

# HORSPATH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2008  
at 7.30pm in Horspath Village Hall.

**Present:** Mr Dobson  
Mr D Horsley  
Mrs H Palmer  
Mrs S Woodcock  
Mrs H Kogel, Clerk  
Mr A Hodgson (District Councillor)  
Mrs A Purse (County Councillor)

**Apologies:** Ms S Gray  
Mr C Henderson  
Mrs J Carr

**Public:** 27

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** - Apologies given for Ms Gray, Mr Henderson and Mrs Carr.

2. **MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

Mr Donald Gray proposed that the minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007 be approved, seconded by Mrs Ena Tasker, all in favour. The minutes were signed as correct.

3. **STATEMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS 2007/08 – Un-audited.**

A statement of un-audited accounts for 2007/08 was circulated. The statement of accounts had not at this point been reconciled with end of year bank statements. There were no questions raised.

4. **STATEMENT OF PAROCHIAL CHARITIES ACCOUNTS 2007.**

A statement of accounts for the year ending 31.12.07 was circulated. No comments made.

5. **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT – Mrs Shirley Woodcock**

Mrs Woodcock welcomed residents, Councillors and District Councillors to the meeting. The past year has not been without its problems for the Parish Council some of which have been solved and some are on going.

Over twelve months ago the **Parish Plan** was formulated, revised many times, checked by the authorities, and was almost ready to go six months ago when the representative from SODC who was dealing with Parish Plans left the company and a replacement had to be found. 600 questionnaires have now been delivered to all households in the village and some have been completed and returned. We need at least 500 to be completed to achieve a 90% return.

This village turns up trumps when there is a problem and the threat of **3000 houses** starting from right across the road from here, under the Bridge and as far right as you can see, this is a big problem. If each village took a dozen or so houses the Government would soon get that figure.

Residents of the village came out in force to defend the **Bridge**, and after a long agonizing wait we heard that we had won. I wonder how long it will be before it raises its ugly head again!

This year has seen our **Community Police Officer** around the village, but not enough for most of us, he has a large area to cover and has done nearly 60 foot patrols and attended a couple of meetings as well as having contact with Parish Councillors. There are 3 boys and their parents on formal letters as to their future behaviour, this being one step towards an ASBO. The Doctor’s surgery will be used for him to drop in to on an ad-hoc basis and he is hoping to set up a surgery every couple of months or so. A wireless will be playing in the waiting room so you will be able to talk freely without being overheard.

There has been mindless **vandalism** occurring around the village, most of which has been around the Village Hall. The broken swings being an example, costing around £6,000.00 to replace, but not only that, hours and hours of negotiations with the un-cooperative insurance company. To follow that, the lead was stolen from the Village Hall roof and the repairs are being held up by...the insurance company.

The No Smoking ban has caused problems at the **Chequers Inn**. They asked the Parish Council for permission to erect a shelter, but were told that as they rented the car park, it did not give them the right to build a shelter, which of course would require planning permission. They ignored this and built the shelter regardless. It is now under an enforcement order from SODC.

We fought off **Oxford City's plans** to extend the lighting along at the Marathons. Well done and thank you to Mr Martin Harris and Mrs Heather Palmer for all of their hard work fighting our corner and for publishing the full result on the website.

A letter has been received from the **Nursery** informing the Parish Council that they had to expand the Nursery to enable them to accept children from the age of two and asking if the Parish Council had any plans to replace the porta-cabin as it is deteriorating. A reply was sent to the Nursery stating that the Parish Council did not have any future plans to replace the porta-cabin and that if the Government want them to expand to accept younger children, then they should provide the necessary finances.

The hunt for Village **Allotments** started in September 2007 when Mrs Palmer received an email enquiring about the possibility of being allocated an allotment. As Mrs Palmer knew nothing about the allotments, except that they are situated in Cuddesdon Road she set out to find more information. This led to internet searches to the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance, and to Sidleys Surveyors in Oxford. It then became apparent that there are two sets of allotments, side by side in Cuddesdon Road. The area managed by Sidleys, which totals 14 plots is let out to a local farmer, but in theory part of it could be reclaimed for allotments. The charge would be £10 per annum plus vat depending on the size of the plot. The others all seem to be fully occupied with no free plots. In October 2007 with increased interest in the allotments, Mrs Palmer contact Sidleys again, who stated that they would contact the farmer to see if any plots could be freed. There was no further response from them. This subject was then raised at the Parish Council meeting in March 2008, where it was agreed that "Allotments" would be included in the next Newsletter along with a note from Mr Frankum. In April 2008 Mrs Palmer tried unsuccessfully to contact Sidleys again. For anyone interested in an allotment, the contact name and address of the Glebe Land Manager at Sidleys is available on the Horspath website.

