

OLVESTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held at Olveston Parish Hall, Tockington, on Thursday 28th April 2011 at 7.30 p.m.

Present	Mrs J Lyons (Chairman)	Mr A Clarke	Mr A Cogram	Ms V Hudspeth
	Mr J Hughes	Mrs I Reid	Mr J Spratt	Mr A Heming.
	Mr M Riddle (District Councillor)		12 Parishioners	

Apologies for absence Mrs J Webb

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked them for attending. She also thanked Mr Cogram, who had again brought his computer to display the agenda, with some views of the Parish.

Police report

Kelly Dimery sent her apologies and PC Roger Hope is away on holiday this week. However we have monthly reports in the Meeting Point now, as well as monthly surgeries at Olveston Stores.

Minutes of the last Annual Parish Assembly

The minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Thursday 29th April 2010 were circulated, Mr Heming proposed that they should be signed by the Chairman as a correct record, seconded by Mr Hughes, all in favour.

No Matters were arising from the minutes

Chairman's report

A warm welcome was extended to everyone attending the Parish Council's Annual Parish Assembly, and especially to the outgoing Parish clerk Mrs Valerie Tutin who has had to reluctantly resign after twelve years, due to failing eyesight. During that time she has worked tirelessly to make sure the council's business was accurately recorded, letters written and problems sorted. She has a genuine interest in the Parish and its parishioners, always available to give advice or answer parishioners' complaints, and has been a pleasure to work with. The members of the council wish Valerie a very happy retirement.

Throughout the year we have had a full complement of 9 Councillors, with an average meeting attendance of 8 Councillors, and our District Councillor Matthew Riddle attended 7 of the meetings. To cover the possible cost of Parish Council elections in May, the precept has been raised by £3,000 this year, and our clerk's salary is in line with the recommendations of ALCA.

The Parish Council is concerned about the potential closure of Thornbury Hospital. They understand that if the hospital is not financially viable the Primary Care Trust would not keep it open. After extensive discussion the council wondered if the site could be used for Extra Care Housing funded by South Gloucs Council and the Primary Care Trust. A related questionnaire was completed and returned to the Primary Care Trust and a letter expressing the council's views has been sent to the Primary Care Trust and the North Bristol Trust.

During the year we invited 4 speakers to our meetings. In September Mrs Jane Sunnucks updated the council on her initiative for a monthly 'Totally Locally' event on Tockington Green, which has proved very popular, although Mrs Sunnucks has found that the district council have very strict rules requiring a trading licence and insurance cover.

In November, Rebecca Anthony from South Gloucs Council and Richard Lloyd of the local conservation group advised the council about the progress of an up-to-date appraisal of the Parish conservation area. So far a local survey has received 29 responses. Rebecca and Richard have also assessed our conservation area and will prepare a draft appraisal highlighting the issues, make comments and suggest new areas that might be included in the scheme for further discussion.

Our third speaker was Owen Jenkins from South Gloucs Council who talked about the possible construction of a reed bed at the Harnhill quarry site, which would filter out sludge from gully water and rural road sweeper waste. It was envisaged that about eight lorries per week would use the site, saving the district council a considerable amount of money.

Most recently, Reverend Roly Bain came to update the Parish Council on the poor state of the Churches' Boundary wall and the general cost of maintaining the churchyard. The wall has been damaged over the years by large vehicles, and needs urgent attention. Unfortunately the Council has already set its precept for this year, and is actively looking to repair the war memorial steps that also need urgent attention, but will donate if possible. Roly also commented that the churchyard is filling with graves quicker than anticipated. It is the Parish Council's duty to look for a new burial site in the not too distant future.

The projects committee was re-introduced from May to December 2010 under the chairmanship of Val Hudspeth to work with the Pre-School and Parish Hall committees to make the best possible use of the £350,000 grant available to provide the Pre-School with completely separate premises at the Parish Hall. From the inception, the three committees have worked well together, and particular mention should be made of Ray Lambe who designed the building and helped with technical details; Roger Smart's work with South Gloucs Council preparing and presenting the business case and funding bid, as well as managing the project with Geoff Chappell (chairman of the Parish Hall Management Committee); Natasha Harrod and Katy Peacock who determined and remained focused on Pre-school's requirements; and lastly the members of the Project Committee Val Hudspeth (chairman), John Hughes and Tony Hemming. Thank you to all the people who gave their time and expertise generously to this project, sorting out all the legal problems as well as the many other issues – including the potential loss of funding last July (after the General Election). The builders (Sharemills) have provided a first rate building, and have been complimented on how friendly and helpful they have been and how tidy they have kept the site.

The Parish Council project committee's role included making the Parish Council holding trustees of the Parish Hall; creating a 99 year lease with a peppercorn rent for a small amount of Parish Council land required for the project; and, identifying/ managing Parish Council's particular concerns over Health & Safety issues; continued access to the Tockington play area while the works were being undertaken; renovation of the footpath along the side of the Parish Hall, and protecting the tarmac surfaces. A historical record was also required.

This whole project has been completed on time and within budget. It has not only provided Pre-School with their own excellent facilities, but given the Parish Hall a new kitchen and extra space; tidied up the outside with a tarmac cross-over, created a widened footpath, landscaped the garden (with help from Mrs Stella Chick of the allotment society), three new trees are to be planted, and the official opening on 14th May. In the near future the Parish Council also hope to install new play equipment.

The Planning Committee received 47 planning applications this year, the same number as last year, of which 8 were refused. Applications included extensions, barn conversions, agricultural buildings, repairs to two listed buildings, alterations to the conservatory at Old Down House and the Pre-School extension at the Parish Hall, as well as permission to deal with a number of listed trees in the conservation area. The Scouts at Woodhouse Down have also put in several applications to give them more facilities.

