



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting

18th April 2012 at 7:30 p.m.

St John's Hall Mortimer

The Annual Meeting of the Parish was held on Wednesday 18th April 2012 in St John's Hall, Mortimer.

Present: There were 35 people present.

- 1 **Welcome by the Chairman:** Cllr Rebecca Barker welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 2 **To receive the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meetings held on the 21st April 2010 and the 20th April 2011:** As the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 20th April 2010 were not approved at the last Annual Parish Meeting these were approved as a true record and included an additional sentence to the second bullet point in No 11 Open Forum, and signed by the Chairman. The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 20th April 2011 were also approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.
- 3 **Presentation of the Stratfield Mortimer Community Award 2012:** The Chairman presented the 2012 Stratfield Mortimer Community Award to Mrs Jean May for her many years of dedicated service to the Burghfield & Mortimer Volunteer Bureau as secretary, occasional treasurer and driver. Mrs May has also spent 18 years as a volunteer helping the health visitors at the weekly baby clinic in the village.
- 4 **Annual Report of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council from the Chairman of the Council Cllr R Barker:**

'Once again the Parish Council has had a busy year. There have been some changes of Parish Councillors over the past year. In May after local council elections we welcomed the addition of three new Councillors, John Bull, Mike Dennett and Julian Earl and welcomed back a previous Councillor, Graham Puddephatt. My thanks go to Austin Colaco and Keith Davies for all their time and efforts while they were Councillors and I wish them well in all future endeavours. And we remember the sad loss to our community of Steve Clark.

The Fairground received a major facelift in January with the replacement of the diseased Horse Chestnut trees with native lime trees. As part of the Parish Council's contract with the tree supplier the trees are receiving care in their first year to help them establish and hopefully thrive.

The Parish Council agreed to install power on the Fairground, in particular, to allow the village to enjoy the lights and Christmas celebrations around our village tree. This year the Parish Council worked in partnership with Together in Mission and Mortimer Village Partnership to hold a carol singing event around our tree. This was a great success and I hope this is an event that can be enjoyed by the people of this village for many years to come.

The Parish Council also agreed to a power supply to the grazing area of the fairground, which could be utilised by all hirers of the fairground, and in addition would be used by the Parish Council's The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Beacon Event on 4th June. This will be installed in the next few weeks.

Hirers of the Fairground during this year were: the Mortimer Fun Run, Mortimer Fun Day, and the Fair. The Parish Council used its discretion and the hire charge for Mortimer St John's School annual sports day was waived. The Carol singing around our village tree was a Parish Council led event and therefore incurred no charge. The Fairground also continues to be used by the cricket club, tennis club and a fitness club for which they all pay an annual fee.

The two children's play areas and the hard standing and the sports walls continue to be well used. While there have been a few teething problems with the new equipment these are well on the way to being sorted out.

The Fairground hire charges were increased in January by 2.5% in line with many other local areas, although the cost for casual use of the tennis courts, for ease of administration by McColls, remains the same. My thanks once again go to the staff at McColls for administering the tennis booking system and holding the keys for public use.

Over the past year the Parish Council has been looking at possible sites for the provision of allotments for our village. To date we have yet to be successful in finding a suitable piece of land

and getting the agreement of the landowner but we continue to search and hope to source a piece of land in the near future.

The deterioration of our roads is a particular concern to both public and council alike and I would encourage you all to contact West Berkshire Council Streetcare Team if you see anything that causes you concern such as potholes and hedges overhanging pavements. You are, of course, more than welcome to put your concerns through to the Parish Clerk.

Work by the Parish Council to obtain an extension to our cemetery is progressing well and planning permission will be applied for soon.

We continue to monitor West Berkshire Council's Local Area Framework regarding the siting of approximately 800 houses by 2026, with the main focus being on the Mortimer/Burghfield area. The site specific report from West Berkshire Council is still not available but to put this number into perspective this equates to approximately 25 houses per year between the two areas as over half of these houses have already been built.

