

The Parish Council of St. Helen Without

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.00 p.m.on Monday 12 May 2014 at Dry Sandford Primary School

Present: Cllrs. G. Fitzgerald (in the Chair), M. Bailey, M. Gilbert, K. Houlden, C. Parkin, C Priestley, B. Rogers, and V. Talbot

In attendance: Mr John Higgs and George Edmonds-Brown (Clerk).

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr M Russell

2. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 13th June 2013

The Minutes of the Meeting of 13th June 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes

None

4. Report from Cllr Geoff Fitzgerald 2013/14 Chairman of the Parish Council

It's normal for the Parish Council Chair to present a general overview of our activities and contribution to the community over the past 12 months. However, whilst I will cover some of this, I think it is important to stress the level of change occurring within local government and how this might impact us all. The biggest change will undoubtedly come from the Vale of the White Horse District Council's review of the Green Belt and the need to find additional housing in our parish, via the *Local Plan 2011-2031*. This means that our villages are likely to grow in size; and, areas previously protected under the Green Belt will be reviewed and new land allocated for development. This will have both positive and negative impacts on the availability of new and affordable housing, on our green spaces, on the availability of primary school places and an increasing burden on our roads and village services. The primary issue here is that local residents will have little say in where these new developments appear; for example, in our neighbouring parish of Wootton they have just been told of a likely development of 200 new homes in East Wootton, following on from similar announcements in Marcham, Drayton, Steventon, Radley, etc. This brings me onto a key, strategic need for our parish to develop a local *Neighbourhood Plan* which would allow us to have some statutory say in managing future new housing developments in our area and how our communities develop. However, the creation of such a plan will be costly; time consuming; and, the Parish Council would most likely require substantial help from residents to implement this. So, there are major challenges ahead for us to help protect our communities moving forward! If you are concerned about any of the above issues I would urge you to get involved and offer your help to the Parish Council (download more info from the Vale's website: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/node/11658>).

In addition, as you may be aware, the Parish Council is also under threat of changing parish boundaries. Whilst this may not seem that important to residents on a day-to-day basis, it will affect which residents we represent and the budget we have to spend on local services, i.e. local road safety projects, maintenance of children's playground equipment and recreation ground maintenance, dog bin services and other, local infrastructure provision (bus shelters, etc.). I would like to thank all those residents that have written in to the District Council objecting to this change – we are likely to hear the outcome very soon.

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On to our activities of the last 12 months:

- Speeding and road safety remains an important priority for the Council and so we have installed a 40mph Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) on Honeybottom Lane; upgraded the corner chevrons on Cholswell Road; and, we are in the process of implementing speed reduction measures in Cholswell Road, Long Tow and Barrow Road in Shippon. Any further ideas for improvement would be welcomed.
- The Parish Council is also looking at developing further recreational activities on the Sandleigh Road Recreation Ground in Dry Sandford, including a provisional plan to install adult exercise equipment. We would welcome comments on this and any further ideas from our residents.
- The development of the two disused farmyards in Shippon is also under discussion, with a view to appropriate development of these sites, as per the Shippon Plan. It is still early days but the Council would be looking to gain some benefits for the local community if these projects go ahead. Local consultation on these plans would be part of the overall process and we would encourage resident participation.
- The Parish Council continues to monitor and comment on all local planning applications.

Thanks are due to all our Parish Councillors for their work throughout the year, particular thanks go to the Vice-Chair, Madeleine Russell; and, to our hardworking and diligent Clerk, George Edmonds-Brown.

6. Financial Report by the Clerk

The 2012/13 External Audit was passed without comment

The 2014/15 Precept was increased from £16,000 to £16,900 to take into account the vandalism of bus shelters and the quadrupling of the dog bin servicing charges. In addition the Parish Council received a grant of £125 from the Vale of White Horse DC for concessionary Council tax. The reserves are healthy with budget allocations of £2,000 for street lighting; £6,000 for highways; £5,500 towards a Shippon Village Hall project and £2,000 for equipment at the Sandleigh Road Recreation ground. The 2013/14 Account is currently being prepared for Audit.

7. Public Participation

Covered in following AGM

8. Any Other Business

None

Signed

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