



Great Shefford Parish Council

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<p>The minutes of the Great Shefford Parish Council meeting and the Parish Assembly that followed on Thursday 23rd April 2015.</p>	<p>Present Cllr J Carter (Chairman) Cllr S Ackrill Vice Chairman Cllr J Winfield Cllr G Knass Parish Clerk K Lloyd</p>																		
<p>9 members of the Public was present</p>																			
<p>Apologies: Cllr Parsons</p> <p>Cllr Whiting gave his resignation on the 26th March to the parish clerk. The parish council thanked Mr Whiting for all his help over the last year.</p>																			
<p>Declarations of Interest on Agenda items -none</p>																			
<p>Planning 15/00544/REM H Dalton & Son Ltd Retirement Benefit Scheme. Re-development of existing barn to provide B1/B8 unit. The planning application was discussed after the parish assembly by all councillors. After full discussion the parish council had no objections. Clerk to submit observation form to planning.</p>																			
<p>Minutes – the minutes of the meeting of the 5th March 2015 were proposed for adoption by Cllr Ackrill and seconded by Cllr Winfield</p>																			
<p>Finance.</p> <p>Cheques to approve and send.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>100192 - FCC Recycling</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£86.30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100193 - WBC - Public transport contract</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£429.91</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100194 - WBC - Superfast Broadband</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£1596.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100195 - BALC - Subscription</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£177.01</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100196 - Benash Farms Ltd - Allotment Rent</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£200.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100197 - K.Lloyd (parish clerk)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£488.12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100198 - Box of Blue - Website</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£88.80</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Current Account</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£14,002.55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Recreation Ground</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£9,221.59</td> </tr> </table> <p>S106 Agreement dated 9th August 2013 between WBC and Aaron Alan Bates for planning application number 12/02676/FULD. Clause 4.1 Contribution towards improvements to existing public open space.</p>		100192 - FCC Recycling	£86.30	100193 - WBC - Public transport contract	£429.91	100194 - WBC - Superfast Broadband	£1596.00	100195 - BALC - Subscription	£177.01	100196 - Benash Farms Ltd - Allotment Rent	£200.00	100197 - K.Lloyd (parish clerk)	£488.12	100198 - Box of Blue - Website	£88.80	Current Account	£14,002.55	Recreation Ground	£9,221.59
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Cllr Jim Carter signed the receipt showing the Parish council had received the payment of £1,404.00 from the developer in respect of the contribution towards the improvements to Great Shefford Parish councils existing public open space. This payment will be used towards improvement to public open space in the village.

Gill Comely from West Berkshire Volunteer Village Agents gave a talk on how to become a village agent. The Village Agent is a volunteer recruited from within the parish they live in and therefore provides a local trusted friendly face to those in the community. Their aim is to put older and or socially isolated residents in direct contact with community, voluntary and statutory agencies that offer help and advice and to assist them in engaging in local activities and to help maintain independence in their homes for longer.

They have recently trained one agent in each village of Chievley, Compton and Hermitage They are expanding through West Berkshire and would like to train more agents, if this is something you would like to be involved in, please contact the parish clerk or for more information please call 01635 49004 or 07775 366812 at the Volunteer Centre in Newbury.

Chairman's Report

Good evening and welcome.

I would like to start by introducing the current team on your Parish Council. Steve Ackrill is Vice Chairman and Gareth Knass represent Great Shefford, Janice Winfield who represents Lambourn Woodlands and Kim Lloyd who really runs the show in the position of Parish Clerk, we also have Glenn Parsons who could not be with us this evening due to business commitments. Finally of course there is me, Jim Carter your current Chairman.

A word or two around the format of this evening. Ideally we would be discussing the outline of the new Parish Plan. However, interest in the project has been negligible and a meeting to start the process was so poorly attended that at present there is no project to build a Parish Plan for Great Shefford. If you are interested or know of anyone that would like to help, please let yourself be known after the meeting.

You may be aware that there is an election this year, not only for our MP's but also for your Parish Councillors. This year we were all re-elected by default, as we were the only candidates to put ourselves forward. This suggests two possibilities, either the members of the parish think we do a fantastic job or no one wants to take up the challenge. I suspect the latter but with the former in mind, thank you for your vote of confidence.

Being on the Parish Council is a team effort, and we have a very good team. My thanks to them in all their support and work, some of which we will review this evening. I would also like to thank those who have left this year. Sue Benn was our last Chairwoman and left just before Christmas. She started up the EMT and was active in a number of committees including the Allotment Society. If it were not for her health she would no doubt still be standing here instead of me. Sandi Ackrill was parish Clerk for such a long spell before a new business opportunity arose for her but I have to add that some of the more negative comments towards the Parish Council on the village facebook page were a contributing factor to her leaving. Such a shame that what is an excellent medium for informing the village was temporarily used in such a negative manner. Finally, Mathew Whiting who was one of our Councillors left last month due to business commitments. Thank you all for your help and support.

Before I begin to summarise what has been done this year I'd like to cover off some of the miss conceptions around what we as your Parish Council can do. Personal disputes between neighbours, complaints against local organisations or companies are often brought to our attention but unfortunately there is little that we are able to offer apart from sympathetic advice. We cannot enforce Laws such as speeding and criminal activity; it is a concern but apart from lobbying for support from the Police and Highways there is little action we can take.

