

DUNCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY MINUTES

Held in the Village Hall, Rugby Road, Dunchurch on Tuesday 5th May 2009 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

Councillor R T Aird [Chairman] Councillor P Eccleson [Vice Chairman]
Councillor A J Gilbert Councillor R Carlton
Councillor L Beech Councillor K Wells
Clerk to the Parish Council Mrs P M Knowles

OTHERS:

County Councillor G D Collett [part time] Borough Councillor R Ravenhall
Borough Councillor S Ravenhall Borough Councillor H Roberts
Mr P Waller Mr B Nesbit
Tony Pearson Scott Carlton
Callum Hollis Mr & Mrs Littlejohn
Mr I Lowe

1. TO ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor B J Remmelts Councillor N Jones
Councillor M Mansfield

2. TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 6TH MAY 2008

Councillor Eccleson proposed confirmation of the Minutes of the Meeting as a true record this was seconded by Councillor Gilbert and approved by all present. Signed by Councillor R T Aird [Chairman].

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

CRIME, ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND SECURITY IN DUNCHURCH PARISH

Crime levels

Crime and anti-social behaviour is now running at a monthly rate of about one quarter of the peak level we experienced in February 2008. I believe that there are many reasons for this significant improvement: pressure from the village to have more pro-active policing; less easy availability of alcohol to under-aged drinkers; the moving away of some persistent offenders; a greater awareness of problems in our community, which are regularly reported in the Neighbourhood Watch Item in the Dunchurch Dialogue; and, I like to believe, a realisation that the village will not tolerate anti-social behaviour.

However response from RBC to requests for consultation on such matters, backed by all our elected representatives, has been totally inadequate.

CCTV

Anticipated trials of CCTV, for which Dunchurch has prepared, have not yet materialised. One such system, we are told, has reached a trial stage and it is the intention to install the system at Wolston for evaluation. However, as this council learns more about the proposal there are still issues regarding the system technology, data encryption and the protocols for its use.

Lack of resource allocated to such projects, obstacles to implementation and the long time scales for any action to take place, seem to indicate a lack of will from the agencies involved. The Parish Council will continue to investigate security systems but will not implement them unless they are proven to be effective and represent value for money to the electorate.

Alcohol Control Orders

Another example of the this lack of will is the emasculation of proposed alcohol control orders for the rural areas and the failure as yet of RBC to implement orders that were initially promised to be in place before the school holidays in 2008.

Policing

I should like to emphasize that support from our local Safer Neighbourhood Police team during the last year has been commendable and an enhanced working relationship with these officers has been created.

PARISH COUNCIL OFFICE

The long term aim of the Dunchurch Parish Council to establish its own office was finally realised when on Monday 9th February, 2009 our office was opened in the prime location of The Green. Dunchurch PC's business is extensive and requires considerable space for record filing and equipment and it was no longer acceptable for the Council to rely on the usage of rooms in the Chairman's or Clerk's houses for this purpose. That had made it difficult for residents who had enquiries of the Council or who wished to view any documents. With the Government's stated aims of devolving more responsibilities to a local level the burden is likely to increase in future.

I am pleased to say that our Police Team are using the facilities on a regular, informal basis which we hope will be formalised soon. It will undoubtedly improve their efficiency and the deterrent value of their regular presence in the village centre will benefit us all. Display of their "A board" outside the door is an invitation to anyone who might need their services to talk to them directly.

DIALOGUE WITH THE COMMUNITY

PC Surgery

The introduction of the surgery by the Parish Clerk in the local Library referred to in last year's Chairman's report was not a success, possibly because of lack of privacy. However the early indications are that there is much increased communication since our Parish Council Office was opened; it raises the Council's profile and provides vastly improved accessibility.

Dunchurch Dialogue

Our publication "The Dunchurch Dialogue" continues to be published and we believe it is much appreciated in the community. However as indicated by the previous Chairman we would welcome more community generated copy.

Protocols for the acceptance of advertising have now been established and it is hoped that income from this source will allow us to improve the quality of the publication. However more help in the compilation, from what ever source, would be welcome.

