



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting

7th April 2005 at 7:30 p.m.
St John's Hall Mortimer

The Annual Meeting of the Parish was held on Thursday 7th April 2005 in St John's Hall, Mortimer with Cllr G S Puddephatt in the chair.

Before the commencement of the Meeting, the Chairman of the Parish Council presented the 2005 Stratfield Mortimer Community Award. This year's award was presented jointly to Val and Laurie Drake, who run Mortimer Common Post Office. The Chairman said "The parish wanted to recognise the commitment that the couple has made in running the Post Office in West End Road for the past 17 years, most people have come into contact with the couple. They do a sterling job in the Post Office, and they have taken it beyond a post office and made it a community resource. They have done an excellent job and several residents nominated them for the award." The Chairman commented that among the nominations two other people were put forward, John Gosling and Tennant Barber and it was decided that under the terms of the constitution they were not eligible as the work for which they were nominated was largely done as serving councillors.

Present: There were 58 people present (including Councillors).

- 1 **Apologies for Absence:** Apologies were received from Cllr J Morden and Cllr G Parry.
- 2 **Minutes of 2004 Annual Parish Meeting:** The Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th April 2004, which had been previously circulated, were proposed as read by Mr L Picking and unanimously accepted.
Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.
- 3 **Update on Community Policing in Mortimer and new Neighbourhood Action Group initiative (Thames Valley Police):** Inspector Andy Talbot of Thames Valley Police Pangbourne gave an overview of Community Policing issues and the Neighbourhood Action Group Initiative. Local policing has mainly two issues 1. Crime and 2 Quality of Life. The Neighbourhood Action Policing Programme was initially tested in Greenham Common and Burghfield. The initiative has now been expanded into other areas including Mortimer. The Neighbourhood Action Groups include representatives from the Police, local District and Parish Councils, Sovereign Housing Association, Neighbourhood Watch and Youth Services. People in the parish of Mortimer will be given the chance to tell the police and the other agencies involved in the scheme what they think about the quality of life in the village and issues of concern on Monday 23rd May, St Johns Hall 7pm. Inspector Talbot said "we cannot solve all the issues but can prioritise by looking at the issues raised by residents. Come along and have your say."
- 4 **Formal nomination and election of a Parish Meeting Trustee for new Fairground Trust:** The Chairman gave a report on the background of the Fairground Trust regarding issues with Charity Commission, the Parish Council's Auditors and explained the role of the new trustees (5 in total). Two nominations were received for the formal nomination and election of a Parish Meeting Trustee for the new Stratfield Mortimer Fairground Trust. The names put forward were 1. John Bull and 2 Philip Edwards. This was put to a ballot by the parishioners present and the results of which were John Bull 31 and Philip Edwards 22. John Bull was therefore elected as the Parish Meeting Trustee of the Fairground Trust.

5 **Parish Council's Annual Report:** Cllr Graham Puddephatt (Chairman of the Parish Council) started by introducing all the current members of the Parish Council present, he advised that this was his 6th Annual Parish Meeting that he had chaired, five as Chairman and one as vice-Chairman, he then presented the Parish Council's Annual Report.

The Chairman opened by outlining in great detail the very many diverse and challenging duties of the Clerk/Finance Officer of the Parish Council, Jayne Kirk. These include office manager, responsible for the operation of the Parish Office, legal adviser to councillors and information gatherer, responsible for all correspondence (in and out) and telephone calls/emails. Responsible for the finance, preparing accounts, budgets, VAT, insurance, PAYE and liaison between auditors, Cemetery Manager, making sure that the legal aspects are covered, filling in the paperwork, people are buried in correct plot and ensure that the cemetery regulations are followed, Fairground, arrange maintenance e.g. grass cutting, emptying of dog bins, safety inspections of play equipment, fairground/tennis court bookings and deal with constant vandalism. Commons Manager/Administrator this year had to represent Parish Council for the removal of travellers on Brewery Common and other legal issues such as registration of commons, trespass such as gas pipes etc, Web Site Manager, Organises Community Award, Remembrance Day Parade road closures, Police presence etc and much more.