In January the Parish Council Custodian, Terry Hall, retired and we welcomed a new Custodian, Mark Bradberry to the post. On behalf of the Parish Council I would like to thank Terry for all his hard work for our village. Mark continues Terry's dedication in keeping the Fairground and cemetery in excellent condition.

The Parish Council newsletter which is delivered to every household in the village three times a year continues to be well-received. Once again I would like to thank Cllr Pete Blagden and his team of volunteers for their time and dedication.

Details of the council's budget for the coming year have already been published and in view of the present economic climate the Parish Council voted once again not to increase the Precept and so this will remain at £88,000.

The Parish Council annually sets aside a sum of money for grants to village groups for projects within our community. The total amount the Parish Council made available for grants for 2012/2013 was £2,500. Applications were received from eight local groups and this sum was awarded between five of them.

I am pleased to advise that, following a public meeting in January, the Parish Council voted to fund, over a three year period, the infrastructure to bring Superfast Broadband more quickly to our community. It is hoped that, in addition to the many personal users of the Internet, local businesses and people working from home will benefit from this enhanced service.

Finally I would like to share with all of you the splendid news that the Parish Clerk, Mrs Jayne Kirk has recently completed her Certificate in Local Council Administration which is designed to examine the standard of professional knowledge of town and parish clerks. I am very pleased to advise that although less than 5% of clerks who take this course receive distinction Jayne is one of them. Well done Jayne. As for what this means for us – it is the next step towards the Parish Council obtaining Quality Parish Status.'

- 5 **Report from Thames Valley Police:** PC Perran Bateman from Thames Valley Police gave an overview of policing in Mortimer which included the crime figures, compared to the previous year, for the parish for the previous 12 months, these included theft from vehicle up 16.9%, theft of vehicle down 36%, burglary dwelling up 55.6%, burglary non dwelling -15%, total serious acquisitive crime up by 12.3%, total other crime down by 1.2%.

Mr Graham Puddephatt repeated a request asked in previous years that Thames Valley Police include statistics from the British Transport Police regarding Mortimer Railway Station in their future monthly reports/statistics.

- 6 **District Councillors Observations:** Cllr Mollie Lock reported 'Sadly, in spite of a petition to retain the Day Centre in Windmill Court, it was closed and residents now have to travel to either Calcot or Tadley Centres for respite care. Costs for Council provided services for the older residents are rising and some are even being cut completely. During the year twenty seven planning applications although as yet not all have been built. The Section 106 money which the builders must pay as part of the planning conditions is for the impact on the village and is designated specifically to improve highways, open spaces, schools and libraries in the village. Despite the increasing demand for primary places in West Berkshire 94.98% receive their first, second or third choice of school. The two Mortimer schools give children an excellent start in their education – both schools are full. I urge Mortimer parents who have children due to enter St John's or St Mary's School in September