Parish Council Web-site

The Parish Council has established its own web-site, dunchurchpc.org, which has huge potential in promoting the Council and its work. It is fair to say however that its content does not yet cover all that we would wish and it has yet to reach its full potential. Meetings will be held with the hosting company to simplify and make more immediate the updating and addition of material.

Parishioners' Forum

The Parishioners forum a part of the official agenda for the monthly Parish Council Meeting has been a partial success. There have been 49 attendances of the public at the various meetings over the year, the highest attendances being when contentious issues have been to the fore.

The Chairman and Clerk have attended about 16 meetings of local government committees during the past year as it is considered paramount that Dunchurch's voice is heard by the Borough and County Council, who have such an effect on Dunchurch.

A mendacious and thoroughly vexatious letter about the work of this Council was published in the press in March. It is regretted that it appears to have come from a source that has neither made any attempt to attend council meetings nor to communicate directly with this Council.

ADKINSON AVENUE

The project for the re-development of the Atkinson Avenue area is now almost complete and the new houses are likely to be fully occupied soon. The project is undoubtedly a major enhancement of Dunchurch's residential landscape but it is also an example of RBC's lack of foresight and will that half of two semi-detached houses remain un-renovated. It seems obvious that the renovated halves will be at some stage compromised by the un-renovated Airey halves and that in years to come this anomaly will be seen to have been a dreadfully short-sighted error.

Additionally it is regretted that the development, contrary to assurances at the outset, has led to the loss of 6 out of the 10 original road-side trees in the developed area.

Of the two new closes created in the development, one Terry John Close has been named after a well respected former teacher in the village and the other Rye Close takes its name from the ancient name of the former enclosed land on which it stands.

THE OLD TELEPHONE EXCHANGE

The remains of the former BT telephone exchange, adjacent to the Arkwright Field-Coventry Road footpath, continue to be a blot on the Dunchurch landscape and potentially a dangerous diversion for young people, especially as greater numbers will arrive in the village with the occupation of the new Adkinson Avenue development. A site visit by RBC took place on 27 April and it is hoped that some action will be taken by them. Short term measures should ameliorate the immediate dangers but a long term solution needs to be found. This Council will continue to lobby the Borough Council for something to be done as its continued existence in its ruinous state is not acceptable.

GRASS CUTTING

Large numbers of complaints were received during 2008 about the lack of and standard of grass cutting of the public grassed areas. RBC invited Parish Councils during the year to take on the responsibility for grass-cutting. Following a meeting held with RBC on the suggestion, it became evident that we should avoid this proposal, as sufficient funding was not available and the risks to this Parish Council were not acceptable. However 2009-10 has seen a remarkable improvement of the service from the Borough, which I believe is in part due to the vociferous complaints emanating from this and other parish councils.

WALKING FOR HEALTH

This project, under the excellent guidance of Pearl Bennett and leaders, continues to flourish to considerable benefit to health of all participants. The Parish Council continues to support this activity wholeheartedly.

AMENITIES

Improvements to amenities have been made during the year.

All old Mercury vapour luminaires on our lighting columns have now been replaced.

The thatching on the bus shelter on The Green and the Parish Notice Board has been renovated and a programme for renovation of the various public seats in the village has commenced.

Lord John Scott's statue has been cleaned and the inscription re-cut and additional litter bins and dog-bins have been sited in areas of need.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING

Speeding and traffic volumes

Traffic and parking are perhaps the most important issues facing the Council at present. Parking restrictions were imposed at the top of Daventry Road at the end of last year and one of the predicted effects has been to increase traffic speeds. Further study and action needs to be undertaken to lessen the dangers.

The problems of excess vehicle speeds and difficulties for pedestrians wishing to cross the roads at the junction of Rugby Road with Cawston Lane are currently under review by WCC. It is hoped that some acceptable ameliorating solutions will be proposed in the near future.

