

TAPLOW PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF TAPLOW PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON 20th MAY 2014 AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE READING ROOM TAPLOW VILLAGE CENTRE HIGH STREET TAPLOW

Present

Cllr. George Sandy (Chairman) Cllr. Rachel Gainey-Corcoran
Cllr. Iris Midlane Cllr. John Bamberg.
Cllr. John Kennedy Cllr. Euan Felton
Cllr. Josie Corio

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 7.30pm.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies from the Clerk, Cllr. Marina Grazier, Cllr. Louise Symons and Cllr. Elizabeth Forsyth.

2 To confirm minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 24th May 2013

These were **approved** and signed by the Chairman.

3 Report from Thames Valley Police

No representative of Thames Valley Police was present and no report had been submitted.

4 Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council

The Chairman began by welcoming everyone particularly County Councillor Dev Dhillon who represents us at Aylesbury and who, like the Chairman, also serves on SBDC. He introduced the councillors and thanked all of them for the unpaid time they give in managing parish affairs. He was happy also to announce that Josie Corio has returned to the Council after a sabbatical during which she obtained the necessary qualifications to manage a nursery school. He referred to the excellent parish clerk, Hilda Holder, who takes care of almost everything that is the Council's responsibility, and who should be the first port of call regarding any queries or concerns.

He also thanked Olive Straw, who is responsible for managing the village hall bookings and generally keeping an eye on the upkeep and maintenance needs of the building.

He added that during the year the Council had been sorry to lose Joy Marshall from the team. Joy had served on this council for over 20 years during which time she not only became exceedingly knowledgeable on Council affairs but she also became our undisputed champion of footpaths. He reported that the three main responsibilities are to maintain the village hall, village green and streetlights, but not including those on the A4 which come under Bucks Highways. On the traffic front a previous survey told us that the majority of residents were concerned about speeding vehicles especially when they are juxtapositioned with schoolchildren, other pedestrians, and horse riders. So the Council invested in a Moveable Vehicle Advisory Speed sign (MVAS) and obtained permission from highways to install it from time to time at four points around the parish; namely Berry Hill, Cliveden Road, Hill Farm Road and Boundary Road.

Unfortunately, there have been some teething problems with the technology and it hasn't worked a lot of the time but these problems will soon be resolved and should help slow drivers down. That same survey also showed the majority of residents wanted the same roads to have their limits reduced to 20mph. Today, the good news is that BCC Highways have agreed that Rectory Road and the High Street should become 20mph zones. This will undoubtedly improve safety around the environs of the school, village

green, church and pub. However, the Council is unhappy that they have not yet agreed to the same for Boundary and Hill Farm Roads and Berry Hill. We shall therefore continue to press for these to be included. There is so much equestrian activity in our parish, plus children walking to school along narrow pavements at the edge of winding lanes that it's vital that vehicles should be made to go slow. He added that there are actually 6 equestrian establishments within 1.5 miles of the village roads so drivers really should be encouraged to approach all bends with caution. On this subject thanked Cllr Dhillon because he has been instrumental in obtaining funding from Bucks for all of the signage replacement that will be required.

Those of you who walk the parish footpaths will be pleased that three dog litter bins have been installed. One at the top of Mill Lane on the path that runs down, crosses the jubilee river and then another at the end where it emerges near Skindles. The third is sited at the Boundary Road end of the path that crosses the fields to emerge below Berry Hill Farm. We continue to do battle with Bucks over the maintenance cost of the parish footpaths. They are legally responsible for their upkeep and it is only right and proper that Bucks should maintain them to an acceptable standard.

The memory of Jo Brooking and her bequest to the parish enabled us to enjoy another christmas scene with a sparkling tree on the village green. As in past years we had hoped to organise a carols on the green evening and had circulated the planned date for it well in advance. However, subsequently we learnt that both the school and church had organised their events for the same day. Therefore, to avoid grid-lock our plans were aborted. However, it wasn't just due to the clash of events.... there had been a serious drop in sponsorship, which had in the past largely provided for the costs of refreshments, mulled wine, mince pies and most crucially contributed to the salvation army band. There is good news for this year.....the Christmas tree will be funded again by the Jo Brooking bequest but this time... Juliet Lecchini has undertaken to organise the 'carols on the green' under the auspices of the HTS.

