



# Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

## Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting

18<sup>th</sup> April 2007 at 7:30 p.m.  
St John's Hall Mortimer

The Annual Meeting of the Parish was held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2007 in St John's Hall, Mortimer with Cllr K Davies in the chair.

Before the commencement of the Meeting, the Chairman of the Parish Council presented the 2007 Stratfield Mortimer Community Award. This year's award is a joint award to June and Colin Woodward for their work in founding and leading the Mortimer Local History Society.

**Present:** There were 53 people present (including Councillors).

- 1 **Apologies for Absence:** Apologies were received from Cllr G Puddephatt and Cllr A Smith.
- 2 **Minutes of 2006 Annual Parish Meeting:** The Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2006, which had been previously circulated, were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.  
**Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising.
- 3 **Parish Council's Annual Report from Parish Council Chairman:** The Chairman of the Parish Council (Keith Davies) introduced the Councillors and the Clerk and welcomed all new parishioners in Mortimer including residents of Mortimer Hill. He said that the Parish Council have had another very busy year and the Parish Office continues to be well used; many residents and councillors call in or 'phone on the open mornings. In addition over the last 12 months the office has been used for 97 additional committee and many other meetings plus 12 District Councillor Saturday Surgeries. The Clerk's role continues to be a very busy one, covering the entire administration and management of the Parish Council. Her responsibilities include:
  - i. the operation of the busy parish office and all correspondence;
  - ii. giving legal advice to the Parish Council;
  - iii. finance officer (dealing with the accounts, budgets, VAT returns, insurance etc);
  - iv. responsible for agendas and minutes of all Council and Committee meetings;
  - v. Cemetery Manager;
  - vi. Fairground Manager dealing with bookings, maintenance, safety inspections etc.;
  - vii. Commons Manager/Administrator dealing with all maintenance and legal issues;
  - viii. Web site manager;
  - ix. New projects such as funding for Mortimer Link mini bus, equipment for Fairground etc;
  - x. Community Award;
  - xi. Remembrance Day Parade;
  - xii. Newsletter Editor;
  - xiii. Liaison with various departments at West Berkshire Council;
  - xiv. Dealing with the many other matters that come along during the year.

**Finances:** The Parish Council total budget for income is down by £1,500 for the year 2007/08, due to less usage of the Cemetery (obviously it is very hard to predict an income budget for this). The income budget for the Fairground, generated from Fairground

Lettings, will stay the same as long as we continue to attract bookings from the main income providers such as the Fair, Mortimer Riding Club and tennis court users. Budgeted expenditure has increased on the previous year due mainly to the anticipated provision of partial funding for a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) as well as set-up costs for the proposed car park at Mortimer Station. Although the precept figure has increased by £4,961 the cost per household on the council tax for 07/08 for Band D properties has actually **gone down by £1.65**. This decrease is due to the fact that there are more houses in Mortimer now with the completion of Mortimer Hill and other small developments.

Planning Applications: Although West Berkshire Council are the Authority which determines planning applications, the Parish Council as a statutory consultee is invited to comment on all applications within the Parish. To this end the Planning Committee have met 27 times during the past 12 months and considered 97 applications. In order to press our views the Parish Council representative has spoken on 6 occasions at the West Berkshire Council Eastern Area Planning Committee Meetings.

All Parish Council Planning Committee Meetings are advertised on the two Parish Council Notice Boards outside The Post Office and outside The Library 3 days in advance and parishioners are welcome to come along to meetings and observe. These are usually held in the Parish Council Office at the back of the Library. Many people take advantage of viewing current planning applications which are available to view in the Parish Office on Tuesday/Thursday mornings, although all planning applications can now be viewed on the West Berkshire website.

Update on Parish Plan Action Plan: During the year the Parish Plan Actions have been updated with West Berkshire who have taken on board a number of the outstanding actions such as Mortimer Link funding, Parish Plan grant for the Youth Shelter, Rural Housing Trust planning steer, safe route to Willink School, new station car park etc. As many of the actions from the original plan are now complete or nearly complete West Berkshire Council recommend that the Parish Council now consider re-visiting the Parish Plan.

