

TAPLOW PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF TAPLOW PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 29th MAY 2018 AT 8.00 P.M. IN THE READING ROOM, TAPLOW VILLAGE HALL, HIGH STREET, TAPLOW SL6 0EX

Present

Cllr. Jamie Barnard (Chairman) Cllr. Roger Worthington
Cllr. Toby Greeves Cllr. Louise Symons
Cllr. Gerry O’Riordan Cllr. Karen Walsh
Cllr. Spencer Norton
Mrs. K H Holder – clerk- and eleven members of the public.
The Chairman declared the meeting open at 8.00pm.

1 Apologies for absence

Cllr. Val Pridmore, Cllr. Claire Price, Cllr. Yannick Le Touze and Cllr. George Sandy.

2 Report from Thames Valley Police

Police Sergeant Trevor Walker, the local Neighbourhood officer, reported that burglaries had fallen slightly since last year but there had been an increase in thefts of power tools from sheds. They had mounted a large scale anti-theft operation at the local car boot sale but there had been no arrests made following this. Theft from vehicles was a major problem especially in the Jubilee River area – they were aware of increased anti-social behaviour in River Road and would patrol more frequently. Cllr. O’Riordan was concerned about very loud engine noise from vehicles travelling along Marsh Lane. He was encouraged to collect evidence to be passed on to the traffic police. Travellers were on the move locally and an attempt to move onto land in Boundary Road was recently prevented by police. Two events were coming up – the Rural Crime initiative and the Community Speedwatch initiative. He also promoted the virtual community forum planned for 14th June.

3 Report from Parish Council

3.1 Report from the Chairman

3.1 The Chairman ran through facts about the parish with reference to the parish boundary map. He said most of the parish was very rural and the last bastion of the Green Belt. He referred to the two conservation areas. He noted that the precept (and therefore the tax paid locally to the parish council) for this year was still the lowest by a substantial amount amongst parishes in South Bucks. He explained councillors were unpaid volunteers and all residents were welcome at the monthly meetings. He explained the responsibilities of the Council ranging from running the Village Hall, Barn and Green and the Old Priory Gardens, a large number of lampposts and street furniture as well as consulting on planning matters and running two funds – the Legacy Fund and the Brooking Fund and being concerned with all aspects of public life.

3.2 He said 2017-18 had been a positive year with improvements to Station Road footpath and new bins installed; the parish gates had all been repainted and flowers planted in the stone planters on the Green. In addition the trees on Council managed land had all been surveyed and work done as necessary. Pressure was being maintained on Berkeley Homes to ensure there was no over-development of Mill Lane.

3.3 It was however disappointing to note:-

- * BCC were pushing ahead with the A4 cycle path despite strong opposition by the Council,
- * the wall collapse in Rectory Road and the state of other walls in the Parish,
- * the decision by network rail to not restore the old bridge at Taplow Station. They were rebuilding a new bridge with full lift access,
- * concerns for the future of parking at the station and
- * the issues of falling numbers in the playgroup.

3.4 He was looking forward to the combined village fete which was to be held on the Green for the first time this year. In the summer the Village Hall kitchen would be refurbished and there were plans to give the Perkins Room a face lift with new oak windows to match the fire door. Plans were also progressing to make the barn into more of an amenity and ideas were welcome.

3.4 Finally he wished to recognise the contribution of five people:-

- * **Heather Fenn** who had stepped down from the HTS after 20 years – three as chairman- and who had worked hard to restore Mill Lane from blight.
- * **Joy Marshall** who had spent 21 years as a parish councillor and continued to be a champion of footpaths and the Riverside Conservation Area.
- * **Tony Harding** who had lived in the area since 1966 and deserved recognition for his efforts – most recently volunteering in the Old Priory Gardens.
- * **Olive Straw** who had been the Council's bookings manager and assistant clerk for over 15 years but had recently retired. She had been an outstanding member of staff and would be missed.
- * **Cllr. Roger Worthington** whose efforts looking after the Council's responses on planning matters was worthy of applaud.

