



## **Stratfield Mortimer Parish**

### **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting**

**held at St. Johns Hall, West End Road at 7.30 pm on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

- Prior to the meeting, information was on display by the Mortimer Local History Group, Mortimer Health Walkers, Mortimer Table Tennis Club, Patient Participation Group, Burghfield & Mortimer Volunteer Bureau, Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan and also the artwork entries for the 'My Mortimer' art competition.
- There were approximately 60 members of the public present.
- 13 councillors were present, and apologies were received from Cllrs. Nick Carter and Andrew Richardson.
- The meeting commenced at 7.30 pm.
- It was agreed that Sallyann Taylor, Assistant Clerk - would take the minutes.

#### **1. Welcome by the Parish Council Chairman**

Cllr Danusia Morsley, Chairman of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council, welcomed all attendees.

#### **2. To receive the Minutes of the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting**

The minutes of the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting which was held at St. Johns Hall on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023 were received.

#### **3. The 2024 'My Mortimer' Art Competition Awards:**

Cllr Danusia Mosley reported they had very few entries, but what they all showed is that Mortimer is a very positive place to live. Cllr Morsley then presented the certificates and prizes to the first prize winners in the three age ranges: -

First Prize in Years R-2 went to Naomi Attoe-Martin

First Prize in Years 3-6 went to Alice Prime

First Prize in Years 7-13 went to Alice Thomas

All the other entrants received 'Judges Commendations' certificates and prizes.

#Before moving on to the Guest Speaker Alison Foster each stall holder talked briefly about their group's activities.

#### **4. Guest Speaker – Alison Foster from Building Berkshire together with an update on the project for building a new hospital in**

Alison Foster the Programme Director from 'Building Berkshire Together' presented information on the future of the new Royal Berkshire Hospital. The following main points were discussed: -

- Building on the current site is very challenging - constrained, potential planning issues and underground challenges will cost more to build on.
- The Trust Preferred Way Forward is a new hospital on a new site, and they have provided the New Hospital Program (NHP) with independent evidence to support this.
- They are exploring alternative sites, carrying out due diligence and reviewing Thames Valley Park and Thames Valley Science Park.
- They will be engaging with patients, the public, stakeholders and community between now and August on impact of moving the RBH and encourage the community to get involved.
- The NHP are meeting Treasury on 30 April to agree final funding allocation and the timing of schemes – with the outcome in May.

A few questions were raised by the public and answered by Alison Foster.

#### **5. The 2024 Stratfield Mortimer Community Award:**

##### **Presentation of award to Doug Overett**

Cllr Graham Bridgman, who was on the judging panel, reported the choice was between 2 individuals and it was a difficult choice to make. Chris Morsley was the runner up and got an honourable mention and Doug Overett was announced the winner. Cllr Bridgman provided information on their respective contributions to the community. Cllr Morsley then presented the Stratfield Mortimer Community Award plate to Doug Overett.

#### **6. Update on Speeding in the village.**

Cllr Dennett presented data of vehicle speeds recently obtained from deploying the Speed Indicator Device (SID) and the Automatic Speed Watch Camera (ASWC) at different places in the village. The data from ASWC is sent to Thames Valley Police who take relevant action against speeding motorists.

Cllr Dennett said they are looking for volunteers for both the SID and ASWC and to contact the Parish Office if interested.

## **7. Update on Sewage Discharges from Stratfield Mortimer Sewage Treatment Works into Foudry Brook**

Cllr. Michael Dennett presented data on the storm discharges into Foudry Brook from 2019/2020 onwards and up to 21 April 2024. Mortimer Sewage Works storm discharges occur most frequently between September and May with fewer (but some) in the summer. The storm discharge is due to an inadequate sewage system and discharges are becoming more frequent. In 2023 there were 3304 hours of storm discharges. This is equivalent to 137.7 days. In both 2022 and 2023 Mortimer had the second longest periods of discharge in the whole Thames Water area. The upgrade of Mortimer Sewage works was originally scheduled for completion Dec 2023, then summer 2024, latest December 2024.

## **8. The Annual Report of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council**

Cllr. Danusia Morsley gave a report as follows:

This is the report for the year May 2023 to April 2024. Following Mike Dennett's many skilful years as chairman, I took on this role with some trepidation; I was relieved to be strongly supported by our Vice-Chairman Graham Bridgman.

When I was elected chairman, we only had 13 councillors, the election just a week or two before having been uncontested. We have been lucky enough since then to co-opt Andrew Richardson and Hugh Kilshaw onto the council, so we are back up to a full complement. Or we were until today when I received a resignation; so watch out for notices of how to apply for the vacancy.

Our assistant to the clerk, Bernise retired in January; Sallyann who has come to replace her has settled in incredibly well and we are all glad to have her on board. Lynn, our super clerk is thankfully with us – just on holiday this week. The death of our custodian Frank came as a great shock. We will be looking to recruit a new custodian but, in the meantime, councillors are volunteering to cover some of his duties.

Councillors all bring different skills and interests. Before the council can make decisions there is a great of research to be done; other activities need skills ranging from IT to tree planting to drafting legal documents and a myriad of others. There is remarkably little disagreement and lots of teamwork. If you've never been to a parish council meeting, it isn't at all like the Vicar of Dibley but good, reasoned discussion and decision-making.