Village Design Statement: The working party made up of members of the public and councillors set up to prepare the Village Design Statement have now completed the final document which was submitted in early March to West Berkshire Council for consultation before they are able to adopt it as a material consideration in determining planning applications.

Rural Housing Trust: The Rural Housing Trust and West Berkshire Council planning department in consultation with the Parish Council are still looking at possible exception sites within the parish. As soon as more information is known a public meeting will be held.

Cemetery: Not many burials have taken place during the year. Since its inception we have only received one application to place a memorial rose in the garden of remembrance and The Council have decided to remove it. In the light of good practice and advice from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management the Cemetery regulations and forms are currently being updated by the Parish Council.

Roads & Footpaths:

Speed limit reduction: After years of campaigning by the Parish Council West Berkshire Council have reduced the speed limit on The Street from 40mph to 30mph between The Avenue and Pitfield Lane.

Footpath on the South Side of The Street: It was said to have become impracticable for legal and financial reasons to provide a continuous footpath along The Street and West Berkshire Council therefore advised at a public meeting in 2006 that improvements would be made to the existing footpaths. A pedestrian crossing has however been installed in a

location east of Kiln Lane.

Safe Route to Willink School: West Berkshire Council had previously decided to withdraw free bus passes to Mortimer children, but subsequently bowed to representations from the Parish Council that the identified so-called 'safe' footpath via a recreational wooded remote route would in fact be far from safe, and West Berkshire therefore agreed to reinstate the free bus travel.

Police enforcement lay-bys: Two police speed enforcement lay-bys have been installed by West Berkshire and are situated in front of the Fairground and close to Mortimer Lane respectively.

Street Lighting: As requested at last year's Annual Parish Meeting a working party was set up composed of members of the public and councillors, tasked with carrying out a feasibility study into whether additional street lighting in the village would be practicable or desirable. It would be reporting back to the Parish Council in due course.

Brewery Common:

Ownership: The legal freehold title held by SMPC is shortly to be officially registered at the Land Registry.

Prevention of Trespass: West Berkshire Council, which looks after Brewery Common in accordance with a Management Scheme (under the Commons Act 1899) has started to create protective ditches along the roadside boundaries to act as a deterrent to unauthorised vehicles.

The Fairground:

Fairground Trust and Community Building: Consequent upon the setting up of a new board of trustees on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2005 the grant of a lease for 21 years by the new Fairground Trust to SMPC was signed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2006. In accordance with urgent advice obtained from the South East England Development Agency the Parish Council proceeded to set up a Community Interest Company (CIC) in order to carry forward the on-going project to construct a new community building in place of the existing pavilion (which is clearly near the end of its life). The CIC has taken over the responsibility for all fund-raising and construction work plus the subsequent management and the meeting of running costs, under a suitable sub-lease which will need to be granted by the Parish Council.

Multisports Wall and Youth Shelter: These have recently been purchased and installed by the Parish Council on the Fairground to the west of the Car Park and have already proved very popular with the young people of Mortimer.

The Sportswall accommodates football, basketball and cricket and was partially funded by a grant from West Berkshire Council Arts and Leisure Development Team as part of the 'Leisure in the Parish Scheme'.

The Youth Shelter provides some partially covered seating and between dusk and 10:30pm has low level integral solar powered lighting. The facility has been partially funded by a West Berkshire Parish Plan grant of £5,000 which was given as a recognition and direct result of the successful creation of the Parish Plan.

Fairground Improvements and Upkeep: Since the granting of the lease in 2006 the Parish Council has carried out many projects on the Fairground including:

A new much needed wooden post and rail fence has replaced the 25 year old fence around the perimeter of the Fairground; The addition of additional wooden posts around the pond area near the war memorial to prevent unauthorised parking, especially by workmen and contractors; The installation of two five bar gates to allow access from the grazing area to the main part of the Fairground via the environmental area; The installation of two new galvanised steel litter bins in and just outside the play area plus three new dog bins; and replacement in the play area of the two toddler rocker toys (a Crazy Scrambler motorbike

and a Crazy Nellie elephant) which had been vandalised.

