and talking with the applicant, these concerns had been addressed and the Council had no objections.

2009/67

District Councillor's Report

The Clerk advised that Cllr. Hanna, when lodging apologies, had asked that the postponement by Thames Water of the reservoir be referred to members.

2009/68

County Councillor's Report

In the absence of Cllr. Brown no report was available.

Mr. Cumber left the room

2009/69

Post Office

It was known that the lease of the shop was on the market and that the Post Office had had meetings with the current owners. If there was no new tenant then the Post Office would look to provide a different type of service but it might be restricted. Once the future of the Post Office and possible new shop tenant was known the Council, at that stage, may have to think about a community shop, or taking residents to other Post Offices in the community mini-bus. The Post Office would be closing on 22nd April for audit purposes, and it was then for the Post Office Authorities to put in a temporary person if possible.

Mr. Cumber rejoined the meeting. The Chairman, on a point of clarification asked Mr. Cumber whether the Post Office could continue in the premises on a temporary basis. This Mr. Cumber confirmed.

2009/70

Southern Central Oxfordshire Transport Strategy

Council noted the transport strategy. The proposals improved the Wantage – Didcot routes particularly given the increase in business at the Harwell International Business site and nearby areas. Members suggested it was a good strategy but commented that the A34 and its congestion problems should not be forgotten.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that this Council supports the strategy
- (ii) that concerns regarding the A34 and its congestion be passed to the Oxfordshire County Council

2009/71

Affordable Housing – Extension to properties – Exception sites

Council noted responses from the Rural Housing Trust and the Vale Housing Association regarding consultation with Parish Councils when applications were lodged by tenants or those with a shared equity interest, for extensions. The approach from both Housing Associations was different. Council expressed disappointment that the Vale Housing Association was not prepared to notify the Parish Council should an application be lodged for alterations to a property on the rural exception site. The Chairman reminded members about an event at Wantage Civic Hall on 22nd April “How to get on the housing ladder”

RESOLVED:

- (i) that Cllr. Jane Hanna be advised that this matter had been raised again.
- (ii) that an advertisement be placed in MAD News inviting those moving from Longfields to notify the Parish Council, so that steps could be taken to ensure that the planning agreements entered into for this site were observed.

- (iii) that a letter be sent to the Vale Housing Association asking that its consultation policy be reviewed and that the Parish Council be informed should they receive any applications for alterations to any of its properties on the rural exception site.

2009/72

Longfields Grass Cutting

Council noted that although Mrs. Turney had offered to cut the grass free of charge, no public liability insurance cover could be provided. The Clerk advised that this could present a risk for the Council and consequently council tax payers should an incident occur and there was not cover. The alternative would be to instruct S.T. Grounds Maintenance, who had insurance cover and who were already working as sub contractors to the Council in other areas Council considered that the risk was small and therefore

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the risk to the Council be noted
- (ii) that Mrs. Turney cut the grass in the Longfields play area, free of charge to the Council, without providing independent public liability insurance

2009/73

Calor – Oxfordshire Village of the year competition 2009

Council considered entering the competition this year. Council discussed the amount of work involved and

RESOLVED:

that the Council not submit a competition entry on behalf of the village this year.

2009/74

Training Event for Chairmen - Report

Mr. Denton, Chairman, gave a report on a training event that he and Mr. Walton as Vice-Chairman had attended.

2009/75

Proposed Staffing Committee

Council considered in general terms setting up a staffing committee, as it had been advised at the Chairmen's training event that an established structure was needed to manage staff. The Clerk advised that the next meeting of the Council was the annual meeting when committees and their membership were appointed. Specific terms of reference for such a committee were required.

RESOLVED:

that the matter be deferred to the next meeting.

2009/76

Projects

Council noted that in the budget Council had set aside funding for repairs to the war memorial steps and the hardstanding for the bottle bank area in Howard Cornish Road. Council noted that members of the public were dumping garden

waste and also leaving bags behind at the bottle banks that had been used to carry recyclables. It was noted that a litter bin was required. Mr. Denton advised that he would be talking in a private capacity to the children in school about the volunteer day and litter collected. Council received a report regarding the renovations to the youth shelter and the repairs to the steps at the start of the North Street footpath. The youth shelter work had been delayed owing to the bad weather in February. The Clerk confirmed with members that there were to be no concrete slabs behind the shelter and that the repainted colour was to be dark green.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that Mr. M. Davies be instructed to start the repairs to the war memorial steps
- (ii) that Mr. G. Ayres be instructed to undertake the hardstanding works for the bottle banks in Howard Cornish Road
- (iii) that an article be placed in MAD News reminding residents not to dump items by the bottle banks and to take the bags home.
- (iv) that the Vale of White Horse District Council be asked to provide a litter bin at the bottle bank area.

