



Stratfield Mortimer Parish

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting

held at St. Johns Hall, West End Road at 7.30 pm on 24th April 2023

- Prior to the meeting, information was on display on the Greening Mortimer Campaign; sewage discharges at Stratfield Mortimer Treatment Works; vehicle speeding data and the Mortimer to Burghfield cycleway and footpath.
- There were approximately 26 members of the public present.
- Ten councillors were present, and apologies were received from Cllrs. Chris Lewis and Dave Butler.
- The meeting commenced at 7.30 pm.
- It was agreed that Mrs. Lynn Hannawin – Parish Clerk - would take the minutes.

1. Welcome by the Parish Council Chairman

Cllr. Mike Dennett, Chairman of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council, welcomed all attendees.

2. To receive the Minutes of the 2022 Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of the 2022 Annual Parish Meeting which was held at St. Johns Hall on 26th April 2022 were received.

3. The 2023 Stratfield Mortimer Community Awards:

a. Presentation of awards to Rebecca Barker and Anne Haines

Cllr. Dennett confirmed that further to receiving several excellent nominations the Committee had agreed to make two awards this year. He presented the awards to Rebecca and Anne providing information on their respective contributions to the community.

b. Comments on deserving but unsuccessful nominations.

Cllr. Dennett reported that in addition to the awards being made, letters of recognition had been sent to two other well deserving nominees.

4. Guest Speaker – Jenny Graham, Environment Delivery Manager, West Berkshire Council: “You Don’t have to be an expert! How we can all play our part in tackling climate change”

Jenny Graham talked about West Berkshire Council’s (WBC) Environment Strategy and confirmed that the role of her team is to deliver the strategy across the authority. She reported on initiatives that may be relevant to Mortimer such as Solar Together; Car Club; electric vehicle (EV) charging points and aDoddle.

Further to points raised/questions asked it was confirmed that:

- WBC are just completing the Transport Plan which feeds into the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) but any changes, including the return of Mortimer's Sunday bus service, will be dependent on Government funding. Members of the public should participate in future relevant consultations to highlight the need for a Sunday bus service.
- A contract for providing on street EV charging points is in place and WBC are currently going out to tender for a contract for the provision of charging points in other places i.e. car parks. It is likely that charging points in other locations will be supplied first to those areas, such as Mortimer, that are already in discussion with WBC.

5. Mortimer Greening Campaign – Achievements, Upcoming and Transition Brook

Cllr. Amanda Marsden outlined Phase 1 of the Greening Campaign which took place in January. She confirmed as a community owned and driven initiative the Greening Mortimer Campaign now sits under the Mortimer Village Partnership (MVP) but continues to be supported by the Council. Phase 2 will be instigated once further information has been received from the national organisation.

Free thermal imaging of Mortimer resident's houses, offered as part of the initial launch of the Campaign, will continue in the Autumn with a newly purchased camera.

Further to points raised/questions asked it was confirmed that further to changes in planning law, expected November 2023, new English developments will be required to demonstrate at least a 10% increase in biodiversity on or near development sites. WBC are currently working on the systems necessary to implement this change but are waiting on secondary legislation. Some Councils are requiring a higher increase in biodiversity than 10% but WBC do not currently have the evidence to support this. It was acknowledged that Mortimer, with its rural location could benefit from this new requirement.

6. The Parish Council and Greening

Cllr. Danusia Morsley gave an outline of the ways SMPC are promoting greening. This included work on the footway to St Marys and the station; the Mortimer to Burghfield Footpath and Cycleway; looking at EV charging use; the hosting of the website using only green energy; printing the newsletter on recycled paper and managing the biodiversity of the Fairground.

7. Update on the Neighbourhood Plan

Jo Emberson-Wines, Chair of the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, reported that work continues on both the outcome for the Reserved Land, from the previous 2017 Neighbourhood Plan (NDP), and the new Neighbourhood Plan (NP). Further to the consultation that took place in November, six key work schemes have been identified. These will be turned into policies of the new Plan with the aim to make the new Plan live in 2024/25.