So what does the Parish Council do? We meet once a month here in the Village Hall, the public are welcome to attend and there is time allotted for comments or questions to be posed to the Council. Whilst we may not be able to discuss the points raised at that time, they can form part of the agenda at the next meeting.

Probably the most important task the Council performs is the budget and subsequent precept calculation. For those of you that do not know, this is the amount of money each household contributes through their council tax to the running of the Parish for basic services. The precept for 2015 will remain as last year at £16,000, which equates to £39.43 per Band D household.

Planning applications come in many forms from quite straightforward property changes too much larger projects such as the proposed Knackers yard that prompted an extraordinary meeting here at the village hall and organised by the Parish Council.

We aim to send a minimum of two councillors to each application to review and report back at the next Council meeting where the case can be reviewed publically and the Council can provide an informed summary to West berks planning. Over the past year we have reviewed approximately 20 applications.

Lobbying your views to West Berkshire Council departments is a common occurrence, to the Environment Agency, Highways and the Police to name a few. Whilst we are vocal through letters, Emails and telephone correspondence, change comes either not at all or at a pace that is infuriating to those of us in business who manage to make practical decisions happen so much quicker.

In respect of law enforcement, Lee Bremner is our community police liaison and has been present at several meetings. A recent exercise by the Police (following concerns over the crime levels in Great Shefford) revealed that there were a number of cars left unlocked and in some cases, mobile phones and laptop computers were found in full view.

Speeding and traffic calming is an emotive subject in our village and one certainly of interest to me. The Police have promised to carry out spot checks but the nature of the way the A338 passes through the village means that the Police are limited to where they can set up speed traps as they require a good line of site and a safe place to pull over offenders.

Having just completed the new Bus Shelter in Church Street it was somewhat frustrating to find that the main Bus Stop next to the Swan was in a poor state of repair and effectively fell short of the bi annual safety checks that the Council performs on the fixtures around the village, such as benches, playground and of course the Bus shelters. Indeed the weight of the roof was found to be causing the construction to list towards the road and there was a risk that it may collapse. Emergency repairs were carried out to make the structure safe to use and the Council are now obtaining quotes for a replacement.

Last year the Emergency team were in full swing with the flooding and many will remember the AGM was packed last year with representatives from The EA, Highways, West Berks and Richard Benyon. The report that the Parish Council produced was well received and commended by our MP; whilst progress has not been the lightning response we were after, there is movement. Steve Ackrill has taken over the EMT and has represented Great Shefford in the Flood committee meetings. Over the winter some 8 tonnes of silt was blasted from the culvert under the garage and there has been a topographical survey carried out in respect of a second relief channel alongside the A338 from the North of the village to the Lambourn river. We await the expected report.

Gareth is “the man” when it comes to grants and he is an unsung hero in our village. A great man to have on side when matters of process, form filling and funding are involved. We have brand new playing surfaces at the recreation ground that have been part funded through grants that Gareth has identified and acted upon. Indeed we hope to obtain some money to repair the bus shelter through available grant funding.

The Parish Council has representation and support on several committees and organisations, including the Country Fayre of which preparations for this year are well under way, the village allotments and the Parish Magazine.

In September our Parish archivist, Liz Saunders, organised an excellent exhibition in memory of all the members of the armed forces named on our War Memorial who gave their lives during the first and second world war. It was well attended and visitors included some relatives of the men. Liz has condensed some of the detail to enable it to be placed on the village website that is so well looked after on our behalf by Linda Bowden and John Turton.

The Parish Council continues to support the annual poppy appeal with a donation and a wreath that is laid at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday

Litter around the village is addressed each year in November through the annual clean-up operation headed by Janice and the generous help of volunteers. The volume has steadily decreased and a couple of hours over a weekend results in a tidy village and pockets stuffed with Hero’s chocolate. So it’s worth helping out.

In December we continue to organise a Christmas tree that is located on the green across from the garage, with decorations supplied by the school. The carol singing has moved to The Swan over the past few years and has been well attended.

I have often remarked, or heard say, that being on the Parish Council is a thankless task. In some respects it is. It is a pain to give up your time at the weekend to review a planning application and it does seem that the monthly meeting falls on that one Thursday in the month when you have had a tiring day at the office and you just want to put your feet up. But that said, when you take stock of what is achieved over the year and the involvement you have with the community, the Parish Council does make a difference. It is worth it.

Matters raised from the public.

The public raised the matter of installing a lifesaving Defibrillator somewhere in the village. The chairman this evening had been passed a letter addressed from MP Richard Benyon in connection with the proposal.

After discussion the chairman asked for the item to be added to the next agenda to discuss further.

An idea of a community garden was spoken about, to include raised beds to be used and maintained by the pre-school to grow produce, and too incorporate a seated area for the parishioners.

More discussion required on who would take responsibility for it, and maintain it.

Date of the Next Meeting –The AGM

Thursday 14th May 2015 at 7.40pm

ALL ARE WELCOME.

Meeting closed 8.45pm