2013 to ensure that they complete their application forms as soon as they receive them in the Autumn Term 2012. This also applies to children who are due to move to secondary schools. Cllr Geoff Mayes reported 'It has been a busy year for Cllr Mollie Lock and myself since the election on 5th May 2011. We have worked well together during a difficult transition period. Generally we have split the responsibilities according to our strengths with Mollie dealing with the **Educational** and **Social** aspects and I have covered the Eastern Area **Planning** Committee work at WBC level. In addition we have had responsibilities on the **Licensing** and **Standards** Committees that are called when a hearing needs to be discussed sometimes in Private session but often in Public. Of course we have both dealt with the problems faced by Ward Residents as necessary irrespective the nature and attend the meetings of the Five Parish Councils in the Ward where possible. During the year in October 2011, West Berkshire Council and Veolia introduced the weekly black bin and alternate green bin recycling system with the opening of the **Recycling Facility** at Padworth Lane. This caused some complaints from residents but very few from the Mortimer area. In February the **Planning Core Strategy** was debated in Council and approved. The document outlined the site selection process for some 10,500 houses to be built in the plan period to 2025 including those on the Newbury Race Course, Sandford (south of Newbury) and throughout the remainder of the District. The resumed hearing by the Inspector for the Secretary of State is now expected to take place in June. The **Budget for 2012-13** was approved in a highly charged Council Meeting on the 1st March 2012. There is to be no increase in the Council Tax this year but the elderly, disadvantaged and the youth services are being cut, including the bus token scheme and Meals on Wheels service. This will result in hardship, some staff posts in Newbury being left unfilled and others being lost by normal wastage, retirement and redundancy. On **Roads** maintenance it has been a struggle due to financial constraints but in the Ward the Bloomfield Hatch Road / Lambswood Hill, Burghfield Road, Goring Road have been resurfaced and St Catherines Hill was repaired last week (apart from one pothole). The worst sections of The Street are due for resurfacing soon. Work has been undertaken at the War Memorial junction, at the Forehead on the Beech Hill Road and on Silver Lane/Padworth Lane following damage caused by construction traffic on the Padworth Recycling facility. More will need to be done between Mortimer and the A4 with the Network Rail bridge heightening and replacement works over the Reading to Newbury railway line. On **Planning** at the Village Level, I have Called In to Committee, those applications which have had objections from either the Parish Councils or several affected neighbours. In most cases the Officers refused the Application or it was withdrawn by the Applicant. There were three Appeals - two which were Dismissed (42a WER & Little Park Farm) and one is currently with the Inspector (Calleva, Longmore Lane). A major concern for the Village is the building of large houses on small garden plots which cause overlooking or shadowing of nearby properties and the loss of small more affordable homes. WBC drainage officers expect to repair the Culvert in Pitfield Lane in the near future to prevent flooding and to undertake a flood assessment of the Monktons Brook catchment to Foudry Brook at Tun Bridge (North of The Street from Hammonds Heath to Foudry House and the Saddlers). Thames Water completed the Foul Sewer Rising Main diversion at Tun Bridge during the year using directional drilling methods to avoid road closures in The Street. If you have any questions or comments please contact Mollie Lock or myself. We hold a Surgery on the first Saturday each Month between 10 and 11 am at the Library.'

7 **Reports from local Charities:**

a) **Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity:** Mr Hector Clark, Chairman of Relief in Need Charity reported 'The Charity continues to provide help to those needing support. For example the replacement of an oil tank, upgrading bathroom facilities etc. Money was also given to Windmill Court Social Club, Silver Circle, to assist with their activities. With the help of Age Concern we are able to provide £100.00 fuel vouchers at Christmas time. We have placed adverts in local journals to advise people of our existence in the hope that those in need can receive it. Assistance has also been given to Mortimer West End Village Hall, Clarke's Educational Foundation, Mortimer West End Cricket Club, Mortimer Youth Club and Mortimer Urban Saints. Funds were also provided towards the repairs and maintenance of St John's Hall. As stated in previous years the Charity is able to give support to people and projects in Mortimer, Mortimer West End and part of Wokefield.

b) **Clarke's Educational Foundation:** Mr John Mazillius Trustee and Hon. Treasurer reported 'Clarke's Educational Foundation uses the rental income from its assets to provide grants to local

schools and individuals. The charity owns part of the buildings and grounds of St. Mary's School and in addition the Headmasters house known as School House. This year we have made grants for educational purposes to St. Mary's and St. John's Schools in Mortimer, The Willink School in Burghfield and Silchester School. The Trustees would like to thank the Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity for the generous grant which has enabled us to continue with our programme to provide bursaries to students in further education at university, colleges of further education and those embarking on modern apprenticeships.