Vandalism: This continues to be a serious problem especially on the Fairground; for example the fence and gates around the play area have been bent and pulled out of shape; the two new five bar gates were badly damaged only two weeks after installation and the locking mechanism cut off; the newly repaired kissing gate by the edge of the cricket outfield and the conservation area was very badly vandalised just three weeks after being mended also there are problems with attempted unauthorised access by the cutting of locks, so if anyone sees anything suspicious please take down any details and call the police or the Parish Office. The total amount spent on rectifying this vandalism is costing £1,000s.

Working Party: This continues to meet on a monthly basis on the first Saturday of each month to carry out maintenance to the Fairground. New volunteers are always very welcome.

Mortimer Link Mini Bus Service: This service to Mortimer Station continues to be well used and West Berkshire Council has agreed to continue to part-fund the service. In addition to the contribution from the Parish Council. Demand is increasing and the number of passenger journeys has risen by approximately 10% over this last year and over 20% since the service started back in 2004. This represents an increase from an average of 102 per week in 2004 to 156 for the first three months of 2007. It is anticipated that the demand for the service is likely to increase further as the housing numbers in the village grow and the problem of parking at the station gets worse. Timetables and routes are advertised in the Parish Council Newsletter and are available on the web site.

New Station Car Park: First Great Western advise that in comparison with similar stations we are severely under-provided with car parking. Planning permission has therefore been applied for to provide approximately 100 car parking spaces in additional car park to the south of Mortimer station. Cars are parking and turning on the Grazeley Road and are damaging the recently completed flood defence up-grade and if this continues it will severely reduce the effectiveness of the flood defence scheme.

Communications:

Newsletter: The Parish Council continue to produce a thrice-yearly Parish Council Newsletter which is distributed to every house in the parish by volunteers. Many residents have said that they find the information very welcome.

Policing: The Parish Council has resolved to go ahead with the shared appointment with Burghfield and Sulhamstead Parish Councils of an additional Police Community Support Officer for the three council areas.

Parish Council Elections 2007: Nominations closed on 4<sup>th</sup> April and since the number of applications was the same as the amount of seats on the Parish Council there was no contested election. The Chairman thanked all the outgoing councillors and he welcomed three new councillors: Ian Titman-Reade, Austin Colaço and Mollie Lock. Graham Puddephatt, Sandra Harding and Graham Parry, were now standing down; and he gratefully acknowledged on behalf of everyone all their hard work over the years.

Web Site: All minutes, agendas and other parish council information can be viewed on the Parish Council website [www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk](http://www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk) and also on the two parish council notice boards outside the Post Office and the Library.

- 4 **Update on Street Lighting Feasibility Study:** Cllr Neil Kiley gave an update on the working party and advised that a public meeting would be held in June.
- 5 **Update on Police Community Support Officer:** Cllr Dudley Ives explained that the proposed Police Community Support Officer will be jointly partially funded with Burghfield and Sulhamstead Parish Councils. PCSO Steve Pengilly and PC Nick Evans gave a comprehensive report on the role of the PCSO.

## **6 District Councillor's observations:**

Cllr Keith Lock reported that there have been a number of planning issues locally especially in Mortimer where suddenly there seems to be an assault on any open space which can be built on. In the area the biggest long term threat is from Prudential's plan to build 7,500 houses over 25 years, in Burghfield but north of the M4. The whole area is in the flood plain and totally contrary to Government policy and the Insurance Industry's own policy which it has been pushing in discussions with the European Parliament. The original application has been withdrawn but we understand another will be made later this year. One important change in Planning Law which may be introduced by the Chancellor this year, is the Planning Gain Supplement, this will mean that the developer contributions made on any development which are currently known as Section 106 agreements and which provides money for local infrastructure etc. will be taken by the Government who will then guarantee to return at least 70% to the local Council. What a bureaucratic nightmare and areas like West Berkshire will lose by some £2m per annum. Education has again been West Berkshire's biggest item of expenditure and overall the Schools have performed well. The element of Government grant made direct to schools has risen by 5%. Locally Mrs Wynn the Head Teacher is due to retire from Willink School in the summer after 13 successful years. West Berkshire's recycling levels have now touched 24% but still no decision has been made about the proposed recycling site at Padworth. The recent application to establish a new site at Abbotswood near Newbury is to replace Pinchington lane not Padworth. We will continue to oppose the Padworth site principally on grounds of access. Next those of you who qualify will know that the changeover date for issuing travel tokens and bus passes for 2007-8 was brought forward to April 1<sup>st</sup>, this is to align the date for issuing tokens with the bus passes which must start on April 1<sup>st</sup> as it is a national scheme. West Berkshire set its budget at a meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007 and a tax increase of 2.8% was agreed, i.e. £30.64 at band 'D', not including any changes in parish Taxes and the Police and Fire Authority precepts which increased by about 5%.

