

GORING PARISH COUNCIL

We aim to serve in the best interests of our community

Minutes of the Parish Annual Meeting, held on Monday 12 April 2010 at 7:30pm at Storton Lodge, Goring

Present

Cllr Alan Strong, Chairman of the meeting, and parish councillors , Kevin Bulmer, David Holt, Jill Jephson,, Peter Mortimer, Matt Platts, Ann Hart, Brad Bright, Anthony Ewen and Mathew Brown; also district councillors Ann Ducker and Pearl Slatter and county councillor Dave Sexon plus 33 other members of the public. By invitation: Linda Watson, of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council.

Peter Clegg, clerk

1 Chairman's welcome

In addition to welcoming all present, the chairman said that the council was in the process of setting up the procedure for co-opting another councillor to fill the current vacancy. He also confirmed that in May elections would take place for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the parish. The new parish clerk Peter Clegg was introduced and the meeting was advised that this was his first day in the role. Also The Chairman announced the appointment of a new planning clerk Clare Fox who replaces Maureen Whitcher. The Chairman thanked Maureen for her hard work over a number years.

2 Minutes of meeting held on 16th March 2009

The minutes, having been displayed on the parish council website, and distributed immediately before the meeting, were approved as presented.

3 Matters arising from those minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes

4 Annual report of the council

The chairman commended the annual report, which had been published in Goring Gap News in March 2010 and on the parish council's website.

Questions and concerns raised from the audience were:-

(a) Traffic flows through the village.

(b)The size of the Precept. The Chairman responded highlighting the reasons for the increase of the precept to 4.9%

(c) The Provision of Allotments. There were points raised for and against various sites being considered by the council. In particular the possible use of part of Sheepcot Recreation Ground was not welcomed by sports clubs. Other speakers believed there were restrictive covenants in place and that planning permission would be required.

The chairman assured the Meeting that no firm decision had been made in fact the process was in its infancy with the Council simply looking at the options available.

Once all the options had been considered the community would have the opportunity to have an input.

(d) Councillor Jephson congratulated District Councillor Ann Ducker on her MBE and the Meeting to showed its appreciation.

5 District councillor's report

District councillor, **Ann Ducker** presented her report ([Appendix A](#)), adding that she was doing so on behalf of herself and fellow councillor.

This year the council had introduced a new waste collection to 56,000 households which had been a huge challenge to both the council and residents. The work with the Contractors had started a year beforehand which proved to be worthwhile with Recycling rates rising from 48% to 70% resulting in real savings to the council in the form of recycling credits. Where problems arose the council undertook regular discussions with the residents concerned.

Nexus leisure has taken over the running of four leisure centres and this has enabled members to use any centre they choose. Improvements have also been carried out and the council plans to continue upgrading facilities throughout 2010. Sport is not just limited to the towns since through Go Active we have also been increasing opportunities in the rural areas.

By working with consultants our Economic Development of three market towns enabled us to obtain SEEDA grants which were matched by the council to help businesses in these towns. Also by working with key employers in the area such as Harwell, Culham, Milton Park, Oxfordshire County Council this has achieved inward investment. This is particularly important with the planned expansion for Didcot.

The two new shopping centres The Orchard Centre at Didcot and Cornerstone at Witney has shown what can be achieved even in a recession.

Security and peace of mind is working well through the PCSO's. CCTV is being reviewed as they are financed jointly by the town councils, police and SODC.

Housing development has been severely halted due to the recession however Housing Associations have completed developments in Wallingford with smaller in fills in the villages. We hope to see the start of building in Didcot, Fairmile and Chinnor shortly.

Choice based lettings have been a success giving those requiring homes the opportunity to bid and making the process more transparent.

The recession has reduced the number of planning applications. In an effort to help the market a new process was introduced which has seen some bad press. This is partly due to a misunderstanding of the process and does not mean the parish council's comments are not important. However it is important that the district council works closely with the parish council especially on the more contentious issues.

To help development going forward LDF (Local Development Framework) we have a vision through to 2026 which takes into account both national and regional plans. Needless to say this can be controversial.

Joint working with the Vale of Whitehorse has caused some job uncertainty but has resulted in savings of £1.5m. At the same time over the last 5 years council tax has increased by only 1% and some years no increase at all. The councillors want to continue offering a good service and they have frozen their allowances making them one of the lowest paid in the South East. Finally the Audit commission has scored SODC as one of the top councils in the country.

6 County councillor's Report-Dave Sexon (Appendix B)

Appointed in June 2009 I was excited and honoured to be serving Goring Division for the next four years. Having no previous parish or district council experience I knew it was not going to be easy.

Committees

After 40 years in education I thought Children's Service Scrutiny would be one area I could have an immediate impact. The purpose of the committee is to look at all matters relating to children and young people who includes youth services, education and schools and safe guarding the young. The committee will examine how well the cabinet and the local authority is performing so that it can influence any decisions that affect local people and policy making.

The scrutiny committee were successful in limiting the cuts in youth services so that the "Chill Out Fund" was not greatly reduced and funds that had been designated to improve some youth centres were also protected. In the current climate there can be no guarantees for the future since the council faces a difficult financial time.

