

West Hagbourne *Parish Meeting* *reports for 2005-2006*

Chair 's report for the Annual Parish Meeting

This month brings us to the end of our 3rd year as elected Councillors for the Parish West Hagbourne. We haven't needed to use any of our new powers to take action against litterers or people who daub graffiti or those that illegally flypost, nor have we found the need to use "dog control orders. Little has changed in the Parish this past year which is quite comforting.

Once again we have been given a range of challenges to deal with, from simply keeping up with the ever growing bureaucracy of government to the complex re-submission of the planning application for the development of Didcot Great West Park. This report sets out what we have done during the past year, and includes reports from

- The Parish Council
- The Village Association
- South Oxfordshire District Council – Cllr Patrick Greene
- Oxfordshire County Council – Cllr Patrick Greene
- William Tyrrell Trust
- Parish Plan Steering Group
- Village History Group

These reports are being presented to the Annual Parish Meeting which is an open meeting for all residents of the Parish to attend. Whilst it is a statutory meeting that has to be held once a year, it is intended to provide an opportunity for us to tell you what the Parish Council has done in the past year, to give you a series of updates that affect the whole community and to give you the opportunity to raise questions and get feedback on the actions of your representatives at Parish, District and County levels.

Each year since our election Councillors update our list of aims and objectives which are formulated in response to feedback from parishioners and external demands. An update on these issues is available for new items to be added.

At the last meeting of the Parish Council in May, we reported on how we had spent the precept, (part of the Council Tax which is given to the Parish to spend). This covers all the maintenance in the Parish, the salary for the clerk, grass-cutting and other expenditures such as the newsletter and village planting. If anyone wishes to see the full accounts, please contact the clerk.

As in previous years we have continued to build improved lines of communication between stakeholders, allied organisations, neighbouring councils and campaigners, so that West Hagbourne becomes more visible in the community as a whole. We have also formed closer alliances with neighbouring parishes, relevant agencies, district and county councils and our MP to help in addressing threats such as the Didcot West development, infrastructure planning and traffic issues. We have provided and encouraged the web site which is growing - www.westhagbourne.org

As in previous years we have continued to lobby to emphasise the inadequacies of the road and transport infrastructure in and around Didcot, and repeatedly pointed out that if the town continues to grow, the impact on this and other villages is significant.

As reported last year, South Oxfordshire District Council and Didcot Town Council seem to have acknowledged that the lack of infrastructure must be remedied, before the expansion can continue, although we feel sure that expansion will inevitably continue in some form.

We recently joined a mass objection to the proposed timetable changes put forward by GWR that would have meant cuts in the number of stopping trains at Didcot.

We have continued our village maintenance

*May 20th
2006*

Tyrrell Trust

Parish Plan

SODC report

OCC report

Village History

Annual Parish
Meeting 2006

Parish Council report continued

programme, and with the financial assistance of the History Group the Map Board has been replaced. Tree planting has been ongoing and we now have a plan in place to pursue further planting along the parish boundary. We will continue to accept all offers of 'free' trees and saplings which are regularly offered to the Parish.

As in previous years we will continue the annual traffic measurement and will compare and report the change(s) against previous year's results.

The SODC Conservation Team completed their 'Character Study' of the village and adopted an extension to the Conservation Area which will be featured in our Parish Plan. This extension will help to protect the village for future generations.

The Parish Plan is almost complete now, some small proposals have been implemented, like the personal column in the newsletter, and the French conversation group. More will continue to be done, and reported in the newsletter.

The memorial tree planting scheme has commenced with trees about to be planted on the parish boundary in memory of Mike Wilson, Jeff Higgins and Betty Gordon.

During the year, in answer to our continually expressed concerns regarding traffic volume and speed through the village the Highways Department proposed an experiment which after debate we decided to accept. This is an evidence-based experiment which in essence should achieve a reduction of the perceived 'acceptable driving speed' within the 30mph zone, and we await the results of the second stage of measurement which will be done after implementation.

We are still in discussions with the brewery over the plot of land opposite the Horse & Harrow (the old Toll House Garden) It had been hoped to have cleared the land to grass, and then maintain it, this has taken longer than anticipated.

This year we have dealt with numerous planning applications for extensions and minor works, all within the allocated period of time allowed us by South Oxfordshire District Council. The Parish Council are consulted on planning, but final decisions are actually made by SODC.

Again I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank my fellow Councillors for sharing the responsibility of taking part in other Committees.

