



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Unadopted Minutes of Meeting

held on Thursday 13 October 2005 @ 7.30 p.m.

Present: Councillors: K Davies (Chairman), P Blagden, C Lewis, J. Morden (until 8:20pm), Mrs A Philips, T Shorrocks, P Challis, D Ives, G Puddephatt, S Clark, A Smith, Ms S Harding (until 8:45pm), G Parry, A Thorpe Mrs J Kirk (Clerk), Cllr K Lock and 1 member of the public.

Apologies: None

Declaration of Interest: Cllr A Philips 05/172(vi).

05/160 **Minutes and Matters Arising:**

Minutes:

The Minutes of the Meeting of 8 September 2005 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising:

The Chairman reported that due to health reasons Cllr Clark had taken over the chairmanship of the Cemetery Committee from Cllr Thorpe for the foreseeable future.

- 05/161 **Invitation to Members of the Public to address a meeting (see Standing Order No. 30.3)** The Chairman confirmed that at the chairman's discretion, members of public may address meetings of the council and its committees on matters of which they have concern. However, this has to take place outside of the formal meeting and therefore is not minuted. It has been the Parish Council's practice therefore to give members of the public ten minutes before the meeting starts, after which when the meeting has commenced; they are limited to being non-participating observers only. This obviously means that members of public are not allowed to take part in or contribute to any ensuing debate or vote.

- 05/162 **Report from District Councillors:** Cllr Harding reported on the continuous footpath and traffic issues in The Street. In order to deal with the issues raised by the creation of the footpath it has been divided into two sections, the first section is between the two entrances of the Avenue and the second section from the second entrance to the Avenue and Kiln Lane. It has been decided to deal with the lower stretch first, since that is essential to creating a continuous footpath. If this could not be achieved then the upper stretch would be redundant. However, even without the upper stretch, the lower length would achieve a continuous link if footpath users used Orchard Rd to bypass the upper section.

The developers of Mortimer Hill have contributed £15,000 towards the cost of the footpath, which is ring fenced for 10 years. However if the footpath is not achievable within the next year the District Councillors believe the money should be put towards a traffic light controlled pedestrian crossing at the point where the footpath crosses over.

From The Avenue to Kiln Lane: The owners of the paddock have been identified as the Lambton Trust. They have been approached and are sympathetic to the idea of the footpath. Legally there should be no problem with designating some of the land as footpath. All that would remain is for negotiations as to the price to be paid by WBC. The owners of East End House are willing to give/sell the land required and there are no significant issues with this length. The owner of Holm Oaks is sympathetic to the footpath. However, the WB tree officer has made a site visit and is unhappy with the effect the footpath works would have on the trees. There are two holm oaks, one oak and one wellingtonia. In addition, the ground level immediately adjacent to the highway is at least one metre higher than the road surface. The trees are currently healthy, but would suffer and probably become a danger to road users and the nearby house if works went ahead. The tree officer would oppose their felling, which would also probably cause damage to the house at Holm Oaks. Cllr Harding has asked whether this footpath length could be raised up, rather than excavated down, but the tree officer is unhappy with the piling work which this would require. He would also not support

an unmade up footpath across the tree roots. There is a question of where the greater public interest lays - trees or footpath. The advice we have currently is that the trees carry the greatest legal weight. A formal written report from the tree officer will be published next week. The only solution remaining for this length would be to move the road over and lose the footpath on the other side. I have asked for a costing for this to be done. First of all the service providers will need to be contacted for permission and costings for moving all the services which run under the pavement. The main one is BT who has been contacted and has agreed to give an estimate. In the next few weeks a trial trench will be dug to check that there are no other services etc. WBC hope to have all costings in the next few weeks, and can then look at the cost/benefits and possible budget sources for this. It will be very expensive.

Another problem is that the footpath could not be moved over without the upper stretch also being completed, as the north side path would not be redundant until then. (Visibility is not adequate to allow a crossing point from north to south at the end of the Avenue)

