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Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held
on Wednesday 28th October 2015
at Madley Park Hall, 6.30pm

Present:

- Cllr Jeanette Baker (West Oxfordshire District Councillor)
- Cllr James Mills (West Oxfordshire District Councillor)
- Cllr Howard Chirgwin (New Witney Town Councillor)
- Cllr Dr Suzanne Bartington (New Witney Town Councillor and Residents Association committee member)
- Cllr Chris Holliday (Witney Town Councillor, Deputy Mayor and Residents Association committee member)
- PC 6382 Miles
- PCSO 8154 Holt
- David Bates (Residents Association Chair)
- Stuart George (Residents Association Treasurer)
- Tina Hepworth (Residents Association Secretary)
- 29 residents were also in attendance (including Residents Association committee members Tony Bennett, Ray Hall and Richard White and Kelly Hale, Hall Manager)

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

David Bates welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance. He introduced the panel (listed above). Apologies were received from Duncan Enright (Town and District Councillor), Richard Langdridge (County Councillor) and Residents Association committee member Pam Smith.

2. Police report

PC Tony Miles spoke about the role of the Neighbourhood team. They try to cover as wide an area as possible (on foot / bike / car) and will usually be visible. Recently there was some criminal damage to trees and they have targeted patrols in those areas in response to this. They have received reports from residents about issues such as cars parked on pavements and rubbish. David Bates asked what would be the best way to contact local police. PC Miles said there is a link on the Thames Valley Police website, where a postcode can be inputted and an email address will come up. This information will be added to our next newsletter and put up on our Residents Association newsletter.

ACTION: Tina to include police contact details in next newsletter and put on website (TH).

Question from the floor: People are still parking inconsiderately. Would it be possible to have some signs displayed to tell people not to park on the pavement?

PC Miles replied that, unfortunately, their hands are somewhat tied on this issue. Unless the vehicle is causing a specific obstruction (e.g. if pedestrians cannot get past on pavements), there is little that the police can do, particularly as there are no road markings. Police can mediate between neighbours if there are tensions, but otherwise this is a council issue. PC Miles advised residents to contact the council if there is an **ongoing** problem with parking in their local vicinity.

ACTION: District Councillors, Jeanette Baker and James Milles agreed to follow up the ongoing problem of cars parking on the pavement and causing obstruction around the estate (JB, JM).

Question from the floor: How many patrols do the police have concentrated in this area?

PC Miles said that there is a separate response shift which runs alongside the Neighbourhood Team and that, although they might not always be immediately visible, be assured that there is always someone on patrol in the area.

Question from the floor: The stretch of path beside the allotments, leading to Oxford Hill is completely unlit. Can anything would be done about this? Many people on the panel and on the floor agreed. PC Miles said that this is a council matter. The District Council will take action on this, it is possible that there might be some funding available to improve lighting in this area. Suzanne said that she has already raised this with the council and they are considering putting in an application for funding under s106. The more support that could be gained for this the better.

ACTION: District Councillors, Jeanette Baker and James Mills agreed to look into the possibility of lighting along the path by the allotments (JB, JM).

3. Note re. last AGM Minutes

David Bates pointed out that, due to unforeseen circumstances, the Minutes from last year's AGM were unavailable. This year's Minutes will be on the Residents Association website as soon as they are available.

ACTION: Tina will type up the Minutes within two weeks of the AGM and ensure that they are available on the website (TH).

4. Chair's report

David pointed out that Madley Park is now nearly 15 years old. We have had a fantastic committee on the Residents Association this year.

The Garage Sale and Easter Egg hunt were both successful events and will hopefully run again. Thank you to Tina Hepworth and Stuart George respectively for organising those events.

The next Litter Pick will take place on Saturday 7th November.

David also thanked Kelly Hale and Martine Kingdon for all the hard work they put in to the continued success of the hall.

We were successful in securing funds for the defibrillator, which will be installed outside the hall very soon. Many thanks to local resident, Regina Lally, who donated £700 of her sponsorship after running the London Marathon for Arrhythmia Alliance. This matched the funding that we received in the form of a grant from West Oxfordshire District Council.

