

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, 29 APRIL 2010

Report by Chairman Jim Flux

The format for tonight will be as in previous years: first a short report from me on the Council's activities over the last year; after this we will open the meeting for any subject you may wish to raise. This evening is an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions and to make comments and suggestions. However, no decisions can be made at this meeting, but relevant items can/will be discussed at the next Council meeting, where decisions on appropriate action can be taken.

The current members of the Council are: Councillors Don Anderson, Alan Collins, Jim Flux, Martin Ince, James Privett, Jean Rudge, Martin Squires, Geoff Todd, Jonathan Watts, Heather Ward and Brian Wood, plus the members co-opted during the year after resignations: John Day replaced Helen Spencer, Jim Alison replaced Angus Alton and John Finnigan replaced David Westbury. May I thank the Helen, David and Angus for their work and support of the PC. The whole council is up for election on 27 May. Currently there are 15 candidates for the 14 places and the new council comes into office on 1 June.

Our current Vice-Chairman is Don Anderson, our District Councillor is Paul O'Sullivan, and Ray Jelf is our County Councillor. Our Parish Clerk is Lorraine Watling, who does an excellent job keeping us on the straight and narrow. Our village stewards are Max Pankhurst and Richard Banister, who was given a contract during the year. Last but by no means least we have Susan Fuller as Minutes Secretary. Sgt Scott Evans is our Neighbourhood Manager and we have a rural team of PCs; recently we have taken steps for the PC to be more involved with the Neighbourhood Action Group.

This last year we held 11 council meetings, generally well attended by councillors, but with a very small number of the public on most occasions. There were three exceptions! The November meeting was held in Hempton, and was well attended with an active forum on speeding problems in Hempton; and our meetings in March and April were quite lively during the open forum on the subject of a proposed development in Clifton.

The Satin Lane Allotment Association, chaired by Lynda Lake-Stewart, has done an excellent job tidying up the area and re-energising the whole area. They recently cleared some shrub land for four new plots which are already taken. The PC has updated the agreements for allotment holders and these are now issued for the current year. It is planned to issue similar agreements for the allotment holders in Hempton.

This year we have taken steps to register the Castle Grounds with the Land Registry. We are awaiting the final papers and it should be completed soon. Richard Hirst of CDC was very helpful in completing this work. We have included the entrance road in the application as the Church Commissioner said they no longer consider it their property.

In line with good practice, the Council has continued to have a standard agenda item to allow Councillors to record any declaration of interest at the start of each meeting. The Council has a model freedom of information policy.

The Council continued to pay councillors only for authorised travel and agreed out-of-pocket expenses. Once the minutes of our meetings are approved they are posted on the village website thanks to DOL, and of course on the main notice boards in the three villages. Our thanks to the DN for reporting the meetings every month.

Working groups handle most of the work of the Council: Planning, Environmental & Special Projects, Recreation, Finance & General Purposes, and Highways. These groups review the items in their areas and bring to Council a report and proposals for debate and for Council approval as appropriate. I would like publicly to thank all the Councillors and the Chairs.

During the last year we had several applications for planning that have caused concern. Not all of these were resolved to our satisfaction. Speeding continues to cause concern, especially on the Hempton Road and in Earl's Lane, as does parking in the Market Place. Cllr Collins has some more information later.

Grants have been made in the last year to seven students for books needed for their first degree course. We have continued our subscriptions to OALC, CPRE, OPFA, SLCC,

and ORCC and contributed to the cost of the church tower lighting and maintenance of the clock.

Funds: At the end of April 2009 the Council had funds of £556K, at the same time this year we had £542K. It should be noted that there are strict rules on how these funds can be spent. We may use the interest for revenue items, but capital can only be used for capital projects. Lorraine has a list of the projects that have been funded from this reserve by the PC. The council reconfirmed its policy of maintaining a level of reserves of at least £450K.

The catastrophic drop in interest rates has considerably reduced Council income. We have raised the precept over the last two years to recover some of this. To help we have reduced the levels of grass-cutting and changed the way we do this. Other services have been maintained but are continually monitored. It should be noted that, despite the rise, the precept for Deddington is in line with our neighbours, and way below that of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington.

It was also agreed that the cost of insuring the sports pavilions at the Windmill Centre should be carried by the clubs. This will be phased in over two years. We are into our fourth year of a four- year lease for the Town Hall. The new council will need to review with the Feoffees [Deddington Charity Estates] the future of this building.

