

WEST HAGBOURNE

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2017

Report from Chairman of the Parish Council

1. In June 2016 there was a garden party to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday, with music, a barbecue and a buffet, in the garden of the Horse and Harrow. This was funded by the Parish Council, the Village Association, a grant from SODC and some private donations. I would like to thank all those who helped to organize the event.
2. In the course of the year the roundabout on the A417, at the bottom of Hagbourne Hill, was completed. A land swap deal was carried out so that the plot owned by the William Tyrell Charity remained the same size despite the County Council taking some of the original plot for the roundabout works. The charity also received a contribution of £1000 from the County Council.
3. Work on another roundabout on the A417, near the Kingswell, is well under way and eventually this will form the junction with the Harwell Link Road. It is hoped that this new link road will reduce some of the traffic passing through the village. Whether this will be significant will remain to be seen, as a considerable amount of traffic is still expected to and from the east side of Didcot.
4. The junction with the A34 at Chilton has now been made bi-directional and is a useful alternative route to and from the village.
5. New Local Plans are at the consultation stage with both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils. I have attended two events on this, both at Cornerstone. One was on 28 March where SODC gave a presentation to some representatives of parish councils. The other was on 5 April when SODC and Vale held a joint exhibition open to the public. At the SODC presentation it was made clear that there were no plans to expand Didcot southwards towards West Hagbourne. If you look through the various documents you will find maps that show plots unpleasantly close to West Hagbourne, but this is in the context of areas they considered. No such plots were adopted by SODC for development. The people from Vale at the exhibition said the same thing when I discussed this issue with them. There is a plot on one of Vale plans that comes across towards the north west of West

Hagbourne. That is marked “search area”. It is something they considered but rejected and they said that there were no plans to develop in that area.

6. The latest consultation document from SODC (March 2017) says that: “We propose to direct development to the larger villages to support the spatial strategy and will support those neighbourhood Development Plan groups who wish to promote development in the smaller villages. In addition, there are “other villages” which lie at the bottom of the settlement hierarchy, being hamlets or very small settlements with very limited or no services. Our strategy reflects the status of settlements in this assessment.
7. We are one of the smallest parishes in South Oxfordshire, and may qualify as an “other village”. Any development is likely to be very limited and recent planning applications for development that would extend housing in the village to the south, have been unsuccessful.
8. As mentioned at the APM in 2016, there were plans to provide “traffic mitigation” measures using funding under Section 106 from the Bloor Homes development on Park Road. During the year there have been some developments. Plans were proposed by Highways to deal with the stretch of Main Street to the west between the pond and York road, and the budget increased to £50,000. Then our hopes were dashed, as we were informed that there were doubts about whether the funds were available under Section 106. On 1 March 2017 we received the following email: “Unfortunately there is still some uncertainty over the funding. While there is clear acknowledgement that the initial intention to allocate funds to nearby villages (including the £50k proposed for West Hagbourne) remains, there are concerns that complex arrangements between several developers may mean that the funds will be required for compensation. I stress that this is not certain but we cannot commit while any doubt exists. We will investigate and get back to you as soon as we have clarification. I stress that none of this reflects a belief that the proposals are anything but essential”.
9. The Parish Council expressed some strong views about this development and on 24 April we received the following message: “I’m pleased to report that we now have confirmation of the funds so I’ll arrange for the works at the narrowing to be constructed”. We are expecting a site visit again but the contractor is on paternity leave until 22 May. The last plans involved a clear single track stretch with signs and road markings, as well as a “Virtual Pavement” between the pond and York Road so that wide farm vehicles could still travel down this stretch whilst there was a clear path for pedestrians.

It is hoped that accompanying signage will also deter drivers from crashing into the pond.

10. At the meeting of the Parish Council in March 2017, some villagers queried procedures for closing Main Street in the event of the road being flooded. Discussions with Highways have made it clear that the only people who could close a road that was flooded were the County Council or the emergency services. Highways can be contacted by phone or email to deal with a flooded road but they also suggested that the police could be contacted on 101.
11. There may be some progress this year as regards BT upgrading broadband in the village by bringing fibre to a new cabinet in West Hagbourne . At present the fibre stops at Upton. SODC planning authorities have been advised that BT will be erecting a new cabinet and so it is likely to happen in the next few months.
12. Once again the Village Association organised a successful dragon event in the village to celebrate St George's day and many thanks to the Association for organizing the event.
13. There was a village litter pick up on 8 April and I would like to thank those who participated.
14. As noted earlier, the William Tyrell Charity has received a contribution of £1,000 from the County Council and it is also receiving its annual rent from the tenant farmer – currently £220 per year. The trustees will be meeting again to discuss how funds are to be distributed. The principal requirement of the trustees is to use the funds to help the poor and the sick. Any suggestions as to how this aim could be achieved would be appreciated.
15. On 9 May I was one of a party of ten who visited the food waste recycling site near Wallingford. The process makes a slurry type of fertilizer and also produces methane gas which is used to power the generation of electricity. Where the food waste was delivered it was noticed that there were some black bags as well as the compostable bags that we are instructed to use. It turns out that the compostable bags do not break down in the process that they use (anaerobic digestion) and have to be removed by machinery along with other plastic bags. As far as the operators of the site are concerned there is no benefit in using compostable bags. I took this up with an SODC person who was also on the visit, and at present the guidance for householders is the same. The justification was that people could get the wrong impression and fail to remove food from packaging before putting it in the food waste bin. Oxford City, however, has delivered some householders with test food waste

bin liners (that do not dissolve at the bottom!). It remains to be seen what guidance we will get eventually, but I was told that currently in South Oxfordshire the waste removal men may still expect to see food waste in compostable bags and may refuse to take the food waste unless it is in those bags. I shall conduct some experiments.

Michael Butler

10 May 2017