

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

held on 16th June 2015 @ 7.30 pm

at St. John's Hall, Mortimer

Present: Approximately 30 parishioners and councillors.

The meeting commenced at 7.31 pm.

The attendees agreed that Cllr. Lewis should take the minutes.

- 1 Cllr. M. Dennett, Chairman of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council, welcomed all attendees.
- 2 **To receive the Minutes of the 2014 Annual Parish Meeting.** The minutes had been on the Parish Council web site for some time and hard copies were available for inspection. It was agreed that the minutes should be taken as read.
- 3 **Update on Local Policing by Thames Valley Police.** Due to operational changes Thames Valley Police were unable to attend.
- 4 **Presentation of the 2015 Stratfield Mortimer Community Award to Mrs. Alison Richardson.** This year there were six nominations and the Committee were unanimous in making the Award to Mrs. Alison Richardson. Mrs. Richardson is currently Chair of St. Mary's Governors, a Governor of Willink School, a member of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Committee, a member of MVP Committee and has worked really hard for the village over many years. Cllr. Dennett duly presented the plate.
- 5 **Update on Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan.** Full details of this are available on the NDP web site. Cllr Wingfield gave a summary of some of the more interesting facts:
 1. 1285 questionnaires had been returned and this represented 40% of the electorate; this was an excellent response and gives credence to the NDP .
 2. 55% were in favour of a single development behind St. John's School.
 3. Views on street lighting were well spread: 34% wanted none, 28% wanted ground level lighting on pavements and paths, 24% wanted lamp post lighting at junctions and 13% wanted lamp post street lighting throughout.
 4. Opinions seemed evenly divided about public toilets in the middle of the village.
 5. The vast majority wanted the Fairground and the Alfred Palmer Memorial Field to be designated Local Green Spaces.
 6. Draft documents should be completed later summer.
 7. It is hoped that the Referendum will be early next summer.
- 6 **The Annual Report of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council.** Cllr. Dennett gave a resume of the activities of the Parish Council as follows:

"The Parish Council year starts with the Annual Meeting of The Parish Council in May. At that meeting in May 2014 I was elected Chairman and Cllr Julian Earl Vice Chairman.

I had a rude awakening to that role as a few days later travellers invaded the Fairground by

cutting through the locks. Thanks to the public, who photographed the cutting down of a small tree, the Clerk and the police were able to serve eviction notices on each of the 21 caravans. The clear up operation cost the Parish approximately £1300. Security has been increased and the Council hopes the public will keep a watching eye and report any suspicious activity.

During the year Cllrs Alan Thorpe and Danusia Morsley resigned. No election was called, so the Parish Council advertised for candidates for co-option. Six candidates were interviewed and Cllrs Tony Butcher and Andrew Richardson were co-opted in October. Sadly, serving Cllr John Morden passed away. John was Chairman of the Parish Council 1997 to 2000 and Chairman of the Planning Committee from 2000 to 2014, a position he carried out with great care and diligence. The Council has been able to name the new housing development in West End Road as Morden Close in his memory.

What has the Parish Council achieved during the last year? Some of the important aspects are:

a) Continued to support and contribute to the Neighbourhood Development Plan, as outlined by Cllr Pat Wingfield earlier in the meeting. This is an extremely important activity which will influence the future form of the village.

b) Set up and funded a Parish Plan Refresh Group (now called Community Plan) which will be led by Rebecca Barker and is concerned with facilities within the village. A launch meeting is scheduled for 22nd September.

c) Obtained a grant of £45,000 from Sports England to refurbish the tennis courts. Despite some difficulties, and input from the public about drainage problems, the work was completed and passed a comprehensive inspection by Sport England. The courts include a 'Serveace' facility in the fence which enables one person to practise shots by themselves.

d) Installed a sports shelter and bench on the tennis courts. This was funded by a grant from West Berkshire Council of £4,170 and £760 of S106 funds from housing developments.

e) Commissioned a full tree survey of the Fairground, Windmill Common and the Cemetery. This identified works that were needed for public safety and all these works were carried out.

f) Was delighted to receive a donation of a bench in memory of Rita Mace (a former resident), which was installed in July between the pond and the cricket outfield on the Fairground.

g) It was a busy year. The Council responded to WBC Housing Development Planning Document and the Planning Committee met twelve times dealing with 40 applications. During the year the Parish Council Cemetery had eight burials and three cremations.

h) Frank Stansfield, our Custodian, passed a RoSPA Play Safety Inspection Course and now carries out weekly inspections of the play equipment. Frank also now collects all litter and empties bins on the Fairground. Carrying out these aspects in house is providing a better service than the previously contracted out services.

i) In the budget for 2015/16 the Council decided to increase the precept request to £112,840 from £90,830 in 2014/15 to enable it to deliver additional amenities and services.

The precept request had only increased slightly over the last seven years and next year there will be no Council tax support grant. The change means that the Band D Council Tax charge rises from £56.94 to £69.70. This may sound a lot but in Theale the charge is £81.91 and in Burghfield £104.03. The main projects to be carried out are to refurbish the Fairground car park, provide new information boards on the Fairground, management work on the ponds, better Christmas tree and lights, better and more notice boards in the village, install bollards to prevent pavement parking and a World War I anniversary project.

This report would normally have finished in April, but the meeting was postponed because of the Parish Council elections. At the election, in May, two new members were elected, Councillors Nick Carter and Chris Lewis. Cllr Audsley has since resigned and members of the public have requested an election. West Berkshire Council have issued a provisional timetable, with notice of election issued on 9th July, close of nominations on 17th July and the election on 13th August”.

7 Open Forum and Questions:

A question was asked about the replacement of the post and rail fencing around the Fairground. The Council hoped to plant some more hedging and it was intended that this together with the ditch and bank would mean that there was no direct replacement.

The meeting closed at 7.49 pm.