We understand that one hand-held speed gun has been purchased to be used by parishes. Training in its use will be provided by Warwickshire Police but, as it is to be shared amongst all the parishes in Rugby Borough, its availability to an individual parish is going to be very limited.

The Western Relief Road section from Potsford Dam to Lawford Road is due to open before the end of 2009 so there should be a welcome reduction in CEMEX traffic through the village but we have to wait to see what benefits there might be to overall traffic patterns.

Traffic Lights

In the mean time we still have serious doubts about the design and phasing of the traffic-lights; particularly in relation to the lack of a right filter from Daventry to Rugby Road and the pedestrian crossing timing. This Council intends to continue to lobby for improvement.

Parking

When the Western Relief Road is completed WCC intends to move their Highways Depot from the current site on Southam Road to the Paynes Lane area in Rugby. This will free the substantial site in Southam Road for re-development. This council is determined to have its voice heard, such that its development includes tangible benefits for the village including village parking in what is the last available possible site within easy reach of the village centre. Such a facility would also have the potential to remove all the traffic and parking problems that currently exist in the immediate vicinities of the Infant and Junior Schools.

SUPPORT FROM COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

County Councillor Gordon Collett's retirement is imminent and we shall have a new County Councillor following the June elections. Councillor Collett has given unparalleled support to our community over many years and I should like to thank him on behalf of the Village for his work on our behalf; our best wishes go to him in his well earned retirement.

During the year your Council has continued to receive the support from Borough Councillors, Ron Ravenhall, Sally Ravenhall, and Howard Roberts, and I take this opportunity to thank them for their presence at Council meetings and their assistance with our problems.

In particular, Borough Councillor Ravenhall's stoicism in the face of serious illness is the mark of a very resolute and dedicated man, determined to continue working on our behalf; it is much appreciated.

OUR CLERK

I should like also to pay tribute to our Clerk who in spite of serious health issues at the end of 2008 has bounced back rapidly to resume her duties. Having worked closely with her for the last year, I know that she is a person of extraordinary ability who pursues her tasks with zeal; we are indeed fortunate to have her services.

RESIGNATION OF COUNCILLOR BERNARD REMMELTS

Finally I should like to pay tribute to retiring Councillor Bernard Remmelts, whose tenure ceases tomorrow. Bernard has been a member of this Council since January 2002 and chaired the Council for five years. I should like to make public this Council's appreciation of the work that he has carried out on behalf of the village.

That we have been able to raise the status and public awareness of the Parish Council is largely down to his leadership and encouragement over several years. Although we have not always succeeded in our aims, considerable progress has been made and I trust the Council will continue to better its service to Dunchurch. We thank you for his valued service; it will not be easy to replace such wise counsel.

Both County Councillor Collett and Borough Councillor Ravenhall thanked Dunchurch PC for its hard work and also its support for the County and Borough Councillors.

4. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS OF DUNCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL 2008/2009

All Councillors have been circulated with a copy of the Annual Accounts. Councillor Beech proposed a motion to approve the accounts this was seconded by Councillor Wells and agreed by all present.

5. GUEST SPEAKER

Tony Pearson, WCC District Youth Worker together with two youth representatives Scott Carlton and Callum Hollis made a presentation to the Assembly regarding the possible installation of a skate park within the village. At the present time young people are having to cycle to Birdingbury to use skate facilities which is not an ideal situation. A significant amount of research has been carried out by Scott and Callum together with their colleagues to establish costings and possible sources of funding. A copy of all the information collected so far will be sent to The Clerk who will then contact Warwickshire County Council to discuss possible sites.

All the Parish Councillors thanked the Youth Representatives for making an excellent presentation.

6. OTHER MATTERS

The Youth Action Team is concerned that there seems to be a reluctance on behalf of the Village Hall Trustees to allow the Youth Club to use the facilities of the main hall. Although it is understood that the main hall is heavily booked and also understandable the Trustees would not want any activities in the hall that may damage the facility hopefully there is scope for negotiation. The Parish Council will try to organise a meeting with all the parties concerned.

Meeting Closed at 08.05pm

Signed: [Chairman]

Dated: