

Annual Parish Report 2011

The Parish Council

It was with regret that Cllr Diane Shepherd had to finally resign her membership of the Parish Council in the early part of last year, this due to an illness in her family. We were pleased to welcome Nicola Aiston who was co-opted to the Council in July to fill the vacancy.

Once again I am grateful to all Councillors who have given of their time throughout the year and ensured that this Parish Council achieved what I believe to be some very worthwhile benefits for the village.

I would like pay tribute to the three Councillors who did not stand for re-election but who contributed a significant amount to our collective achievements. Peter Betts for administering the Speedwatch initiative, for instigating the formation of the Whitchurch Walkers and spending a lot of time in the preparation and presentation of the Village Questionnaire. Hans Meyer for so assiduously keeping our focus on HS2, the Energy from Waste initiative at Calvert and the proposed wind farm at Wingrave as well as representing us at the Neighbourhood Action Group. Lastly Nicky Aiston who also worked hard on collating the Village Questionnaire.

The Parish Council continues to be represented on the Local Area Forum and Local Council Planning Liaison Group.

Thanks too go to our County Councillor, Netta Glover, who not only attends many of our monthly meetings but keeps us informed on matters of importance to the village.

Parish Clerk

Yet again our Parish Clerk Sue Mordue has ensured this Council administered it's work in a correct and proper fashion. I am sure we are all, and me particularly, most grateful to her for her diligence and the good spirit in which she conducts her very important role for the Parish.

Police

We continue to work closely with Thames Valley Police, indeed we inform them of issues in the village not only with a feedback report at each Council meeting but at the time of any incident or concern. They have an open invitation to attend PC meetings and two members did attend in February but it is fair to say we would have welcomed more frequent visits. We continue to be represented on the Neighbourhood Action Group, first by Cllr Abigail Bond and latterly by Councillor Meyer. The top issues identified at this forum, and supported in part by the Village Questionnaire, are speeding, parking and farm theft.

Speeding – Whitchurch participates in the Speedwatch initiative and TVP assist us with training.

Parking - The Council has discussed this issue with TVP and we trust that firmer action will be taken in the future against those who park on pavements in the village.

Footpaths

The Council, with support of villagers, continues to report to BCC all problems that arise on the many public footpaths within our parish to ensure the paths are kept in good order. The dispute between the landowners and BCC regarding the footpath which crosses the gardens of houses in Little London continues and the path remains closed. Our application to BCC to have the footpath reopened was upheld at a hearing last June. We regret that due to circumstances beyond our control there has still been no resolution between the two householders and BCC and in March this year we resolved to insist that BCC make the Order for this claimed footpath.

We continued also to ensure that all landowners mark the public footpaths across their land and where applicable prevent obstructions inhibiting walkers. This was boosted by the formation of the Whitchurch Walkers in January this year and they have continued to walk

the local footpaths every month. My thanks go to Cllr Peter Betts for ensuring this Council's initiative came to fruition and to Chrissie Major who volunteered to lead these walks.

Lighting

No new street lights were fitted in the past year but we did endeavour to look critically at the electricity consumption of our existing lamps. This was in an effort to reduce costs to villagers. Despite a significant amount of work, again by Peter Betts, we have, as yet, been unable to realise any savings. I wish the new Council better success.

Affordable Homes

From a wish expressed at the Village Meeting in late 2003, through a survey conducted in 2007, on to a Consultation Day in 2009 and speaking at the Development Control Committee meeting in 2010 this Council is proud to have carried forward its mandate to secure affordable housing in the village. New residents of Newman Close moved in over the past few weeks and the official opening ceremony is on 13th May. I think the whole village, as well as the Council, is to be congratulated on this achievement.

Recreation Field

Another project which has had a gestation period of more than four years is also nearing completion. With great help from the village the area we now call the Recreation Field, which was ceded to the Parish in 2004 as a result of a Section 106 agreement linked to the development of The Meadows, we now have a purpose built children's play area as well as a multi-goal with basket ball hoop, a fully drained football pitch, a wildlife pond and a community woodland and not forgetting seating provided by the Community Association. I would like to thank everyone from the village who has helped in any way with this project and realising a great asset for us and our families.

It was fitting that last week the Field was, for the first time, the site of the May Feast. By all accounts it proved to be a suitable venue and we wait to see whether the Community Association asks to return next year.

Whilst talking about this area my I remind you that an additional Dog Litter Bin was purchased and sited by the car park of the field to give dog owners no excuse to clear up after their pets.

Village Questionnaire

The views of the village were sought in a Questionnaire issued to all households in November last year. There was a disappointing response with barely 10% of those questionnaires being returned. The summary of responses were published in April and will be considered by the new Council

Communications

The Village Web Site continues to publish information about the Parish Council including the agenda and minutes of all meetings amongst other things of interest to the village.

A Village Newsletter, circulated by e-mail, has been issued on an infrequent basis for the past two years. Much of the information contained within these newsletters comes from Parish Council meetings and its correspondence. I look forward to hearing from the new Council if it wishes to continue this communication.

Promoting Whitchurch

Once again in 2010 the Parish Council entered the village in the Best Kept Village competition. Our total score was disappointingly lower than that of 2009 but the judges gave a special mention to the White Swan being a credit to the village and said that Whitchurch is well cared for by its inhabitants. It is hoped we will do better this year as the Council decided again to enter the village. Judging will be in June and we look to everyone in the village to do

what they can to hopefully ensure a good result.

Finally, I would like to thank Whitchurch News for reporting promptly each month on the proceedings of this Council.

Andrew Pain JP
Chairman, Whitchurch Parish Council