The **HVSA** has been at a standstill since September awaiting guidance through the Parish Plan as grants could not be applied for until the results are available. This is frustrating, especially for the Cricket and the Football section. Mr Murray will explain in more detail later in the meeting.

The **Burial Ground** is in urgent need of attention with the drainage problems. A letter has been sent to White Horse Contractors as they carried out the original drainage work, albeit to agricultural standards in 1973, so some of the drainage is only 33 inches deep. The grave diggers suspect that they have already hit one of the drains. Whilst we accept that the recent rainfall was unusual, this problem cannot be ignored and will be addressed as soon as possible.

**Mr Brian Mayling** has resigned for personal reasons from all of his posts, but has agreed to see through the insurance claims on both the play area and the village hall roof. I would like to record a vote of thanks to Mr Mayling for all of his hard and at times frustrating work.

The **Neighbourhood Watch**, the **Senior Residents**, the **Ladies Coffee Mornings** and the **Gardening Club** are all still thriving.

A new **Bus Stop** half way up Gidley Road will be installed, to be called Butts Road Bus Stop.

The **Scout Hall** was acquired from the Scout Association at a nominal fee after much bartering and will play an important part in future plans.

Now a few "**Thank You's**":- A special thank you to Mr Martin Harris has agreed to attend and speak on behalf of the Parish Council at important meetings connected with the future of Horspath. To Heather Palmer who deals very efficiently with the village website. To Hayley for her unstinting help and support. To Mark and Ena Tasker. To Keith Brooks, to Mr Andrew Martin who has resigned due to work commitments and to all my fellow Councillors who will need to work even harder next year because there will be even fewer of us! There are currently five vacancies for Parish Councillors. We desperately need volunteers, anyone who may be interested, please come forward.

**6. CHAIRMAN OF VILLAGE HALL & RECREATION COMMITTEE'S REPORT AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS – MR CHRIS GOSS.**

Mr Goss reported that there are new organizations/clubs now using the Village Hall during the daytime. The total income for the year was slightly down by approx £800.00 from last year. The costs are also slightly down. A copy of the accounts was circulated. There are two major on-going projects for the Village Hall, upgrading the central heating system (a consultant has been employed to assist with this), and refurbishing the kitchen area. Mr Harris asked if there is going to be a new boiler, will this mean having new pipes as well. Mr Goss explained that they are planning to have two new boilers so that they can be controlled, both of which will be condensing boilers.

**7. HVSA REPORT.**

Mr Horsley stated that it had been a frustrating year. Plans for the HVSA haven't been able to progress until the results of the Parish Plan are available, which has also held up applying for funding. A copy of the accounts for HVSA was circulated for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007. The finances are all going very well, the account now has a significant reserve balance.

**8. SOUTH OX'SHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILOR'S REPORT – Mr Andrew Hodgson.**

**SODC** – Has recently been awarded the Status of Excellence, for maintaining standards. Staff will continue to work hard to maintain this level.

**South East Plan** - Mr Hodgson is still waiting for more news from Hazel Blears.

**Waste Collections** – SODC are in the midst of carrying out a consultation exercise. Many targets have been set to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill sites. At the moment 33% of the waste that is collected is recycled, the target is 50%. SODC will be providing wheelie bins to help achieve the target. If the target is not met, then fines will be issued.

**Leisure** –£26 million has been spent upgrading sports centres. In the last twelve months four towns have benefitted from the investments.

**Community Investment Funds** – This scheme supports towns/villages with funding for projects. Individual bursaries are available for music, sports and art.

**Concessionary Fares** – From 1<sup>st</sup> April bus passes for people over the age of 60 can be used throughout England, but do not include routes to London.