8. Update on Sewage Discharges from Stratfield Mortimer Sewage Treatment Works into Foudry Brook

Cllr. Dennett presented data on the storm discharge from 2019/20 onwards. The long periods of discharge mainly occur between September and April. Thames Water have confirmed that

the Mortimer sewerage works was due an upgrade around December 2023, but, due to a shortage of equipment, this has been pushed back to 2024.

Further to points raised/questions asked it was confirmed:

- The storm discharge issue is due to an inadequate sewerage system.
- It would be useful to understand the quality of the water now so that the results of the upgrade can be established.
- It is unknown if Thames Water can extract phosphorus from the runoff of water from farmland.

9. Speeding in the Village

Cllr. Dennett presented data of vehicle speeds recently obtained from deploying the Speed Indicator Device (SID) in the village.

Cllr. Marsden provided information on the SID and the Automatic Speed Watch Camera (ASWC) and confirmed the data collected from deploying the SID informs the deployment of the ASWC. The data from the ASWC is sent to Thames Valley police who take relevant action against speeding motorists.

Cllr. Marsden extended grateful thanks to Dudley Ives for his involvement with deploying the SID.

Further volunteers are needed for operating the SID and assisting with the greening and traffic management aspect of the new NP.

10. The Annual Report of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Cllr. Mike Dennett gave a report as follows:

This report covers the period May 2022 to April 2023 which has been a very active year for the Council. At this time last year we were preparing for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The events were coordinated by a working party set up by SMPC but that grew with many other members. I believe all involved produced a weekend that will live long in the village memory. I can't possibly thank everyone, so many volunteers stepped forward. Many thanks indeed to Mortimer Music Live and Mortimer Village Partnership for their major roles in the weekend, to Cllr Simon Beard who led the working party and to Eric Howell and Andy Bell for the procession.

You have heard earlier of some of the projects the council has been undertaking. In particular, the Mortimer to Burghfield Footway/Cycleway where we have commissioned the necessary surveys and are about to submit a planning application. Some progress has been made with improving the footway down the Street to St Mary's School and this is continuing. Adult fitness equipment has been installed on the Fairground. The council has also been able to contribute to the discussions on the future of Windmill Court. The council introduced a Community Grant Scheme and has made relatively small grants to ten community organisations. We have also managed to hold the precept virtually constant. You may have noticed that on your Council Tax bill that the contribution to SMPC actually decreased by 0.2%!

We have come to the end of the four year term of the council and election of councillors for the new council should have taken place in May. The council comprises 15 councillors but only 13 nominations were received by West Berkshire Council. These 13 were therefore elected in an uncontested election and the two vacancies must be filled by co-option in the new council year.

The 13 councillors are all currently in office, but the other two current councillors did not stand. Cllr Chris Lewis was a councillor in the late 1990's until 2007, he then had a break and re-joined the council in 2015. Cllr Keeleigh Field joined the council in 2019 and was our youngest ever councillor. Unfortunately, having moved out of the parish Keeleigh was not eligible for re- election. I thank them both for their service and dedication to the council.

There is perhaps a misconception that the council consists of the same councillors year after year. Of the 15 councillors elected in 2019, ten remain as councillors at present with the other five being replaced by co-options. Indeed, we have co-opted three councillors in the last year, and I am delighted to say these all stood for re-election. Please consider whether you would like to be co-opted and contribute to the council and the running of the parish. We need you!

Finally, I thank all councillors for their varied contributions during the year. The council is incredibly lucky to have three outstanding staff; Lynn (The Clerk), Bernise (Assistant to the Clerk) and Frank (Custodian). They are responsible for the smooth and efficient running of the council and on behalf of all, I thank them for their outstanding performance during the year.

11.Open Forum and Questions.

No questions were asked.

Cllr. Graham Bridgman thanked Cllr. Dennett on behalf of the Council and the community for all the work that he had done in the last year.

The meeting closed at 21:00.