Between two entrances to the Avenue: The holly hedge which runs along the rear of gardens in Orchard Rd would need to be cut back and in some cases removed. 7 houses are affected. There is currently a covenant forbidding the cutting of the hedge. The burden of this covenant lies with the owners of the Orchard Rd houses - this means that they cannot enforce it, but if they cut the hedge down they are at risk of being sued by the people who hold the benefit of the covenant. The position of the ownership of the benefit of the covenant is less clear (not the ownership of the hedge itself) as the covenant was put on when Mortimer Hill and all the land around was in the same ownership, so it was not clear which land it ran with. It has now been established that the benefit lies with the Lambton Trust (who retain the paddock and some houses in Orchard Rd) and the developers of Mortimer Hill. They will both require some payment to be negotiated to lift the covenant. As this section of path was not essential to the complete footpath link and seemed to be more problematic, it was decided not to pursue the lifting of the covenant and possible acquisition of land until the lower section of the footpath had been finalised. However, it has since become apparent that there is not adequate room to put signage for the new roundabout in without cutting the hedge back, so the work to lift the covenant has been commenced. Once the covenant is lifted, then negotiations can start with the Orchard Rd residents about cutting back or possibly removing the hedge. Next week a letter will go to the residents of Orchard Rd telling them what is being done. (Although they will have no say in the lifting of the covenant, only in whether they then want to sell land or permit the cutting of the hedge) WB have been approached by someone purporting to be representing residents in Orchard Rd saying they are in favour of the footpath and would consider selling some land, although one resident has also contacted them to oppose any scheme. The letter which is going out should enable WBC to gauge the level of support more fully. If the lower section of the footpath is unachievable, then this section would not be worth completing.

Crossing: If the footpath is unachievable, the District Councillors believe that the next best solution would be a lighted controlled crossing where the north side path currently runs out. This would cost approx £20,000. The £15,000 developer's contribution could be used, but Cllr Lock has made a bid for capital funding. This would leave the £15,000 available for other footway works in the village. They don't think they should pursue a crossing until the footway question is resolved, but it looks like they will have a firm position on the footway in the next few months.

Footway from Kiln Lane to St Mary's School: The footway from the entrance to Mortimer Hall to Pitfield Lane is narrow compared to the rest of the footway. Plans are being prepared to cut away the bank where possible and increase the width of the path. It is believed that the cost of this could be covered by surpluses in the Area Forum budget. This is to be confirmed.

Mortimer Hill traffic works: The developer has agreed to put in a raised surface for the roundabout. There are still other works (e.g. lighting and crossing surfacing) to be completed around the roundabout. The signage for the roundabout coming into the village is inadequate (being on the wrong side and too close to the roundabout) It cannot be moved to the correct place until the holly hedge is cut back (and the covenant removed to enable this to happen). In the meantime traffic engineers have declined to allow the signs to be sited further back down the road on the correct side. (By the second entrance to the Avenue) This is being passed to Mark Edwards, Head of Highways, WBC.

Speed review: The 40 mph stretch along the Street is due to be reviewed at the next review in

February. Procedures have now been changed to allow district councillors to address the review panel, so Cllrs Lock and Harding will attend. Publicity nearer this time would be helpful. Criteria used to make the decision are enforceability (the police give panel input here), urban nature of the area (usually require housing on both side of the road), traffic volumes and accident record. Although this has been turned down before, Mortimer Hill will have been completed and also Mortimer Hall developed since it was last reviewed. There are also more people using the crossing point on that stretch. On the question of a 20mph speed limit outside the schools; this has already been installed outside some schools. No more will be done until a speed limit policy review is completed (scheduled to be early in the new year) Councillors and presumably Parish Councils will be consulted on this.

Police speed enforcement: There is to be a consultation on the installation of lay-bys for police cars to carry out speed enforcement. One is proposed on the fairground and one just before Mortimer Lane. Both district Councillors have said that the one on the fairground is unnecessary as there is already a lay-by. They question whether they are really necessary for the half an hour per month that police are likely to turn up and does Mortimer really want these eyesores? There is an implied threat they speed limits will not be enforced without these lay-bys.

Cllr Lock reported that there are a number of staff changes at WBC, the Chief Executive, Jim Graham has left and four planners are leaving the planning department. He has received a petition from Age Concern asking for the travel token system to continue which will be presented to the next council meeting. The council has been told that the Primary Care Trusts for Newbury, Reading and Wokingham must combine into one. Each District will have a local organisation under a joint management board based on District Council boundaries. This means that Mortimer Surgery will be part of the West Berkshire local area rather than the Reading PCT as at present.

05/163 **Planning:** Cllr Morden reported that the Committee had met once since the last Council Meeting on the 27th September 2005 when 7 plans were considered.

05/01929/FULD Woodlands, Summerlug. Small dwelling in corner of garden for elderly couple.