Other issues the Residents Association have been working on:

- Campaigning for bus services. David has been liaising with, and writing to our councilors and Oxfordshire County Council regarding our concerns over the potential loss of services 213/214.
- Parking and speeding. This remains an ongoing issue. We have used speed boards to emphasize speed limits, targeted letters for inconsiderate parking and posted reminders about these issues in the newsletter.
- Road adoptions. It is very disappointing to note that there are still roads that are not adopted. David thanked committee member Tony Bennett for his tireless work on this.
- Getting the Neighbourhood Units occupied. Partly due to recently forging a good relationship with the son of the landlord, lines of communication are more open and new tenants are moving in to units soon. This includes an estate agent, a lifestyle hub for babies/young children and parents, a fish and chip shop (around the back of the Co-op) and other parties are also interested
- The local newsletter has gone from strength to strength and is now 4 pages long. It is self-financing, through adverts for local businesses. A big thanks to Tina Hepworth for her work on this.
- Our website is another useful outlet to share information; the newsletter and estate map is also on there.
- Facebook is well used (please 'like' our page if you have not already done so), as well as Twitter, to communicate with residents.
- Our email address receives a steady stream of enquiries which we continue to work on.
- Development of the French Square. The first plans are beginning to take shape and will be presented by architect, Anthony Pettorino, later in the meeting.
- Activity area for children and young people – we are working with town and district councils as well as consulting with residents and we will keep residents up to date with progress.

David Bates was praised for all his efforts and hard work with pushing forward all the issues that the Residents Association have been involved with over the past year. It has been a very productive year.

5. Treasurer's report

Stuart George passed around the summary of accounts and reported that we are getting busier and have more projects and events going on. The accounts are in good shape. We have £288 in general funds (e.g. not ringfenced), so work on a tight budget and all fundraising helps. £2400 is ringfenced for the play areas.

Stuart thanked Kelly Hale and Martine Kingdon for their help with the Easter Egg hunt. Printing costs for the newsletter have gone up as we have increased the number of pages, from two to four. However, revenue from advertising still covers this cost.

Stuart pointed out that the money raised by Regina Lally for the defibrillator was paid in directly from the charity she raised the funds for, and so it does not appear on the accounts summary.

The accounts were certified by an accountant in July of this year.

Ray Hall proposed the accounts. This was seconded by Linda Richards.

6. Election of committee members

David Bates, Stuart George, Tony Bennett, Ray Hall and Pam Smith were all re-elected (proposed and seconded by residents) to the committee for a further two years. David pointed out that we have two co-opted members, who help develop our links with the Cogges community: Suzanne Bartington (Town Councillor and Cogges resident) and Richard White (Minister in training, Cogges and Madley Park resident)

7. Presentation of French Square plans

Anthony Pettorino presented his plan for development of the square, and stressed that this is still at very early stages and is a document in progress.

David and Chris from the Residents Association had a conversation with WODC about the square, as it needed resurfacing and there was flooding in one corner. It was agreed this was an opportunity to have a broader conversation on how the square could be best used as a community space. With the help of WODC, a questionnaire was drawn up and issued to residents with the quarterly newsletter. 45 responses were received and a sub group of residents was set up to explore options further. With Anthony's help and intervention, a group of Wood Green school students worked on the plans.

The questionnaire responses highlighted that the square is a place everyone should enjoy, and improvements should make this a more effective and used community space. Anthony saw two main issues to consider; firstly there needed to be a sense of enclosure and safety from the road, but also, it can be a busy place and access would be important.

Anthony explained how his early ideas grew from these thoughts and he began to 'join up the dots' from the consultation. He looked at creating a sense of enclosure, possibly with raised beds, with controlled access points. There have been loose discussions around having a sculpture or memory tree (local artist Abbie Cooke will be working with Madley Brook Primary School children to design something). When complete, it should be a safe area of green space for the whole family to enjoy.

