

HORSPATH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 26th April 2010
at 7.30pm in Horspath Village Hall.

Present: Mr Dobson
Mr C Goss
Mr C Henderson
Mrs A Julian
Mrs H Palmer
Mr S Turnbull
Mrs S Woodcock
Mrs H Kogel, Clerk
Mrs J Carr (District Councillor)
Mr A Hodgson (District Councillor)
Mrs A Purse (County Councillor)

Apologies: Ms S Gray
Mr M Harris
Mr D Horsley

Public: 12

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** - Apologies given for Ms Gray, Mr Harris and Mr Horsley.
2. **MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**
Mrs Palmer proposed that the minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 27th April 2009 be approved, seconded by Mr Dobson, all in favour. The minutes were signed as correct.
3. **STATEMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS 2009/10 – Un-audited.**
A statement of un-audited accounts for 2009/10 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 2009.**
A statement of accounts for the year ending 31.12.09 was circulated. No comments made.
5. **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT – Mrs Shirley Woodcock**
Mrs Woodcock welcomed residents, Councillors, County and District Councillors to the meeting. It does not seem like twelve months ago we were sat here; this last year has certainly had its ups and downs!
In April last year Mrs Palmer and I attended a meeting at SODC to discuss **Affordable Housing**. SODC were keen for us to support a third phase but this Council was far from happy as to how the second phase of housing had been allocated. There is a procedure set down by them, and in no less than ten places it states “refer to Parish Council etc”. None of this was done so we do not know how the allocations were decided. A couple of conditions are that applicants must have been a resident of the village for five out of the last eight year, or they must have a strong village connection. At no point were the Parish Council made aware of who had applied, which is all as a Parish Council that we were asking. We do not want to know people’s financial situation etc just if the conditions have been met. After all, we are trying to help our youngsters who have grown up in this village to stay here. Residents along the top of Gidley Way requested another **Bus Stop** near the Wheatley end and the one near Sandy Lane to be made more user-friendly. After four meetings this happened but not for many months later.
Angela Julian and I went to more meetings in relation to applying for grants to update the **Toddlers Play Area** and to provide one for teenagers using the information from residents as requested in the Parish Plan. Following several rounds of public consultation with the village, based on the children’s own designs, we were delighted to be awarded two major grants, one for £36,500.00 from WREN for the little ones and one for £47,500.00 from Playbuilder. Following the approval of the final design by Playbuilder, we received the Playbuilder funds in November for the new 8-14s area, which is sited on

the top field. The play site aims to be challenging and fun, to give the older children somewhere of their own. Following a tender procedure, we commissioned Craig Johnson of Allplay Services to undertake the build. Despite extreme weather, and two burglaries during Feb/March which resulted in his digger being stolen, Craig has now managed to get most of the equipment in place. All being well, this stage of the project will be finished by the end of April once the safety surfacing has been laid. The new area includes an aerial runway, a big "Huck" pendulum swing, a bird's nest swing, two big Wickstead tangled timber climbers and various other agility/balancing items. All items are of heavy-duty "vandal proof" construction. The grant from WREN will fund the younger children's area, toddlers – 12 years. Work will commence at the beginning of May 2010. Allplay Services are now also undertaking this project which aims to renovate and replace the existing play equipment to bring the site up to Rospa safety standards. There will be a range of equipment to suit all abilities, forming an inclusive and safe play scheme which will have a broader appeal across the different age groups. We will be keeping the existing swings, but will gain a toddler adventure trail with a "Huck" bouncing basket (specifically for the under 5s), a pirate ship, a supernova, and another smaller nest swing. Unfortunately the bike track has had to be put on hold. We hope to overcome these problems later.

Planning Applications have kept us busy, some we won and some we lost and other are still on-going. Details of all these plans put before the Parish Council are available on the Horspath website that are available to download to see in detail, including any comments received from neighbours. For those of you without access, watch for the monthly agendas on the notice board or should you wish, you can ring me for a copy.

New Allotments are along the Cuddesdon Road. Heather Palmer has done sterling work here and the holders are now very active digging and sowing. More from Heather later.