The committee has also looked at other matters such as the impact of the dissolution of the Learning Skills council will have, monitoring youth carers, the Oxfordshire Anti-Bullying Strategy and Action Plan and measures being taken to reduce teenage pregnancies.

In the coming year I shall be vice-chairman of the committee.

Scrutiny Committee Working Group:

This group have been looking at the performance of Oxfordshire schools. Whilst our schools are slightly above the national average we are behind our neighbours. Councillors have visited a cross section of schools to see all levels of performance so that the authority can devise a plan to improve the overall performance. The first report will be at the end of April.

A sub-committee was also set up to appoint a new Director of Children's welfare.

Corporate Plan Working Group:

This committee has been appraising the council's Corporate Plan in particular the council's medium term focus for responding to challenges we face as a county.

One of the biggest challenges will be the number of people over 80 which is expected to double over the next 12-15 years and the impact on health and care for the elderly.

Champion for Older People:

One of my duties has been to make sure older peoples interests are represented in debates, discussions and look into matters that may affect them.

Council Tax

The council wish to keep this as low as possible. It has been set at 2.75% for the current year as against 3.75% for 2008/09. This has been achieved by careful planning and savings through improved efficiency yet maintaining a considerate approach.

Local Activities

The major issue facing the five parish councils of the Goring Division centred on the extreme weather at the beginning of the year and its consequences. The Goring Division being rural and no designated Priority One road other than A4074 suffered badly. Although I was not inundated with complaints because people made the best of a bad situation. However, I believe the B471 running through Woodcote and Crays Pond and then to Whitchurch should be upgraded to a Priority One due to the amount of traffic that use this route.

Potholes continue to be a major issue. The situation has not been helped with the council changing contractors from the beginning of April but it is hoped the new contractors will provide a better and quicker service.

Although I was involved with helping to improve the bus service between Wallingford and Goring real credit should go to representatives from South Stoke and Goring who worked tirelessly to make sure a successful conclusion was achieved.

Allowances

Although I am entitled to an allowance of £8849.76 p.a. you will be delighted to know that I did not claim any expenses for 2009/10.

Conclusion

Although this has been a demanding year and there has been much for me to take in I have still enjoyed the year. I welcome the opportunity to be involved locally but sometimes find it frustrating if I cannot attain a quick solution. There are 74 divisions each represented by their own councillor all wanting action now so patience is definitely a virtue.

I will however continue to do my best for the five parishes of the Goring Division.

7 Reports from local organisations:

David Watts representing Goring and Streatley Amenity Association did not have a formal report but stated the Association had enjoyed another good year and expected this coming year to be equally successful.

8 “Sustainable Communities” presented by Linda Watson of the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council:

The ORCC is the oldest RCC in the country celebrating its 90th birthday this year. Part of a national charity it commenced its life as a spin off from Oxford University bringing together people who care about rural life. We focus on “helping people to help themselves”. A good example of this was Goring’s “Village of the Year”

In the last 90 years Oxfordshire has changed yet some problems –housing, transport, availability of services –have never gone away.

New challenges are an aging population, rising fuel prices, climate change and increasingly centralised services. In the future the pool of volunteers who have done so much to contribute to village life may shrink as people work longer.

The ORCC will provide free advice on a wide range of rural issues and will keep you informed of the problems facing rural communities.

Our village hall adviser helps committees with everything from effective marketing ideas to energy saving, legal requirements to funding opportunities. The Village Shop Advisor provides help and support to rural shopkeepers. This includes advice on business developments, regular fact sheets and newsletters. Ways of obtaining grants to improve shop facilities. Where a village has lost its shop help is available explore options such as community-run shops. The Rural Housing Enablers work with parish councils and other local groups to promote affordable housing schemes in their villages. These are usually small schemes on “exception sites” where special rules mean the houses will always be given to people with a local connection. The support will cover survey needs, finding possible sites, linking with planning officers and generally trouble shoot when there are holds-up in the process.

In any community change is inevitable. Community led plans or Parish Plans give local people the chance to consider the future and the opportunity to say what kind of changes they want for their village and to decide what is most important to them. The ORCC will help local communities draw up an action plan, provide information, events to develop their skills aimed at including the whole community and having fun.

Transport is becoming a major issue for rural communities. The support starts with a survey of transport needs which will be useful to local authorities and bus companies enabling them to understand what is needed. Our Community Transport Adviser will help people set up and manage community transport schemes on how to get started, funding and complying with the legal requirements. Thought will also be given to those having disability.

Smaller market towns have suffered from competition from outside so ORCC will offer a "health check" which has helped the towns to become more attractive. We have seen this work successfully in Faringdon, Wallingford and Thame to name a few. All have attracted funds for major projects such as community buildings, street furniture, town centre wi-fi, and improved landscaping.

Oxfordshire is the most rural county in the South East and almost half its population lives in rural communities. Part of ORCC's job is to make sure that decision maker at local, regional and national level know about the ways in which policies and services will affect rural people. We do this by working in partnership with local authorities and other public bodies, and by responding to consultations when changes are planned.

In response to Linda Watson's request for an article to be entered in the ORCC's 90th birthday's edition it was agreed that members of "Goring Village of the Year" and Goring and Streatley amenity association would prepare a suitable article.

10 **The Chairman thanked Linda Watson, and there being no further business, declared the meeting closed at 8.45 pm.**