There was brief discussion over the question of whether the area for petanque is big enough and/or suitable. This will be discussed democratically and the views of all residents sought.

Anthony reiterated that the plans are currently still an aspiration and that there is much discussion to be had before any decisions are made. David agreed and emphasized that we need residents' views. We will be sharing developments on our website and Facebook page. The process has started and we will give a phone number as well as email address for responses. There will be more details in the next newsletter, for people who don't have access to the internet.

ACTION: Any new developments on the French Square will appear in the next newsletter (due out mid December) and on our Facebook page and website (DB/TH).

8. West Oxfordshire District Council update - James Mills

James received a detailed letter of concern from David Bates (on behalf of the Residents Association) re. threat of removal of local bus services. This was very useful and was considered as part of the WODC cabinet response to Oxfordshire County Council.

Car parking is an ongoing issue around Witney and there is currently a car park review taking place with police, covering the whole town. James Mills and PC Miles will consult the Residents Association over any issues. James has asked the Cabinet member responsible if officers could liaise directly with the Residents Association as part of the consultation and he agreed that they would do so at the last Cabinet meeting.

The waste and recycling contract is coming up for renewal next year so WODC are looking at how waste is organized. We are amongst the top 10 local authorities for recycling in the country. Feedback from our Residents Association, and across the district last year showed that residents preferred 'co-mingled' recycling as opposed to kerbside recycling (e.g. putting recycled materials all in together rather than sorting into glass, plastics, etc.). James has fed this information back to officers via a recent workshop where members were looking at what form the new contract would take. Our waste is still kerb-side sorted, except for the odd occasion when a vehicle is not available and it is co-mingled and sorted later at the Materials Recycling Centre.

Question from the floor: Recycling boxes are not being treated with care by waste collectors and lids and boxes are often becoming damaged or destroyed.

James said that it is important that residents let WODC know specific incidents if this is happening, as it will be taken to the manager of the contract, and will be dealt with. James' email is james.mills@westoxon.gov.uk and he is happy to receive emails about any issues residents might have.

Question from the floor: Can we have wheelie bins for recycling to replace boxes? Lots of communities across Witney (including Madley Park) are campaigning to get large wheelie bins for recycling and this is currently being looked into.

Since many residents have expressed a desire for 'co-mingled' recycling in wheelie bins, this is something that WODC will bear in mind when awarding the new contract. If a 'co-mingled' recycling service is chosen as part of a new contract then wheelie bins could replace boxes, as with other areas that have a comingled service.

ACTION: James Mills will keep the Residents Association up to date with any update on the renewal of the waste and recycling contract (JM).

There is currently a county-wide review of cottage hospitals and their provision. The Wenrisc Ward at Witney Community hospital has temporarily closed. Oxford Health have now made a public statement confirming that it will reopen in March.

9. Questions to panel

The following issues were raised as concerns by residents:

- Dog mess (especially on Woodley Green)
- Wheelie bins for recycling (James Mills pointed out that this is a request by communities across the district and has been taken on board, any updates will be communicated by James through the Residents Association)
- General state of the estate (drainage culverts, weeds growing through paths, etc.) – piece to go in next newsletter urging residents to report areas of concern
- Lack of lighting at the back of Co-op (Residents Association will liaise with Jim Cover's son)

These were recorded on a flip chart and taken away by the committee to be worked on. Any updates will be communicated through our newsletter, website and Facebook page.

10. Quiz

Stuart George read out the answers to the quiz questions and announced that Kelly Hale and Martine Kingdon were the winners.

Resident Cyril Tennant thanked David Bates and the rest of the committee for all their efforts and hard work over the past year.

David encouraged any resident who would like to join the committee to speak to him or a committee member. New members are always welcome.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.15pm.

(Following the meeting, the Residents Association received an email from Cllr Jeanette Baker, which said: “The pro activity and efficiency shown by the committee is very impressive and an example to any resident association.”)

Next committee meeting: Monday 30th November, 8pm, Madley Park House