Object:

1. The Parish Council is concerned that this is a separate dwelling not an annex to the existing property and is out of keeping with adjacent properties and an overdevelopment of the site.
2. The proposed property is 1m from the boundary and there will be overlooking of the adjacent property.
3. If foul sewer connection is made north to Loves Wood through vacant site it could compromise trees subject to TPOs.
4. Would create an unacceptable precedent.

05/01981/OUTD 29-30 The Beavers. 4 two and three bedroom houses. No Objection.

05/01997/REM The Colt House, Sweetzers Piece. Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of two dwellings. No objection

05/02056/FULD Land to rear of Birch Cottage, Birch Lane. Dwelling House. Object: Irrespective of the Planning Inspector allowing an appeal the erection of a similar property on the adjacent site (Serena, Birch Lane) our objections to that development apply equally to this application (See 03/02414/FUL).

05/02058/OUTD Land adjoining 37 Stephens Close. Chalet bungalow with new access and parking. No objection – however suggest that Sovereign Housing should reinvest the capital raised from this site towards building of affordable housing within the Stratfield Mortimer Parish.

05/02073/FUL Windmill House, Victoria Road. Two storey extension to existing offices. No objection.

05/02003/RESMAJ (adjacent parish) AWE Aldermaston. Replacement of laser research facility. No objection.

Recommendations under delegated powers received from West Berkshire Council:

05/01633/HOUSE 4 Spring Lane. New garage. Approval

05/01590/FULD Land to rear of Birch Cottage, Birch Lane. New dwelling house. Refusal.

05/01682/HOUSE Hathaways Cottage, Kiln Lane. Single storey extensions to front and side. Approval.

05/01635/FULD Land to rear of Serena, Birch Lane. One detached 4 bedroom dwelling. Refusal
 Cllr Morden reported that a further appeal has been lodged against West Berkshire Council's refusal of the original application 05/00243 - 33-37 West End Road. There is an appeal already outstanding on this site 05/01218. Yet another appeal has been made in respect of refusal of the latest application for two houses on The Cold House, Sweetzers Piece site. These (Sweetzer's Piece) appeals will be linked and will be determined by Public Enquiry, date to be arranged. At the Eastern Area Planning Committee (WBC) held on 12th October 05 the application for a separate elderly people's dwelling to the rear of Woodlands, Summerlug was determined. The Officers' recommendation, which coincided with the Parish Council's opinion, for refusal was upheld.

05/164 **Update on Village Design Statement:** Cllr Shorrock reported that the Open Meeting held in St John's Hall on the 17th September was moderately attended although the fact finding process was carried out. A questionnaire regarding the Village Design Statement was delivered to every house in the parish (1400) and to date 130 had been returned and are in the process of being evaluated.

05/165 **Roads, Footpaths and Commons:**

- **Report:** Cllr Shorrock reported that the Roads, Footpaths & Commons Committee met on the 3 October and that most of the items discussed at that meeting have subsequently been covered in Cllr Harding's District Councillor Report (05/162 above), namely continuous footpath, speed review The Street, roundabout. Cllr Shorrock reported: A press statement in support of the demonstration by parents, friends and children of St Mary's School highlighting the need for a continuous footpath on The Street.
- WBC have sent a consultation document under Sections 60 to 62 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 for the initial stages of preparation of West Berkshire's 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan' This plan must be an assessment of the extent to which local rights of way meet present and likely future needs of the public, and the opportunities provided by local rights of way (and in particular by footpaths, cycle tracks, bridleways and restricted byways). Cllr Philips and Cllr Clark are to complete the questionnaire.
- Brewery Common: West Berkshire Council has offered as a gesture of goodwill to carry out an extra grass cut on Brewery Common. The committee have decided to accept this and have asked that this be done before the end of October.
- Car Park Disclaimers: The committee recommended to the council that car park disclaimer signs be purchased for the car parks in West End Road and the Fairground which would also include the wording 'no overnight parking'. The Clerk has obtained quotations for approximately £90 each plus fixings and posts etc. Cllr Clark is to investigate the exact wording and whether posts would be required.
- Gas Contractors: The Clerk and members of the committee are to meet with McNicholas to look at the areas of concern and how they may be rectified. These have been identified as The Green (corner of Burghfield Road/Stephens Firs), Stephens Road/Stephens Close junction (both sides), Drury Lane/Stanmore Gardens, Stephens Road junction with West End Road, Windmill Road grass area.
- Roadside Verge Maintenance: The committee looked at the three public open spaces identified (around the War Memorial, area by St John's Church car park and Heath End Common) for planning and maintaining by a contractor, to be paid for by potential sponsorship. The committee felt that as two of the areas are highway it would be inappropriate to make any changes to these areas and that the Heath End Common should continue to be undisturbed.
- Cllr Challis is to assess whether any work is required to be done on Windmill Common.
- i. **Update on Brewery Common Title:** Cllr Davies reported that Land Registry has told the Council's solicitors that SMPC have freehold title to Brewery Common. The Land Registry are settling the question of boundary and checking with all adjoining land owners of the Common.
- ii. **Update on Brewery Common gas main compensation claim:** No update.
- iii. **Update on installation of 'dragon's teeth' Brewery Common:** No update.
- iv. **To consider recommendation from Roads, Footpaths & Commons Committee to install a large oxford kissing gate on footpath No 37 (The Fairground at the Windmill Road end. Gate to be provided and paid for by WBC, SMPC to bear the cost of the installation (and**

