



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting

17 April 2013 at 7:30 p.m.

St John's Hall Mortimer

The Annual Meeting of the Parish was held on Wednesday 17 April 2013 in St John's Hall, Mortimer.

Prior to the meeting people present were able to circulate and chat to councillors, Police, MVP and other local groups and view their displays. The meeting itself started at 7.30pm.

Present: There were 78 people present.

1.	<p>Welcome by the Chairman: Cllr Graham Puddephatt welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all those who had helped to put the meeting together. The Chairman proposed that J Kirk take the minutes of the meeting and this was unanimously agreed.</p>
2.	<p>To receive the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meetings held on the 18 April 2012 The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 18 April 2012 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman. In the 'Open Forum' section of the 2012 Meeting the Parish Council were asked to look into the feasibility of providing public toilets on the Fairground.</p> <p>The Parish Council subsequently investigated the possibilities. Having temporary toilets, as used for one off events, was not considered practical on grounds of cost, hygiene and possible vandalism. Quotations were obtained for permanent facilities and the cost ranged from £47,450 to £59,000 with an additional cost of up to £20,000 for utility connections. In addition, the costs of cleaning and maintenance would be approximately £13,000 per year. The Parish Council has agreed that it could not make provision for public toilets at present.</p>
3.	<p>Presentation of the Stratfield Mortimer Community Award 2013: The Chairman presented the 2013 Stratfield Mortimer Community Award to Mr Harry Smith for his many years of dedicated service. Harry moved to Mortimer in 1968 and worked in London. He was the treasurer of St John's Hall for some years but he stood down when he felt he didn't have enough time to give. However, he said he would audit the accounts. The word spread that Harry was a willing auditor, he soon found himself auditing the accounts for nine other organisations: St John's Hall, Playgroup, Toddlers, Mortimer Flower Circle, The Gun Club, W.I, Girl Guides, Scouts and The British Legion. He is still auditing some of the above, over 40 years later.</p>
4.	<p>Annual Report of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council from the Chairman of the Council Cllr G Puddephatt: Cllr Puddephatt began by introducing each of the councillors present (14 out of 15)</p> <p>'The Parish Council has had busy year. During the year Cllr Rebecca Barker stood down. Thanks go to Rebecca for all her contributions to the Council, including being the previous Chairman. A By Election was subsequently called and Austin Colaço was elected unopposed.</p> <p>Some of the activities and responsibilities of the Parish Council are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing The Fairground and the facilities on it (except the Community Centre) • Managing the four Commons within the Parish • Managing the Parish Council's Cemetery • Statutory consultee on local planning applications made to West Berkshire Council • Liaising with West Berkshire Council on many matters • Having representation on various local bodies

- Having a Parish Council Office open to public two mornings a week
- Responding to current Local and Central Government initiatives,
- Setting and managing the Parish Precept which part funds the Council
- Part funding of a Police Community Support Officer
- Organising local events such as the Diamond Jubilee Event
- Championing and consulting with the parish such as the Superfast Berkshire Broadband project
- The full Parish Council met every month except in August (and this year will meet monthly except in August and December). Meetings are open to the public.
- The Council has six Committees: Finance and General Purposes; Planning; Fairground, Trees and Amenities; Roads, Footpaths and Commons; Cemetery; Communications. These have met as required in the last year.

Some of the achievements of the Parish Council during the last year were:

- Very successful Diamond Jubilee/Beacon Lighting event held on the Fairground on Monday 4th June - thanks to all involved. More information on this is in the June 2012 Newsletter (on website).
- Superfast Broadband Berkshire SMPC contribution
- Talks with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue regarding the possible closure of Mortimer Fire Station.
- Acquiring land with a 100 year lease for a Cemetery extension adjacent to SMPC existing Cemetery
- New equipment on The Fairground: New multiplay equipment, two new wacky spinners, outdoor table tennis table and surface (purchased with the aid of a grant from WBC)
- Community Christmas Tree for a second year with carol singing
- The War Memorial cleaned and restored
- Resolving to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for Stratfield Mortimer

Budget and Precept 2013/2014

- This has been a difficult year to arrive at a draft budget as not only had the Parish Council had to contend with the normal constraints but the Government has changed the rules as to how Parish Council Precepts are calculated.
- Reductions have been made in the Fairground budget and Roads, Footpaths and Commons budget in order to provide monies to pay for new budget items such as the Parish Council's contribution towards the Super Fast Broadband three year project) and to start the Parish's Community Development Plan. Savings have also been made across the Administration budget to minimise the impact of a £3,000 increase in rent from West Berkshire Council for the Parish Council Office.
- To help with the overall budget situation there will be no grants made to local organisations in the 2013/14 financial year
- The daily hire charge for business use of the Fairground has been increased to £85 (from £76.87), with a reduction to a nominal fee of £10 per day for Non Profit Organisations. Cemetery fees have been increased by 50% to reflect more nearly the true costs.
- The precept requested by the Parish Council this year is £92,370, but because of the change in rules, this has been partly offset by a Government grant of £6,639.41. Therefore the figure shown on your Council Tax Bill as funding for Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council is the difference between these two figures, ie: £85,730.59.
- There are 1,707 households within the Stratfield Mortimer boundary, graded across Bands A-H. An average (Band D) household charge for 2013/2014 is £53.67 (after the Government Grant Supplement). The average Band D charge for the previous two years has been:

2012/2013	£51.57
2011/2012	£51.50

Other matters:

- In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the Parish Council adopted a revised Code of Conduct on 13 September 2012. This is available on the Parish Council website.
- In accordance with the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012,

the Council also adopted a Declaration of Interest Form which has been completed by each Parish Councillor and will be available on the new website.

- Mortimer Link Minibus to Station - West Berkshire have terminated their grant of £6000 per year towards this service year but subsequently agreed to support to the end of September. It appears that substantial additional funding will be required to be able to continue the service.
- Vandalism - The Fairground has suffered a lot of vandalism over the past year, while this seems to have abated at the moment the repairs have cost the Parish Council a total of £14,832 (from earmarked Section 106 developer monies and not from the Council's precept). The vandalism to the multiplay unit in the Children's Play Area meant it could not be repaired and so had to be replaced at a cost of £12,555. This figure is included in the total above.
- A new tennis court booking procedure is now kindly managed by Budgens. The Council sincerely thanks McColls for all their work in managing the Tennis Court bookings for many years and for all their patience and service. We also have new nets and the courts have been cleaned.
- There is to be a new Parish Council website soon. Because of new statutory requirements for all Government websites, the Parish Council took the decision to go with a sector specific web site provider. The Parish Council sincerely thanks John Hannawin for kindly setting up and providing the PC website for nearly a decade and for his valuable help (and patience) during this time.'

Cllr Puddephatt then took Questions from the floor.

Q The Chairman (C/M) was asked several questions relating to the Council's contribution to Superfast Broadband (SFBB) including the area it would cover: justification for the Parish Council's contribution of £21,000 over three years and how many residents were involved in the decision to proceed.

A C/M explained that the area also covered from the Mortimer telephone exchange covered not only Mortimer itself but probably included Beech Hill, Wokefield and Mortimer West End as BT's boundaries are not necessarily in line with civil boundaries. The Parish Council had given the whole parish the opportunity to attend a public meeting which was held in February 2012 in the Methodist Church Hall. This was extensively advertised on the website, notice boards, Parish Council Newsletter and a flyer delivered to every property in the parish. 70 people attended the meeting and a show of hands indicated that all but one of those present were in favour. The Parish Council subsequently resolved to proceed with the scheme. Progress has since been reported in the Newsletter, Minutes etc.

Q A further question was asked regarding the funding for SFBB v the Mortimer Link Mini Bus to the railway station.

A. C/M explained that the PC had to make choices and the SFBB was something which would benefit a large number of people as opposed to one which affected relatively few people. He also explained that in any case the PC resolved to sign up to SFBB in March 2012 and it was not until February 2013 the PC were informed that two thirds of the grant funding for the Mortimer Link Service was being terminated by WBC.

Q. The Chairman was asked to explain the circumstances surrounding the increase in rent of £3,000 to West Berkshire Council for the Parish Council Office.

A. Upon renewal of the Lease (3rd time) the Parish Council had lost its free use of the office with a nil peppercorn rent. It will continue to pay its contribution towards the utility bills. The P/C has looked at the limited alternative premises to rent and concluded that there isn't anything suitable at a comparable cost.

Q How will the reduction in the budget for 2013/2014 for the Roads, Footpaths & Commons Committee be reflected in the service received.

A This will not show a reduction in the service provided by the Parish Council from this budget and the Clerk confirmed that one of the main items of expenditure in the previous financial year was the restoration and cleaning of the war memorial (which is carried out on an infrequent basis).

Q Clarification as to how the Parish Council communicates with the whole village.

A Parish Council website, notice boards, public notice boards, Minutes and quarterly newsletter delivered to each house in the parish.

5. Update and Discussion on the Parking Issues within the village from Mr Andrew Garrett.

Principal Traffic & Road Safety Engineer, West Berkshire Council:

Mr Garrett advised:

‘There have been 4 parking reviews in Mortimer within the last 10 years the main one being in 2008. There are many reasons why we keep reviewing parking restrictions – a change in the environment, new developments/relocation of businesses, parking patterns change. Not a quick hit as parking restrictions require the support of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). There is a cost to advertise a TRO in a local paper so we combine a number of areas to save money. There is a statutory process to follow that can be very time consuming, up to 12 months depending on the number of objections received.