Then along came the proposed **Wind Turbine in Horspath**. This came out of the blue. We had not been formally notified as to the possible site. Partnerships for Renewable Group were applying for planning permission. We were hounded by the press but kept a low profile although they misquoted David Horsley's comment and turned it round and made it sound as if we were in favour of the wind turbine, despite 60% saying "NO" in the Parish Plan. The lengthy minutes can again be found on the website.

Grants were applied for towards a **New Boiler & Heating System in the Village Hall**. Plumbers seemed reluctant to visit, but the three who did quote came up with between £30,000.00 - £40,000.00, excluding electrical work, boxing in pipes for health & safety reasons and re-decoration. No change from approx £50,000.00. This project is now being handled by Charles Henderson, Sarah Gray and Steve Turnbull who are looking into alternative solutions after a review of our requirements. This project is on-going but hopeful for next winter. It is the Parish Council's responsibility to cover the capital costs and for the Village Hall Committee to cover maintenance costs.

There have been numerous complaints as to the behaviour of the **Cycle Speedway Club** such as, noisy music, loud speakers that can be heard around the village, inconsiderate driving on the recreation ground and not locking doors/gates when leaving, thus both the field and the hall are left vulnerable. This is being dealt with by Chris Goss.

At last years meeting, the **Cricket Club** asked permission to develop a second pitch by reclaiming part of the Bowley Field from meadow land. The result can now be seen, mostly carried out by volunteers. Unfortunately the Scout Hut was broken into and Norman and I suffered the loss of the mower that we had lent to the Cricket Club. The Ferguson tractor bought by the Parish Council was soon called into action and can be seen most days cutting the recreation ground, again by Cricket Club volunteers. Weather permitting, the first ball could be bowled on the new pitch this weekend.

Following a spate of accidents along the **Cuddesdon Road**, we asked Oxfordshire County Council Highways Dept to remove the last Chicane nearest the Wheatley end, but to no avail and no alternative traffic calming was forthcoming.

A group of residents in the village would like the **Methodist Chapel** to be kept for community use, but the balance sheet shows running costs of around £3,000.00 - £4,000.00 a year, with income of around £1,500.00. The tight restrictions say no alcohol, no gambling and no dancing. This makes it an

unattractive proposition for either the Parish Council or the Village Hall to take on as it would be a drain on our income.

The **Christmas tree** appeal raised £1600.00 for Cancer Research. Thanks must go to Barbara Lewis and her crew. This is becoming a feature of Christmas in Horspath.

The **Weather** played havoc with us this winter. Only 4x4 vehicles were able to drive up Gidley Way in the snow. Fire engines were used to pump water from houses round the Village Green. Pot holes in the village are big enough to plant flowers in. Some appeared overnight...do report them to OCC Highways Dept but be prepared to wait a long time.

I would like to say thank you to Ray and Olive Jeffs who are leaving us after a short spell as Caretakers. They have done a grand job as cleaners but found the admin and security side too much to deal with. We now have in place a new Village Hall Committee who will re-organise all aspects of the village hall and hopefully make it both profitable and attract more village activities. More from Jonathan later.

Last but not least, I would like to say **“Thank You”** to all of my fellow Councillors for their help and support on what has at times been a very difficult year. Especially to Heather Palmer who is very good at answering my cries for “help” and to Hayley who if she does not know the answer, will always try to find it. Thank you once again.

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

The statement of accounts was circulated. It has been a very difficult year for the Village Hall with a change of Caretaker. There has been a huge increase in gas/electricity costs, lots of repairs carried out and improvements in the kitchen area. The Village Hall is in need of re-decorating and there are still problems with the boiler/heating. Until these problems are rectified then the prices cannot be increased. A rebate has been received from SODC on the rates that have been paid on the Scout Hut. The new HVHMC are now in place and will move the Village Hall forward.