re-location of dog bin) at an approx cost of £250 (subject to approval from the Fairground Trustees): The Roads, Footpaths & Commons Committee recommended the installation of the above kissing gate as above to try to restrict unauthorised access onto the Fairground via Footpath 37 from motor vehicles, motor cycles and other unauthorised traffic, but to allow the access for pedestrians, wheelchairs and pushchairs etc. The Clerk confirmed written agreement to this had been received from the Trustees. Cllr Davies proposed that this resolution be accepted and this was seconded by Cllr Thorpe and carried unanimously. Carried. Clerk to action.

- v. **To discuss sponsorship for planting and Maintaining 3 public open spaces in the village:** See 05/165 above. Cllr Puddephatt agreed with the above recommendation regarding the planting of two of the open spaces but advised that as there is an offer of sponsorship the council should look at other sites. He also said that to do nothing with the Heath End Common (pond area) would not be a good idea as the pond needs management to protect the great crested newts as the crassula helmsii and reeds are likely to take over the pond area. It was agreed that this is a sensible suggestion and Cllr Puddephatt is to look further into the management of this area and sponsorship. Councillors have been asked to identify alternative areas in the village which could be planted and maintained.

05/166 **Fairground, Trees and Amenities:**

Report: Cllr Blagden gave an update, and distributed a report, on the monthly Fairground maintenance and grass cutting arrangements. He reported that the whole of the grazing area had been cut including the border. It was agreed that the Clerk would check the details and facts and that the cheque for payment would be held in the meantime.

- i. **Monthly Area Play Area Inspection Report:** Cllr Smith reported that the damaged clutter bridge had been replaced with a chain link bridge which was very good and to a high standard. He said that as the manufacturer of the multi play unit had gone out of business the Clerk had trouble finding a company to repair the bridge. The contractor had also trialled replacing the chains on one of the junior swings with rods (to try to prevent the swing being thrown over the top bar) and so far this has been successful and Cllr Smith would like to recommend that the council consider changing all the chains on the other swings to rods. He also said that one of the larger swings is away being repaired at the moment and has not been stolen. The contractor has also been asked to repair the self closing gates at both entrances to the play area.
- ii. **Insurance Cover:** Cllr Davies said that the Clerk is in talks with West Berkshire Council's insurers (Jardine Lloyd Thompson) to obtain an alternative quotation to take into account the council's requirements regarding bonfires.
- iii. **Update on Pavilion Project:** The Chairman circulated a paper to all councillors prior to the meeting asking for information on the intended use and facilities of the new pavilion and for a breakdown of funding levels and a breakdown of predicted annual running costs and hire charges. Cllr Smith circulated a report which said that a new building design had been submitted to attain full planning permission and he is in dialogue with the Eastern Area Planning Officer at West Berkshire. Although there is still a way to go, the working party are confident of a start to build date of September 2006. The facilities are designed to be flexible to include use by existing users of the Fairground, namely the tennis club and the cricket club but also groups who currently make use of the cricket pavilion on a regular basis such as St John's and St Mary's schools, the local toddler groups, the fun run and the scouts etc. Provision has also been made to include a new location for the Parish Office. Planning Permission is being sought for a building costed at £420k to build. The working party does have a contingency design, which can be built for around £100k less than this. This would mean the loss of a meeting room and a slightly smaller main room; otherwise the facilities remain the same. In order to raise this amount of money the working party are focussing on achieving grants from large funding bodies. Other local funding activities are being carried out to raise funds to go towards the fixtures and fittings of the building and are targeting £10,000 of local funding. Local funding may take the form of cash, or services rendered in kind. To date the current status of funding is as follows:
Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need £150,000 confirmed (review March 2006), SEEDA

