



# Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

held on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2017 at St John's Hall Mortimer

Present: Approximately 30 parishioners and councillors.

The meeting commenced at 7:32 pm.

The attendees agreed that The Clerk should take the minutes.

1. Cllr. M Dennett, Chairman of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council, welcomed all attendees.

- 2. To receive the minutes of the 2016 Annual Parish Meeting:**

It was agreed that the minutes should be taken as read. They had been available on the Parish Council web site for some time and a copy was on display in the hall. Cllr Dennett reported, regarding the Open Forum, that the two wheelie bins outside the Community Centre were not the property of the Community Centre and were removed soon after the meeting.

- 3. Update on local Policing by Thames Valley Police:**

PC Ian McDonnell emphasised that the latest figures showed that crime was relatively low in Mortimer. He also stated that the form of Neighbourhood Policing would change in June. There would be separate response and investigation teams which should result in quick responses to incidents. PCSOs would also be reverting to a more traditional role of providing police visibility in the community. PC McDonnell also stated that there appeared to be a reluctance in the community to provide statements on incidents; without such evidence the police were unable to further proceed with charges.

A greater sharing of information between Hampshire and Berkshire Police teams, which had been lacking before, is now taking place.

In answer to a question regarding local NAG groups, PC Ian McDonnell commented that they had changed dramatically to be more informative, giving more feedback information.

- 4. An election for the appointment of a Trustee (Regulation 3 Trustee) for the Alfred Palmer Memorial Field Trust (3 year term)**

There was only one nomination for this post and Sarah Smith (the outgoing trustee) was reappointed until April 2020. John Hannawin (trustee) gave a brief outline of the trust's activities and the importance of the help and support given by SMPC.

- 5. Update on Stratfield Mortimer Development Plan:**

Cllr Pat Wingfield reported on progress with the NDP:

This time last year when I reported on the NDP it had been submitted to WBC and they had just finished their own consultation. A lot has happened since then!

- Once that consultation was complete an independent Examiner was appointed.
- He spent a long time examining the NDP and its supporting documents and then decided, most unusually, to hold an oral hearing.
- This took place over 2 days at the end of August, in WBC council offices, when anyone who had sent in representations could attend and speak. In the event about a dozen individuals and organisations spoke.
- There was also a site visit on the afternoon of the second day when the examiner visited the village and all the development sites that had been considered for housing development.
- In October the examiner reported and while he was largely content with the NDP he was concerned about what he felt was a lack of a specific environmental impact assessment for the possible development sites. On that basis he recommended that the NDP should not be put to a referendum.
- This was of course not what had been expected and after discussions with WBC the parish council requested WBC not to consider the examiners recommendations until May of this year. This would allow time for an environmental assessment to be carried out which would inform their decision.
- Such an assessment was commissioned from an independent consultant and was carried out in January of 2017.
- Taking the results of that assessment into account, as well as other factors, the parish council, in February, determined that they felt the NDP should now go to referendum. They have asked WBC to recommend that course of action to their members.
- WBC officers have said that they are minded to do that and as such they have undertaken another round of consultations to inform interested parties of that view and seek any reactions. That consultation has just closed and there have been 23 responses. Officers are considering the responses and what their final recommendations should be.
- It is understood that WBC will consider this matter at its full council meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May.

**6. The Annual Report of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council:** Cllr. Dennett gave a resume of the activities of the parish council as follows:

At the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council last May, Cllrs Mike Dennett and Julian Earl were re-elected as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively for 2016/17. Following the resignation of Cllr Angie Philips, no election was called and Mick Johnson was co-opted (from three applicants) at the July meeting. Unfortunately, Mick has just tendered his resignation. I would like to thank him for his useful contributions during the last nine months.

Cllr Pete Blagden has also just resigned. Pete was first co-opted to the Council in June 2003 and has played a major part in many activities since then. The Council thanks you for your many contributions and will miss you. Notice of the two vacancies will be posted shortly and if no election is called the Council will advertise for candidates for co-option.