**Council Tax** – SODC increased the Council Tax by 3% this year. It is very difficult to maintain funding without increasing the Council tax. SODC have much fewer staff than other District Councils, and are working with other District Councils to reduce costs in other areas.

**SODC Website** – Contact details of all District Councillors are available on the SODC website.

**9. OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – Mrs Anne Purse.**

**Waste Collections** – Mrs Purse reported that OCC are responsible for waste disposal in Oxfordshire and they are working closely on a strategy with District Councils to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill sites. Other technologies are available, but the best offer at the moment is the Incinerator which is a much cleaner process nowadays. The other benefit to incineration is the provision of heat and power and if this can be used to provide heat and power to houses this is an added benefit. There will also be a food composting unit in a safe container with regards to foot and mouth disease. This will enable District Councils to collect food waste separately.

**Housing Developments** – Another big proposal has arisen that is very important to Oxfordshire – An Eco Town from Weston on the Green to Charlton on Otmoor that will be bigger than Bicester town. The proposed development will have a bridge going the A34. Local landowners have submitted the bids that are now being considered. Will now have to wait for the decision to be made. It is very worrying that Oxfordshire is considered to be the ideal location for future development.

Mrs Purse commented that she is very honoured to serve this area in her position as County Councillor and will continue to do so.

## 10. PARISH PLAN

Mr Harris reported that the process for the Parish Plan stemmed from attending local enquiries for future developments. The 1<sup>st</sup> stage of the plan is to ask residents what they would like in the village. This has been done by means of a questionnaire which has now been delivered to all households. Horspath has formed a Steering Committee for the Parish Plan which has 40 volunteers. We are the first village to benefit from a computer read paper questionnaire which is much quicker and will be of no cost to the Parish Council. We have a budget of £1500.00 of which we have only spent approx £200. It is very important that people complete and return the questionnaires; ideally we need a 90% response level. The results will help defend the village when involved in disputes such as the South East Plan and planning issues, and will also raise the profile of the village. When the results are available, they will be considered by various organisations. Parish Plans are supported by District and County Councils and SEERA. Mr Horsley commented that there are empty houses in the village where the owners are away for at least three months and asked that those households not completing the questionnaire be recorded. Mr Horsley asked how additional comments will be recorded if it is all done by computer. Mr Harris stated that they will be typed out by the Clerk at SODC. The results will tell us what the priorities in the village are. Mr Harris is hoping to submit the questionnaires to SODC by the end of May 2008.

## 11. PRESENTATION BY MR ED MURRAY FOR HORSPATH CRICKET CLUB.

Horspath Cricket Club was founded around 1894, has played on the recreation field since 1924 and is the best village Cricket Club in England. Horspath Cricket Club has proposed a 2<sup>nd</sup> cricket pitch to develop cricket further at Horspath and would like the support of the village. At present the club has approx 230 members of which approx one third are from the village, including 80 youth players, all of whom are members of HVSA. Lots of Cricket Clubs are folding but Horspath is well managed, very successful and still growing. We are also an ECB "Focus Club" and "Safe Hands" which means we are recommended by the Cricket Board. We are expecting a Sports England "Clubmark" award later this year. At present we have 3 Saturday sides (possibly 4 very soon), 6 youth sides and the possibility of girl's cricket all using only one pitch. Hiring pitches is very difficult, unreliable and expensive. The new field presents a perfect site for a 2nd cricket pitch as well as for football, tennis and other sports. The Cricket Club would like to start in 2008 and put in a 2nd cricket square at its own expense of approx £15,000.00. This process is expected to take 1-2 years. Funds will be raised by the Cricket Club, but to do this the permission of the Parish Council is required. Other sports can become involved or follow at a later date. The benefits of doing this mean that the new sports field comes into use as early as possible (poss. 2009), there will be more opportunities for sport, the area will be "well kept" and the more that it is in use the less likely it will be the target for vandalism. HVSA will also benefit from increased bar revenue. Looking to the long term, the whole development could become a well used complex providing multi sports facilities putting village assets to good use for the future generations, all of which will be co-coordinated by HVSA. If the 2nd square goes ahead, the Cricket Club would need to seed the area by September this year with a view to playing on the square by the end of next season.

