

WHITESHILL & RUSCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Whiteshill & Ruscombe Annual Parish Meeting Held on 21st May 2009 at Whiteshill Village Hall

Present: There were 26 people present at the meeting.

Introduction

Councillor Gerri Kimber welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Chairman's Report

Councillor Kimber gave the report as the outgoing chair from 2008/09 after standing down as chairman as of 14th May. Councillor John Rogers is the new Chairman and Councillor Rebecca Charley remains as the Vice-Chair.

The parish council has achieved a lot in the past year with limited resources. The major capital expenditure in the past year was the Ruscombe Road railings, these have now been refurbished and life span extended considerably. A working party from HMP Leyhill was utilised to refurbish the railings and also installation of a soakaway in the playing field. We have also had a new handrail on Zion Hill installed.

The parish council has spent dozens of hours looking at reducing the speed of traffic throughout the parish. We keep hitting problems getting approval from Highways to implement traffic calming schemes.

We have been campaigning for 20 is plenty signs in the parish. We cannot have a mandatory 20mph limit, but can do a 20mph campaign. Despite difficulties with Highways, we have finally had approval. Local residents are urged to stick to the 20mph to slow down the rest of the traffic.

Stratford Park has donated a basketball hoop to the parish council and we have investigated the cost of it in the playing field – it will be located near the old netball pig.

The parish council is replacing some of the grit bins in the village with attractive wooden bins. A couple of noticeboards also need replacing this year. We have adopted the red phone box at Double Spout in Ruscombe and will be turning it into an information point.

The parish council ran a logo competition in the past year.

An allotments working party was formed after the last annual parish meeting.

Some of the council's objectives for 2009/10 include getting the 20mph signs up, rolling replacement of grit bins, turn phone box into information point, site basketball hoop, and replace some noticeboards.

County Councillor & District Councillor both called away to a meeting at SDC and unable to attend APM this evening. Report from Philip Booth was circulated to the meeting.

Parish Newsletter – Dilys Warren

Dilys is the editor of the WaRbler, which we have been publishing for 2 years. Thank you to Julie Shirley for the printing of the newsletter. Thanks also to Molly Tomkins who delivers the WaRbler for us. Please let us know if you are not receiving the WaRbler.

The WaRbler has changed over the past 2 years. Parish Council information is published through the newsletter and we also receive good articles from the Village Agent.

People provide historical facts and stories; we've also delved in the parish council archives for useful information. We publish puzzles and small advertisements. We covered the refurbishment of the village shop. There are local interviews and walks, and articles from the school.

The Parish Council's vision statement is to make the parish a pleasant place to live. We hope that the WaRbler contributes to that sense of community feeling.

If you would like to contribute – please leave your details.

Village Agent – Angela King

Angela is the new village agent. The service provides a bridge between the old and vulnerable and the benefits they can access. Transport is also an issue to be looked at. Angela recently suffered a detached retina which has given Angela the empathy with old and vulnerable as she has felt very vulnerable with going out and about and not being able to see correctly.

PCSO Gary Lynch

Gary has been in post 5/6 months – PCSO Tanya White is still involved with the parish.

Gary has looked at the speeding issues using visibility to deter speeding, and been standing with speed guns and sending letters out to drivers who drove in excess of speed limit. Gary would like to keep the momentum going with deterring speeding and working with parish council.

There is no physical way to do speed tests in Ruscombe because of nature of the road but does carry out foot patrols in the area.

Sometimes it is perception because of cars revving loudly to go uphill and give the impression of speeding.

Gary has been regularly visiting elderly people that have been victims of bogus callers and checking that they are okay.

There was a street surgery in March but feels they got the time wrong. If it had been earlier they would have seen more people. Some of the issues highlighted were anti social behaviour and milk thefts.

There will be a neighbourhood panel meeting on 1st June where Gary and Tanya take forward priorities from respective areas. Already plan to take forward the issue of speeding. If there are any other specific issues that the community needs to address please contact Gary. Also, if anyone would like to get more involved with PCSOs please contact Gary. If anyone would like to attend the 1st June meeting, it is being held at the Cainscross council offices at 2pm.