HTS are to be congratulated and thanked for the huge contribution they make to the parish's social life. The mid-summer ox-roast, the Easter egg hunt, and now carols on the green. Well done to all of you who participate and help put on these Taplow events which folk of all ages seem to enjoy immensely

Crossrail is coming to Taplow. It will undoubtedly create more need for parking spaces, and more congestion around the station and its neighbouring roads. Bucks had actually proposed the area become 'pay & display'. a suggestion that your Parish Council absolutely rejected. For all the years we can remember we have striven to protect the rural nature of Taplow and to have meters and wardens patrolling our roads was considered just a step too far and one that we shall continue to resist. It has been suggested that the introduction of one-way traffic on both Station and Institute Roads providing dedicated parking on one side only would make the roads safer and eliminate the head to head confrontations that frequently occur especially on institute road. Additionally, we have suggested to Network Rail and Crossrail that they could help alleviate parking congestion by constructing a layered car-park on the south side to provide secure parking for cycles, scooters and smaller vehicles to encourage green travel.

John Willmore should be thanked for organising the Taplow Rail Users Group (Trug) which recently merged with the Maidenhead & Marlow passengers association to make a stronger group to promote the needs of rail users. John and Trug have been responsible for bringing so many improvements to Taplow station and will no doubt continue to speak strongly in defence of Taplow's station

A notable item of maintenance undertaken was that of the fire door and windows in the Perkins Room. They were totally rotten, but have been replaced by solid oak frames that not only look good, but will require very little future maintenance.

The wall on the green, opposite the Old Rectory has been repaired, it was in danger of falling and also, a significant crack in the barn has also been mended.

There has been a surfeit of fly-posting, especially along the Bath Road, which is actually illegal. If signs & billboards are erected on verges it is generally the responsibility of Bucks to remove, but we have also been informed that it is within our powers also to do so- please keep that in mind and report any you see to the Parish Clerk. Enforcement action has recently been taken against Roots, one of the main offenders on the A4 and their signs were removed. There is every likelihood they will creep out again so let us know when they do.

To reduce our electricity bills and go a bit greener we have converted our 73 streetlights to LED. John Bamberg will astound you all in due course by telling you how much that will have saved.

Finally, and not before time, your parish in one bound leapt into the twenty-first century! We now have a parish website which will become an important method of communication once folk start to use it and when other features are added. To see it for yourself just 'google' "Taplow Parish" and you can then go to the pages that interest you. It will also be available for others to use...for example HTS may wish to announce their events and residents can read the minutes of council meetings and keep in touch with what's going on. if you ever want to promote a community event always check with the Clerk to see if it can be included on the web.

5 Report from the Chairman of the Finance Committee

Cllr. Bamberg outlined the Parish Council's financial position . He said the Council recently spent £3,500 converting our street lights in Taplow to LED. In consultation with the electricity supplier, we have now secured rates which mean we will be able to recover the £3,500 investment over the next 18 months. Continuing to reduce our costs, is a trend which the Council has managed to do by approximately 30% over the last few years. The total expenditure levels are around £40,000 and income to meet this is via the precept of £20,000 and then the equivalent amount in hall hire fees. The level of reserves held by the Parish Council are recommended to be equivalent to 9 months worth of the precept and we have been averaging approximately 15 months which we have been reducing slowly. Now, of course, we have the additional £100,000 from Land Securities, which will be the topic of local funding projects later in the meeting.

No questions from the parishioners received.

6 Report from the Chairman of the Planning Committee

The Parish Council has been consulted on 100 Planning Applications since May last year and has commented on most of them. As a statutory consultee the Parish Council's comments must be taken into account by the District and County Councils in determining Planning Applications. Notable planning events this year have been:-

6.1 The purchase of the Dropmore Estate by a private owner who applied to return the house to a single dwelling which the Parish Council supported. Work is now underway to restore the house and grounds. We believe this is an excellent outcome for the estate and for the Parish.

6.2 The refusal of an application to build an industrial scale chicken farm in Marsh Lane, which the Parish Council and many parishioners strongly objected to. We were glad to see that the protection of the amenities and rural openness of the remaining un-

developed land along the A4 between Slough and Maidenhead carried enough weight to get this unsuitable application refused.

6.3 The Parish Council has always sought to protect the Conservation Areas in the Parish and was disappointed that an applicant was permitted to remove many mature trees from a plot in Ellington Gardens and also that an over large extension and sub-division of a house in Ellington Road, adjacent to but not in the Conservation Area, was permitted.