Finances: The Chairman reported that the precept figures have had to increase this year to meet the Council's financial commitments. He said that over the last 2 years the Parish Council has planned and budgeted to use some of their reserves to alleviate some of the burden on the Parish (tax payers). In the years 2003/04 and 2004/05 the Parish Council has supported expenditure by using funds from its reserves (£20,000 in 2003/04 and £10,000 in 2004/05) which is obviously not sustainable and cannot be continued as the Parish Council needs to have adequate reserves for unexpected expenditure. One of the largest costs is staff, the Clerk does much of the real work of the council (the Chairman then outlined a detailed breakdown of the Clerk's duties and responsibilities) and over the past few years the Clerk's role has grown from a part-time position to realistically full time. The Council have implemented the new national salary structure for Clerks with effect from 1st April. Other major expenditure is The Fairground, legal fees and grants to Willink Leisure Centre.

Planning: The Planning Committee dealt with 95 planning applications in 2004 ranging from small developments of about 10 new houses to applications for new conservatories and meets on average 2 or 3 times per month to consider these. All Planning Committee Meetings are advertised on the two Parish Council Notice Boards outside (the Post Office and Library) 3 days in advance and parishioners are welcome to come along and observe. Lots of people take advantage of viewing current planning applications which are available in the Parish Office on Tuesday and Thursday mornings; although West Berkshire Council advises that full plans will soon be available on their web site.

Village Design Statement: The council are to undertake a Village Design Statement which sets out the character of the village and will be used to influence planning decisions by West Berkshire Council

Rural Housing Trust: In September a housing needs survey was sent to every household. The survey report has shown that there is a need for more low cost housing within the parish and the Parish Council will now consider whether to go forward to the next stage.

Cemetery: There are a steady number of interments and burial of ashes. The Cemetery looks good now especially as grave owners are now mainly complying with the Council's Cemetery Regulations with regard to flowers etc. The local charity Thrive are now contracted to carry out gardening, management of waste area etc in addition to the regular grass cutting contract.

Roads and Traffic: The Parish Council have commissioned TRL Ltd (Traffic Research Laboratory) to carry out a traffic survey on the main roads within the village on which future recommendations for traffic control can be based.

We now have 4 councillors trained up in the use of SID (Speed Indicator Device) and it is hoped that this will be able to be used more regularly in future.

Policing: The Parish Council decided not to go ahead with the expensive Warden Scheme but instead will be joining the Police Neighbourhood Action Group scheme outlined by Insp. Talbot earlier and a special Public Meeting has been arranged to find out local concerns on Monday 23rd May at 7pm in St John's Hall

Public Car Park West End Road: The Parish Council will apply for a new lease from the Fire Authority for the continued use of this public car park

Windmill Common: The Parish Council have installed 3 kissing gates onto the pedestrian accesses to Windmill Common to try to prevent entry by unauthorised vehicles and horses.

Brewery Common: Ownership: Work has been done to regularise the legal title held by Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council to officially register it at the Land Registry.

Travellers: In September last year unauthorised travellers arrived on Brewery Common, and after the Clerk, in conjunction with the Police, served notices on them (on a Saturday evening) they moved on. We were lucky that the bill for legal costs on this occasion was under £500 but if they had stayed we would have had to go to court it would have cost the Parish Council (tax payers) £1,000s in fees. The Parish Council has decided to secure the common with 'Dragons Teeth' bollards which it is estimated will cost in the region of £1,500.

Fairground Trust: The Charity Commission requires the setting up of a new board of trustees in place of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council.