7. HVHMC REPORT.

The New Committee met for first time at the end of March 2010. There is a good mix of “new faces” (several from outside the Village) and “experienced” Villagers. HVHMC are aiming to meet at least 4 times per annum. The early “wins” (in next 3 months or so) we are looking to make include:-

- “freshening up” the site as best we can with paint and general “TLC”.
- further improving the general security of the site, following recent theft incidents.
- replacing the departing caretaker/cleaner, including in this a revised job description and methods of working.
- revisiting and reworking the Lease agreement with the Parish Council to reflect reality of 2010 (the current 1964 version has many many anomalies).
- publish a first draft of a “Business Plan” for the Hall and the related facilities that will seek to turn the current loss making operation into at LEAST a break-even one and en route to a profitable one. Aim to have this with the Parish Council for their June 2nd meeting.
- central to this Business Plan will be agreeing on an overall “vision and philosophy” for what we would like the Hall and related facilities to offer to the Village and outsiders. This will involve a complete review of pricing, terms and conditions and the type(s) of bookings and usage we would like to attract.

- Medium term (in next 6 – 12 months):-

- improved, hopefully through web based system, booking and overall management of the Hall and related facilities.
- explore all funding options – grants etc. – available to allow us to look in due course to upgrade the current facilities beyond the “make over” that we will give to most areas in the short term.

CONSERVATION AREA REPORT.

The Horspath Wildlife Conservation Area continues to be a very successful village project, with hundreds of visits regularly made to it every week by Horspath residents, and in all weathers including during last winter's snow, mostly for a walk around the 'circular path'. As a result, the maintenance of this path has become an increased responsibility for the Parish Council, and it has required more gravel to be applied, and this summer some more wooden steps will be constructed by volunteers using materials supplied by the Council, where a steep section has become very worn. The work carried out by village volunteers over the ten years since the Council decided to convert this disused railway cutting into a nature reserve has been recognised by its formal designation by the County Council this month (April 2010) as a "Local Wildlife Site". This new status will afford it some increased protection as a village amenity. There have been record numbers of the four species of bats hibernating in the tunnel this last winter, which makes this one of the most important wildlife sites for bats in Oxfordshire, and the successful emergence of thousands of small froglets from the frog pond each summer has now established this wildlife conservation area as a specially important one for the survival of frogs when more frequent hot dry summers will dry up many other local frog breeding ponds. There will always be a variety of different seasonal maintenance tasks for volunteers to do in the Wildlife Conservation Area, and anyone of any age, who is interested to help with this, is encouraged to contact the webmaster at www.horspath.org.uk and they will then be added to an e-mail list which is used to let our volunteers know when there is a job to be done."

Mrs Woodcock passed thanks to Mr Harris and his team of volunteers for the time and effort they all put in at the Conservation Area and recommended that residents visit the area.

HVSA REPORT.

Mr Murray reported that approx two years ago, HVSA worked very hard to involve Football Clubs and Cycle Speedway. The only success of HVSA is the Cricket Club that is expanding all the time. The entire income of HVSA is generated by the Cricket Club. There is a need to review the relationship between the HVHMC and HVSA, which will be done over the next few of months. The Football Clubs have shown an interest in HVSA but they are looking for the pitches to be ready to play on. Part of the Scout Hut is being converted into changing rooms. Most of the labour on this project has been carried out by volunteers.

8. SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILOR’S REPORT – Mrs Janet Carr.

A year in which due to financial restraints, difficult decisions have had to be made. There will be no increase in Council Tax for 2010/2011, tax will remain at the same level as 2009/10.

Joint working with the Vale of White Horse District Council has caused some uncertainty for staff, but we now have a joint Chief Executive and joint Heads of Service and Managers. This has meant a reduction in staff but definitely given us more efficiency savings.

Consideration of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy has been delayed until after the impending general election. The Core Strategy is a key document that sets out where major housing development will go. The proposals that the council has consulted on have generated significant debate.

It is a general principal, enshrined in the Local Government Act 1986 that councils do not consider controversial issues with the inherent publicity that they generate in the period immediately prior to elections.

