

HERMITAGE PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly of Hermitage held on
Thursday 20 April 2006 at 8.00pm in the Village Hall**

Present: Mr N Pearson (Chair), Mr K Gover, Mrs P Knightley, Dr J Lawler, Mr H Overeynder, Mrs L Riordan (Clerk), Mr G Pask (District Councillor), Mr Q Webb (District Councillor) and 30 members of the public.

1. **Apologies:** Mrs J Pearce, Mrs K Willis.
2. **Opening Address** - Mr Pearson welcomed everyone to the meeting.
3. **Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Thursday 28 April 2005** were agreed and signed as a correct record.

4. Reports

The Chairman of the Parish Council – *Mr N Pearson*

District Councillors – *Cllr G Pask & Q Webb*

Hermitage & Curridge Youth Club – *Mrs D Forbes*

1st Hermitage Cubs – *written report from Mr J Pearce read by the Clerk to the Parish Council*

Hermitage School Governing Body – *written report from Mr J Watkinson read by the Chairman of the Parish Council*

Hermitage Pre-school Playgroup – *Mrs W Young*

5. **Village Hall Presentation** – *Dr J Lawler & Mr C Gilchrist*

6. **Parish Walk** – 2.00pm Monday 28th August 2006.

7. Villagers' Open Forum

To the District Councillors: *You said the graffiti removal scheme to be launched was free. I telephoned the Town Council (sic) for advice on removing graffiti at the village hall and after being passed via at least five departments was advised to go to B&Q!*

The scheme is a new scheme not yet in operation but when launched it will be free. It is very disturbing that were you passed around departments and this is against West Berkshire Council policy - this will be fed back. Please accept apologies as your experience is wholly unacceptable.

Of the £1.5m s106 cementation site developer contribution, is this proportionately in line with other developer contributions?

Sadly, Hermitage did not do very well out of the s106 negotiations undertaken back in the early days between the land agent and West Berkshire Council. Lessons have been learned which will benefit others but cannot change the outcome for Hermitage. West Berkshire Council has since appointed an officer specifically to negotiate s106 agreements.

Did the arena site attract s106 funding?

Yes it did for highways and education, but nothing that will directly benefit village facilities. A payment of £24k has been received by the Parish Council as compensation for a reduction in open space within the arena site. This will be used for recreational purposes in due course.

Trees are being felled in abundance at the cementation site, is this acceptable?

The arboricultural officer was called to the site on the Saturday that tree felling commenced. He was satisfied that this was in accordance with the planning consent.

Why was the employment/industrial area not included in the planning application?

This is a question for the developer! However, the land will not be developed until such time as plans are submitted to and approved by West Berkshire Council. It is conceivable that the developer may apply for more residential dwellings rather than industrial units, this, however, is speculation at this time.

Grass verges have been destroyed during the works to install the new gas main, will they be reinstated?

Once the works throughout the whole of the village are completed the contractor will be obliged to restore them.

And the roads?

The roads too should be reinstated to their previous condition including the painting of white lines where necessary. If not done to the satisfaction of West Berkshire Council, the highways team will undertake the works and charge the contractor.

Deacons Lane and Pond Lane were already noted as in poor condition, but there was little point pursuing improvement until after the gas works had been carried out

The need for a footway on the Yattendon Road is now urgent!

The works have been given a high priority by the Parish Council and West Berkshire Council.

Will there be a roundabout for the cementation site/Oare junction and will there be lighting?

Yes, there will be a roundabout and yes, there will be lighting as this is now a legal requirement.

Why are there no street names in Hermitage – Yattendon Road, High Street for example?

The roads are named by the Post Office and clearly identifiable as demonstrated by the electoral register. If there are no actual signs then this would be a matter for the West Berkshire Council department for Street naming and numbering.

8. Any Other Business and Close of Meeting

There being no further business the chairman closed the meeting at 9.15pm.

