



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting

22nd April 2009 at 7:30 p.m.

St John's Hall Mortimer

The Annual Meeting of the Parish was held on Wednesday 22nd April 2009 in St John's Hall, Mortimer with Cllr T Shorrocks in the chair.

Before the commencement of the Meeting, the Chairman of the Parish Council presented the 2009 Stratfield Mortimer Community Award. This year's award was presented to Mr Lawrence Picking for his services to the community.

Present: There were 41 people present.

- 1 **Apologies for Absence:** Apologies were received from Cllr S Clark Mr H Clark and Mr R Peters.
- 2 **Minutes of 2008 Annual Parish Meeting:** The Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 16th April 2008, which had been previously circulated, were approved and signed as read by the Chairman.

Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.

- 3 **Parish Council's Annual Report from Parish Council Chairman:**

Councillor Tom Shorrocks (Chairman of the Parish Council) started by introducing all the current members of the Parish Council present; he advised that he had been elected as Chairman in May 2008 after Councillor Keith Davies' term as Chairman.

Due to the resignation of one of our Parish Councillors (Mr. Ian Titman-Reade) due to ill-health, an election was held; this was won by Mrs. Rebecca Barker whom he then introduced to those present.

Parish Council's Annual Report: The Parish Council has had another very busy year and the Parish Office continues to be well-used. Many residents, our District Councillors, and Parish Councillors, all make use of this facility, to call in or 'phone on the open mornings.

The Parish Council Office is open Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 a.m. In addition to these regular 'public' opening hours there have been 37 additional committee and other meetings and 12 District Councillor Saturday surgeries held there over the last 12 months. Many people also take advantage of the Parish Office to view current planning applications which are available there, although all planning applications can now also be viewed on the West Berkshire website.

The Parish Clerk: The Clerk's role as Responsible Officer (and Responsible Financial Officer) continues to be a very busy one covering the entire administration and management of the Parish Council, supporting our 15 councillors and maintaining a good working liaison with the various departments and personnel at West Berkshire District Council in Newbury. In fact it is fair to say she remains the lynch pin of the Parish Council.

The Clerk has many responsibilities including :

- Giving legal advice to the Parish Council,
- Dealing with the accounts, audit, budget, VAT returns, insurance etc
- Agendas and minutes of all Council meetings.
- She is also the Cemetery Manager, Fairground Manager and Web Site Manager

I know that Jayne has an enviable reputation not only among the other Parish Clerks from neighbouring Parishes, but also among the officers and full-time staff at West Berks to name but a few.

Finances: The Parish Council's total budget for expenditure for 2009/10 has remained pretty steady for routine items. There has been a small increase of £4,487 or 4.62% in the total precept budget for next year, which is to be used for:

- An increase in grants made by the Parish Council (S137 payments).
- Fairground projects.
- The continued maintenance of an additional, part-funded PCSO.
- An increase in our contribution toward the Willink Leisure Centre.

The 4.62% increase is equivalent to an increase of £1.87 for the year per Tax Band D household.

Members of the public are cordially invited to come and observe the full council meetings which are held on the second Thursday of each month (except August) in the meeting room of the Methodist church. The Parish Council has recently instituted a formal procedure to enable members of the public to briefly address the council before each meeting.

Council Make-up:

In addition to the full council meetings, the business of the parish is conducted through the five 'standing committees', Planning, Roads & Footpaths, Fairground Trees & Amenities, Communications, and Cemetery Committees. In addition, the chairmen of each of these committees, together with the Council's Chairman and Vice-Chairman, make up the Finance & General Purposes Committee which oversees the financial affairs and regulation of the council

Committee Reports:

Planning: (Chairman: John Morden). West Berkshire District Council is the authority which determines our local planning applications. However, the Parish Council as a statutory consultee is invited to comment on all applications within the Parish and it actively engages in its responsibilities. To this end the Planning Committee have met 13 times and considered 51 planning applications (last year it met 24 times during and considered 108 applications is this a reflection of the recession?) 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 always welcome to come along and observe. (These meetings are usually held in the Parish Council Office at the back of the Library).

Roads & Footpaths: (Chairman Dudley Ives) The Roads, Footpaths and Commons Committee has had a busy year and among many other matters it is continually looking at the parking situation and speeding within the village. Again this is an area which benefits from the strong links and relationships we have formed with the local highways authority at West Berkshire.

The Fairground, Trees and Amenities Committee: (Chairman: Pete Blagden): This committee does a sterling job in looking after some of our most prized assets within the parish. The Fairground continues to be very much the heart and focal centre of the community and the Parish Council, through this committee, has made great improvements during the year, notably through the installation of the much-needed tennis court fence and the recruitment of some nationally-recognized voluntary organizations, who have helped in the landscaping and maintenance of this beautiful open space.