Over the last year other items of note include:

- John Suckling has carried out the necessary internal audits - our grateful thanks to John.
- We continue to sponsor Jonathan Watts as a Governor of the Primary School.
- Our nominated Feoffee on the Deddington Charities Estates is Terry Clinch. Don Anderson resigned during the year.
- The District Auditor gave us a clean bill of health for last year's accounts.
- Meetings with CDC in various areas: Both CDC and OCC continue to improve their relationships and communications with the parishes.
- A ROSPA approved inspector gave us a clean report on the play equipment situated around the parish.

- The dog bins are emptied regularly and used by most of our dog walkers. We have installed one extra bin in the village, and one sponsored by the Vets in St Thomas Street. Unfortunately, we have a few uncaring people who do not clear up. This is a special problem in the Windmill sports area. I would ask everybody to ensure that their dogs do not foul public areas.
- Contracts were awarded for cutting the grass verges and amenity areas around the village, at the Windmill, various play areas and the Castle Grounds. These have one more year to run and, in order to keep costs under control, the number of cuts was reduced and will continue to be monitored carefully. At the Castle Grounds we will ensure that pathways and a play area are cut.
- The Friends of the Castle Grounds was formed during the year, and have been very active. They have obtained agreement for a grant from English Heritage to cut back the undergrowth and generally tidy the areas. This grant for legal reasons is handled through the PC. Our grateful thanks go to all who work with this group.
- We have arranged weed treatment for all the roadside curbs in Deddington, Clifton and Hempton.
- The idea of the PC having snow clearing equipment was debated, but rejected on numerous grounds.
- It was also confirmed that householders do not have parking rights on the highway outside their premises.
- Vandalism is a recurring problem around the Windmill, but of late has not been too serious. The Police do include the area in their nightly patrols especially when there are 'certain' events at the centre. The all-weather court continues to be specifically targeted and bolt-cutters have again been used to gain entrance - a pity with all the other facilities available.
- The AWC costs around £3500 a year to maintain. When we experimented a few years ago leaving it open the surface was destroyed within a year.
- The November fair in the Market Place took place on a slightly larger scale. It received a positive response, and Mr Hatwell, who runs similar fairs in many

other village around Oxfordshire, will be coming again this year in November.

- We have again written in support of the Horton Hospital in Banbury.
- We have completed the Democratic and Legal Monitoring required by CDC.
- Cllr Ince and the Clerk have done an excellent job in tidying up the records and rules for the cemetery. We have also amended the various fees. An H&S audit has been carried out and we are planning a wild flower area in the unused part of the cemetery. For this we have received a grant of £500 from the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment. We have also improved the area around the water butt.
- We have also continued to improve the area around the war memorial.
- Hanging baskets last year were sponsored by the Red Lion; this year they are sponsored by the Market Group, and the planters by Nicholsons Nursery of North Aston. Many thanks to all for this support.
- We have continued our commitment to support the Youth Club over the next year. They did not call on us for help this last year.
- A wifi system available in the Windmill Centre is proving popular.
- OCC highways have agreed a plan to improve the bus stops in the village. This work should be completed this year.
- The notice Boards around the village have been repaired, thanks to Martin Ince and Nipper Clarke.
- The Christmas tree was great this year. Thanks to Martin Ince and others. Extra lights were also purchased.
- Deddington was declared a rural area and so allowed to keep its Pharmacy at the Health Centre.

Finally a few words of thanks to:

- The Parish Councillors, together with Ray Jelf our County Councillor and Paul O'Sullivan our District Councillor for their work and support;
- Max and Richard, our stewards, for their good work;
- Lorraine, whose work as Clerk is unseen but vital to the village, and Susan our Minutes Secretary;

- Representatives of the Hempton and Satin Lane allotments who ensure all plots are in use;
- Joyce Minnear for her work at the Windmill Centre;
- Oxfordshire Conservation Volunteers who have carried out projects in the village;
- Jill Cheeseman, Mary Robinson and the *Deddington News* for their reporting of events and support, including Charles Barker who has to sit through our meetings;
- The Festival and the market, together with all the clubs and unsung people who do so much to make the Parish of Deddington, Clifton and Hempton a great place to live.