The Footpaths and the Environment committee would like to thank Peter Cabban for his work over the last few years looking after our footpaths. Rod Williams has kindly agreed to carry on this good work besides offering his team of 'litter pickers' who do a marvellous job removing rubbish from all the main roads coming into the villages. Help is still needed to tidy other areas of the parish particularly the closes, and there has also been some instances of fly tipping in Hardy Lane. The Parish Council would also like to thank Lindsay Saunders, South Gloucs footpath warden, for her help during the year.

Last May, Matthew Riddle advised that the footway from Old Down to Alveston would be started during the year. The first phase has now been completed to a high standard, although it is disappointing to be told that horse riders are now using this path. The footway from Haw Lane to Tockington has been cut back and recently most of the roads have been swept mechanically. It is also pleasing to report that South Gloucs Streetcar have resurfaced Ley Lane.

Due to the lack of parking space at Windmill House, many cars during the winter months have been parking on the grass verge. One bollard has been knocked down, one car damaged and it has left the verge in a very messy condition.

The Streetcare official from South Gloucs is hopeful that our historic street signs can be refurbished over the next few years. Our two red telephone boxes are to become redundant and suggestions include a possible book exchange for the Tockington box.

The Recreation and Leisure Committee carried out weekly safety checks at the three play areas with an annual audit by South Gloucs (cost £150). In addition to planned maintenance such as grass cutting, hedge trimming etc, it has been necessary to replace the safety surfaces under the play equipment (£6,500) and resurface the entrance road to the Pavilion (£3,100), as well as remove various trees on Old Down and one large tree in the Play area at Tockington on Health & Safety grounds, The council are grateful to Oldbury Power Station for a £500 grant, and to Matthew Riddle for helping with a £3,300 grant from South Gloucs Council for the play area safety surfaces.

It is pleasing that adults are now asking to use the play areas. The council have agreed to allow circuit training sessions two/ three times per week on the Vicarage Lane play area. Ladies netball is being played on the newly marked out court at Tockington, and a cycle group of up to 70 cyclists meet on Old Down for weekly time trials during the summer.

The Parish Council would like to thank the Chairmen and committees of our lease holders who provide so many facilities in the parish, including the Parish Hall, Sports and Social Club, Allotments Association, the Tennis and Football clubs, and the Scouts & Guides. We wish them all another successful year. Thanks also to our contractors, RGS, Dave Webb and Jim Hallett for all their work during the year. And last but not least the three parishioners who kindly look after the bus shelters.

In conclusion, the chairman thanked the members of the council for their continued support and excellent work throughout a particularly busy year. Also our District Councillor, Matthew Riddle, who has regularly attended Council meetings, advised wherever he can, and this year sourced funds which have helped with some of the projects.

Presentation by Mrs Hudspeth on the Pre-School Project

This presentation included photographs of how the Parish Hall has been transformed. Overall the project took 19 months to complete from September 2009, planning permission was granted on 29th May 2010, the doors opened to children on the 26th April and the official opening is to be on the 14th May 2011. The total cost was £345,966 and 100% funded by South Gloucs. The new building is a 'State-of-the-art' facility for the preschool and will also benefit the Tennis Club and other users.

Financial report

The proposed accounts for the year ended 31st March 2011 were handed out as paper copies and the clerk/responsible financial officer advised that the audited accounts for last year and the accounts book were available for inspection. Given the loss incurred in 2010/2011, a parishioner queried the amount of rent that the Sports & Social club and other lease holders paid and whether more should be charged. It was pointed out that the Lease holders provide a service to the Parish, and by charging more the Parish Council would be affecting the parishioners they represent.

Any other business

A parishioner asked about using the Red Telephone boxes as a visual amenity. He was particularly concerned that the Old Down box was not in the best of conditions, and that it would be vandalised and quickly become an eyesore. Mr Riddle informed the meeting that other councils had successfully adopted their red boxes. Oldbury use their box for newspaper collections, while Rockhampton & Hill have kept theirs as visual amenities, and they are often kept in better condition by the Parish Council than by BT. The meeting was informed that the Tockington box may be used for a book exchange scheme, but final decisions on both boxes need to be taken shortly.

Dissatisfaction was registered by a parishioner over the excessive parking, parking on the pavement, speeding and lighting along the Street. The parishioner suggested that Green Lane Garage was a major cause of the parking issues, and that as a consequence the Street often became a 'one-way' system. It was pointed out by the chairman that the parish was lucky to have such a vibrant village with the Shop, Butchers and Garage, and that the previous owner of the garage had the benefit of extra parking on the forecourt before it was built on. One aspect of the problem is that private car owners are not collecting their cars as quickly as they should, and another factor may be that an increasing number of people are lift sharing across the Severn Bridge and leaving cars at the bottom of Orchard Rise. Mr Riddle suggested that parking on the pavement is a police matter, and South Gloucs Council have plans to provide some sort of car parking at Tormarton, Aust & Falfield motorway junctions to help with lift sharing. Certainly these issues strengthen the case, although these plans may be several years away. Mr Riddle will also confirm that recent changes to Green Lane Garage meet planning requirements.

Mr Williams indicated that this month the 'litter pickers' may sweep the gutter along The Street rather than clearing outlying areas, and the Chairman declared that the Council and Parish are very grateful to the litter pickers for all their hard work. It is also hoped that South Gloucs Council have agreed to remove the chewing gum from the pavement immediately outside the stores.

There were no further questions. Mrs Reid thanked the Chairman for all her hard work, and the assembly showed their appreciation in the usual way. The Chairman introduced the speaker, Mr Eric Garrett, who gave an interesting talk on the history of the Parish Council, before being thanked and duly applauded.

The meeting was closed at 21:00.