Lynne Riordan, Clerk, Hermitage Parish Council


19/4/07

Annual Parish Assembly 20th April 2006

Chairmans Report

Firstly you will have noticed a change in Chairman and some Councillors since the last Annual Parish Assembly. The details are all in your booklet but I will just introduce people so you can put a face to a name. I would also like to thank my fellow councillors for their support and hard work during the year.

I took over from Hans in May last year and he has provided me with considerable support since then. He has now decided to resign with effect from next month. Hans has been a very dedicated servant of this village and I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank him for the time and effort he has put in over the years. We will be formally be recognising Hans contribution at the next meeting.

Once again our meetings this last year have been dominated by discussions concerning the major developments in the village. With the Arena seating site development now well under way, focus has been on the site at the north end of the village known as Cementation.

The Parish Council met regularly last year with the developers to discuss their proposals for the site and ensure these were within the guidelines set out in the Village Design Statement. For example we objected to the massing effect that proposed 3 storey flats would have had and were able to ensure that they did not feature in the final application.

Planning Permission was granted in December for 209 dwellings and associated works including access, open space, amenity space and woodland. At the same time a Section 106 agreement was entered in to between the developers and WBC that agreed a sum of £1.5m would be paid to WBC and various obligations fulfilled in respect of the development. One of these obligations was to lay out an area of open space and transfer this to WBC in order that it can be maintained for recreational purposes. It is then intended that WBC would transfer on a section to the village for the provision of a new hall. John Lawler will expand on these plans a bit later.

The Parish Council are now concentrating on ensuring that the monies to be paid by the developers are put to full use in the village in order that services and facilities can be improved. In particular we are trying to ensure that some much needed recreational facilities feature on the site.

In June John Winstanley from the highways dept at WBC visited our meeting to discuss feedback from the B4009/Halcrow exhibition and consultation. Various traffic schemes for the village were proposed and these were prioritised in order of importance. The two schemes at the top of the list were a footpath along the Yattendon road up to Chapel Lane and safety schemes on Hampstead Norreys Road by the school. It appears that both of these schemes are now in the design and consultation stage and we should see work commencing this year.

The Parish Council continues to support local organisations and you will see from your agenda details of the grants provided.

Finally I would like to thank our 2 District Councillors for their support and contribution to the village. I will now hand over to them for their report.

Parish Council Meeting Report

Review of Cubs for the year 2005-2006.

1st Hermitage Cubs is currently running at 34 Cubs of a maximum 36 Cubs. The children predominantly live in the three Downland villages of Hermitage, Chieveley and Curridge, with a fairly even mix across the three villages.

Each year we get a lot of support from Chieveley and Hermitage Parish Councils to enable us to keep the refurbishment of the cub hut going and support in the purchase of cub equipment, without which Cubs wouldn't be able to run.

I would like to formally thank Hermitage Parish council for its ongoing support.

Over the last year this support has enabled the cubs to take part in the following events both for the enjoyment and development of the cubs but to also to assist in vital fund raising.

1. An overnight stay in the cub hut where the children cook their own supper and make their own breakfast.
2. Summer Camp at Rushalls farm at Stanford Dingley.
3. A Christmas Walk
4. Visit to the Jungle book pantomime at the watermill
4. The sponsored Carry of the Crafty Raft through the village of hermitage (1Mile) to be repaired by local volunteers.
5. Fireworks Evening and bonfire.
6. Quiz night
7. Sponsored Triathlon event

Proposed Events

Crafty Raft Race
Yorkshire Camp in the Summer

Treasurers Report – Cubs Financial Situation

Liz & Mark Foster have agreed to act as the new treasurers.
Mark has also agreed to become warranted to provide us with a much needed second qualified leader.

At present we have approximately £1,800.00 in the bank.

New Cubs and waiting list

We currently have a number of spaces for 8 – 11 year old (boys and girls) with 3 more spaces becoming available at the end of easter. So if any parents, relations or friends of children wishing to join cubs would like to join.