Thanks go to our new Parish Clerk Roger Sweet who has continued to rationalise the ever-growing postbag, kept up with the request for planning responses and dealt with the budget for next year.

As usual, our annual thanks must also go to Tracey Anderson for her work printing the newsletter, John Baile who with Roger has been responsible for the website and to Mary Ann LeMay for the planter by the pond.

Thank you to everyone who came along to the village tidy up, and also to those of you who take the time to pick up litter as you walk the footpaths through the Parish.

As so few Parishioners attend our regular Parish Council meetings I have to take it that in essence you are all happy with most of what we do. However we continue to set aside the first half hour of the meeting to discuss anything relevant or important that needs to be dealt with. It gives you the chance to see your Council in action, and whilst we appreciate your support we also need to know that we are representing you in the way that you want us to.

Do please tell us if there is anything that bothers you, or that you would like us to deal with. You don't have to attend a meeting to do this, you can always email the clerk or any of the councillors, or just drop us a note. We will make the effort to try and react to anything you raise.

Phil Taylor - Chair May 15th 2006

William Tyrrell Trust

The Trustees met twice during 2005-06.

As the Trust's income is very small, this severely limits the size of grants that can be awarded. Current Trustees are committed to taking all active steps possible to optimise the Trust's income to increase the Trust's ability to offer support to villagers for worthwhile projects.

Tenancy

The Trustees continue to work towards updating the terms and conditions of the tenancy to bring it into line with current legislation. Particular thanks go to Mike Butler for the protracted negotiations he continues to undertake toward getting a tenancy agreement in place.

Allotments

Again during this year there have been no applications for allotment land. As there has been no uptake of allotments over the past 5 years the Trustees consider it appropriate to allow the tenant to take over the allotment land, subject to written agreement and rent review.

Dispersment of Charity funds

During 2005/06, a grant was awarded to Hannah Wing to help with her trip to Beijing to learn Mandarin.

We have agreed two awards for the coming year.

The Trust continues to offer support to young people and others in the village for worthwhile projects.

Accounts for 2005/06

The annual Charity Commission returns were made in September 2005.

The Trustees are grateful once more to Bridget Pickup for preparing the accounts for the year which are available for inspection. Thanks go to Ian Thompson for auditing the accounts.

Website

This year there has been a comprehensive update of the information about the Trust on the West Hagbourne website.

Mike Butler Marion Judd Bridget Pickup

Village History Group

Village Map and Board

The History Group has replaced the old village map with a new version. This includes hand written information about the history of the village and is illustrated with hand-drawn family shields representing the old manorial families of West Hagbourne. As well as providing information about the village for visitors, the new map contributes to the recent improvements to the appearance of the area around the war memorial. It seems to have been well received by villagers.

The Group is now working on an electronic version of the map so that it can be easily updated when there are changes in the village.

The History Group has also contributed £445 towards the purchase of the new board to house the map.

Village Website

The History Group has contributed to the development of the new village website with it's own dedicated pages. As well as information about the Group and its various projects, there is a potted history of the village: a summary of the contents of its publication Windsor Hakeborne: the Story of West Hagbourne, together with a review and an order form: a section debunking some local myths an explanation of the village name and West Hagbourne's entry in the Domesday Book. Most of these pages are illustrated. More pages are planned for the future.

Archives and Photo Albums

The Group continues to maintain an historical archive, and is presently creating photo albums of village events.

Medieval Chapel

The site of the medieval chapel on land behind Chapel Hayes was mapped by the Berkshire Archaeology Research Group (BARG) in September 2004. BARG had intended to return last September to carry out a second Resistivity Survey close to the first site but owing to problems with their equipment, this was not possible. It is hoped that the survey will go ahead at some time in the future.

Expansion of Didcot

The Group was concerned about the expansion of Didcot and it was suggested that a fighting group be set up, perhaps with other villages to press for a by-pass for the village. This was put forward to the Parish Council.

Village Character Study and Conservation Area

The SODC asked the Group to prepare an introduction to their Village Character Study and to comment on the proposed extension of the Conservation Area to include Grove Manor Farm. It was decided to ask for a further extension to include the Horse and Harrow . The Group understands that this has been agreed and now awaits written confirmation.

The Parish Plan

The History Group was represented at the two Parish Plan Drop - In sessions held in October.