c) **Alfred Palmer Memorial Trust:** Mr John Mazillius, Hon Treasurer of the Trust started by reporting: 'I would like to pay tribute to Keith Lock, our previous chairman, who died in February of last year. Much has been said of Keith's work on West Berkshire Council, but Keith was also a keen football fan and an ardent supporter of Reading Football Club, who freely and enthusiastically gave his time to helping provide good facilities for the youth of the parish to play organised sports. He will be sadly missed by all of us. The Alfred Palmer Memorial Playing Field was given in memory of Alfred Palmer by his grandchildren in 1939 to be used as a recreation area for the benefit of the Parishes of Stratfield Mortimer and Wokefield. Since that time it has been used as a public open space for the general use of local residents and for playing of organised sport, mainly football. The field has continued to be used by the Mortimer Football Club throughout the playing season. The club regularly cut the grass during the football season and continue to maintain the ground in a fit and proper state by regular application of fertilizer, watering when required and marking out the pitched for the teams that use the ground. It is generally recognised by the local football leagues that the field and pitches are amongst the best maintained in the area. The English Football Association have awarded the club charter status in recognition of their excellent work in the coaching of young people. The Football Club has a flourishing youth section and provides regular training and coaching sessions for about 90 boys and girls from the village and surrounding areas. All the qualified coaching staff have been CRB checked and a fully trained welfare officer has been appointed. The Mortimer Youth Football Club have continued using the field on a regular basis with teams catering for boys and girls under the age of twelve. As I am sure the council realise the Alfred Palmer Field has been the only facility available this year to the young men, boys and girls who wish to play organised football in the village. In addition the ground is used by the scout, guide, cub and brownie movements for organised games and fund raising events throughout the year. In addition every year a fund raising event for Naomi House is held with teams representing Reading Football Club and Mortimer Seniors. This event raises over £2,000 per year for this worthwhile Children's Charity. The trustees and committee would like to thank the Parish council for their financial support towards the running costs of the field which amount to approximately £1,500 per annum.

Appointment of a Trustee: A vacancy for a Trustee to be filled by election at the Annual Parish Meeting was advertised prior to this meeting but unfortunately there were no nominations.

d) **Stratfield Mortimer Fairground Trust:** Cllr Graham Puddephatt, Trustee reported 'The current Trustees are Graham Puddephatt (Chair), Roger Peters (Treasurer), Geoff Mayes (Secretary), James Strang and Neil Kiley. We last met on 3rd October 2011 to approve the minutes of the previous meeting and to review financial matters and consider future actions. The Bank balances now total £8272 and the annual income in 2011 was £2000 from the Parish Council as Rent for the Fairground. In 2012 this Rent is expected to remain at £2000pa. James Strang and Neil Kiley need to complete their Nat West Bank paperwork and to forward them to the Treasurer to enable them to operate the Charity's accounts. The Chairman Graham Puddephatt is the editor of the Mortimer Village Magazine and an advertisement was placed in the magazine for possible beneficiaries. One request was received but it was for overseas travel assistance which is not covered by the terms of the Charity. No other requests for assistance have been received. The Fairground has still to be Land Registered. The boundaries were surveyed in 2010. A Report and Sketch map were circulated to the Trustees and Parish Council for comments but none were received. As Registration is likely to exceed the assets available to the Trustees they are not able to proceed further at this time. The Trustees have discussed the maintenance of the boundary fences and hedging which is the responsibility of the Parish Council. The Trustees were mainly concerned to avoid the use of wire (plain or barbed) which makes mechanical cutting of adjacent hedges difficult. Geoff Mayes's four year term as Secretary and Trustee representing the Village Residents comes to an end at this

Annual Meeting. He is prepared to stand for re-election.’
The meeting then re-elected Mr Mayes unopposed.

8 Statements by School Governors:

a) St John’s Infant School: In the absence of Mr Paul Young reported, Chair of Governors, Mrs Barker, also a Governor read out his report: ‘There are currently 181 pupils on roll, 85 girls and 96 boys in six classes encompassing three school years (Foundation, Year One and Year Two). The school is slightly over the admissions intake during this academic year for the Foundation stage.