Fairground General: The Fairground has suffered a lot of vandalism this year, especially to play area and litter bins. The new slide which cost £8,000 has had petrol poured onto it and burnt, faeces, glass and even 2p coins super glued to the surface. The new safety surface was dug up and one of the toddler spring toys has had to be repaired twice in the last year. The litter bins are constantly being broken and these cost £100s to replace (Please keep the Parish Council informed of any incidents). During the year the large 5 bar steel gates to the grazing area from Hammonds Heath were stolen! These cost £550 to replace them plus the added worry of securing the Fairground in the meantime from unauthorised entry. The Chairman thanked Tony Boffey of Butlers Lands for acting quickly and loaning a piece of farm machinery to temporarily secure the entrance.

Working Party: The working party continues to meet on a monthly basis on the first Saturday of each month to carry out maintenance to the Fairground.

Mortimer Link Mini Bus Service: The Parish Council has managed to secure a further 65% grant from the Countryside Agency (with a 35% contribution from Parish Council Funds) until the end of February 2006 for the continuation of the Mortimer Link Mini Bus Service from the village to the station.

New Car Park at Station Hope to be able to provide new car park on the other side of the station and discussions are taking place with the landowner (Englefield Estates) and the relevant rail authorities. The proposed new car park will ease the current overflow problem and help disabled travellers get to and from the 'down' platform.

Web Site: The Parish Council now has a new website up and running www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk and would like to thank Mr J Hannawin of i-next for setting up the web site and his kind contribution to the community. At present approximately 40 per day are visiting the site.

Newsletter: A Parish Council quarterly newsletter is being distributed to every house in the parish reporting on the work done by the Parish Council. Good feedback was received

from the survey questionnaire sent out with the last issue.

Computer Course: The Parish Council subsidise the laptop computer courses run by West Berkshire Council in the Methodist Hall. So far a taster course and a follow up course have been run. Another beginner's course is scheduled within the next few weeks.

Skate Board Park: As no volunteers came forward to make this happen it is probable that the scheme will have to be shelved.

Youth Club: We now have offers of help to set this up and a meeting has been arranged for the near future.

- 6 Update on new Fairground Pavilion Project:** Cllr Adrian Smith, Chairman of the working party said that the group had first looked at the original design and the funding would be just over £400,000. A business plan had been put together to granting bodies and grants of £100,000 had been applied for from Relief in Need, £14,000 from Sport England and to date £200,000 had been promised so half way there on the fund raising.

7 Report from local Charities:

Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity:

The Chairman of the Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need Charity, Hector Clark gave a report. The Charity is an amalgamation of several ancient charities dating back to the sixteenth century. The area it covers comprises the parishes of Stratfield Mortimer, Mortimer West End and Wokefield. The principal asset is Burnt Common in Mortimer West End. This has traditionally been used to provide winter fuel for the needs of the parish. Ten years ago an agreement was entered into with ARC Southern (now Hanson Aggregates) to allow the extraction of gravel, from which the Charity receives a royalty on every tonne of gravel sold. From this income, 75% of the money is invested to provide future income, the remaining 25% is available to support the needs and projects which benefit the parish. It is from this money that the Charity is able to provide a fuel allowance at Christmas for those in need. They also give support to the local schools and churches and such organisations such as the Scouts and the Burghfield and Mortimer Volunteer Bureau. Currently they are helping to fund the new central heating system for St John's Hall and the Fairground Pavilion Project. The Trustees have given support to this over the past few years, providing the funds for the original scheme which proved to be too expensive. They have now offered £150,000 subject to conditions towards the new and more realistic scheme. The Trustees wish to be satisfied that the building is needed by and will be used by the community as a whole. They would not be satisfied if it were to be just a cricket pavilion and Parish Office. It is also considered important that the building should not be a drain on parish funds but should have a proper and viable charging policy and become self financing in the short term. The Charity is able to support any local group who have a genuine need. It is usually expected that each and every applicant can show that they are able to provide some initial funding. The Charity is able and do give relief to a number of people in need throughout the year and will, of course continue to do so.