Hugh as our by far and away youngest councillor is helping the council find ways of being more in touch with younger residents – watch this space for a Parish Council Instagram account and more. And thank you for being photographer tonight.

Last September we had an Away Day – an opportunity to meet outside of the council framework and discuss ideas not on the monthly agenda. Some of the outcomes have been: -

- the first ever Parish Council entry for the Mortimer Scarecrow Trail ( you may remember the Councillors on the Bus outside the library), built by Dave Kilshaw, Graham Bridgman, Heath Geary
- meetings with chairman/vice-chairman/clerks of other parish councils in the ward
- the Art Competition you have heard about earlier this evening and
- the holding of informal surgeries for residents to speak to councillors. These are being organised by Heath Geary and will take place on the Tue evening and Saturday morning immediately before a full council meeting – see website for dates.

Negotiations with WBC Highways resulted in improvement to the pavement on The Street from Kiln Lane to Pitfield Lane. Hoped for further improvements from the pedestrian lights back up the hill have proved not to be possible.

The long-awaited cycleway and footpath to Burghfield was finally granted planning permission just before the end of 2023. Work continues to secure the conditions of the permission, on formulating the leases between the Parish Council and the landowners, and to gather information enabling us to go to tender for construction. David Butler is heading up the liaison with our project manager and Graham Bridgman is working on the legal aspects.

The Parish Council has continued to engage with the Royal British Legion to push forward to a resolution on the future Garth Hall. Seven councillors have worked on this as well as some non-councillor residents, with Nick Carter, Mike Dennett and Graham Bridgman having most engagement.

The Fairground and Cemetery Committee, headed up by Steve Hill is always busy. The normal management of trees, grass, fences and gates is a big task, but they found time for some new projects.

- The design of the cemetery extension has been finalised and we are in the process of going to tender for the landscaping construction, many thanks to Andy Noonan for tremendous input into this project.
- Planning permission was applied for and eventually obtained for CCTV on The Fairground. This has now been installed and will provide useful evidence should incidents occur; hopefully it will act as a deterrent.
- A new path to enable children from before school care to walk safely and drily from the Community Centre to school and an attractively fenced hardstanding square for the Christmas tree will be constructed soon.

Roads, Footpaths and Commons committee under Amanda Marsden is co-working with Greening Mortimer to look at improving our green credentials. As part of the Parish Council's green objectives, Michael Shaw is assessing our commons for biodiversity. This will all contribute to best management practice going forward.

You have heard from Mike Dennett about the work undertaken to record and deter speeding in the village using the SID and the ASWC. I thank him, John Wells, and other councillors and volunteers who undertake this work.

Under our community grant we have given small (up to £1500) grants to Mortimer Cricket Club, The Oaks Childcare CIC, the new Table Tennis Club. Mortimer Scouts, Mortimer Methodist Church, Daisy's Dream charity, Burghfield & Mortimer Volunteer Bureau and are looking to provide a contribution towards the cost of delivering emotional health and well-being workshops at St John's and St Mary's schools.

We have recently applied for the foundation stage of the Local Council Award Scheme. Andrew Richardson has developed and collated the information for this. The scheme pinpoints any areas of our operation which can be improved so we can become an even better council! He also scrutinises all our financial dealings and policies with a very experienced eye.

You may know that parish councillors undertake to sit on various other bodies as trustees or members, helping various local organisation's function. Having at different times in the past undertaken most of these roles, I would like to mention: -

- Neighbourhood Plan: Amanda Marsden, Nick Carter, Graham Bridgman
- Clarke's Education Foundation: Nick Carter
- Stratfield Mortimer Relief in Need: Mollie Lock
- Wokefield Common Advisory Committee: Mollie Lock and Michael Shaw
- St John's Hall Management Committee: Michael Shaw
- Burghfield and Mortimer Volunteer Bureau: Andy Noonan
- Neighbourhood Action Group: John Wells and Graham Bridgman
- AWE Local Liaison committee: Graham Bridgman
- This year I've got away with just being a trustee for the Fairground Trust, but the list shows the wide contribution made by councillors to the running of local groups.

This year has seen the Parish Council undertake a major review of all our policies. This has been done with great thoroughness, mainly by Heath Geary and Graham Bridgman. We now have policies which are up to date with respect to national and local legislation, totally consistent and beautifully formatted!

This report has given a flavour of some of what the council has been up to. We exist to serve the village and I hope you will feel that we do.

## **9. Open Forum and Questions.**

The following points/questions were raised: -

- The boards in St John's Hall for the chairman and the community award need updating. Cllr Morsley reported it has proved difficult to find someone.
- Cllr Morsley said we have not had representation from the Police and Fire service, school governors and other groups in the last few years and asked if people thought this was a good idea to include them rather than just talk about Parish Council business; there was general consensus that this would be good.
- A member of the public asked if there had been any communication with GWR regarding the Mortimer Station car park. Cllr Heath Geary reported that there has not been any communication with GWR and from a recent survey the car park is rarely full. The council could write to them again regarding their current position. The planning permission has now lapsed.
- Parking outside St. Mary's school in the morning and early evening. Cllr Bridgman reported that a meeting was held recently with St. Marys and WBC. The Parish council has asked WBC that the faded road markings be repainted and also asked for an extension of restriction for the double yellow lines. The school governing body also intend to talk to Englefield to ask them to use the field that is used for funerals for parking.

**Cllr Morsley thanked everyone for coming.**

**The meeting closed at 21:10.**