## **7 Reports from local Charities:**

### **Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity:**

No Report

### **Clarke's Educational Foundation:**

The charity owns part of St Mary's School Mortimer and what used to be the Headmaster's Cottage. The income from renting this property together with the income generated from investments is distributed in the form of grants to support the educational needs of young persons who live in the parishes of Stratfield Mortimer, Mortimer West End and Wokefield. The charity is governed by a group of eight trustees, four appointed by the local parishes and the local authority, the vicar of Mortimer and three co-opted trustees. This year the charity has made grants of £16,825 to local schools, organisations and individuals. The main recipients were St John's and St Mary's Schools and Silchester School together with Mortimer pre-school and the local Brownie pack. The trustees have continued with the scheme to award bursaries to young persons starting at university and further education to assist them in the purchase of essential text books. Currently 8 young people are receiving bursaries totalling £3,850. The trustees would like to thank the Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity for their grant which has enabled us to fund this scheme. The trustees would like to record their grateful appreciation to our secretary Mrs Isobel de la Mothe who has retired after working with us for over twenty years. Isobel has administered the charity in a very efficient manner and has kept our admin. Expenses to under 2% of income. We would like to wish Isobel and Bernard many happy years together in their new home in Scotland. Our new secretary is Mrs. Daphne Wraight and we look forward to working together for many years. A copy of the Trustees Annual Report

and Accounts were tabled.

**Stratfield Mortimer Fairground Charity:**

The charity has progressed over the last year having been formed in June 2005. In August 2006 it reached agreement with the Parish Council on the details of the lease. This will initially produce a small income for the charity and allow the Parish Council to continue in its role of managing the Fairground for the village. Although a large proportion of the income for the charity has been spent on legal costs we were able to advertise for claims to be made of the charity and the trustees will be evaluating these claims as they arrive. The trustees expect that applications will be welcomed on an annual basis and we look forward to distributing the money as required by the charity.

**8 Report from the Stratfield Mortimer CIC (Community Interest Company):**

Mr Phil Edwards, Director of the CiC reported that the Community Centre project has been managed for a number of years by the Parish Council, and it was decided to transfer the ownership of the project to the CIC so that it could be brought to fruition. The CIC was formed in December 2006, and its objective is to get to a position where work on the new Centre can commence within a 12 month period. The Cricket Club have agreed to play their 2008 fixtures away from home, which presents a window of opportunity to start construction work from October/November this year.

We are pleased to report that the long standing financial commitment from RIN has recently been re-confirmed, and we also have a commitment from SEEDA that their grant remains available. These, plus other smaller financial commitments, total circa 200k.

Funding remains the one obstacle that prevents work starting, and we are currently pursuing a number of applications for grants from various charitable bodies.

**9 Statements by School Governors:**

**Mortimer St John's Church of England Infant School:** No Report.

**Mortimer St Mary's Church of England VA Junior School:** Mrs Jane Carpenter, Chair of Governors reported:

School Organisation: There are currently 225 pupils on roll, 105 girls and 120 boys. They are organised into eight class groups across 4 years. The approximate number of pupils for the academic year 2007/08 is 241. Following the completion of our two new classrooms last summer we are able to accommodate the 61 new students in September. With School numbers consistently over 200 the Budget is reasonably generous and we are able to continue to provide adequate cover for staff to have their statutory PPA (Planning Preparation and Assessment) time. We are also able to provide non-teaching support in all classrooms.