There has been a downturn in planning applications which is mainly due to the recession. A new process for referrals has been introduced which mean that district Councillors need to work closely with our parishes on applications, especially those which are contentious. Enforcement cases have reduced dramatically during the year, but there are those cases which do take a long time due to their complexity. Having previously resolved to work with the county highways and Lewknor Parish Council to find a safer, more secure transport interchange arrangement, the council at its meeting on 18th December 2008 agreed to carry out a feasibility study. Officers have now produced a report which has been circulated to local members and Lewknor Parish Council. In the current economic climate the council needs to have confirmed financial support from county highways and at least one partner. At the moment both county highways and Stagecoach are focused on increasing the capacity at the Thornhill 'park and ride' and until this project is complete they are not willing to confirm any financial support for the development of a facility at Lewknor. No further work will be carried out on this project.

SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILOR'S REPORT – Mr Andrew Hodgson.

Mr Hodgson commented that the new joint working with the Vale of White Horse District Council is working very effectively and has not had any effect on any services.

The new waste collections have been a huge success and are proving to be very effective.

Mr Hodgson commented that Councillors/residents are welcome to contact him to discuss planning applications.

Mr Harris representing the Parish Council at Oxford City Council's meetings regarding the Green Belt. More information will be available after the elections in May 2010.

The proposed Wind Turbine in Horspath continues to be a source of debate. We are waiting to see a planning application from Oxford City Council. Mrs Carr reported that Emma Morris at SODC is currently looking into an effective way to inform Parish Councils of planning applications submitted by Oxford City Council. Mrs Woodcock commented that a letter from the Parish Council has been sent to Oxford City Council requesting that the Parish Council is kept informed.

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

This report will be mostly dealing with roads and transport, although the County is responsible also for education, care for the elderly and disabled and for vulnerable children, the fire service, trading standards etc.

It will not come as a surprise to anyone that local government has to make cuts in services in the wake of the recession. Basically there is less money from central government, and this situation does not look as if it will improve over the next few years.

Money comes from the government both as a settlement to be divided between services and also as pots of money for specific things that have to be bid for, such as the money for Local Transport Plan 3. The County Council sets its priorities etc, and then bids for money for the work needing to be done. I managed to ensure that traffic noise was one of the criteria that could be used to get schemes included under the Local Transport Plan, since noise from the A40 continues to be a very important issue for Wheatley and other affected villages. It is good that the villages affected by this noise problem are now working alongside each other. However, any money from central government is likely to be significantly reduced compared to what we have received in previous years. The Local Transport Plan will be the blue print for Oxfordshire's roads and transport for the next 30 years. The actually programme of work will be a rolling one, updated annually. There will be consultations this summer, and it is important that people respond.

Last year, villages were suffering from the spate of potholes that followed the bad spell of weather in early February 2009. Repairs happened, but now we are very much back in the same situation with the whole county's roads feeling the effect of the severe winter we have just come through. Horspath certainly has its share of these. The County is putting some extra 'one off' money into getting pot holes etc repaired, but several councillors, (myself included) feel that more should have been set out in the budget to deal both with emergency repairs and with the general maintenance of roads and pavements. Also, concerning the two episodes of snow and ice this winter, there is to be a Scrutiny Review at the County Council to look at what happened regarding roads and transport in the recent bad weather. I have a place on that review, so all information will be very useful, and I hope the outcome of the review will benefit this area in any future unusually bad weather. Good news for those who try to use Thornhill Park and Ride is that a planning application for an expansion of parking spaces is due this summer.

10. ALLOTMENTS PROJECT UPDATE - Mrs Heather Palmer.

I reported at our APM in 2009 that the Diocese would allow the old site in Cuddesdon Road to be reclaimed for allotments, but that the allotment applicants had to pay for all restoration and maintenance. This proposition was put to the existing 20 applicants and over a short period about half of them withdrew because of financial cost and the physical effort required.

I had a site meeting with the Glebe Land manager in June who confirmed that we could go ahead with site reclamation and that posts would be erected to mark the boundary of the area. During June and July the remaining applicants visited the site so that they could see the job ahead of us.

In July I started the new "Allotments" pages on Horspath website, and held an allotments group meeting. It was agreed to research costs for spraying the weed infested fallow land and for ploughing it. The site was then surveyed and a map produced.