Statutory process:

- Requires executive member approval – I have started this process as it was included as part of my teams work programme for 2013/14 which was approved at the end of March.
- Assess issues– issues are identified in a number of ways which include correspondence from Parish Councils, local members and local residents. We investigate the issues which require a number of site visits.
- Design restrictions – to address the issues identified and the likely effect of any displaced parking is taken in to consideration.
- Preliminary consultations – we consult with Parish Council and ward members and amend the scheme according to their comments.
- Statutory consultation – formal process of TRO where we advertise on street, in the local paper and on our website. This is advertised for a duration of 3 weeks.
- Individual Decision – This is the process formally reporting objections received during the advertised TRO.
- Implementation- this requires a further notice in the local paper sealing the TRO and the order needs to come into effect when all the signs and markings are in place. The timescale can depend on the number of posts required. Restrictions are enforced by WBC and we carry out regular enforcement.
- Review – investigate any knock on effects.

What are we doing now – we are aware of parking issues in Victoria Road (near the Doctors surgery) and on The Street. At The Street a long term solution needs to be investigated which includes improvements at the railway station. WBC have a meeting next month with Network Rail and First Great Western and the Parish Council will be invited to that meeting.

We have started investigating the parking issues in Mortimer and anticipate that the restrictions will be in place before Christmas.

Q. If there is a serious accident will that speed up the parking restriction process?

A. Probably not as the statutory process still has to be followed.

S. A statement was made saying there are continuing issues by the school and Pitfield Lane due to poor parking and driving?

Q. Because of the parked cars in the lower end of The Street the street cleaning machine has been unable for several months to clear the build up of detritus and to clean the drains which are on that side of the road. This is important because this area has a flooding problem. Could the cars be prevented from parking on the day the drains are cleaned?

Q. Does WBC realise that because of the camber of the road by the turning to the Church it is also causing a problem with flooding?

S. A statement was made saying WBC’s 2006 Core Strategy document stated that it would improve parking at Mortimer Railway Station and this problem will be exacerbated with the loss of the mini bus service.

A. Mr Garrett said he would raise all the above questions/statements with West Berkshire Council (WBC) and report back to the Parish Council.

5. **Update on local policing by Inspector Warren McKeown:**

Insp. McKeown introduced the Police team and then gave an update on policing in Mortimer. He advised that the Police do take vandalism seriously and asked if anyone had any information to please phone 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. In answer to a question on crime statistics for Mortimer Railway Station car Park he promised that he would try to get a representative from British Transport

	<p>Police to attend the Annual Parish Meeting next year.</p> <p>Q. What are the Police doing about soft drug and alcohol use on The Fairground?</p> <p>A. To be able to arrest someone they have to be in possession. He said that if an area was a designated area as an alcohol free zone it would give the Police more powers of arrest.</p>
7.	<p><u>Presentation and Launch of the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan by Cllr Mike Dennett:</u></p> <p>Cllr Dennett gave a presentation entitled 'Neighbourhood Planning - Stratfield Mortimer' (available on the Parish Council website). This outlined what Neighbourhood Planning was, what it could do and what it could not do. It then outlined why the Parish Council had resolved to proceed with developing a Neighbourhood Development Plan. The various steps of the process in producing a plan, from determining the desirability of a plan to the referendum were then outlined. It summarised the current situation and the proposed next steps which would include consultation with the community. The meeting was then asked for questions and whether it supported the Parish Council in the development of a Neighbourhood Development Plan. After some discussion the view of the meeting unanimously supported the development of a Neighbourhood Development Plan.</p>
8.	<p><u>Report and update on matters raised at the Community Gathering held on the 19 November 2012:</u></p> <p>Q Why were invitations restricted?</p> <p>A Because of space it was only for representatives of groups within the village and the idea was to facilitate a meeting where different groups could meet and chat and possibly work together in the future by maybe holding a series of meetings. This didn't really work and the meeting held in November did not meet its objectives so the Parish Council will need to decide whether or not to repeat.</p>
9.	<p><u>Open Forum:</u></p> <p>S. A statement was made that the school clock at St Mary's School is now working again after 5 years.</p> <p>A Noted.</p> <p>Q Clarification on the procedure for dealing with and reporting of correspondence addressed to the council (including cc on correspondence to WBC)?</p> <p>A This will be taken back to the Parish Council and reported back to the Annual Parish Meeting next year.</p> <p>Q Has the new format for this meeting been successful?</p> <p>A The consensus of the meeting agreed that the new format was an improvement although interestingly the new format had been set up with the intention of making the meeting shorter (and more interesting!). It was felt that it was important that local organisations were given the opportunity, as they were today, to be able to display information regarding their organisation.</p>

There being no other business the meeting closed at 10:25 p.m.

The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting is Wednesday 16 April 2014