Following a spell as locum Clerk, Haydn Selywn-Jones has now been in post as Clerk for a year. In March, Lynn Hannawin joined the staff as a part-time Administrative Assistant, a post which attracted twelve applications. Frank Stansfield continues his sterling work as out part-time Custodian.

During the past year the Council has continued its routine work but has also undertaken extra activities. On the Fairground, the routine maintenance has been supplemented with a phased programme of gorse clearance, clearance of vegetation along the boundary with Badgers Croft and tree work to remove dangerous branches. The Council did have difficulty in getting parts and suitable trained contractors to repair the 'Titan' on the Fairground. However, this has now been done and in addition the two gates to the small children's play area have been replaced.

The Cemetery has had seven burials and six cremations during the year and the hedging around the extension has been completed. The Planning Committee has considered over 70 applications in the last year and passed its comments to West Berkshire Council (WBC). Councillors have deployed SID (Speed Indicator Device) twice this year, each time at a number of sites within the Parish. The problem with speeding remains the few cars with excessive speeds. The Council has tried to improve communications with the public via Facebook, the newsletter and the website. The web site is being considered for improvement including access to more Council documents. In addition, Major Kemp's research on the soldiers listed on the War Memorial has been put on the website. The Council again provided a Christmas tree for the Fairground but sadly the lights were completely destroyed by vandals.

During the year the Council decided not to renew the PCSO contract as there was no demonstrable added value in paying for this, a view also arrived at independently by Burghfield and Sulhamstead Parish Councils who were our partners. The Council also responded to WBC on their budget proposals and has been involved in discussions with WBC on the future of Mortimer Library. The Council has agreed in principle to contribute financially to the library budget provided it can be clearly shown to be for the benefit of parishioners. Volunteers are needed and that is currently being handled by

WBC. There is a need to set up a Library Liaison Group involving members of the community to get involved in shaping the future form of the library. The Council meet with the Royal British Legion regarding Garth Hall and has commissioned a structural survey to estimate the costs of returning it to use and whether or not it makes sense to take over as trustees of the Hall. The Council has been involved in discussions with WBC about the proposed zebra crossing outside St John's school. The Council disagreed with WBC's interpretation of the street lighting requirements, but supported the project which should be carried out this summer.

The SMPC budget for 2017/18 increased the Band D Council Tax, payable to the Council to £82. This followed no increase in the previous year and is still considerably less than Burghfield (£103). The strategy for this was explained in the February 2017 newsletter, but in brief the Council had no funds available for grants (such as the Library and Handybus) or to press ahead with Community Projects.

In the latter respect, the Council last May set up a NDP Community Projects Committee to help assess priorities for projects, to ascertain who can help implement such projects, to identify sources of funding and to report back to Full Council. Projects being considered vary in scale: a Heritage Trail in the Parish is almost complete, additional parking at the station has been kick started and a planning application involving Englefield estate and GWR is likely by the end of the year. The possible footpath / cycleway between Burghfield and Mortimer was put on hold for one year at the November 2016 meeting because of concerns over costs and safety aspects. A project on sports facilities has started and that on traffic management has highlighted two issues (parking on Grazeley Road) and the effects of any development in the village. These are being taken forward by the appropriate committees.

At this meeting last year, I reported that the Council was organising the Queen's 90th celebration on the Fairground and hoping it would be a success. I am very glad to say it was. The Beacon will be lit again on 11th November 2018 (Remembrance Day) when a nationwide chain of beacons will be lit to remember the end of the First World War. Finally, I would like to thank the council staff and all the councillors for all their time, commitment, and effort over year as we strive to serve the community

## **7. Open Forum and Questions:**

The Open Forum raised the questions of parking on and the road condition of the Street. District Cllr Graham Bridgman confirmed part of the Street would be resurfaced in the summer.

The meeting closed at 8:15 pm