Clarke's Educational Foundation:

Mr John Mazillius, Hon Treasurer for the Clarke's Charity reported that The Charity owns part of St Mary's School and the income from this together with a grant from Mortimer Relief in Need Charity, together with interest on invested funds is distributed in grants to support the education of young persons who live in the parishes of Stratfield Mortimer, Mortimer West End and Wokefield. The Charity has this year given grants totalling £13,470 to various organisations and individuals. The main recipients are our two local schools of St Mary's and St John's together with Silchester School. The Charity has also given grants to Mortimer Scouts and Guides. This year the trustees decided to award 3 young people who were starting at university to assist them with the purchase of essential text books. They intent to continue this scheme in the current year. There are eight

trustees, four appointed by the local parish councils and the unitary authority, one appointed by the local churches, together with three co-opted members. The Trustees would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution to the development of the Charity by the Chairman, John Gosling, who was a trustee for over ten years. John has now moved to sunnier climes in Spain. A copy of the Trustees Annual Report and Account was tabled.

8 Statements by school Governors:

Mortimer St John's Church of England Infant School: Mrs Diana Thackery reported that the number on roll this year is 170 out of a possible 180, which is a rise of 13 over last year. The rise in the number of children has, for the most part been, easy to accommodate, but it has led to a large Year 1 group. There are six classes with two in each year group. Each class has a full-time teacher and the equivalent of a full-time teaching assistant. The school has produced a new prospectus, which has been well received by the parents and a copy will be made available for the Parish Council for review. Once again there have been some significant staff changes in the year. During the year the resignation of the Head Teacher, Mrs Moorhouse was received who has had her secondment to the LEA extended. Mrs Nichola Sumner (already acting as cover for the secondment) has now been appointed as Head Teacher starting from the 1st September 2005. In line with the Department of Education guidelines, the Governing Body was increased in size from 15 to 17. This will help to spread the increasing load on governors. St John's continues to benefit from an active, capable group of volunteers. The Governors continue to attend relevant training, which is monitored by a nominated Governor. The school has continued to develop in delivering the National Curriculum. Literacy is being emphasised this year along with handwriting. The staff at the school continues to deliver and develop extracurricular activities and clubs. At present the school runs a French Club, recorder club, gardening club and a choir. St John's school continues to work closely with their colleagues at St Mary's School. Their heads meet regularly and the Governing Bodies have initiated a process of building closer links. The two schools have recently jointly produced a travel plan to present to the LEA. St John's School continues to benefit from close links with the Church. The children use the Church for lessons and services at end of terms and the Harvest Festival. The school is grateful to the Parents and Friends Association for fund raising. This year the school have received £3,000 for books and outside play equipment. We also continue to receive support from local charities, the Englefield Charitable Trust and Clarke's Educational Charity which has enabled us to buy playground equipment books and PE equipment. New school signs have been erected with funding from the diocese. The security of the school has been improved by the commissioning of an access control system. This system allows teachers and authorised staff to move unhindered around the school whilst ensuring that external doors remain locked.

Mortimer St Mary's Church of England VA Junior School: Mrs Margaret Mayes reported that the school pupil numbers continue to rise and there are now 194 pupils on roll, 81 girls and 113 boys. The predicted pupil roll in September 2005 is 212. They expect to receive additional pupils from the Mortimer Hill development. The budget settlement for the financial year 2005/2005 was not as generous as hoped because we once again fell below the figure of 200 pupils which would have given the school additional funding. From September 2005 teaching staff will be released from classroom duties for 10 per cent of their time in order to work on planning preparation and assessment. The Senior Management Team and the Governing Body aim to provide qualified teaching staff to cover those periods of time when class teachers are absent from their classes. Three new Governors have joined during the year, Mother Juliet Straw (foundation governor) and Clare Dancer and Shelley Hackett (parent governors). There are now seventeen