Research

The History Group continues to carry out research . The present project concerns a quarrel in the 16th Century between the Dunch and Windsor families and villagers over the enclosure of Hagbourne Down. A bottle has been found which proves that ginger beer was made in the village at the end of the 19th century and that needs further exploration.

New Members and Visitors

The Group has welcomed three new members during the year. The Group is open to anyone interested in history. Visitors from America whose ancestors once lived in the village have been entertained and shown the village and church. The Group continues to get mail from overseas and more locally. There is a slow steady sale of books

Accounts

These are being audited and will be available for inspection

AGM

Mary Wiley(Chair) and Sheila Taylor (secretary) will be standing down from office at the AGM which will be held at Silva Felix at **8pm Monday July 3rd 2006**

Parish Plan Steering Group

The Parish plan made considerable progress over the past year. Villagers were invited to see the outcome of the Parish Survey at **drop-in meetings** in Upton and East Hagbourne Village Halls. They were also asked to sign up for those projects that they were most keen to see taken forward.. The greatest support was expressed for a Transport and Traffic lobby group and it is planned to arrange their first meeting in April. Interest was expressed in having some day time social events and a successful coffee morning was organised by Val Walton and Hazel Rack. It is hoped that this will prompt further events. A Village **French conversation group** that meets once a month was also established following the drop in meetings. Do you have an interest you would like to share? It is not too late to include this in the plan.

Spring cleaning tends to generate lots of 'rubbish' so instead of adding this to landfill, this year the village will explore a **recycling** project.

Paul Ryman suggested a village **garage sale** and it is hoped that this will take place in May. If we can offer several 'garages' and publicise the event, it is hoped that we will find a bigger market for the things people want to sell. There will

be no charge for villagers who want to participate.

Another popular idea, which had been taken forward by Marion Judd was to establish a **Memorial Grove** where villagers could plant trees to mark the death of a relative or friend. Marion has been seeking suitable sites and a suggestion which will be pursued is to plant trees around the Parish Boundary. These trees would be marked on a master plan, perhaps displayed in the village, and would provide some formal expression of the historic extent of the parish, hopefully resisting further erosion.

Other projects under way include the preparation of a **'Welcome Pack'** for new villagers, which will be managed by Andrea Mitchell and Mary Ann Butler, and the establishment of a 'personal' column in the village newsletter (see the April edition for details).

The Steering Group will be working on producing a written plan in the next few weeks and this will be circulated to all households for comments. They will then arrange a meeting to formally adopt the plan and to establish how progress to delivery will be monitored. Your help continues to be essential to the success of any plan adopted.

Sue Totterdell April 2006

Oxfordshire County Council report

Following the County Council Elections held on 5th May 2005 the Conservatives hold 43 seats out of a Council made up of 74 Councillors.

The Conservatives have a majority of 12 and it the first time for some 20 years that the Council is not hung!

The Conservatives voted for Keith Mitchell to be the Leader of the Council and formed a cabinet of ten members as follows: David Robertson - Deputy Leader of the Council and member for Transport, Jim Couchman – member for policy Coordination, Charles Shouler - member for Finance, John Howell – member for Change Management, Roger Belson – member for Sustainable Development, Louise Chapman – member for Children, Young People & Families, Michael Waine – member for Schools Improvement, Don Seale – member for Social and Community Services and Ray Jelf member for Community Safety.

General Comment

All Councils rely on the Government for around 70% of their funds

The Government has given the South East of England much lower sums of money than it had promised this year.

Oxfordshire County Council is committed to lower council tax rises after heavy rises across the Country in recent years. Hence the rise for 2006/07 being kept to the promised 4.375%.

The Cabinet has pledged to provide 'Value for Money', 'Real Choice' and 'Lower tax rises'.

The County Council provides around 80% of the services that local people receive.

These services include Fire & Rescue Service, Schools, Social Services, Roads maintenance and safety, Emergency Planning, Museums & Libraries, Trading Standards, The Registration Service, Waste Management and many others.

The Audit Commission has rated the Council as 'GOOD' despite the Oxfordshire is poorly funded along with other councils in the South East when compared with other northern parts of the country.

At the Council meeting of the 14th February'06, the Conservative group delivered its manifesto commitment by keeping the tax rise to 4.375% - the lowest rise of any County Council in the South East.

To achieve this result there were no cuts and a real growth of spending over the previous year of 2.1% over inflation. To achieve this service departments have had to find savings without cutting services by improving the way services are provided or cutting out waste.