Please contact:

Jon Pearce - Chair 1st hermitage Cubs
01635 200597
jp_charnwood@hotmail.com

**Hermitage School Report to Hermitage Annual Parish Meeting
20 April 2006**

The last year has been another successful period for Hermitage School. Following the very good OFSTED inspection, our focus has been on continued improvement of standards in all aspects of the school, using the processes that we developed for the inspection. This has resulted in exceeding our academic targets for the second consecutive year. Consequently we are at the top end of the national tables in comparison to similar schools. We are also particularly pleased to be one of the first primary schools in the country to be granted the Challenge Award, with our work being used as examples for other schools; we are receiving payments for our lesson plans that are being published. The Challenge Award is nationally sponsored and seeks to develop the most able pupils. We have also received recognition with the Early Years kite mark which is awarded for high standards in the very important entry stages to children's education.

With all the developments in the village, the school has corresponding plans to further extend the school buildings to accommodate the influx of additional children. This will eventually allow us to have a class per year group and take the school numbers from the current 120 up to a capacity of 210 children. The plans for this extension, involving four new classrooms and a learning area, are currently being re-submitted for planning permission. The construction is programmed to start in November this year and finish in the summer holidays in 2007.

As part of this development we considered the possibility of the pre-school club re-locating into the school grounds and vacating the Village Hall, which they currently use. After full consideration, and consultation with West Berks LEA, the Governing Body concluded that this move is not in the best interests of the school and so pre-school will not be moving into the school grounds.

We continue to enjoy a high degree of support from the PTA, the village community, and the Army Barracks, all of which adds much value for the children and the school. It makes a strong contribution to the diversity of activities that are provided. We have enjoyed success in many aspects away from the classroom. For example we won second place at the West Berks inter-school indoor athletics championships against 24 other teams; this was the first time we had entered the event and reflects the high levels of fitness, enthusiasm and sporting ability that the children at Hermitage display. Our thanks go to all the local people who do a tremendous amount to support their local school. It is greatly appreciated.

Jon Watkinson MBE
Chair of Governors'
19 April 2006

Hermitage Pre-school Playgroup



The Village Hall
High Street
HERMITAGE
Thatcham
Berkshire RG18 9SS

Hermitage Preschool Playgroup provides preschool education to our local village children. The preschool operates daily giving the children from 2 ½ to school age their first taste of education whilst encouraging interactive play and development of social skills. We have expanded the sessions to provide a daily lunch club. The Dolphin club now runs two afternoons a week for the older children in the terms before they start school. In this session they have more demanding activities with a higher staff ratio and the popular activity based "PE" session.

The preschool has a deservedly excellent reputation with a long waiting list of children - to the extent that over the last year we have increased our sessions twice to extend the early years provisions in the village. We hope to be able to achieve further expansion over the coming years to accommodate more children as the village population increases.

Without your tremendous grant we would be unable to replace equipment and meet the ever-increasing challenges of the Early Years National Curriculum and Ofsted requirements.

Earlier this academic year we had a full combined educational standards and curriculum inspection by Ofsted when Donna Elms became the acting supervisor whilst Justine Rigby was on maternity leave. The report we received reflected the commitment of our excellent staff team, the dedicated volunteer committee who manage the pre-school and the supportive parents.

With your help we have been able to further increase the opportunities for outside play. Last year we held a charity auction to raise funds for a new secure shed for outside toys and with your grant we were able to purchase some exciting ride-on toys which accommodate more than one child. These increase gross motor skills and help with sharing and taking turns.

We have purchased mobile display board to replace the old, very heavy boards currently used to display the children's work and provide information to parents. We have also replaced some of the old carpet remnants used by the

children for play mats with new brightly colour educational rugs. Both of these purchases not only enhance the environment but also meet current H&S requirements.