There are currently 8 teaching staff and 29 support staff employed at St John’s. The Governing body is at full strength and comprises 18 Governors representing, staff, parents, the community, the diocese and the local authority.

Inspection: The Ofsted inspection, having taken place in January 2011, resulted in the school as “Good with many outstanding features”. The governing body continue to work with the school leadership on the school development plan to continue to challenge and improve the school further.

Pupils: We have always been extremely proud of our young people and regularly receive positive comment on their excellent behaviour when they are and about in Mortimer and further afield on school trips. The school works hard on developing our young people to show care and respect for one and another. Visits made to the Mortimer lunch club and residential homes where the children sang carols were particularly well received as was the recent art week. The key stage 1 SATS results have, again, been very strong which underlines the excellent work in teaching and learning undertaken. A system to encourage children to become better learners has been introduced which also helps the children in supporting and celebrating the learning of others. Awards/Accreditation Some of the awards/accreditation the school has achieved (or maintained) over the year includes: Healthy Schools Award (recognising the school’s role in the health and well being of the children.

Arts Mark Gold (recognises commitment to raising the profile of the arts in school and local community)

Building/Development Works: There has been a considerable amount of development works around the school including a kitchen refurbishment and the installation of individual lockers for the children. Further refurbishment work has been undertaken throughout various areas in the school including new carpet, flooring and cloak room facilities. Other facilities work has been undertaken on updating site drainage and renewing some of the electrical works. There have also been some improvements to the outside play areas with new play equipment installed.

Clubs and Activities: Whole school trips include a visit to the Hindu Temple in Reading and Wisley Gardens. Activities within the school include a visit from a theatre company, the Snow Queen production and the school hall being transformed into a Giant’s castle. We continue to have a wide range of clubs and after school activities available to our children and are grateful to staff, parents and members of the local community who give up their time to support the school in this way. The current range of activities include: Games, Wii Fit Dance, Choir, Judo, Fencing, French, Recorders, Maypole and Country Dancing, Bible Club, Science, Maths and French Clubs. There are also further sporting activities available through First for Sports. As part of the schools commitment to our community the school regularly lets out its school hall to community groups such as Yoga group, Little Oaks. The site is also used for extended services activities – Kids and Dads (KADS) and the Sunday Circle. The children are also regular visitors to the Mortimer Lunch Club, distribute harvest festival gifts around the village, sing Christmas carols at Windmill Court and visit the pre-school children prior to intake for the Foundation stage at St Johns

The work of the head teacher, staff and Governors is supported by The Parents and Friends of St Johns, a committed, enthusiastic and hard working fund raising body which raised around £9k last year to fund some of the extra curricula activities and equipment. Their work, which benefits the whole Mortimer community, includes the May Fair and the fireworks display. As always we are most grateful for their support.

The governors would like to take this opportunity to thank the Head Teacher, Mrs Sumner, and all her staff for all their hard work, dedication, enthusiasm and commitment to Mortimer St John’s Church of England Infant School

b) Mortimer St Mary’s Church of England VA Junior School: Mrs Margaret Mayes reported ‘The past year has been a time of change, challenge and achievement for Mortimer St. Mary’s School. Our Headteacher, Jo MacArthur has led the school forward with a strong mix of vision and hard

work. Her introduction of the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) in January 2011 fully engaged the pupils and has created new learning opportunities for them and helped to improve attainment. Greater emphasis on the analysis of performance data, school evaluation and monitoring systems has provided additional tools for the measurement of pupils' progress and these are now used very effectively by teachers and the members of the Governing Body.

These achievements were acknowledged by the Ofsted Inspectors who visited the school on 21 and 22 November 2011 and who noted the recent pattern of improvement in the above areas and concluded that the school has the potential for further improvement in the future. St. Mary's School was rated as Good. In common with all Church of England schools, Mortimer St. Mary's was visited by an Inspector under the National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAS) regulations. The school's SIAS Inspection took place on 13 January 2012 and this also achieved a rating of Good. The SIAS Inspector praised the supportive Christian environment of St. Mary's, underpinning the support and care of the whole school community - teachers and pupils alike. Both Inspections were felt by the school staff and governors to have been very positive and helpful experiences reflecting our own assessment of exactly where the school stands at the present time. All three Inspectors' comments on the potential of the school to improve further at a rapid pace are very encouraging.

