

RAMSBURY & AXFORD PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD ON MONDAY 19th MAY 2008 in Ramsbury Memorial Hall

PRESENT:, Diann Barnett, Cllr Susan Findlay, Graeme Fearon, Sheila Glass, George Hawes, Erica Hodgson, Helen Lloyd, John Peck, Geoffrey Rissone, Ian Ritchie, Geoffrey Treherne, Cllr Brian Twigger, Cllr Humphries, PCSO J. Mills, Paul Bollen (Wiltshire highways), Sue Arnold (clerk) and 26 members of the public.

- 1. Reading of the notice convening the meeting.**
- 2. Welcome by the Chairman:** The chairman welcomed members of the public present.
- 3. Apologies for absence:** Paul Court, Cllr Susan Findlay, Chris Morgan, Tom McQue, Michael Handford.
- 4. Adoption of the minutes of the meeting held on 21st May 2007:** The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting were approved as a correct record and were signed by the chairman.
- 5. Matters Arising:** None.
- 6. Chairman's report:** The report is attached in Appendix A *Sheila Glass*
- 7. Parish Council Committee reports:** attached in Appendix B *Various*
- 8. Axford Ward Report** *Geoffrey Treherne*

The topic that concerned most residents of Axford over the last twelve months more than any other was the speed and inconsiderate driving of the ever increasing and diversity of through traffic. The only real improvement, and that only temporary, occurs when the police carry out their periodic checks. Somehow it would be a help if these could be made to have a more lasting effect. As a council I suspect we have reached the end of the road. Highways have their rules which unfortunately appear to relate to obscure physical features and do not take into account numbers of people or their quality of life. I hear these rules are to be amended in the unforeseeable future and hope then more account will be taken of the human side.

Related to this, but under a different heading is the sorry state of Hooper's lane (the only footpath which allows those living at the western end of the village to escape on foot to our beautiful countryside). It has (had) a tarmac surface which has now deteriorated to the point of danger for it to be used for push chairs and the like. Attempts are hopefully under way to persuade Thames Water to accept their responsibility in this matter. The repeated flooding of the path since their work on the Kennet in that area has caused under-cutting and consequent serious erosion of the path. I understand that they had not considered the effect on the path when they drew up their plans and so feel it only right that they should be made to pay (and quickly) for their error.

There is also hope that the bus company can be persuaded to put a bus stop at this end of the village.

Another controversial matter which hopefully can be clarified soon is the fate of the derelict garages on the car park. There is hope that they can be rebuilt but that is up to Sarsen.

The possibility of building more houses in Axford has been solved by the sale of the available land to a householder for private use. Unfortunately this will not help solve problems with the village sewer, which in hot weather makes its presence felt to those nearby in no uncertain terms.

Public Conveniences

There was nothing to report on the Public Conveniences which the Parish Council took over from KDC in June 2006. A member of the public reported that the light in the gents' loo is out. The chairman said that she would arrange for it to be replaced.

District Councillors' Reports:

Susan Findlay & Brian Twigger

In a written report, Susan Findlay said that it has been a sad year for Kennet District Council with the Government decision to abolish the District Councils in Wiltshire and go for one Unitary Authority. This time next year we will be in the Aldbourne and Ramsbury ward with just one elected representative instead of the present three.

Numbers of Kennet staff have already left for either the new council or posts with a secure future. The Planning Department was one of the first to be affected and it has had an effect on pre-application advice for people in the community. But despite this KDC staff have received nationally recognized awards and performance has continued to improve.

Last year Kennet Councillors agreed that some of the Council reserves should go back into the community and initiated a Grant Scheme. Thanks to very good applications to the Council, the Ramsbury Memorial Hall, Recreation Centre and Parish Council received substantial grants.

The Alternate Weekly Rubbish Collection seems to be working well with Kennet having the highest recycling figures in Wiltshire. She acknowledged that many residents would like more litter bins and it is something to be considered in the future.

Kennet officers are now working with Wiltshire to see how the transition to a Unitary Authority could be made as smooth as possible and to ensure that residents receive the same top quality services.

A reminder to all over 60s - April saw the start of a new national travel scheme providing free bus travel. Anyone wishing to apply for a bus pass for the first time should call Kennet's Contact Centre on 01380 724911 to get the appropriate forms.

KDC are now in the starting stages of a new Local Development Framework "Making Place for the Future". This will help develop a vision for the District for many years and it is important that all residents express their views at the various exhibitions and discussions that are being held. Yours views are being sought on housing, recreation, reducing energy consumption, protecting water environment, protecting the countryside and many other issues.

Mrs Findlay asked that residents should contact her on 520346 if she could be of any help and apologised for being unable to be present this evening.

County Councillor's Report:

Cllr Chris Humphries

Cllr Humphries distributed a comprehensive report on Wiltshire County Council's activities - see Appendix F. Cllr Humphries said it would be a sad day when DDC is abolished as he did not think the same high quality service would be available from the new Wiltshire Council. He said that there was still grant money available from KDC for small grants of up to £5,000 for projects for young people or recreation.