More money has been found **for youth activities** and facilities in the county as well as an extra £150k being put into the Youth Service.

A £1 million emergency fund has been established in anticipation of the consequences of the government's abandonment of Oxfordshire's NHS, and another £1 million has been provide for 40 new beds as part of the Oxfordshire Care Home Strategy.

Until the government's pension funding has been sorted, the Council is holding £1.5 million in reserve. It is likely it will not be needed and £500K will be used to support community well being projects and will require matched funding from parish, town and district councils to give a £1 million spend and the other remaining funds will go towards outward facing e-government projects such as payment on-line and much needed repairs to Oxford City High Street.

An intensive and rigorous financial discipline has been imposed on the budget process and is backed up by long term changes in the way the Council works that will bring

Fundamental service reviews undertaken across the board, and a radical approach to back-office services, and a much stronger co-operate control of all that the Council undertakes.

Cllr Patrick Greene

Moreton Division –

Oxfordshire County Council – April 2006

SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT 2005/06

This has been a year where the council has focussed on what the public identified as important.

Crime

The installation of CCTV in all four towns with a mobile camera being available for use in hot spot areas in villages this year. We have helped finance eight PCSO's in partnership with Thames Valley Police and to actually find out the value for money the scrutiny committee will shortly be looking at the service the PCSO's deliver.

Housing

We have achieved affordable housing on 7 exception sites working with parish councils and housing associations. We have increased the percentage of affordable housing to 40% from 25% in our local plan. Didcot is expected to have 3,000 houses that are already agreed and a further 3,000 that is part of the new central Oxfordshire plan. The council continues to make £1m available for increasing the number of affordable homes. Homelessness has decreased to single figures that is a huge achievement both for the families and costs.

Planning

The planning development team have met their targets and therefore gained awards from the Government with a provisional figure of £354,485, the highest in Oxfordshire, which together with previous years awards, has enabled IT Improvements and the employment of new staff. Enforcement is now improving. Examples:

Total number of planning appeals from

2003/4 **121** 2005/6 (to date)/ **68**

Percentage (won by applicant)

2003/4 **27** 2005/6 (to date) **17**

Dismissed (councils decision upheld)

2003/4 **73** 2005/6 (to date) **83**

which is most encouraging for everyone.

Leisure

South Oxfordshire Leisure Ltd (SOLL) that has reduced the running costs year on year runs all the council's leisure centres. Having spent capital improvements to the centres this has increased usage. Henley is having £1.75m capital improvements this year. The Riverside pool at Crowmarsh had capital expenditure last year in partnership with Wallingford Town Council. Over £2m is given in grants for various organisations in the district and for the first time some of this grant money has been awarded to organisations running costs, because that is what they told us were their needs. The actual procedure for grants has been revised to focus more on the priorities of the council and this has meant some very good schemes have been implemented.

Recycling/green waste

We stopped the green plastic sacks going to land fill, we introduced eco paper sacks which have been partly successful but at a cost of about £13 per sack. Composting rate increased from 2% in 2004/5 to 3.05% to date in 2005/6. This is simply not enough to meet government targets from the beginning of June we will have wheelie bins to replace the sacks. They will cost £29 for an alternative weekly collection, to date there have been 2700 + enquiries. Until the contract is let we do not know if we are able to have various sized bins. This service will be kept under constant review.

Car Parks

Car park charges have not been increased.

Bus Passes and Tokens

From April the government has instructed us to issue free bus passes to residents over 60 years of age. We carried out an extensive consultation as we realised a difficult decision had to be taken regarding the tokens. We simply could not afford both, as we have at this stage no idea of the take up of bus pass. Tokens will only be issued to those residents over 70 years or disabled. We have increased the budget by £160,000 and will monitor the situation during the year.

Council Tax

We have been rigorous in examination of council expenditure and have kept the district councils portion of the council tax to NIL increase.

General

In the coming year we will work on town centre initiatives in partnership with other interested bodies.

We will be looking to have extra resources in youth initiative.

We are the first council to let a joint finance contract with the Vale of the White Horse Council that has made possible large monetary savings to both councils. There will be more back room services that we can do jointly again saving expense with no cut in services.

Continue to improve the service of green waste and general cleaner environment.

Lastly I hope you have noticed the improved state of the roundabouts that we have taken over from Oxfordshire County Council at no cost to the taxpayer, as local companies will sponsor them.

Cllr Patrick Greene

South Oxfordshire District Council

Hagbourne Ward

April 2006