In September 2009 we had the site sprayed and the Group held another meeting at which Horspath Allotments Association, HAA, was established and officers elected. In October the site was ploughed by a neighbouring allotment holder. Once the ploughed area was visible from the Cuddesdon Road we started to pick up new recruits.

In January this year the Oxford Mail interviewed HAA members, took photos and published an article about the Allotments Project. This publicity brought in more applicants. The HAA treasurer applied to the Co-operative Community Fund for a grant, and an award was made to the HAA to assist with site reclamation.

In March a successful working party cut the overgrown hedge down to size and our friendly neighbour harrowed the site. In April despite very wet conditions plot holders did start work. As the weather improved it was very satisfying for me to see so many enthusiastic gardeners at work on their plots. I am pleased to report that we now have 21 plots taken up and our group has grown to 37 strong. We have 5 plots still available. Full information is available on the Horspath website, look down the menu for "Village Projects". I would like to acknowledge the help, advice and encouragement we have received from our neighbouring allotment holders, Chris Pym and Brain Selwood. Finally, I want to thank all of the allotments group for their tenacity in holding on for over 2 years to see our project come to fruition, and also for their hard labour in communal efforts now that we can work the land.

11. AOB

- a. Mrs Woodcock read the following report on the Play Area. Following several rounds of public consultation with the village, based on the children's own designs, we were delighted to be awarded two major grants, £45,700.00 from Playbuilder administered by Oxfordshire County Council and £36,500.00 from WREN.

Following further consultations with various village organizations, and approval of the final design by Playbuilder, we received the Playbuilder funds in November 2009 for the new 8-14s area, which is sited on the top field. The play site aims to be challenging and fun and to give our older children somewhere

of their own.

Following a tender procedure, we commissioned Craig Johnson of All Play Services to undertake the build. Despite extreme weather, two burglaries during February/March which resulted in his digger being stolen, Craig has now managed to get most of the equipment in place. All being well, this stage of the project will be finished by the end of April once the safety surfacing has been laid. The new area includes an aerial runway, a big "Huck" pendulum swing, a "birds nest swing" two big Wickstead tangled timber climbers and various other agility/balancing items. All items are heavy-duty vandal proof construction.

The build for the WREN funded younger children's area, toddlers – 12 years will commence at the beginning of May 2010. Allplay Services are now also undertaking this project which aims to renovate and replace the existing play equipment to bring the site up to Rospa safety standards. There will be a range of equipment to suit all abilities, forming an inclusive and safe play scheme which will have a broader appeal across the different age groups. We will keep the existing swings but will gain a toddler adventure trail with a Huck bouncing basket (specifically for the under 5s), a pirate ship, a supernova and another smaller nest swing.

Mrs Woodcock passed thanks to Angela Julian for all of her hard work on this project.

- b. Mrs Palmer asked Mr Hodgson if the amalgamation of Management Services with SODC & VWHDC will this result in a reduction in services to the community. Mr Hodgson stated that the new structure is working very effectively and to date has not had any impact on the services. Mrs Carr commented that SODC has lost some very experienced staff due to the re-structure, however if there are any problems, please ensure that she is informed. Mr Dobson commented that the Parish Council is still waiting for a reply from the Chief Executive regarding the proposed wind turbine.
- c. Mr Jeffs asked who will be taking over the Village Hall bookings and the keys at the end of this week. Mrs Julian stated that she is trying to get someone to take over the cleaning of the village hall. Mrs Julian to liaise with Mr Goss.
- d. Mrs Lewis asked that Mrs Carr and Mr Hodgson's contact details be displayed on the village notice board.
- e. Mr Brooks asked who is responsible for maintaining the wooden gates along the Cuddesdon Road. Mrs Woodcock stated that Oxfordshire County Council adopted the traffic calming scheme so they are responsible. Mrs Lewis commented that the tree needs cutting as it over hangs the "priority" road sign.
- f. Mrs Purse suggested that along with District and County Councillors contact numbers that are to be displayed on the notice board, details of what services they are able to assist with should also be listed.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Tuesday 26th April 2011.

13. REFRESHMENTS