Cllr Humphries introduced Paul Bollen from Wiltshire Highways. He was asked to urge that the closure of the Froxfield Road for bridge repairs should be as short as possible. Mr. Bollen said that part of the C6 near Axford was scheduled for resurfacing.

9. Ramsbury Parish Council Representatives' Reports

Various

Reports were received from:

Nature Reserve rep

Oral History rep

School Governor

See Appendix D.

10. Reports by village clubs and Organisations:

Various

Reports were received from:

Amenity Group

Bella Voce

Community Policeman

Holy Cross PCC

Horticultural Society

Kennet Citizen's Advice Bureau

Link

Luncheon Club

Meals on Wheels

Memorial Hall

Parish Charities

Pre-School

Ramsbury Flyer

Ravensbury Players

Ramsbury School PTA

Recreation Centre

Ramsbury Roxy

Scout group

Silver Band

Toddler group

Youth Club

See Appendix E.

11. Public Question Time:

The chairman opened public question time saying there is a wealth of activities available in the village. All these are run by volunteers and while many people are involved, more help is still needed. She would welcome ideas for getting more people in their 20s and 30s involved. Ben Tottenham suggested giving a presentation to parents.

Jane Handford asked if there would be a street fair in 2009. The chairman said that there would not be a street fair but a Horticultural Society Summer Fete. There would be a marquee at the Rec Centre which the Church were welcome to use on the Sunday after the fete.

Ben Tottenham said that moving the boundary walk had been a stroke of luck, given the Route to Victory event in the village on the Monday. He said that more people needed to be aware of the village diary in the Post office, so that events could be co-ordinated. Jane Handford said that if there is a large wedding and a village event on the same day, there can be chaos in the village. She asked anyone organising an event to contact her if they found a wedding already in the village diary. Peter Kearns suggested that more use was made of the village website (www.ramsbury.org) for advertising future events and asked the PC to promote the use of the website. Sylvia Judge requested that details of events were sent to the village diary (diary@ramsbury.org), which is included on the website. She also asked for feedback to this address if anything on the website was not working.

Philip Perkins has many pictures of the Route to Victory event on his website.

Sylvia Judge asked if the recently planted hedge on the track behind the village could be kept low. The chairman said that it was on private land over which the PC had no authority.

Mary Cook thanked the Parish Council for their hard work and time, particularly the chairman, Sheila Glass. She noted that this was the only forum with local accountability for council tax and rates money.

Many people mentioned in reports that they were grateful to the village post office. The chairman said that for the post office, village shop and library it was a case of 'use it or lose it'. She said that if everyone in the village were to spend £5 - £10 once a week in the shop, it would make a tremendous difference.

12. Boundary Walk presentation.

Ian Ritchie explained that after the lunch stop, there is a steep uphill section known as 'coronary hill'. This year there was a prize for the first person up which was won by Matthew Groves. Matthew was presented with a T-Shirt and cup.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.45 pm.

APPENDIX A

Chairman's report to Annual Parish Meeting May 2008

The Parish Council has had a successful year during which several projects have come to fruition.

Reports from committee chairmen will give details of many of the things we have accomplished this year.

The most noticeable is the first phase of the Square refurbishment which was finally completed -not without a few difficulties which led to the construction time extending to months rather than the promised weeks. Thanks to Geoff Rissone who oversaw the work and who will probably recover from the experience with therapy.

In conjunction with Action for River Kennet we purchased a piece of land in Mill Lane in order to preserve its use for the village-the purchase is now complete and this will be recognised at a small ceremony on May 21st. Thanks to Sylvia Judge who alerted us to the fact that the land was for sale.

Manor footpath no 2 has been cleared so it is once more accessible to wheelchairs and baby buggies.

The usual chestnuts -speeding, dog mess, fly tipping and High Street parking have been discussed and acted upon.

We had presentations in May from KDC and WCC with regard to the formation of a Unitary Council for Wiltshire. As a result of what appears to be sleight of hand-not many Parish Councils seemed to be in favour- the WCC bid was accepted by government and they will become the unitary authority on April 1st 2009-probably an appropriate date. The bid included a financial analysis which promised cost cutting all round. The intention it would seem is to delegate more areas of responsibility to Parish Councils-since we are all volunteers we have the decided advantage of being cheap. Whether we have the time or expertise remains to be seen.

Many of you will have witnessed the Route to Victory celebrations on Monday 5th. The Parish Council supported and helped the organisers of this event which was very successful in spite of less than wonderful weather in the morning. Another such event is planned for the future.

We've entered the BKV competition again this year. We came second in the first round last year. The school did a great clean up last week-please try to keep the village looking good and who knows we may win.

During the year we co-opted four councillors-Erica Hodgson, Helen Lloyd, John Peck and Alistair Ewing so we are now up to full strength. I would like to welcome them and at the same time give heartfelt thanks to all the long serving councillors who give so freely of their time and energy.