3.2 Report from The Finance Chairman

Cllr. Claire Price had submitted a written report which the Chairman read out in her absence. She said for the period to 31 March 2018:

3.2.1 Precept income was increased by 29%, which was partly attributed to population growth in the parish, and partly due to a considered increase by the Council to support works needed in the village, including much needed repairs to the Village Hall and the Barn on the Village Green. Other income increased through a contribution to the repair on the barn roof on the village green from Mr. and Mrs. Smith who share the barn with the parish, and also through a large rebate on water rates, which we had been overpaying.

3.2.2 There were no other significant income or expenses for the year. Expenses in the accounts remained in line with prior year (although in reality were reduced by the water rates rebate, which netted off against the increased expenditure on the Barn roof).

3.2.3 Planned works for 2018 include a kitchen upgrade in the Village Hall and replacement oak windows in the Perkins Room. Works to the Village Hall have been scheduled over the Summer holidays and will be funded out of reserves accumulated at the end of the financial year. We are considering other refurbishments to the hall, and also improving signage in the village. We have also increased our village green maintenance expenditure to include providing flowers in the planters year-round.

3.2.4 We do have reserves remaining from the Land Securities Fund, so we welcome ideas from the public on ideas on how we could use these funds or other reserves for the benefit of the village (subject to specific restrictions).

3.3 Report from the Planning Committee Chairman

Cllr. Worthington reported that:-

3.3.1 Overview

Taplow is a modest parish that is mostly Green Belt. It has never-the-less undergone significant housing growth in recent years with a continued high level of planning related activity this year. There have been some 138 applications affecting the Parish. Many are modest house extensions and tree pruning but we have raised some twenty objection or comments. All of our submissions can be found on the parish web site.

There are indications that SBDC Planning department is struggling. Fairly mundane applications such as one for a detached garage made in January are still outstanding, along with other more critical ones. Also there are distinct failures of enforcement. The merger of SBDC and Chiltern departments will assist with the problem but this shortage of appropriate staff and funding is frustrating and is one of the reasons behind the push for Unitary Authorities.

The new Local Plan for the combined SouthBucks/Chiltern districts is long delayed, again reflecting resourcing problems. This is becoming a serious issue as the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan effectively gives developers the upper hand under the guidance of the NPPF.

At parish level we ran into our own resourcing problems with progressing the Neighbourhood Plan after the successful completion of the initial questionnaire. We thought then we could await the publishing of the Local Plan before proceeding but the delays to this mean that we are re-assessing what to do.

3.3.2 Specific matters

Mill Lane

The overall site development has run very well. Many houses are now occupied and residents are very happy. The show apartment on the Mill site is now open and the footbridge to Maidenhead installed although not yet open.

The Old Boathouse offices site obtained planning approval for conversion to residential but the subsequent application to build thirteen dwellings has been withdrawn and an application from Berkeley Homes to build a boathouse/apartment was refused.

Some outstanding planning matters remain though that cause us concern. It was to be expected that as development proceeded some matters might need adjustment and this has happened. We are disappointed that despite requests from us and our district councillors, these subsequent applications have been submitted serially and not dealt with as a coherent group to assess their overall site impact. Approval was given to move the office block southwards on the site and an application has been made to build a pub on the space so created and another one made to convert the agreed rebuild of Dunloe Lodge to be nine apartments. We have commented that we have been generally in favour of the pub development but have objected that the retention of the office block and the growth of Dunloe Lodge is overdevelopment of the site.

Institute Road

The entire development is now complete – both the apartment blocks and the Rural Exception site at the Burnham end of the road. All fully occupied less a last few apartments. We worked closely with the housing authorities to identify Taplow residents with first claims to this accommodation.

Taplow Station

The footbridge saga has run across the year but has now reached resolution. The old footbridge was deemed unrepairable and has been donated to Gloucester and Warwickshire Railway for installation at Cheltenham Racecourse station. A planning application is now in for the new footbridge which will have lifts and extend to platform one, an improvement from the original intention to service only three and four. We successfully objected to an application to fell some TPO protected trees.

