

Annual Parish Report 2009

The Parish Council

It was with regret that in July 2008 we accepted the resignation tendered by Cllr Walker on her moving abroad with her family to pursue charitable work. At the October meeting of the Council it was decided that this vacant seat should be filled by co-option. An advertisement was placed in Whitchurch News and as a result Cllr Dianne Shepherd was elected as our seventh member. I am grateful to all Councillors who have given of their time throughout the year.

Parish Clerk

In her first full year as Parish Clerk Sue Mordue has given excellent service to the Council for which we are most grateful.

Police

Whilst we have had regular contact with PCSO Wendy Taylor in the village, including outside the school, at the May Feast and on the Recreation Field, the agreement reached with TVP has not worked out entirely as we had hoped. The Police have not been represented at many of our Council meetings. Notwithstanding there has been a police presence in the form of speed checks when many tickets have been issued, including to local residents. This was very noticeable in the High Street but also in the Oving Road. Because of high speeds here 30 mph repeater signs have now been placed along the road as reminders.

I would like to thank Cllr Newman for his continued involvement with the Neighbourhood Action group and representing the Council at this meeting.

Footpaths

The Council continued to ensure that the many public footpaths in our Parish are maintained as best as possible, this by reporting problems to the Rights of Way team in the Winslow office of BCC. As always we are grateful to those villagers who advise us when work is required. There has been one ongoing dispute regarding Footpath No 4, this crosses the gardens of houses in Little London, between the landowners and BCC which has resulted in it being closed. In the meantime this Council has applied to have the footpath reinstated.

Bus Shelter

In my report of 2008 I said that it is not every year that bus shelters, of which then Whitchurch had only two, had featured so much on the Council agendas. This of course because of the damage caused to the stop in the High Street as a result of fire aboard an Arriva bus. Now we have three shelters. The replacement shelter in the High Street is owned by J C DeCaux and they are responsible for it's maintenance. With the insurance money we purchased a new glass shelter which is outside the surgery and on the other side of the road we have the older brick shelter. With this one particularly we have ensured that any graffiti is painted over as soon as possible after it appears with the hope that it deters the children of our village from persisting in this anti social behaviour

Lighting

The Council continued its policy to replace the older style, and less efficient, street lights with more environmentally friendly and more visually appealing lamps. During the past year a further 7 new lamps have been fitted and these were in the High Street. Whilst it is still our intention to replace all lights it has been decided that to reduce costs no new lamps will be fitted during the current year.

Affordable Homes

There has been considerable progress towards our objective to provide affordable homes within the parish. Despite none of the owners of the three proposed sites being willing to sell their land a fourth site was identified and the owner has agreed to proceed. The Council has been liaising with the Rural Housing Enabler, Hastoe Housing and David Parker Architects and with their help organised a consultation day on 22nd April this year to which many villagers came to view the proposed plans, to ask questions and where necessary voice concerns. Of those who left written comments 48% were in favour and 34% opposed, the remainder being neutral. We expect Hastoe to submit a planning application within the next few months.

Recreation Field

The Council is pleased that during the year three main projects at the Recreation Field were completed. The second phase of the Children's Play Area was finished in September last year with the official opening by the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire on 25th October. Also in the Autumn the drainage of the field was completed. In the first two months of this year 300 native trees were planted to form our communal woodland. Whilst we are of course most grateful to those organisations who funded these projects our thanks must also go to the many villagers who gave their time to assist. These include Di Shephard and Matthew Smethurst who as part of the Play Area Working Group pushed to ensure we got the best equipment that we could afford. Thanks go also to those too many to name who moved the large quantity of wood chippings that formed the safety surface of the play area and to those, including the children of Whitchurch School, who planted the trees. I must mention Robin Moore and Keith Adams without whose enthusiasm this particular project would have taken far longer to achieve.

The next project is to construct a wildlife pond for which funding has been kindly given by Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust. Advice has been sought from AVDC Bio-Diversity Team and it is hoped this project will be completed by late Summer.

Communications

The Village Web Site continues to record life in the village and carries information about the Parish Council publishing the agenda and minutes of all meetings.

Village Meeting

As announced in my report last year the Council was planning to convene a Village Meeting. This was held on 22nd November and several villagers and representatives of local organisations attended. Many issues were raised including parking at the school, speeding in the village and anti social behaviour.

Promoting Whitchurch

The Parish Council entered the Best Kept Village 2008 and Whitchurch was judged with a score of 71 out of 100. This was very satisfactory we have decided to enter again in the hope that with recent improvements we will do better this year. Judging will be in June and we look to everyone in the village to do what they can to hopefully ensure we get a better score this time.

We had hoped last year to investigate the production of a Parish Plan which would involve all people in the village and would help promote Whitchurch in the wider community. This was not deemed practical and it has been decided to revisit this at a later date.

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

Andrew Pain JP
Chairman, Whitchurch Parish Council