

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, 6 MAY 2009

Report from Chairman Jim Flux

The format for tonight will be as in previous years: first a report from me on the Council's activities over the last year; then 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, may I remind everybody that no decisions can be made at this meeting, but relevant items can/will be discussed at our next Council meeting, where decisions or appropriate action could be taken.

The current members of the Council are: Don Anderson, Angus Alton, Alan Collins, Jim Flux, Martin Ince, James Privett, Jean Rudge, Martin Squires, Geoff Todd, Jonathan Watts, David Westbury and Brian Wood. Heather Ward was co-opted in July last year to replace Cllr Rollason who resigned. There is one current vacancy due to the recent resignation of Helen Spencer. The Council will co-opt a new member at its next meeting from people who have put their names forward by 13 May. As of yesterday we have another vacancy due to the resignation of Angus Alton. We will have to go through the correct procedures to replace Angus and have posted the notice of the vacancy today. If no election is called we will ask for interested parties and co-opt at our June meeting.

Our Vice Chairman is Don Anderson; our District Councillor is Paul O'Sullivan; 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. Last but by no means least we have Susan Fuller as Minutes Secretary - Susan has recently given birth to a baby daughter and we all wish them both well.

PC Garry Doyle is our Beat Bobby and there are two PCSOs who cover our patch. Police surgeries have started in the village on a monthly basis and David Keats (ex-village bobby) is a member of the NAG (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; our meeting in March was quite lively during the open forum on the subject of the proposed wind turbine for the Windmill Community Centre. This project has since been shelved. We also had a good

response when the Satin Lane allotments were the issue.

May I add that the new Satin Lane Allotment Association chaired by Lynda Lake-Stewart has done an excellent job tidying up and re-energising the whole area. The question of chickens was resolved and the PC has funded a communal shed for the area. The PC has updated the agreement for allotment holders and this will be issued soon.

After several years of frustration we have now formalised the ownership of the Stonepits allotments in Hempton. Our thanks go to the Richard Hirst of CDC who finally got Land Registry approval.

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 adopted the model freedom of information policy; and has continued its approach of not introducing any allowances for Councillors except 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 Council approval as appropriate. I would like publicly to thank all the Councillors and the Chairs.

We won the Cherwell area of the Calor Village of the Year competition for last year, and received a very good report. Our thanks go to Mary Robinson who led this project.

Speeding continues to cause concern especially on the Hempton road and in Earl's Lane. Cllr Collins has some more information later.

Grants have been made in the last year to three students for books. We have arranged a loan for the Cricket Club to supplement the various grants they received to help with the cost of installing practice nets. These were officially opened last week and are yet another excellent facility for the village. Thanks to the Cricket Club.

We hope to install an exercise trail around the Castle Grounds and are currently working with English Heritage and the Church Commissioners to get agreement for this.

The Council made donations to Deddington OnLine and the PTA. 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. We also paid most of the cost of replacing the south clock face minute hand which 'fell off'.

Funds: At the end of April 2009 the Council had funds of £542K, at the same time last year we had £590K. 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 be used only 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 recent catastrophic drop in interest rates has considerably reduced Council income. We raised the precept to recover a little of this, but we will need to reduce services in areas such as grass-cutting. In this area we have made some savings and look to find more. It should be noted that, despite the rise, the precept for Deddington is in line our neighbours and way below that of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington.

We are two years into a four-year lease for the Town Hall. We will need to review with the Feoffees the future of this building.

Over the last year other items of note include:

- John Suckling has carried out the necessary internal audits.
- We continue to sponsor Jonathan Watts as a Governor of the School.
- Our nominated Feoffees on the Deddington Charities Estates are Don Anderson and Terry Clinch.
- 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 relationship and communication 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 two extra bins in the village; unfortunately, we have a few uncaring people who do not clear up. This is a special problem on the Windmill sports area. I would ask everybody to ensure that their dogs do not foul public areas.

- New two year contracts were awarded for cutting the grass verges and amenity areas around the village, at the Windmill, various play areas and the Castle Grounds, and in order to keep costs under control the number of cuts has been reduced and will be monitored carefully. At the Castle Grounds we will ensure that pathways and a play area are cut.
- We have arranged weed treatment for all the roadside curbs in Deddington, Clifton and Hempton.
- Vandalism is a recurring problem around the Windmill. The Police do include the area in their nightly patrols especially when there are certain events at the centre. The AWC has been specifically targeted and bolt cutters used to gain entrance - a pity with all the other facilities available. The AWC cost 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 was well received, and Mr Hatwell, who runs similar fairs in many other villages around Oxfordshire will be coming again this year in 12-14 November.
- Broken play equipment in the play areas has been removed (springer) or replaced (swing bucket seat).
- New lights were purchased for the Christmas tree, which was great this year.
- We have culled dead trees in the Castle Grounds, and further culling is planned.
- A group led by Cllr Westbury did an excellent job of clearing the entrance road area to the Castle Grounds.
- We have written in support of the Horton Hospital.
- We have completed the Democratic & 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.

- We have also smartened up the area around the war memorial.
- Hanging baskets last year were sponsored by the Crown and Tuns. This year they are sponsored by the Unicorn, and the planters by Nicholsons of North Aston. Many thanks to all for this.
- 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 wi-fi system is now available in the Windmill Centre.
- 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 OCC Cllr and Paul O’Sullivan our District Cllr for their work and support; Max & Richard 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; OCV who have carried out project in the village; Mary Robinson, Jill Cheeseman 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/Hempton a great place to live.

Jim Flux

From Cllr Alan Collins

Four main topics were addressed by a range of councillors at this year’s annual meeting. They were: firstly, an appeal for any neighbours who would be interested in having their street lights turned off during the hours of 12:30 to 5:30am should make the fact known to the Parish Council. It would be helpful if they have taken a straw poll of their street, but the PC will follow it up.

Secondly, a proposal to start a consultation over the future of the war memorial and the grave yard was discussed. A poster that carried a little of the history of the options was presented for people to append their names. This poster has now been moved to the Royal British Legion Club, so if you are interested please add your name or email deddwarmem@aol.com and you’ll be kept informed of any meetings.

Thirdly, a campaign for a crossing in New Street/High Street was discussed. The venerable John Cheney has started a petition that the Parish Council supports. The petition can be signed either in the Library or the Unicorn. The technical reasons why one couldn't be placed further south of the cross roads was also discussed.

Lastly the worrying results of a speed survey at the east end of Earl's Lane were discussed. The Highways group believe that the most of the 96% who were travelling above 30mph were ignorant of the limit at that end. As repeater signs are not allowed in a 30mph area, a novel idea was suggested by Alan Collins that if the east end of Earl's Lane became a 40mph, then signs would be allowed. The 30mph sign could be erected just east of Pound Court, and a 20mph limit could be introduced for the school. Opinion was fairly split with some of the attendees also requesting action at the west end of Deddington that the Highways Group will review.

Alan Collins