governors with only one vacancy on the Governing Body. The governors have recently been working to improve the internal and external appearance and environment of the school with new windows for the school hall, an external security gate to protect the rear playing field and a rolling programme of internal redecoration. With the help of parents, the ICT provision to all classrooms has been standardised and brought up to date. The LEA has confirmed that St Mary's will benefit from work to improve access to the school and to provide hearing loops in some areas. Jointly with St John's School work has been carried on the School Travel Plan. The provision of a continuous footpath between the schools is a key element in this Plan. With the support of West Berkshire Council, who will have overall control of the project, to move ahead with the planning and implementation of work on an eighth classroom. The school's results in the core subjects continue to compare favourably with results both locally and nationally. As well as offering pupils their full entitlement under the National Curriculum, they are offered a variety of extra curricular activities. These include football, netball, hockey, cricket and swimming as well as musical and craft activities and a gardening club. Year 5 pupils recently returned from a residential visit to Kilve Court in Somerset and the Year 6 pupils visited Rhos-y-Gwaliau Field Centre during the Autumn Term. In conclusion Mrs Mayes thanked everyone who has helped and supported the school throughout the past year - either through professional expertise or by giving time or money. Among these the trustees of Clarke's Charity and Relief in Need and the Parent Teacher Association. The support of everyone is much appreciated and helps to improve what we can offer to the children who attend our village school.

9 District Councillors observations:

Cllr Sandra Harding reported that the process for dealing with planning applications had changed but remains based upon a delegated decision by officers of West Berkshire Council, with the possibility of being called in to a planning committee by district councillors. Some categories of application go directly to committee, e.g. major applications and those where there are a number of objections. The timescales have been altered to give West Berkshire a better chance of dealing with applications within the target of 8 week deadline. The Parish Council still has an input on planning applications but no longer has so much time to give its feedback. Negotiations continue to try to achieve a continuous footpath down to the station to be part funded by the Mortimer Hill Development. A small section of the footpath, to the roundabout accessing Mortimer Hill is currently being constructed. Sovereign Housing has finally agreed to re-develop the West Berkshire part of the Windmill Court site with 6 extra dependency flats. This will enable elderly people on the site to remain in their own homes for longer, with a higher level of care being provided at the site. The site will be handed over to Sovereign; this will include the staff house.

Cllr Keith Lock gave an overview of the West Berkshire Council budget. He also reported that three years ago the Audit Commission carried out a Comprehensive Performance Assessment of all District councils. There are five grades from poor to excellent at the time West Berkshire Council were judged as Fair. The Audit Commission have now carried out an up-date and the grade has been up-graded to Good. West Berkshire Council is aiming to increase their recycling rate from the current 17% to 50% and have obtained £23million to assist this project. A preferred site for a "recycling village" has been proposed at Padworth sidings. The number of visits to the Willink Leisure Centre has now topped 100,000 per annum a steady increase on the 70-80,000 a few years ago.

- 10 Report from Alfred Palmer Committee & Election of Officers:** Mr John Dell, Secretary said this was his 42nd report on behalf of the Alfred Palmer Committee to the Annual Parish Meeting. He thanked the Parish Council for their continued financial assistance towards the upkeep of the ground. He also thanked Mortimer Football Club for helping to maintain

the ground. The field is used on a regular basis from August to May with the Football Club running four adult teams who play on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings. The cubs also use the ground for training and organised games. The teams using the field have had a mixed season, the Saturday First Team with two games to go could be relegated, the Reserves have again finished the season with a flourish and will finish mid-table. The Sunday first team having been promoted at the end of last season have found their new division more difficult but will retain their position. The reserves have turned out a full team every week and their enthusiasm has not been rewarded on the field and they have finished bottom of the league. In addition to the games of football it is pleasing to see the field used for many other activities during the year. The current committee of Major G Leworthy, Mr D Grimwade, Mr S Dell and Mr J Dell are all prepared to stand for re-election. This was proposed by L Picking and seconded by K Lock. The committee were re-elected unanimously.