Q. Mr Gray asked about the drainage on the field.

A. Mr Murray reported that the pitch was originally drained by White Horse Contractors. There is a 9" drain line that runs down the edge of the field that flows. Additional drainage would be needed on the second square and that would be connected to the 9" main drain which would be sufficient. Additional drainage would need to be done for the other areas. Further investigations would need to be carried out.

Q. Mr Harris stated that he had been involved with Mr Murray on the possible layouts. If the Cricket Club go ahead and install the necessary drainage, how would this synchronize with football pitches if that were to go ahead at a later date. It would be beneficial if the second Cricket Square and the football pitches were closely aligned so that funding could be sought for a proportion of the drainage costs.

A. Mr Murray stated that positioning of the second square is very important. If the 9" main drain remains in place then it is not a problem as additional drainage can be added.

Q. Mr Goss commented that the NPFA inspected the site and recommended that a drainage system be designed for the whole of the area to include the football pitches, cricket square etc. They have stated

that the 9" drain in place will not be adequate. Mr Goss recommended that ensure that the drainage system is adequate, drains will need to be installed 3-4 metres apart across the whole field.

- A. Mr Murray agreed that the drainage system is an issue and professional advice will need to be sought.
- Q. Mr Goss stated that the 9" drain is working but does not alter the drainage problem with the outfield.
- A. The outfield is a problem that can be resolved in the whole project, in the meantime the drainage can be sorted for the second cricket square.

Mrs Woodcock commented that the Parish Council cannot give permission without the results of the Parish Plan being available, so if the Cricket Club was to go ahead and develop the second square and then find that it is not supported by the village, it would have to be at the expense of the Cricket Club. Mr Murray accepted that the Cricket Club is aware that it is their risk and that they would not look at the Parish Council for any reimbursement of funds, they just want the Parish Council's support.

Mrs Woodcock asked Mr Murray, now that the Cricket Club's plans have been discussed, will the proposals be taken to the HVSA and VHMC. Mr Murray agreed to do this if it is the correct procedure. Mr Horsley advised Mr Murray that this is the correct procedure, but with the delays in the HVSA and the VHMC this should not delay the Cricket Club plans, therefore recommended that the proposals be discussed at the May 2008 meeting.

## **12. OXFORDSHIRE PLAY BUS**

Mrs Woodcock reported that the Parish Council has been mis-informed about this scheme. It is not a play bus that comes into the village, it is a club that is looking to use the village hall. As the village hall is only available on Friday evenings Mrs Woodcock suggested that the Scheme organizers contact the Methodist Church to check on availability.

## **13. AOB**

- a. Mr Murray commented that the repairs to the village hall and play area are taking too long to complete and that the Parish Council should not allow the areas to deteriorate. While waiting for the insurance company to settle the claim the area could be made safe as a temporary measure. Mrs Woodcock stated that the claims having been submitted to the insurance company and we are awaiting a settlement. Mr Horsley stated that even with minor repairs, the law states that we have to obtain three quotes, and the cost of £6,000.00 for the repairs to the play area can not be settled by the Parish Council until the insurance company has settled the claim. Mr Dobson stated that this is a village hall matter.
- b. Mrs Libby Chase asked if it is possible to leave the pedestrian gate at the far end of the Bowley Field unlocked. Mr Goss stated that the gate shouldn't be locked anyway, it was locked by Dowdy's Contractors but can now be unlocked again.
- c. Mrs Palmer has now had a reply from Sidleys regarding the allotments. If there are at least six people applying for allotments then Sidleys can approach the farmer to claim back part of the land. Mrs Palmer will inform all necessary parties.
- d. Mrs Woodcock reported that a meeting has been arranged with White Horse Contractors on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2008 to discuss the drainage at the Burial Ground.
- e. Mrs Edwards asked if the Play Area is still locked. Mrs Woodcock will contact Mr Mayling for an update. Mrs Woodcock also reported that grants for play area equipment are available. Volunteers will also be required to help remove the weeds from the play area.
- f. Mr Horsley commented that the Parish Council only has six Councillors at the moment, one of whom is away for the next 3-4 meetings. Any volunteers wishing to join the Parish Council will be welcomed.

## **14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2009.**

## **15. REFRESHMENTS**

Thanks to Gill Gray for organizing the refreshments.