6.4 The Parish Council has an ongoing and sometimes uphill battle to keep the A4 free of unauthorised signage and has worked hard and with some success this year to persuade the authorities to take this issue seriously.

6.5 The Parish, with the exception of the Bishop Centre is entirely Green Belt land which has a limiting effect on new development and extension of existing buildings. This comes into play particularly when large developments are proposed. One such is the re-development of the Skindles to the old Paper Mill area along Mill Lane. Last August a Supplementary Planning Document for the area was adopted by the District Council as direction as to what scale and type of development should be permitted including public open spaces, access to the river, preservation of wildlife and a new footbridge across the Thames to Boulters Lock. In the main the Council is in agreement with the SPD but is concerned by the last minute exclusion of a cap on numbers of dwellings which may be permitted, having all along in public consultations indicated that numbers would be around 100 dwellings. The site is now owned by Berkeley Homes who have held a public exhibition to show their initial sketches for the re-development. The Parish Council will reserve its opinions until there are more detailed proposals.

6.6 Just today the Parish Council has been informed that an application to demolish Silchester House School and replace it with 4 dwellings and a day nursery has been withdrawn. This is a relief as the demolition of the existing building would have been a considerable loss to the architectural quality of the area.

6.7 An important outstanding issue is that there is an application to extend the gravel workings on Berry Hill which will affect the lower part of Taplow Village and particularly those who live in Boundary Road and Railway Cottages. The application, to be considered by Bucks County Council, seeks permission to extract all the remaining gravel from the site over a period of five years. Working will be within 100 metres of some properties and the Parish Council has strongly objected to it. The Parish Council is pleased to see that the District Council is also firmly against this proposal.

No questions from parishioners received.

7 Report from County Councillor Dev Dhillon

7.1 Cllr. Dhillon reported that at County Level we have had a rate cap for 4 years, this year however rates have risen by 1.5%. On the other hand, we are devolving work and responsibility to the Parish Councils rather than have these things handled at County Level. All councils have to be self-funded by 2020, which means we have to find a funding and responsibility balance.

7.2 Of the money allocated to Dorney, Taplow, Lent Rise Road, Stoke Poges areas, his theme is to bid for safety on the way to school and is specifically bidding for widening footpaths towards St Nicolas' school. The poor weather has meant that we are behind in terms of fixing the potholes in Marsh Lane, Cliveden Road, Burlington Road, Berry Hill. We also have a super sucker to clear the gulleys in the roads. He was going to look at all the roads with technicians and put forward plans to make repairs. Please come forward with any other requests. He is aware of Station Road and is hoping to squeeze this in very soon. Within the last two years, he has got more roads repaired than any other councilor before, so not too unhappy with progress. The more emails he

has, the more power he has to get things repaired, so over communication is encouraged.

7.3 Yellow lines on Institute Road: 7 emails received. Taplow is surprised but Burnham delighted. When elected in 2011, the WI requested that the council sorts out the traffic and the parking on Institute Road. A previous bid for money due to the station expansion failed, so when this came on to the Parish agenda, he had requested £6000 to get the yellow lines painted. Open forum at the Taplow Parish Council meeting suggested three options and the overwhelming view was to paint the yellow lines, hence the decision for this temporary order during which time we can have a 6 month consultation. If this is, therefore, not working, they can be removed at any time. There is a pending application for new houses being built there, which would need to make provision for parking.

Mrs. Sally Sandy asked whether it was allowed to have yellow lines inside a Green Belt especially as it is being requested by Burnham, who are outside of the Green Belt. Cllr Dhillon said he was happy to take suggestions, as this is only a temporary order for 6 months. He suggested that if you live in the middle of Taplow then you do not need to take your car to the station. This was not met with a favourable reaction from the audience as it was not realistic to walk late at night from the station especially with heavy shopping/bags or for ladies to do so in the dark.

Nigel Smales robustly accused Cllr. Dhillon of being out of touch suggesting that people in Taplow should walk to the station adding he was clearly not a person who commutes to London. Heather Fenn suggested that Mill Lane should not be considered for yellow lines as there are already parking problems there for the people who work in the existing businesses, and these will increase with the eventual development of the site with housing, restaurants etc.

8 Questions to Cllr Sandy

Barrie Peroni asked Cllr. Sandy to consider the length of Berry Hill from Stockwells to Berry Court as a 20mph zone? Cllr. Sandy responded that this has already been included together with Boundary Road and Hill Farm Road.