11 **Report from Representative of Tennis Club:** Sandra Harding gave an overview of the tennis club giving details of the progress of the three teams.

12 **Report from Representative of Cricket Club:** Mr Simon Beard of Mortimer Cricket Club reported that Mortimer Cricket Club celebrated another successful year in 2004 and during 2005 will be celebrating its 115th anniversary. Following the purchase of a new tractor to mow the outfield it was stolen in June from the pavilion which will result in a massive insurance bill to pay later in the year. On the field Mortimer continued to go from strength to strength, with new members joining the club. The Tour to Sidmouth will take place at the beginning of May. Last season, the team featured strongly in the Millennium League securing the runners up spot and a strongly performing Sunday Friendly side suffered only a handful of defeats. The club is still working hard to develop its youth set and it is encouraging to see local youngsters playing for the village team. Success on the field and an improvement in the pavilion facilities have helped the growth of the playing numbers so that the club is once again capable of putting out more than one competitive side. The long-term plans of the club remain ambitious. Regular Saturday play and a junior side remain key aims. In line with the Club's long-term vision, 4 members of the club have now been working with the Parish Council Pavilion working party to take forward the pavilion project. The club look forward to having a whole new pavilion for the benefit of the cricket club and the whole community of the village of Mortimer. The Cricket Club is supporting this initiative with fund raising events. This year the Club is holding an Autumn Ball, a cricket player is running in the London Marathon, the club is obtaining local sponsorship and the Club has re-started the 100 club.

13 **Report from Parish Council's Representative on St John's Hall Management Committee:** Mr Lawrence Picking reported that it had once again been another successful year with lettings income up by nearly £600 on the previous year. The new stage curtains are now in place the cost being jointly shared with Mortimer Dramatic Society. A list of jobs has been drawn up in order to comply with the disability act and he thanked the Parish Council for their grant of £1,000 towards this and further funding is being sought from West Berkshire Council. With the arrival of gas in the village the committee decided to go ahead with the installation of gas central heating and would like to thank E S Pipelines for their generous contribution by way of installing the gas connection free of charge and paying £1,000 towards the cost of the project. The overall cost will be in the region of £10,500. The upper half of the hall has now been repaired and painted. The rest of the work will be done after the installation of the central heating. A new roller shutter for the kitchen has been ordered and is currently being made to measure and will be fitted soon. The Committee would like to express its thanks to all those who use the hall and who support it in many other ways.

- 14 **Report from Burghfield and Mortimer Volunteer Bureau:** Mr Alan Thorpe, Chairman of the Volunteer Bureau reported that the Bureau has continued its work for another year, operating from its office at Burghfield Methodist Church. The office is staffed Monday to Friday mornings by a loyal team of lady volunteers. Volunteer Drivers are contacted to arrange transport for people to and from medical centres. During the past 3 months 307 journeys have been made to local hospitals, surgeries, dentists and opticians. We are constantly appealing for new drivers as demand continues to grow. Offers of even an hour or so per week would be very welcome. Along with other Bureaus, a small mileage allowance is paid. We are grateful for financial grants from Mortimer and Burghfield Parish Councils, West Berkshire Council, the Relief in Need Charity and Age Concern. These grants are by nature received each year, and without them this essential work could not continue. The bulk of contributions come from passenger travel tokens and cash donations. No government or health funding is available.
- 15 **Open Forum:**
Q. Will the new pavilion on the Fairground take business away from St John's Hall? The Chairman of the St John's Hall Committee replied that they will be offering different markets, i.e. the hall has regular bookings such as the Dramatic Society and the pavilion smaller meeting rooms etc.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9:40 p.m. The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting is Wednesday 5th April 2006 at 7:30 p.m.