Communications: (Chairman: Pete Blagden) The Parish Council continue to produce a Parish Council Newsletter three times a year which is distributed to every house in the parish by volunteers. The Newsletter is well received by residents who say they find the information very informative.

Cemetery: (Chairman: Steve Clark) The Cemetery is looking very neat and tidy and has now recovered from the flood damage in 2007. In the light of good practice (and after researching other local cemeteries) we have revised the cemetery regulations and forms as from 1st January this year.

Other Council Activities:

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

Mortimer, Burghfield and District Neighbourhood Action Group: Two Parish Council representatives (Dudley Ives and Danusia Morsley) sit on this Committee which meets bi-monthly.

Proposed new Car Park at Mortimer Station: The Parish Council made an application for the provision of an additional car park at the railway station. The planners at West Berkshire rejected this; however an appeal has been lodged with the Planning Inspectorate and the Parish Council are currently awaiting a confirmed date for this appeal to be heard.

Working Parties:

The Parish Plan Refresh: As you will see from the agenda the Parish Council has put together a working party which is undertaking a refresh of the highly successful 2004 Parish Plan. It is hoped that this new and improved, up-to-date version will be ready for adoption at the end of the summer. Councillor Danusia Morsley will be giving you all a full update.

Emergency Plan: The Parish Council also has a working party which is working on setting up an Emergency Plan for the community of Mortimer. Please let us know if this is something you feel you would be able to get involved in.

- 4 **Presentation from Stratfield Mortimer Parish Plan Refresh Group:** Cllr Morsley reported that at last year's Annual Parish Meeting the Parish Council Chairman announced that the actions in the 2004 Parish Plan had been for the most part completed and that a new working party was forming to refresh the plan with new actions. The new Parish Council Working Party formed has worked to discover through public consultation the views of residents. Almost 200 people attended a public meeting in February at St. John's School and gave us many ideas for the future. We have used all this information to produce a questionnaire – one for every person in the village over the age of 16 – which will be delivered to each house during the weekend of the 2nd and 3rd May 2009. Cllr Morsley urged everyone to complete and return their questionnaire; it can really make a difference to the future of this village. With this evidence of how many people support different ideas and projects so new funding from various sources can be applied for to get these projects going. There is also a free prize draw for all questionnaires returned by the closing date of 18th May. There is also a questionnaire for young people in school years 3 to 11 which will go out through St Mary's and The Willink Schools.
- 5 **Presentation from the CiC on the new Community Building Fairground:** Mr Adrian Smith, Chairman of the Stratfield Mortimer Community Interest Company who manage the Community Building thanked all the people who made it possible including West Berkshire Councillors, SEEDA, Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity (who gave the majority of the money). The building is due to open next month with only the finishing touches to complete. The Directors predict it will break even by the 3rd year. The building includes a large meeting room, kitchen, disabled toilet and two changing rooms.
- 6 **Report from PCSO Steve Innes:** PCSO Steve Innes gave an update on his work in Mortimer. He said that there had been a reduction in crime and crime attendance in the period January to March 2009 which he believed reflected a dedicated police presence in the village. The target met for the last year, and small variances smooth out over a 12 month period. It should be noted that local crime does not entirely respect Parish boundaries! Perpetrators of crime tend to be mobile between villages and recent arrests have included a mixture of Mortimer and Burghfield residents. Recent Successes include, Crime Prevention Initiatives; Neighbourhood Watch Recruitment, Arrests, Burglary Non Dwelling, Theft of Motor Vehicles and Theft from Motor Vehicles; ASB Disruption, School Truancy, Multi Agency Involvement (Neighbourhood Disputes/Social Issues); Parking (the parking management now a responsibility of West Berkshire Council not Thames Valley Police (TVP);
Community Engagement: Confirmation of the TVP All Crime Attendance Project has seen a change in balance between policing activities and community focused work. Crime attendance does however produce significant intelligence and is a key and valuable part of the role. However during the last year a number of local initiatives effected: School Visits and Pupil Support; Youth Engagement, Burghfield Free Football Pilot; Assistance Vulnerable Residents; Presentations at Community Groups; Parish Plan Inputs; Regular Community Surgeries. The Mortimer Area Neighbourhood Police Office has now been handed over to TVP and designated an operational station. It will be staffed by a Neighbourhood Specialist Officer (NSO), Neighbourhood Officer (NO), and two PCSO's. Currently there are 5 volunteers available. Initially it is planned to open for two mornings per week. Shifts will be 4 hours and two volunteers are required to be on site to effect this. The Neighbourhood Team as at April 2009 is: NSO Perran Bateman, NO Julie Hamilton, PCSO's Steve Innes and Steve Pengilly (although Steve Pengilly transfers out of the area in July 09). A new PCSO Robert Hubbard-Clark will replace Steve and is currently in training. There will be a 4 week tutoring period in the local parishes to ensure an effective handover.