He also asked if there is a change to the speed limit, how will it be enforced? Cllr. Dhillon said that you can have village volunteers collect data and send a warning to the speed offenders. Heather Fenn asked for someone to review non-vehicular access to Mill Lane (ie cycle ways and footpaths).

9 To consider the merits of the various proposals received regarding the monies received from Land Securities.

A sum of £100,000 was negotiated from Land Securities in lieu of the impact of the new Bishop Centre development. The Council went to the community to ask for ideas on how to invest it. The Council received over 50 proposals and have narrowed it down to the following proposals selected for further consideration as they most closely fitted the policy statement:

9.1 Proposal 1: Old Priory Gardens – Roger Andrews

To evolve a community garden space to the south of Wellbank, which was formerly a site of lovely gardens and which has now disappeared from the community's view.

In the process of turning it into a community space, the entire community can be involved to create a wildlife and woodland space, to enjoy and walk dogs. He pointed to an urban woodland example in Tower Hamlets, London (8,500 children use it as an outdoor classroom) and it has 3000 volunteers and it has been turned into something that the community cherishes.

This highlights the opportunity for our own community. So far we have cleared some paths, done some planting and put in 30 bird boxes, half of which have been adopted. 60 people in Taplow have been involved in some form or another. The kids have been writing names on bird boxes and making them too.

There are some areas and old green houses that need to be made safe so the plan is to continue to open it up and put in a programme of tree planting. Over the years some trees have disappeared and we want to replace them to create and open, safe space for the community.

Current funding has come from personal donations including the Parish Council but we do need more funding to accelerate the process: Laying hedges, making safe rock structures. £20,000 is the target figure supplemented by fundraising as well. We are aware that we need specific proposals with itemized line items.

A Wellbank resident complained about two fires that have been lit and asked what could be done to supervise and prevent issues. Mr Andrews referred back to the Tower Hamlets example and this has eradicated these types of issues. A further question was raised about the fencing between the Wellbank and Old Priory Gardens. It was pointed out that the original lease required a chestnut paling fence at the bottom of the garden and South Bucks are liable for anything that had not been maintained during the lease.

Tony Meats mentioned that he supported the proposal and that he had, in the past, been asked by Tower Hamlets to review the cemetery project

9.2 Proposal 2: Taplow Village Green

A lot of building rubble surfaces in parts of the green and there is a case for doing something to improve the appearance of the green. Nigel Smales supplemented this data and mentioned that the land was acquired for £15,000 and the Parish Council has only spent £85 in raking it level.

Cllr Bamberg noted that no costings for the work had been obtained and it was not clear who would follow the project through. Cllr Sandy said that before releasing any funding for any project, the Council would request 3 quotes and review the best option.

Brenda Hickman enquired whether there were any water issues? Cllr Sandy said there would need to be a survey.

Barrie Peroni suggested that thought is given to lowering the level of the Western end of the green as it becomes a visual inhibitor for oncoming traffic.

9.3 Proposal 3: The War Memorial – Tony Meats

Mr Meats proposal would tighten up the end of the High Street to reduce the traffic and parking issues; create a paved area in front of the Church Gate and re-site the War Memorial; paint the church steeple to become a beacon for Taplow. Nigel Smales pointed out that this proposal did not have the support of the Hitcham and Taplow Society although Mr Lawrence did support it personally. Cllr Sandy pointed out that highway issues would need the approval of County.

9.4 Proposal 4: The Church Roof - Reverend Alan Dibden

The Church is used for the happiest times of our lives, for the saddest of times, for choirs, orchestras and schools. A proposal by the Church Warden who can't be with us this evening, is to ask for support in fixing the church roof. The church roof leaks. If you go around the church and look at the guttering, some of it is falling apart. It is a Grade 2 listed building and we have to replace like with like. The lower North roof is leaking and needs attention. The cost of the works are about £75,000 for the first stage and the church has £25,000 in hand but would like some help.

9.5 Proposal 5: The Mural – Barrie Peroni

We sit in a wonderful room painted by a special local artist who has captured the spirit of the community on the walls of the village hall. It is right that we should want to preserve the Horton Mural which was painted over 4 years using acrylic paint on raw plaster. Modern technology exists to be able to build an archive of images, which would represent everything that exists here. There is a company that specialises in all of this work and specialists who have contracts with most of the major museums to preserve unique works. It would include all of Sheila's original sketches and her planning.