2009/77

Correspondence

- a) Vale of White Horse District Council – “Worried about facing redundancy” leaflet.
- b) Vale of White Horse – Parish Council newssheet
- c) Oxfordshire County Council – Primary School Review – view of stakeholders
- d) Oxfordshire County Council – Early Learning
Advertising material for local children’s centre handed to the School and playgroup.
- e) Vale of White Horse District Council/Wantage Breakfast Club
Information as to a business seminar at Lains Barn 14th May 8.00 a.m.
- f) CPRE – Oxford Green Belt Way Walk and Rally 19th April 3.00 p.m.
- g) Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils –Update
- h) Oxfordshire County Council – Changes to X15 Bus Service
Council noted that this bus would no longer go round the village and would stop on the A415 by the war memorial. Council expressed disappointment at this news and felt that the bus company would stand more chance of picking up residents should it serve the village.

RESOLVED:

that a letter be sent to the County Council and RH Transport concerning this.

2009/78

Accounts

Mr. Walton expressed concern that the Council's schedule of payments appeared in the supplementary clerk's report on the agenda and not specifically listed in the part of the agenda or minutes which were automatically available to the public. He suggested that this was a less than tight system. He suggested that the Council was in breach of its financial regulations. The Clerk advised that this had already been raised by the member with the Clerk and that she had advised that possibly putting details of all cheques issued automatically in the public domain may be a breach of the Data Protection Acts. She had also advised the member that advice was being sought from the Association of Local Councils and that when the advice was to hand, the matter would be put on the agenda for discussion. Members discussed the point raised and instructed the Clerk to place the matter on the agenda for the next meeting regardless of whether the legal advice from the Association of Local Councils, necessary to reach an informed decision, had been received.

Council noted the list of cheques numbered 1970-1977 to be signed and authorised payments totalling £2524.26 in respect of administration costs, play area/maintenance, grass cutting and sign.

2009/79

Matters Raised by members for information

Public Footpath from Church to Cemetery/Frilford

Mrs. Evans confirmed that this path had now been cleared by those undertaking community service. They were returning the weekend following Easter to paint the burial ground gate and fence.

Villager of the Year

Mr. Bough stated he no longer wished to organise the "villager of the year" award. A replacement would be considered at the May meeting.

Anson Field

Mrs. Ricketts stated that children kick balls against the pavilion building in the Anson Field, this was causing damage to drain pipes. She asked that future consideration be given to a "wall". This might be funded through grants and other contributions.

Anson Trust

Mr. Bough, as a Director of the Arthur Anson Memorial Trust Ltd reported that the Trust had completed the land option agreement, the school was not interested in the project and the value of the land for development had reduced. Matters would proceed, but not on the same scale. He confirmed that Mr. John Duffield had been contacted within the last 3 months regarding the Institute, but he does not have an interest in that. The joint working party of representatives of the Parish Council and Jane Hanna, would be meeting with the Trustees to receive an update on the position at the end of April.

Access to Council meetings

The Chairman stated he would make laminated signs for use to indicate the

room where council meetings were held.

Longfields – play area

Mrs. Turney stated that there had been dogs in the play area last week. She suggested suitable signs should be erected. She would liaise with the Clerk regarding this.

Anson Trust field - fence

It was noted that the fence along the edge of the public footpath was in a poor state of repair. It was suggested that the Anson Trust be approached to see whether they had plans to fence the field.

Garden Competition

It was suggested that a Spring Garden competition might be considered for another year. It was noted that this was not successful on a previous occasion when it had been tried.

Land at Howard Cornish Road/Junction of North Street/Sheepstead Road

Council noted that the Guides/Brownies were considering planting bulbs for their 90th year celebrations. This land was not in the ownership of the Parish Council. Consent would have to be obtained from the Vale Housing Association/County Council who owned the land.

2009/80

Items for MAD News

Council noted the list of items for inclusion in the village newsletter. An advertisement would be included for the Annual Parish Meeting containing reference to refreshments.

2009/81

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council would be held on Wednesday 13th May, 2009 in the residents' lounge, Duffield Place at 7.30 p.m. This would be the annual meeting of the Council

The meeting closed at 9.10 p.m.

Signed Date