7 District Councillor's Observations: District Councillor Keith Lock reported that this year the Council Tax increased by 3.9% a little above the national average and despite an overspend last year of nearly £1 million reserves stand at over £7 million and are above the Audit Commission guidelines. West Berkshire Council (the Council) has made efficiency savings of some £900,000 which may lead to cuts in services. They have also abolished travel tokens for the over 60's unless you are disabled, this is a blow to the many elderly people who live where there is no bus service or only a very limited one. They have also decided to charge £25 to collect bulky items from households thus ending a free service, this was tried once before and collections fell 90% and fly tipping soared. A Government scheme to provide free swimming for the over 60s is starting shortly and the West Berkshire Card is being introduced which will allow local residents discounts of 10% on admission to local attractions such as Council Leisure Centres (Willink), Shaw House and on the hire of DVD's from libraries. The Council's road programme has been hit by the number of roads needing repair following the floods of 2007. A number of projects were delayed including Mortimer repairs to Mowbray Hill which are promised for this year and Stephens Road which is due to be resurfaced next year. In West Berkshire one of the 'hidden' problems is shortage of affordable housing. Prices have fallen but there are now over 4,000 families on the Council's waiting list and the programme is to build 150 affordable homes per annum. The implications of the new District Plan which is up to 2026. The Government has decreed that the District must accept 11,000 new homes even though it has stopped the scheme to build 7,500 north of Burghfield. Apart from a lot more houses around Newbury and Thatcham the rural service centres i.e. villages with a range of services such as Mortimer will have to accept at least 200 each. When it comes it could be the biggest change in the village since the growth of the 50s and 60s.

8 Reports from local Charities:

a) Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity: Mr Hector Clark, the Chairman of the Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity reported that the programme of gravel extraction at Burnt Common is complete, and negotiations are now taking place with Hanson with regard to the permanent reinstatement of the site, which provides for the retention of the pond and footpath. During the past year the Charity has assisted a number of local organisations, including Age Concern, Burghfield and Mortimer Friday Club and the Silver Circle. Assistance has also been provided to the British Legion, the BP Scouts and the Methodist Church. The Trustees are also supporting the community building on the Fairground and the improvements to the Football Club. Schemes under consideration include the replacement of the store building at Mortimer West End Village Hall, improvement to the heating at St Saviour's Church and a replacement organ at St John's Church. The Charity also gives support to persons/families in need and continues to provide fuel or fuel allowances. In this connection we rely on information from Health Visitors etc but welcome applications.

b) Clarke's Educational Trust: Mr John Mazillius reported that Clarke's Education Foundation is a registered charity serving the Parishes of Stratfield Mortimer, Mortimer West End and Wokefield. The Charity provides financial assistance to local schools, youth organizations and individuals' resident within the above parishes. The charity is administered by nine trustees from the local community. The charity owns the major portion of the land on which St Mary's School is situated and School House which used to be the home of the head teacher. The charity leases School House to private tenants and it is the income from this property which provides the finance for our educational grant programme. Over the past five years the trustees have introduced a scheme to provide bursaries to young people attending universities, colleges of further education and modern apprenticeships to help them with essential books, tools and equipment. This scheme has been very successful and we are now supporting twelve youngsters from our community. In addition it has provided grants to both village schools, pupils attending the Willink School and Beenham Primary School, Mortimer Junior Football Club and Mortimer West End Toddler Group. The Trustees would like to acknowledge the gratitude of Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity for their generous grants that has enabled Clarke's Charity to provide assistance to St Mary's School towards the installation of an all weather sports pitch, and to continue the programme of awarding bursaries to young people to assist with their further education. A copy of the Trustees Annual Report and Accounts were tabled.

c) Alfred Palmer Memorial Trust: Mr Keith Lock's reported that apart from occasional use by the Guides, Brownies and Scouts, Mortimer Football Club continues to be the main users of the ground. The Ground Committee under the chairmanship of Mr John Mazillius continues to work with the football club to oversee the proper use of the ground. Finance remains a problem especially with the Parish Council's current Grant Policy. On the positive side the Trust received £9,200 Section 106 funding from West Berkshire Council following development around Birch Lane. This money can only be used for capital items and some has been spent on a storage container for football equipment and on fencing for the pitch. Mortimer Football Club has been awarded charter Status by the FA and is designated as a training club. They run training sessions on Mondays for youths and Wednesday evenings is training for adults. The under 8's section formed last year is flourishing. There are two Saturday teams in the Reading and District League, there is one Sunday Team and a Veterans Team. It is placed to start an under 14 team next season.

d) Stratfield Mortimer Fairground Trust: Mr Chris Lewis gave an update on the Charity and the bursaries they provide.