This would preserve the heritage of the mural at a cost of £10,000 to £15,000. Future protection of the archived material would attract costs, which needs to be taken into consideration. Cllr Kennedy suggested insurance for damage to the mural.

9.6 Proposal 6 Heritage Matters – Nigel Smales for Mary Trevallion

Heritage Signage and Website and Footpaths Map should be considered together to establish an achievable 'heritage vision' for the Parish by defining a selection of projects, contributing towards the achievement of that vision. Heritage is "something transmitted from the past or handed down by tradition". Awareness of heritage enhances civic pride and appreciation.

We can increase awareness of Taplow's rich heritage in a modern way by:

- Preparing an updated map of the Parish footpaths.
- Installing heritage boards at key points to explain and illustrate local history.
- Developing a heritage website, perhaps with interactive smart-phone access.

9.6.1 Footpath Map: Issue- The footpath map is out-of-date. Parish boundaries have changed and some footpaths have been rerouted. Cliveden Hospital has gone and the Jubilee River has come. The proposal was to survey footpaths by Parishioners (some organisation required but minimal if any cost) and create a Historic Map of Taplow highlighting not only footpaths but key facts regarding sites and people of historic interest: cost perhaps £2,500 plus printing (unit cost dependent of size of print run).

The content would be designed by Mary Trevallion & Nigel Smales in consultation with others: no cost. The Parish used to look after footpaths at County expense; contractors would visit twice each year to clear and maintain footpaths. Now footpaths are becoming less attractive (and sometimes difficult) to walk because County contractors visit only once a year (if we're lucky) and often don't do a good job. The survey should identify specific instances of where attention is required.

9.6.2 Heritage Signage: Issue - Our heritage is a secret. Most people have no idea about the history of where they are. The proposal was to install heritage boards giving brief historical information (text, illustration, map or whatever) about the immediate location: cost up to £2,500 each depending upon design selected. Content designed by Mary Trevallion & Nigel Smales in consultation with others: no cost. Suggested locations: Amerden Bank, Skindle's (plus Taplow Riverside), Taplow Mill (and river history), Taeppa's Mound (plus Old Churchyard & Taplow Court), Village Green (including current church), Nobleman's Corner (for Cliveden, Dropmore & Hedsor) and Sheepcote, Hollybush & Abbot's Woods. For contiguity, all boards to be to a consistent design style across the Parish. Perhaps the Parish Council could ask Parishioners for suggestions where boards might be put: cost minimal. Use its influence to encourage developers to fund the costs of certain boards: no cost, potential for 'inward investment'. Set a budget and delegate prioritisation and design.

9.6.3 Heritage Website: The proposal is to design an online facility to enable upload of contributions including copies of original documents. Provide printable information sheets on significant places and people. Provide written and perhaps oral reminiscences by local individuals. Offer interactive smart-phone access to enable people to learn the history of exactly where they are at that moment; this might include a written and/or verbal reminiscence, perhaps even an oral guide to a section of walk. Cost from £2,000 to £5,000, plus perhaps an additional £5,000 to 'go interactive'. Some 'pay back' might be generated by having hard copies of information available for sale at Heritage Days, at various social events or selected local retail outlets. This proposal is made without knowing if the new Parish Council website has the capability to be enhanced in this way.

9.7 Proposal 7: Neighbourhood Plan – Martin Maund

In order to protect the area of Taplow for now and the future, Martin is suggesting that Taplow needs a formal neighbourhood plan inside the planning framework. We have a great opportunity to get this done to prevent unwelcome developments.

Many councils now approve planning applications to avoid losing time and money through appeals. This gives the community less control over the development of their area, therefore an additional framework is required to protect the village and surrounding areas. Taplow is under threat and this is going to increase as Crossrail arrives in our area.

Bear in mind that Taplow is 97% green belt and we must have our own brown field policy. We are, therefore, vulnerable. There is an urgent need to protect heritage assets and traffic control policy but also to agree areas that could be developed.

It serves to protect the whole area and we must be clear what we wish to protect. The workload does not have to be too severe because we can use the Parish Plan. It has the support of the HTS and the EDRA members.

Costs envisaged would be approximately £10,000

Tony Meats asked who is going to prepare it? Martin and Cllr Sandy said that an external consultant plus a local committee would be involved.

Euan Felton made the point that the Parish Council has to be responsible for it.

10 Any Other business

There was none

This concludes the Minutes