Gary is being moved onto another part of Stroud, so PCSO White will remain our point of contact. PCSO Jane Fellowes is going to be supporting Tanya.

Adrian Wakefield – Whiteshill Youth Football Club

Adrian is the Chairman of the football club. Adrian expressed his thanks to the council for their support.

The club has been using the playing field and changing facilities at the Scout hut for many years. The age group of boys & girls is 8-11 years for Stroud & District mini soccer league and 12-16 years playing in the Stroud & District Youth League.

There has been a declining interest and the football club has gone from 5 teams down to 1 team this season. There is a general lack of support from volunteers and lack of interest from children.

The club has one team currently playing in the U13 for Stroud & District Youth League and is very well supported.

The coaching staff are all CRB approved and Level 1 football association. Children receive a good standard of training. There is also a child welfare officer to support and protect children's interests.

The immediate future plan is to provide football with the one team currently, but the aspiration is to try and rebuild the club back up to the former glories of recent years, hopefully within a 2-3 year timescale. The focus is on the rising 8 years olds, with open training sessions on a Saturday morning. The club is finding it very hard to attract new volunteers.

Playing Field – Rebecca Charley

There have been a number of things going on this year. The Parish Council were approached by Stroud FC to use the pitch but wanted to build changing rooms. The council decided that it wasn't appropriate in the end for the village – too many cars, etc. The council is very happy to support our local football club.

The Basketball Hoop will be installed near the boules area so players can use the hard surfacing on the boules area. The netball pig will be removed as it is unsightly with lots of graffiti and rarely used.

The playing fields were well-used during the snow. However, the salt and debris that washed down from the road has killed off brambles in the playing field.

The school has a school gardening group and they are going to help with pruning of the orchard and weed in the area. The school children planted the trees 3 years ago and will learn how to look after the orchard.

The plans for the play area include trying to integrate the play area more with the rest of the playing field. We would like to create more natural things – big boulders and big pieces of timber to create a visual barrier without it being an actual barrier between play area and playing field.

Ruscombe Valley Action Group – Rebecca Charley

Nothing has happened in the past year. RVAG is not a parish council run group. The group has a couple hundred pounds in the bank that people donated to the group. Should they fold the action group and donate the money or sit on it for another couple of years in case further action is needed? The group may need to discuss this again in the future – if anyone has any suggestions please let the action group know.

Ruscombe Brook Action Group is very active and busy and going from strength to strength.

The Chair of group, Zarah Haines, addressed the meeting.

The Brook Action Group has been going for 3 years and regularly meet once a month. The group also regularly walk the full length of the brook. The group won a funding application (Awards for All) to develop the website.

They have been doing lots of work with Puckshole as they suffered with flooding. The culvert is being changed and doing some other work. They want to increase the smooth running of the brook from top to bottom. The group has already reduced the number of sewage pollutions in the brook. Severn Trent has been persuaded to take action and also funded an information leaflet.

There will be a seminar in the future to bring the different water groups together. The Environment Agency, Severn Trent, landowners and householders, interested persons, SDC, and WRPC are all signatories of the partnership agreement. This is a unique example of how a community group can influence stakeholders and is being used by other groups as an example of best practice.

The group has been working with Water21 and a number of students have been working on reports, which have been published and sited as forward thinking research.

There were no statistics available over water changes etc on the Ruscombe Brook, so there was a study carried out on Slad valley. The student compiling the report recommended that use of mill ponds that were there in the past as water retention will prevent huge flooding. This was proved to EA and they now have some money from Defra to do a pilot scheme.

The group are inputting into policy making and put ideas forward for SDC Core Strategy.

The group are developing the “Ruscombe Standard” – aim for quality of water at source is the same as at destination.

Whiteshill Parochial Church Council – Geoff Lavis

Geoff Lavis is the PCC Treasurer. Apologies were received from Padre Woollaston who has a church service this evening.

Denise Cole died during the past year and is much missed.