9 Statements by School Governors:

Mortimer St John's Church of England Infant School: A report was given saying there are currently 180 pupils on roll, 85 girls and 95 boys in six classes encompassing three school years (foundation, year one and year two). The school has a full intake this academic year and expects the same for the September 2009 intake. There are currently 9 teaching staff and 22 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. Over the past year the school has achieved (or maintained) the following awards and accreditation:

- Recognised as a good school by Ofsted Inspection last year.
- Received an outstanding level by Church Inspection.
- Quality Mark (recognising minimum standards in teaching literacy and numeracy).
- Active Mark for the School's for promoting the benefits of physical activity and for offering good physical provision.
- Silver STEP Award (for promoting safe and sustainable travel to school).
- Silver Arts Mark, (which shows commitment to raising the profile of the arts in school and local community).
- Healthy School Award.

Work was completed on building a music room and funding is currently being sought to build a Nurture Room. A sample of the varied activities undertaken by the children over the past year include: A whole school visit to London to see The Sound of Music, Book Week visits by authors Meg Harper and Nick Briscoe, Art Week visit by artist Rosie Smith, Chinese Ribbon Dancing by Wisemoves, Tai Chi, Sainsbury's Chinese cooking demonstration and Year 2 science morning with Year 9 girls from Kendrick School. The work of the Head Teacher, staff and Governors supported by parents and friends raised the sum of £11,000 last year to fund some of the extra curricula activities.

Mortimer St Mary's Church of England VA Junior School: No Report

- 10 Report from Parish Council's Representative on St John's Hall:** Cllr Tom Shorrocks reported that during the last year, the hall has had some much needed decorating done and a new back door installed to comply with new fire regulations. The committee has also, after a lot of effort, managed to change its waste contractor which will result in a considerable saving. The committee is pleased to announce that the West Berkshire Breast Screening mobile facility will again be hosted on the car park from Thursday 28th of May for approximately 8 weeks. It is to the credit of the committee that it has, over recent years, been able to keep the hire charges to hall users at the same level, whilst still maintaining its policy of maintaining prudent reserves. However, it was noted from this year's accounts that while the Hall's income has increased, the running and maintenance costs are increasing at a greater rate, resulting in only a very small surplus for last year. The Committee have therefore reluctantly agreed to a small rise in Hall charges for all users this year, effective from September. The Hall committee would like to thank Tim Courtney for his professional advice in reviewing and updating the Hall's insurance requirements, including, for the

first time, Trustee Indemnity Insurance.

The discussions regarding alterations and improvements are on-going and the trustees are mindful that, major items are on the horizon, in particular the state of the roof. It is still the trustees' intention to come up with various proposals and appropriate costs/benefits that will ensure the Hall remains a major amenity and benefit to the community for both the immediate and long term future. As always, the whole village owes thanks to the trustees, especially its Chairman, Mr. Lawrence Picking and the other 'front-line' officers, John Bull, Sandra Waller and Mari Fleming, and also to Harry Smith, the auditor, and Kerrie, the cleaner.

11 Open Forum:

- It was raised that parking in the village continues to be a problem and it would get worse with the change in parking enforcement. The Parish Council were asked to lobby West Berkshire Council to get a better deal.
- It was noted that appreciation of the Parish Council's temporary Custodian's work in that the Fairground is tidier etc. Thanks were also given to the Fairground Committee as well.
- Miss Sarah Morland gave an overview of the 2008 Fun Run and advised of the date for the 2009 event (27th September) the proceeds from which will be given to the June Hancock Mesothelionia Trust and half to Daisy's Dream. Sarah raised concern that prior to the 2008 Fun Run the weather had been very wet and that the Parish Council had warned that it might have to cancel the event if the Fairground was too wet. The Chairman responded to say that the Parish Council would only reserve its right to cancel in extreme circumstances when extensive damage would be caused to the Fairground surface.
- A vote of thanks was offered to Cllr Thorpe and the Parish Clerk for arranging for the memorial seat in memory of Miss Margot Pyman.
- Mr B Rae advised that the British Legion would be holding a memorial service at the War Memorial to commemorate the 65th anniversary of D Day on Saturday 6th June.
- Mr A Thorpe advised that the Volunteer Bureau who take people in need to hospital, dentists etc by a team of volunteer drivers who use their own cars are need of more volunteers.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9:00 p.m.

The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting is Wednesday 21st April 2010 at 7:30 p.m.