Throughout the school year there was a slight fall in the number of pupils on roll – from 240 to 233 due mainly to family relocations. It is anticipated that these vacancies will be filled quickly as there is a general shortage of primary school places in this part of West Berkshire but this slight fall in numbers will have an adverse effect on funding for the new financial year.

During the year there has been a rise in the number of admissions appeal hearings. Despite the pressure on school places the Governing Body has decided to maintain its general policy of restricting class sizes to thirty pupils. This is regarded as the optimum number to allow adequate teacher-time for each pupil and reflects the overall size of school classrooms and other facilities such as the school hall. Pupil attainment at Level 4+ (the level of expected achievement at the end of primary education) is largely in line with national averages. At Level 5+, attainment in English and Mathematics is well above national average figures. There continues to be a trend for girls to outperform boys in English while the reverse is true in Mathematics. The very detailed data now available will help us to address these issues and to identify any pupils needing particular help and support, thereby raising attainment. The curriculum is well supported by school trips to relevant locations and in addition visits to the school by individuals and organisations offering additional input into classroom learning are arranged throughout the school year. Year 6 children visited the Houses of Parliament in January. Shortly afterwards Mr. Peter Argyle, Chairman of West Berkshire Council, made a visit to St. Mary's as part of the Year 6 topic work.

As part of their IPC topic Fashion, Clothing and Music, Year 3 children visited the Victoria and Albert Museum in March. Year 4 pupils have greatly enjoyed studying Earthquakes and Volcanoes, and made a visit to the Natural History Museum, while Year 5 have been on a Mission to Mars which brought a planetarium experience to the school followed by a chance to sample "space food".

Pupils are also offered opportunities for personal and social development ranging from health issues to good citizenship workshops. Year 6 pupils have taken part in cyberbullying and social networking workshops delivered by our Police Community Support Officer. A wide range of after-school clubs and sporting activities organised and run by school staff and volunteer parents include hockey, netball and tag rugby as well as cross-stitch, chess and an art club. The school choir and musicians play in local concerts and mixed school events. During the year residential trips were offered to both year 5 and year 6 pupils. The ties between the school and the ecclesiastical parish have been maintained throughout the year and there are termly opportunities for pupils and staff to worship together with parents, carers, governors and friends in St. Mary's Church. Some pupils and past pupils have become altar servers at St. John's Church and one of the charities usually supported by the school pupils is the Altar Servers' Lent Mission, a village-wide initiative to support children in the link Diocese of Kimberley and Kuruman in South Africa. From time to time pupils take part in sponsored events to collect money and have made donations to various charities. A non-uniform day and retiring collections at the evening performances of the Year 3 and Year 4 Christmas production raised £472 to sponsor a child named Evelyne from Kenya through Action Aid.

There were two changes to the teaching staff during the year. Miss Caroline Houchin resigned her teaching post in July and Mrs. Dawn Bicker took Maternity Leave shortly before the birth of her baby daughter. Two new teachers, Mrs. Jenny Dearing and Miss Lucy Hanks, joined us in September. We also welcomed a new School Business Manager, Ms. Julie Joannides. Attempts to recruit a Deputy Headteacher proved unsuccessful and this vacant post was covered internally on a temporary basis. The Governing Body has also seen some changes throughout the year. There will shortly be vacancies for two parent governors but otherwise all vacancies have been filled successfully. We were sad to lose Mrs. Jane Carpenter, our long-serving Chairman of Governors, in September. Our new Chairman, Mrs. Alison Richardson, proved undaunted in leading the school through the recent Inspections and has fully justified our faith in her.