The church is continuing links with the schools, such as the Open Books Scheme.

Church attendance remains stable and there has been a lot of wider support throughout the parish.

The restoration of ceiling was achieved through applications for grants to fund the work. The church has also recently refurbished and painted the cast iron guttering and carried out repairs to the stained glass window in Lady Chapel (following vandalism).

The future holds considerable plans for the church. The organ needs refurbishing (£35k estimate), plus some stonework repairs and re-pointing. By law the church has to have an assessment of the church and this dictates the work that has to be carried out.

PCC estimated in 2008 that would have considerable deficit but thankfully this did not arise and had a surplus at the end. The sad death of Denise generated a lot of donations to the church. The church also held lots of meetings to highlight finance issues and lots of donations gained through this. There has been considerable support in the area for the continuation of the church.

Ruscombe & Whiteshill Village Shop Association – Mary Dunford

Mary is the Chair of the village shop committee, and gave a brief history of the shop including events after the fire.

The shop opened in 1998 by David Drew, following much hard work by the local community. The last shop in the parish had ceased trading several years previously (apart from the post office).

An ex-school room portacabin was sited on the playing field and a disabled toilet installed with help from Help the Aged. The shop was fitted out by local firms and donations and people offered skills and time. The initial enthusiasm died down slightly but the shop continued. Prices are competitive as a non-profit making shop.

In 2007, the shop had been repainted and trading steadily. A wider range of goods were now being offered (eco products, organic, fair trade and vegetarian). Bread goods were baked on the premises. The parish council kindly provided a litter bin.

The fire was started in the litter bin and destroyed the disabled toilet and part of the shop. Lots of stock was saved from water damage and the shop was able to keep trading throughout.

The shop was given discretionary use of scout hut toilet.

Unfortunately, the shop was inadequately insured and had to do a lot of fundraising to complete the refurbishment. A grant was received from Help the Aged towards the cost of new toilet.

Mr Charley worked very hard to secure a better settlement from the insurers and was successful.

The new toilet ready just in time for the 10 year anniversary celebrations. David Drew came back and officially opened the new toilet.

The shop committee would like to thank everyone who has helped to make the shop the success it is especially the shop customers.

The shop urgently needs more volunteers to continue opening between the current opening hours. If you feel you can support the shop, shifts are 2 hour slots. Any other skills that can help the shop are welcome too.

Allotments – Louise Scott

Following Sue Dance's talk about Allotments at the APM last year, the parish council put together a small working group to take forward the idea of allotments. A landowner in Ruscombe is discussing offering land in Ruscombe to the parish council to be used as allotments.

The working group has visited some other existing allotments to see how they operate.

There is nothing concrete at the moment, but the parish council will be discussing further in June to take this forward.

Whiteshill School

Unfortunately Robert Kempner was unable to attend the meeting so John Mutton as school governor said a few words about the school.

The school are putting on a play on 7 & 8th July at the Stroud Playhouse – Joseph & Technicolour Dreamcoat.

The Sports Day will be held on 21st June on the playing field and the Samba band will march around the village.

There are a reduced number of pupils in the coming year but should be back up to full complement the following year.

The parish meeting in July includes a presentation from the school if anyone would like to attend that meeting.

Open Forum

Stuart Gregory (ex parish councillor) congratulated the parish council on all the things done in the past year, especially the railings which look nice but also create a barrier to the sharp drop the other side.

Stuart Gregory highlighted that Hanley's corner needs attention again. Clerk noted this for the next parish council meeting.

Mr Gregory also requested a survey of roads / congestion / parking particularly the blind bend at Middle Spring where people park and puts cars head-on. Clerk noted this for the next parish council meeting. Steve Tomkins noted that this has been discussed before with Highways – Highways like the parking as it slows the traffic down.

Louise Scott noted to the meeting that the allotments group are looking at community payback, a youth offenders' scheme working on the allotments to clear the ground etc.

Steve Tomkins noted to the meeting that the planning process has been torturous and problems with one planning permission in particular.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.