

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD 17/05/2016

AT ST JAMES CHURCH WEST HANNEY at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs. Chris Surman (Chairman), Trevor Brettell, Graham Garner, Kay Sayers (Clerk) & Eddie Wilkinson

Parishioners: Mr D Walker

Apologies: Matthew Barber

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting 2015

Minutes of meeting held 14/05/2015 agreed & signed

Chairman's Report

After we were all returned unopposed in the election of May last year we have had yet another busy year with all councillors working hard on various aspects of our role in the village. We have a Neighbourhood Plan under construction and development of a dedicated West Hanney Parish Council website is progressing well. Thanks to Eddie and Graham for their continued hard work on these projects.

During the year either I or other councillors, or indeed at times several of us, have attended meetings with the Vale, presentations on subjects such as the new Community Infrastructure Levy, Planning laws, Parish Forums run by the Vale, and events held by neighbouring Parish Councils. We had meetings with OCC to discuss possible use of PC land for an extension to the School's sports area and we have met with a representative of the sports field association to discuss the possibility of an all weather pitch on the sports field. Grove Parish Council held their annual get together in October which Kay and I attended.

We have two fairly major planning applications still awaiting decision at the time of writing, 15 houses on Neil Walker's field along School Road, and either 8 or 11 on the old orchard adjoining Church Farm. We are still hopeful that our negotiations with Sweetcroft over the field adjoining the community woodland will mean the village gains another 7 1/2 acres. The outcome of this depends on planning being granted for the 8 or 11 houses and our support of other aspects of the application, such as access across parish land.

I have had several meetings with Sweetcroft's directors and at this moment I am fairly confident we can reach agreement. If we are successful the addition of a wildlife meadow for the village would be wonderful. Paul Sayers has already produced a prospective management plan for the future which we hope we will be able to put into practice. We are also discussing a legal covenant with Sweetcroft that would protect the field on the southern side of school road from future development without the agreement of us as the Parish Council.

Thanks to Eddie for his work on looking at all applications and submitting our views and objections, or otherwise, to the Vale.

I have personally had many meetings with residents along school road to discuss their concerns about the developments, and discussions are still ongoing with Martin & Alison Trowell of The Old Vicarage, and James Smith of The Dower House regarding access to the Church Farm rear yard.

We put in some hard work in the autumn with our continuing policy of bulb planting, and we have received many comments as to the lovely display that now appears every spring. We should ensure that this annual planting continues. There are several other areas that would benefit from extra planting. If only we could get some volunteers to help!

Due to the budget cuts by Oxfordshire County Council it seems that we may have to take control of some aspects of village maintenance. In this respect Trevor is liaising with representatives of the County Council to seek a way forward.

Our free Community Bus Service has been of immense value, especially to the less able in our village but unfortunately OCC's budget cuts mean the service will end on July 20th. We have investigated the possibility of our own community service, but even sharing with other villages, the cost seems prohibitive.

We have had several issues relating to land owned by the Parish council and we may well have a worrying situation developing. Whilst trying to help the potential purchasers of 'The Barn' in Church Street our solicitor points out that we have no real proof of ownership, despite my finding correspondence from Berkshire County Council in the 1960's stating that the land had been registered to the parish council.

I am told by our solicitor that unless land is registered as ours with the Land Registry then we must prove ownership all over again. How we do this with all the parcels of land in the village is hard to know. It becomes obvious that as a first step we must set up a large scale map showing these areas and the appropriate land registry numbers where applicable and I am currently looking to do that.

During the last year we have seen The Plough successfully reopened as a Community Pub owned by village shareholders after we applied to have the property registered as a community Asset in the previous year which prevented Punch Taverns effecting a quick sale to another buyer. Long may the pub prosper! If only we were allowed to hold our meetings in there!

The Community Woodland goes from strength to strength thanks to the keen band of volunteers who have worked so hard under the stewardship of Graham. We now have an official 'Community Woodland Plan' which outlines our view and plans for the future for the area, and what needs to be done. Well done and thank you Graham. We now have a new access gate for disabled users, new/repared stiles and a safer ditch crossing in Cow Lane. More work is planned, including improving the drainage in certain areas. A big thank you to all volunteers, especially Paul Sayers and also Des Thomas who keeps the rides in good order with his frequent grass cutting.

We still have rental income from the two parcels of meadow land we rent out, Vicars Piece and Gallows Ham. We terminated the Gallows Ham agreement with a previous tenant towards the end of last year as he did not appear to be making good use of the land, and other people wished to take up an agreement. A new tenant is now in occupation and the land is in use with chickens in residence.

We have not had any newspaper articles threatening massive airports in our back yard this last year but the reservoir threat does not seem to go away. We may well need to get our ammunition ready!

In conclusion, may I thank all my fellow councillors for all their hard work, and support to me personally. Kay especially deserves praise for the excellent job she does as our clerk and financial guru, together with her responsibilities as a Councillor.

Thank you to a great and dedicated team.

Planning

PC is still awaiting the decisions on the Old Orchard and Land off School Rd.

Land off School Rd, the target date for going to committee is 25/5/2016 but this has been postponed. KS to inform D. Walker when we get a date.

Land owned by Parish Council

This must be sorted out as a matter of urgency as it could affect development off School Rd.

Signed (Chairman)

Date