£40,000, working through preliminary survey (April 2006), Land Fill Tax Scheme (Community First) Min £50,000 (April 2006), English Cricket Board £25,000 (March 2006). The total level of funding, should all applications be successful, is over £350,000. This remains some way short of the target but is in excess of the money required to build the contingency design. The working party is committed to further pursuit of funds to attain the higher target and continue to seek new funding opportunities. As the building is not intended to start until autumn 2006, there will be no, or little need to cover running costs in the 2006/07 Parish Council budget. It is intended that the building will be self-funding within 4 years and a management committee will be set up to manage the building. It will be the purpose of this committee to raise money, (from usage charges, grants etc.) to fund the building. There is no expectation that the costs would be covered by the precept. The question was raised whether this project would be a burden on the precept? The answer given was there has never been any intention for the project to be a drain on the precept and this continues to the case. A major guiding rule for the project is to provide a self funding community facility.

- iv. **Fairground Trust:** No report.
- 05/167 **Cemetery:** Cllr Thorpe reported that the arranged meeting with Thrive regarding Cemetery maintenance had not taken place and a further letter had been sent to them asking for a response to the earlier letter.
- 05/168 **Communications Committee:** Cllr Blagden gave an update on the computer courses. It is hoped to arrange a lunch time business forum later in the year. The newsletter had successfully been delivered to all homes in the parish.
- 05/169 **Update on The Rural Housing Trust:** No update.
- 05/170 **AWE Local Liaison Committee Report:** A report from Mr W Taylor (LLC Representative for Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council) on the AWE Local Liaison Committee Meeting on the 15th September 2005 (already circulated). A full copy of the report and supporting documents will be held in the Parish Office.
- 05/171 **To discuss report on the Clerk's duties in relation to Parish Council Committee Meetings:** The Chairman tabled the previously circulated report on the clerk of the council's responsibilities in relation to attending committee meetings, preparing the agenda and taking the minutes at all meetings. It was unanimously agreed that this procedure will be followed in future.
- 05/172 **Finance:** In accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations all the following items for payment were considered together. Cllr Smith proposed that they be paid; Cllr Clark seconded this. Carried unanimously.
- i. Clerk's Salary.
 - ii. Clerk's/Custodian's Tax and NI.
 - iii. Clerk's Expenses.
 - iv. Custodian's Salary.
 - v. RBWM (Pension).
 - vi. Ian Philips (grass cutting Cemetery/Churchyard) £497.85 inc VAT.
 - vii. Bridgewood Landscape Services (grass cutting Alfred Palmer Field) £80.00.
 - viii. Stewarts of Mortimer Ltd (Mortimer Link) £763.75 inc VAT
 - ix. Forbuoys (newspapers) £3.60
 - x. Dads Shop Ltd - £53.63 inc VAT.
 - xi. British Telecom (Parish Office) £191.59 inc VAT.
 - xii. West Berkshire Council (quarterly photocopying) £44.12 inc VAT.
 - xiii. Staples (stationery) £129.76 inc VAT.
 - xiv. R M Weavers (grass cutting Fairground) £761.76 inc VAT (held over).
 - xv. The Post Office (stamps) £51.00.
 - xvi. Eagle Technologies Limited (ID Cards) £126.84 inc VAT.
 - xvii. St John's Hall Management Committee (hall rental) £25.00.
 - xviii. i-next Ltd (Domain name renewal & management (2 years) £70.50 inc VAT

05/173 Correspondence:

1. Letter from Garth & South Berks Vale Hunt asking to book the Fairground Car Pak for a meet on Tuesday 27th December, not for foxhunting but for a trail ride or following a drag. It was agreed to accept this booking under the same terms and conditions as last year.
2. Annual Parish Survey. To assess how Parish Council's view their relationship with West Berkshire. Councillors asked to send their views to the Clerk who will collate a reply.
3. WBC, Information on District Parish Conference 25th October 2005.
4. WBC Freight Strategy meeting Monday 17th October
5. Minutes from WBC Children & Young People Select Committee Meeting on 13 September regarding Under Age Drinking

05/174 Minor Matters/Future Agenda Items:

None

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 10th November 2005 at 7:30 p.m.

The Meeting closed at 10:15 p.m.