School Inspections: We were pleased with the outcome of the recent Ofsted Inspection. Particularly noteworthy were the inspectors' observations concerning the behaviour and attitude of our pupils – judged to be outstanding. Contributing to this outcome has been the support the parents give to the school's behaviour policy, the ethos of the school and the very good preparation the pupils receive at St John's, both in terms of behaviour and personal development. To the delight of staff, parents and Governors, The School was given an overall rating of "Good"

As a Voluntary Aided Church School we were also subjected to an additional inspection known as a Section 48 Inspection. This is designed to evaluate:

how well the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meets the needs of all learners; the impact of collective worship on the school community; the effectiveness of religious education; the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school. Once again we came through with flying colours and I am delighted to report that this inspection rated the School as "Outstanding".

Special Needs Self-evaluation, reporting to parents, inspection issues, reading schemes

and provision for gifted and talented pupils have all featured on staff meeting agendas this term. Staff continue to run booster lessons for year six pupils in English and Maths and our Year 6 students will sit their SATS exams in early May. Most of our leavers this year will be going to the Willink

#### Premises - Grounds Development

A 'trim trail' has been installed adjacent to the adventure playground. The quiet area and swimming pool redevelopments are underway providing a pool-safe fine grade rubber pool surround. The shelter providing shade will be erected for half the length of the swimming pool where the decking was established. We have also arranged for resurfacing work to be carried out in the courtyard area adjacent to the school hall. New furniture for the dining room and staff room has been ordered. New carpets have been fitted in both year six classrooms. A new oven has been installed in the kitchen where further refurbishment will take place later this year

**Governors:** The Governing body is almost at full strength comprising 17 out of the suggested 18. (We have a vacancy for a Support Staff Governor). This year we welcomed two new Governors; Mrs. Claire Edmundson and Mr. Julian Earl. As Chair of Governors I am ably supported by my Vice Chair and Mrs. Jane Bell. Governors have been very busy with the continued redevelopment of the school site and facilities. We are all disappointed that we have not yet been granted planning permission for the proposed car park and are continuing to investigate ways of solving the parking challenges at the start and end of the school day. Governors are also engaged in a review of all school policies and have recently received the school budget for the coming year which looks most promising.

**School Performance: 2006 Key Stage 2 SATs Results:** Pupils achieved above the national average in English, Maths and Science and reflected the hard work of pupils and staff and the success of intervention strategies particularly with regard to Boy's literacy.

**Other Activities:** Students continue to participate in a wide variety of after school clubs many of them with a sporting or musical theme as well as handicrafts and other activities. Students continue to support a wide range of charities and the School Council is active and effective and voicing students' opinions and suggestions. I was delighted to attend the recent 'Network Willink' concert where our pupils sang beautifully. It was also a delight to see many ex St Mary's students performing on the night. The work of the staff and Governors is supported by a continuously enthusiastic and committed Parent Teacher Association and by many charities and organizations in the area. We are all most grateful for their support and look forward to continue working with them over the coming years. Finally may I extend a warm welcome to the local Community and invite you to visit our School, simply contact Roger Green, the Head teacher.

#### 10 **Alfred Palmer Memorial Field:**

- a) **Appointment of Two Trustees:** It was reported to the meeting that there were 2 vacancies for trustees on the Alfred Palmer Memorial Field. One vacancy is in the gift of the current Chairman of the parish Council who has duly appointed Cllr Keith Lock. The second vacancy is filled by election at the Annual Parish Meeting. The only candidate nominated was Mr Paul Seward who was duly elected unopposed. The third Trustee, Mr D Gardiner, continues in office.
- b) **Report:** Mr John Dell reported that this years report is somewhat of a milestone, it sees all of the Management Committee standing down, three namely Major Leworthy, John Dell & David Grimwade have each completed over 40 years continuous service on this Committee and have a combined service of 127 years. Our thanks to the Parish Council for their continued financial assistance towards the up keep of the ground. This thank you for this year is somewhat muted by the fact that the Parish Council have decided that having funded the Field in its entirety since the running of