The governors are very aware of the importance of maintaining the school buildings in good repair and of providing a pleasant and attractive working environment for pupils and staff alike. Following its rebuilding last year the entrance and reception area has been further enhanced to provide a pleasant welcoming atmosphere and the school is generally well decorated. Plans to deal with an area of persistent damp on a south facing wall of the oldest part of the building are well-advanced and old windows in some of the classrooms have been replaced by new double-glazed units. Planning approval has been obtained for the erection of a small additional building in the school grounds. This would provide a permanent home for the after-school club as well as some additional accommodation for more general use during the school day and would also leave the school hall free for further out-of-school lettings in the future. Availability of finance will determine whether or not we are able to progress further at this stage. The members of our PTA continue to work hard, providing entertaining events which also raise extra funding to support St. Mary's in providing things which cannot be paid for from the school budget. Foremost among these is the maintenance and running of the school swimming pool. Additional funding is also provided by the Clarke Educational Foundation, with which the school shares part of its site. During the summer term the whole school International Primary Curriculum (IPC) topic will be The Olympics. It will reach its climax on Tuesday 17 July with St. Mary's Olympic Games, complete with medal ceremonies, anthems and, of course, Opening and Closing Ceremonies – But no disappointments about obtaining tickets!

In conclusion, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed help, time and support to Mortimer St. Mary's School throughout the past year. It is very much appreciated and a warm welcome is extended to all our visitors in 2012.'

9 Report from Parish Council's Representative on St John's Hall: In the absence of Mr Tom Shorrocks his report was read out by Mrs Barker 'This has been a quieter year than in the past. As always lettings and incomes continue to be a concern. A regular booking was lost this year but a Choir have taken over some evenings which has helped. Despite this we have been forced to increase our letting charges and, unfortunately, this trend will certainly have to continue. We have continued to make progress with the maintenance and upkeep of the Hall. One major piece of work has been completed – the flat roofs have been replaced and the insulation in all those areas was significantly improved. We are very grateful for the contributions from Relief In Need who have again generously supported us as we seek to continue to maintain a valuable village amenity. We have also managed to implement a new Web presence for the hall, which can be found at: www.stjohnshallmortimer.org. Among other things, the site displays the hall bookings diary so people can now check our availability and the meetings on offer online.'

10 Report from CiC on Stratfield Mortimer Community Centre, Fairground: In the absence of Mr Smith, Chairman of the CiC Mrs Barker read out his report. The Community Centre has continued to be a popular venue for meetings and parties, in the last 12 months there have been over 600 meetings and events held inside the hall. The Community Centre is managed by a board on an entirely voluntary basis and the income from hiring's covers all the bills. The number of people using the hall has taken its toll on the fabric of the building, and the main hall was repainted thanks to a grant contribution from the Parish Council. Other donations from the Scarecrow Trail organised by Mortimer Village Partnership have allowed the CiC to buy curtains for the main windows, which not only reduce heat loss, but have improved acoustics too. The building is used by a wide range of community groups covering all ages; toddlers through to youth club, various clubs for adults and the pensioners' lunch club. New groups may struggle to find a slot, but there are still some available. The running costs of the hall have increased significantly since the hall was first opened almost

three years ago and the CiC has just had to increase its hire charges, although these remain very reasonable. There has always been a nuisance level of vandalism to be repaired, although this is possibly not as bad as might have been feared when the project was first suggested. The increased popularity of the hall has also required an increase in the number of times that the hall is cleaned, while we ask that all users leave the hall as they find it, the traffic through the hall has meant that more cleaning time has had to be allocated.

The increase in hire fees serves to cover the running costs of the building and a small level of investment in improving the facilities available. However, the hall simply does not have sufficient storage capacity for all the groups that now use it! Over the past 12 months, we have been successful in gaining planning permission to extend the hall to the front. This extension will provide a large storage area and a porch/vestibule. Groups such as the Youth Club are desperately short of space to store the equipment they use each week. We have been successful in the past in gaining grants to cover the cost of construction and we are once again in the middle of the process of applying for the money to start the construction phase of the project. We have about half of the money required committed to the project and are hopeful that the remainder will be forthcoming shortly. The extension will mean that the Community Centre is ideally equipped to serve the community for many years to come.'