Removal from the Green Belt

The emerging Local Plan has identified the land immediately to the south of the station for removal from the Green Belt and zoning for office use. An applications is already in to build a care home on part of this site. We have written to SBDC to point out that station parking is overflowing and causing problems on adjacent roads and that they should make provision on this site for expanding parking before opening up unfettered commercial development. To date they have completely failed to respond, which we consider unacceptable. We are escalating the problem within the council but our experience suggests that we will be ignored.

3.3.3 A4 Cycleway

In the autumn the proposal for a cycleway along the A4 returned essentially unchanged with all objections ignored. Very strong protests by us and other local bodies then forced the acceptance of changes, most notably the removal of the Berry Hill turning restrictions and the addition of danger signage at the railway bridge. Regrettably, BCC councillors refused to meet with us to discuss the whole project, despite representations from our own district and BCC councillors and our MP Dominic Grieve.

3.3.4 Other Outstanding Objections

Cliveden Stud

The application for reclassification of agricultural dwellings is seen as a precursor to larger scale development. Decision is outstanding since December.

Challens Chicks, Marsh Lane

Outstanding since January. Application for residential presence on a chicken farm.

3.3.5 Other matters

We are saddened by the decision to permit the demolition of the iconic Silchester Manor on the Bath Road over our objections after permission has been refused to previous applications. We expect the whole of the Edwardian character of this stretch of road to disappear over the next few years.

An application for two houses on an Ellington Gardens site has been withdrawn. This followed permission being granted last year on appeal for a single dwelling.

We have made comments on the application across the Maidenhead Bridge for conversion of the Thames Riviera Hotel to residential use.

We commented on the Local Plan for Wycombe district as its housing plans will clearly generate more southbound traffic into Taplow.

4 Report from County Councilor Dev Dhillon

4.1 County Cllr. Dhillon reported that the main issues for the County Council were again financial. The County Council had a budget of £600million mostly taken up with school services. They used to get 34% of their budget from the government but this had been cut repeatedly and this year was almost halved from last year and by 2020 they were required to be self-sufficient. In 2021 they would be repaying a levy to the government to help support weaker councils. They receive less for adult social care than other councils. The adults being cared for rose from 9,000 last year to 11,500 this year and the population will grow by 8% over the next 3 years. 13,600 children and adults are transported by BCC every day. They have had a lot of success prosecuting fly tipping.

4.2 There were 33,000km of highways and it is difficult to keep going on a small budget. He hoped to get Hitcham Road resurfaced and was trying to get a footpath put in under the railway bridge at Institute Road by applying for LAF funding. Parking issues in the area around the station would have to be reviewed when cross rail comes in but he was having yellow lines put in in Hitcham Road.

4.3 The grass cut on the Bath Road had been for the royal wedding and he would be pushing for an earlier cut generally next year.

4.4 The dangerous wall in Stockwells was being pursued and the Local Area Technician had issued a notice to the owners.

4.5 A decision was still outstanding regarding unitary authorities but if there was just one he believed that a minimum saving of £18million was likely and could be used to improve the highways.

4.6 Cllr. Worthington said he had had no response from SBDC regarding station parking and that if land adjacent to the station was allowed to be developed there would be nowhere available in future to expand parking.

4.7 The Chairman asked whether steps were in hand to resolve the problems with the spring in Rectory Road. Cllr Dhillon said he had applied for this to be undertaken with capital grant monies and was awaiting a response.

4.8 Zoe Hatch asked if yellow lines were being considered for Approach Road . Cllr. Dhillon confirmed it would be taken into account once the situation was reviewed once Crossrail had come in.

4.9 Cllr. Symons asked if Cllr. Dhillon could put any pressure on BCC to clean the drains in Approach Road and Rectory Road.

5 Report from District Councillor Matt Bezzant

Matthew Bezzant reported on the status of the unitary authority consultation and the delay to the Local Plan. He was aware that the merger of Chiltern and South Bucks Planning departments had resulted in some teething problems and encouraged residents to write to him if they wanted him to investigate any problems. He also commented on the new footbridge connecting Maidenhead and Taplow at Boulters Lock which was unlikely to come into use until next year.

The meeting ended at 9.10pm.