the field was handed to the Council in the 1950's they will only fund 50% of the required amount for the 2008/09 financial year. This unilateral decision without consultation or reference to the Trustees, Management Committee or the Football Club has been a major contribution to the resignation of the Committee. The hedges have been cut and the grass has been mowed on a regular basis. The weather has been excellent this past year and only a few games have been postponed this season. Our thanks to the main users of the ground for their co-operation in not using the ground on these occasions. Our thanks to the Football Club in helping us maintain the ground. The field is used on a regular basis from August to May with the Football Club running four adult teams who play on Saturday afternoons and Sunday morning. It is pleasing to see that both the Saturday and Sunday reserve sides contain a considerable number of local teenagers. The teams using the field have had a mixed season, the Saturday First Team and the Reserves whilst they will finish in the bottom half of their respective Division are well clear of a relegation spot. The Sunday first team have had a difficult season but should retain their position in the Division; the reserves having been relegated last season have redeemed themselves this season and are currently in third position. In addition to organised games of football it is pleasing to see the field used for many other activities during the year.

- 11 Report from Parish Council's Representative on St John's Hall:** Cllr Shorrocks reported that despite a reduction in letting income compared with the previous year the Hall still ended the year in a healthy and profitable financial state.

During the year we were able to welcome Teresa Willis to the committee, representing the Mortimer Pre-School Group, and we secured the services of Ms. Kerrie Tanner as our new hall cleaner.

As is customary, routine maintenance was dealt with as and when problems arose. In addition to the necessary regular task we have installed some new sodium lights for the main hall, bought new folding tables and replaced all the chairs. (The cost of the latter being shared with Mortimer Dramatic Society) The hall curtains, at all of the windows in the main hall, are in the process of being taken down, cleaned and re-hung.

The heating system now has an extra pump installed and until recently the system was working more efficiently. The recent boiler breakdown has now been remedied.

Last summer we were pleased to allow the Berkshire Breast Screening Unit to use the forecourt to provide a valuable service to the village and we expect them to return in the future.

Much discussion has taken place during the year regarding the proposed extension and refurbishment of the hall and progress, all be it slow, is being made. When we are closer to detailed plans there will be a meeting of all the main hall users to discuss the proposals.

I am sure the whole village would like to thank all the members of the committee for their efforts during the year especially Mrs. Mari Fleming (Secretary), Sandra Waller (Treasurer) and John Bull (Maintenance) on whom the bulk of the work tends to fall. We would also like to say a special thank you to Ann Waller who is leaving the committee after many years of service.

- 12 Report from Tennis Club:** No Report

- 13 Report from Cricket Club:** Mr Simon Beard reported 'the club has made steady progress on the field, and have a few new players coming into the club, although not many are from the village. We are extending the season this year until the end of Sept. So in effect have more matches to play). We have several fund raising events which are normally well attended by the members etc. Financially the club is sound and are managing to pay its own way. We as with others are trying to raise money for the new Community building that may eventually be built on the site of Mortimer Cricket Club's current building. We are

about to venture into the world of coaching some of the youngsters from St Mary's School in the art of quick Cricket. That should start fairly soon as they are entering a quick cricket competition. Hope fully we will attract some new members into the club.'

**12 Open Forum:**

- Mr Tom McCloughlin, a Director of the Cic, showed plans for the proposed larger version (£550,000) of the community building on the Fairground.
- Resident Mr J Clatworthy asked about the proposed expansion to the Station Car Park. Cllr Kiley replied that the Parish Council had already submitted planning permission and that West Berkshire Council will look at Highway and safety etc.
- Cllr Tom Shorrocks advised that the Stratfield Mortimer Village Design Statement is with West Berkshire Council for consultation and it is hoped that it will be adopted by July.
- Cllr Thorpe asked that if any resident has any unwanted bus tokens to donate them to the Volunteer Bureau.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9:30 p.m.

The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting is Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2008 at 7:30 p.m.