11 Mortimer Village Partnership: Mrs Danusia Morsley reported 'I am pleased to begin this report by stating emphatically that Mortimer Village Partnership has had a very successful year in carrying out its stated aims, continuing to involve people in the life of the village by improving communications, by connecting people together and by facilitating activities and events.

The third Mortimer Fun Day was also the first one for which MVP took full organisational and financial responsibility (although still with involvement from Together in Mission and Burghfield Scouts) so I am very glad to be able to state that it was a roaring success both in terms of numbers of people involved, numbers attending and financially. Although fund-raising is not a primary aim of the Fun Day, MVP was able to donate £1000 each to three local causes: The new Duke of Edinburgh scheme attached to the Youth Club, the St. John's Hall roof repairs and curtains for the Community Centre. A number of £100 donations have also been made throughout the year to local projects.

The second Scarecrow Trail was a runaway success with at least 2000 people completing the course to see all the scarecrows and complete the puzzle. Over 700 forms were returned to vote for the favourite scarecrow. The standard of entries was so high that everyone found it hard to choose the winner. Profits from this have been donated to provide children's' entertainment at the forthcoming Parish Council-organised Jubilee beacon event

The concept of local clubs and other organisations affiliating to MVP has continued to develop; the number of affiliated groups has increased to eighteen and the range of equipment they are able to borrow from MVP has also increased. A well-attended breakfast meeting was held to explore how the groups might benefit from working with each other.

Christmas activities centred around the new Parish Council Christmas Tree and MVP joined forces with Together in Mission for a beautiful outdoor carol service after frantic Christmas Tree decoration making by children in the Community Centre. MVP Christmas cards were sold again with lovely pictures of the village.

The MVP Lunch Club continues to thrive; we are grateful for sponsors De Vere Venues and Dolce Caterers who provide the soup as well as the numerous volunteers that work hard. We are thrilled when St. John's or St. Mary's School children are able to come to entertain the members. The MVP Theatre Trips are well-supported and coaches take people to London and other places very regularly to see the latest shows. In March we had our first experiment in being theatrical promoters, bringing a live professional theatre company to the village. The full house of 100 in St. John's Hall was overwhelmingly thrilled with the experience (as evidenced by short questionnaires they completed) so we are looking for the next production to promote.

Last Saturday we had a very productive village Spring Clean; with significant support from Mortimer BP Scouts and Cubs, upwards of 50 people scoured the open spaces, footpaths and streets of Mortimer, depositing huge piles of rubbish by the roadside, ready for WBC to remove.

The newsletter and website have continued to be essential in our success, keeping everyone informed of all the opportunities in the village. Our thanks go to the volunteers who maintain the

website and deliver the newsletters. Only yesterday I was told by the library that they regularly use our directories to help people newly arrived in the village and keep a printed copy for those without Internet to consult. We have been able to expand our delivery of newsletters to some of the surrounding smaller villages.

Coming up we have a Mortimer & Area Sports Weekend on 26th & 27th May, a Jubilee Quiz Quest during the half term week at the beginning of June and of course the Fun Day on July 7th.

We have been able pleased to have one or two new members join our committee, but more are always very welcome. We also welcome those who don't want to join the committee and be involved in everything we do but are willing to take an organisational role in one particular activity. This model has worked well in the Scarecrow Trail and in work on the website. We always seem to have more ideas than we can handle so more help is always needed – working together to benefit the village is very rewarding.'

12 Open Forum:

1. The Parish Council was asked to look into the feasibility of providing public toilets on the Fairground.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9:45 p.m.

The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting is Wednesday 17th April 2013 at 7:30 p.m.