The purchase of a digital camera to record the children's achievements and act as a source of visual stimulation for children with special needs has been a real bonus. It also helps with our record keeping which is a requirement under the Ofsted guidelines. We held various fundraising events over the year and have bought a new computer and printer with the money we raised to enable us to fully utilise this new facility.

Running the preschool to high standards requires both investments in facilities and equipment, but also in the staff. This past year with your help we were able to purchase several new pieces of equipment that have made a massive difference to the operating of the preschool and the activities we can offer. The preschool needs in excess of £45k to run, and the committee raised over £3.5k in fundraising to meet the needs of the preschool. Two members of staff are currently completing their NVQ level 3 Qualification in Preschool Education. We have invested in hiring a part-time administrator to help relieve the workload on the staff and committee whilst complying with Ofsted guidelines.

We are aware that in future we will need to expand to meet the increasing needs of the village over the coming years as more houses are built in Hermitage.

We would really like to thank the Parish Council for being so supportive of the pre-school over the years. We hope you are able to see that your money is being put to good use to further improve the educational facilities available to our local children.

Thank you on behalf of the children, staff and management committee of Hermitage Preschool Playgroup.

Wendy Young

ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

1. West Berkshire Council has been awarded 'Beacon Status' for the Council's success in working together with parishes to produce parish plans. The award is recognition not just for the Council but also for all of the parishes in West Berkshire that are leading the way in producing local parish plans. Over 50 parishes have Parish Plans/Village Design Statements being produced and West Berks also recently hosted a successful national conference on Parish Planning.
2. The Council has launched a vibrant village's initiative, aimed at helping the economic vitality of rural communities. In practice this means that money has been set aside to provide help (both grants and professional advice via the Community Council for Berkshire) to help rural shops, pubs etc survive, diversify and continue their contribution to rural life. Three pilot projects are likely to run this year, but the Council wishes to hear of any situations where it may be able help rural services which are under threat.
3. The Council Tax increase for 2006/7 was kept down to 2.9%. This is the lowest increase since the inception of West Berkshire Council and was achieved against a background of a below inflation increase in government grant. The increase was the lowest of any unitary authority in the south-east of England, the 4th lowest of all the unitaries in England and lower than all but one county council. More detail on the revenue budget is available in the 'budget facts and figures booklet.
4. £2.5m investment this year on road resurfacing represents a tripling of previous year's spending. A minimum of £11.1m will be invested over the next 5 years.
5. £50k has been allocated for a Vehicle Activated Signs Project across the district – parishes will be contacted shortly if they have not already heard from the council, to invite expressions of interest involving match funding from parishes.
6. The new Free Graffiti Removal Scheme will be launched in the next few days in partnership with Thames Valley Police, the Probation Service, the Safer Communities Partnership and Sovereign Housing. Those wanting graffiti removed should ring Streetcare (01635 519080). Arrangements will then be made with the Probation Service for a supervised removal of the offending material. Where the graffiti involves racial or offensive material, efforts will be made to ensure that it is removed quickly. Given the need to involve the Probation Service, other graffiti will be removed in a somewhat more leisurely timescale.
7. Significant improvements the Household Waste and Recycling Centre at Pinchington Lane removing the traffic congestion and providing increased recycling opportunities. Increasing both the number of Bring Banks to recycle materials locally (saving residents from having to drive into Newbury) and improving the existing Bring Banks. The Council is looking for suitable sites in the villages in particular to establish new bring banks - glass, cans, cardboard and textiles.
8. Community Safety - £50,000 has been allocated in the budget towards addition neighbourhood wardens or PCSOs, with the intention that parishes either singly or in groups may wish to match fund wardens in their area... There is also a potential for as many as 37 new PCSOs in West Berkshire funded via Thames Valley Police. The Council is therefore putting together a strategy on how to achieve district wide coverage of wardens and PCSOs in the longer term. Details will follow to parishes in due course, in the meantime interested to hear from parishes interested in neighbourhood wardens for their area.