

Chairman's Report for the Annual Meeting of Waterperry with Thomley Parish Council.

20th May 2015

Introduction

Firstly, thank you to everyone for coming along this evening for our Annual Parish Meeting. The parish council really is here to try to represent the village in all sorts of matters, whether it be negotiating with OCC or SODC on planning, roads, safety and so on, or arranging or supporting village initiatives such as the Village Plan or various social events. In order to do this effectively and fairly it is a huge help to us to hear your views at first hand and we really do welcome your attendance tonight and at our regular meetings. Tonight is not a PC meeting as such, but is meant to be an informal opportunity for discussion & exchange of ideas on any village matters.

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief review of the Parish Council's activities during the last year. If I miss anything, I apologise, but there will be time to talk generally later in the meeting, so please ask for more information or point out any grave omissions if you spot them!

The Parish council

We remain at our full strength of 5 councillors, still ably controlled and advised by Adrian our clerk. This is hugely important in that it means we are generally quorate to go ahead with meetings, even if one councillor is unable to attend on a particular evening. We are the same five that sat here this time last year, with just one small recent change in that Adrian Peake has had to step down as Deputy Chairman, due to business commitments, so Dean Fonge has stepped in to take on that role. I thank everyone on the Parish Council for giving up their time to attend our meetings and to take on individual tasks where needed.

Objectives for the year

On a procedural level, the PC continued to strive to maintain transparency in our meetings and correspondence. All the Agendas and Minutes are now published on the Notice board and PC website as soon as possible before or after our meetings.

Our main objective at this time last year was to finally install the new equipment in the Recreation Ground. This was finished in time for the 'launch party' on the 9th August, which was attended by our District and County Councillors, both of whom had helped us with funding for the project. The sun shone, the play equipment seemed to be a popular with all the children that attended and the event was a successful conclusion to a long- term project.

The Village Plan

The long-awaited Village Plan was published in time to be handed out at the Summer Recreation Ground event. Adrian Peake and I attended a Forum for Parish & Town Councils, at SODC's head office (prior to the devastating fire!) and were delighted to see a copy of the Waterperry Plan being displayed as an example of an excellently well researched and presented Plan! We fed this back to the VP Committee, so that they could send a couple more copies for SODC/ORCC to use. There will be a presentation in a moment from a member of the VP Steering Group, so I shan't steal their thunder, but would just say that it has been nice to see one or two of their projects come to fruition. The PC is not part of the Steering Group, but we like to work closely with them to bring ideas to life.

Website

Lawrence develops and maintains the website, which he keeps up to date with news of meetings and events. There is a Blog and a Twitter feed. If you have any ideas on how this can be developed or improved, please speak to Adrian and Lawrence about what you would like to see.

Finances

We were able to bring the Recreation Ground in within our budget and our bank accounts now remain at a steady – modest – level. We made a small increase in the precept for the year, purely to cover inflation in things such as insurance and auditing costs. The accounts are available for you to see; please speak to Adrian (Clerk). We don't carry a surplus of funds, so any new projects would be likely to require fund-raising initiatives.

Planning matters

We welcome any guidance given by village opinion, so again, please keep an eye on our Agendas on-line or on the notice board, to see when planning applications have been received & will be considered at a meeting. We sought to clarify the level of input we can have into the whole planning process and also to bring the format of our meetings into line with guidance from the OALC. After some initial misgivings or concerns from villagers, this does now seem to have settled into a routine.

We are very much here to represent village views on any planning matter, but we have to do so within the constraints of the SODC planning process. If you have strong views, you are invited to make comments on-line on the SODC planning portal, or you are very welcome to use the opportunity presented at a PC meeting to address the whole PC. The PC can only respond to Applications as directed by Planning Considerations guidance, but we can certainly report back to SODC if we are aware of a high level of residents' interest in any planning issue.

On-going issues

Matters such as road & verge maintenance, footpaths and traffic speed continue to be brought to our attention & we try to deal with each issue appropriately. We have included three current such concerns in tonight's agenda as suggested topics for discussion later this evening, but please feel free to raise anything else too. Most of you probably know that Brookes plans to scale down operations at the Holton Campus over the next two years. Various theories circulate about what might happen to the site, but as things stand currently, we have not been told of any plans to redevelop in the near future. Adrian Peake and I will continue to attend their Residents' meetings throughout the year & will report back with any news on this front.

Village events

Again, the Harvest Supper and the Fireworks event were well attended, as was the Summer Event already mentioned. Lois Selmes & Kate Parsler spearheaded a great St George's Day tea party in the Rec last month, complete with Village Bake-Off competition and children's fancy dress. It was huge fun, very well attended and raised over £100 which has been handed to the PC, but will be ring-fenced for spending only on the Recreation Ground.

It was lovely to see so many children using the play equipment and a great opportunity for new neighbours in the village to get to know everyone. There's another Summer event planned for midsummer and volunteers for this will be warmly welcomed. Please speak to Kit, Kate or Lois to offer your help.

This brings my report to an end. Thanks again for coming along this evening. I hand over now to my colleagues for their presentations and hope you will find the evening interesting and worthwhile.

Thank you

Sue Parker

Chairman