

# PARISH of SHAW-cum-DONNINGTON

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held in the Village Hall, Love Lane, Donnington on Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2015 at 7.30pm

## 131 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2014 were approved and signed as a true record.

## 132 **Chairman's Report by Councillor Bill Graham**

Thank you all for attending this assembly. To be clear, this is a statutory parish meeting, which is called together by the parish council and chaired by me, the parish council chairman, only to ensure good order and a fair hearing of all.

Actually the parish assembly is independent of the council. It belongs to you, Shaw cum Donnington parishioners. It is your annual opportunity to meet one another, to meet parish councillors and to express your strongly-held views on local affairs.

We are grateful for the attendance of Arlene Kersley, the Rural Housing Enabler for the Community Council for Berkshire, who will give her thought provoking presentation at Agenda 6.

Councillors will precede Arlene with their annual reports of parish business.

After Arlene, the floor will be open to you for discussion of her propositions and any other parish related matters you wish to put to the assembly and to councillors.

The only aim of the Parish Council is to serve our parishioners in the widest, friendliest, fairest and most efficient way possible. The present cost or precept is £36,000 per year. That's an average of £1 per week for every home in the parish, which you pay through your council tax. Nationally, we are at the low end of spending per head.

Councillors are volunteers so cost you nothing. We get our satisfaction from supporting our community. We would even say it is interesting and fun! We hope that some of you might find that these are good enough reasons to join us. We promise you will never be bored.

Much of our business and nearly all the expense could be called good housekeeping. If you are pleased with the appearance of our local environment, the low crime rate, the adequacy of the roads, the cleanliness and safety of our parks and streets, support for schools and the elderly in the parish, then somewhere along the line the council has had an input. Sometimes it's big, sometimes it's small, but it's always worthwhile.

We could measure our success by the small number of complaints we get and our ability to resolve them quickly. This year has been no exception. Where there are matters outstanding it will be because other parties are dragging their feet. We would also welcome your complaints and encouragement at the end of this meeting, and at future council meetings which are advertised on the parish notice boards and web-site.

During the year we have also had to take positions on wider issues. For instance planning generally, which Lisa Harrop will report on shortly, and in particular the proposed construction of 400 houses around Vodafone. The developers held a well-attended public consultation in the parish in May last year. At this stage, the parish council is opposing the plan on several grounds: inadequate access, congestion on Love Lane, and questionable flood mitigation being three. Councillor Bryant's report will cover West Berkshire Council's position on this proposal more fully.

However, the parish council recognises that housing is moving rapidly up the political agenda, and that the parish would be wise to plan for additional housing where they want it rather than have it forced upon them. To this end Arlene will shortly introduce us to the concept of Affordable Rural Housing.

During the year we welcomed one new councillor Chris Fenwick, but unfortunately lost four, Ted Hooker, Andy Nichol, Bill Ashton and John Edwards, all of whom served us with distinction.

On behalf of the parish, I would like to thank the councillors who have now put themselves forward for re-election. Chris Byng, Dawne Stephens, Vicky Schollar and Chris Fenwick, who all serve the parish with great energy and skill. Counting me, that makes five

continuing councillors. To realise our ambitions for the parish, ideally we need nine, so you can see why volunteers to serve would be welcome. To make it easy, why not try one council meeting, without further obligation if you find it's not for you?

Our thanks also go to District Councillor, Paul Bryant, who attends most of our meetings, provides sage advice, and keeps us in good touch with West Berkshire Council thinking and actions. Unfortunately he cannot be with us today.

Finally, we must thank our excellent Clerk, John Austin. We could not do without his administrative and financial expertise and advice. In Paul Bryant's absence John will present the West Berkshire Councillor's Report at Agenda 5.

Personally, I am very grateful to all the team for their support.

### 133 **Planning Report by Councillor Lisa Harrop**

The Parish Council monitors and feeds back to the Planning Department of West Berkshire Council its opinion on all planning applications within and adjacent to the parish. In doing so, the Council aims to strike a fair balance between the interests of applicants, their neighbours and the wider community. It also considers the fit of any application with the Parish Plan and of planning advice from West Berkshire Council (WBC).

The WBC planning advice includes, for example, the Local Development Framework and the recent Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). In the latter, WBC has called for suitable land within West Berkshire to be put forward for housing development, and seeks to prioritise the outcome in consultation with the parishes. Shaw-cum-Donnington parish councillors have been closely involved in this process.

Two 'possible' large areas of land have come forward in the SHLAA, which, if implemented, could double the size of the parish. The largest is a proposal to build 401 dwellings on land either side of the A339, north of Love Lane, known as North Newbury which surrounds the Vodafone campus. The second is a proposal to build 226 dwellings on land either side of the B4009, Long Lane north of Love Lane.

The Parish Council is aware of the need for more local housing and has calculated that these needs could be met by bringing forward a collection of smaller sites detailed in the SHLAA. Therefore, for this and for many other reasons, including the lack of road infrastructure, the lack of existing school places, pressure on local GP surgeries, and severe winter flooding of both sites, the Parish Council would not support the concentrated development of these large proposals within the parish.

The underlying problem is that there are no meaningful plans which address these infrastructure issues. Until these can be considered in detail by WBC, parish councillors and parishioners and they are seen to comply with the WBC development framework to the north of Newbury, no conclusion other than rejection is possible at this time.

Apart from these major planning issues, it has been a quiet year in the parish.

In addition, 20 applications were submitted in the period. These included 5 house extensions, 1 construction of a new School Library, 1 Construction of a Double Garage, 3 change of use, 1 demolition, 1 conversion of a cart shed into an arts and crafts studio, 1 house conversion.

### 134 **Relief in Need Charity Report**

The Charity exists to provide help for needy people in the parish. It holds two statutory meetings each year in January and June. One small bequest was made and a donation of £5,000 was received during the year. Stuart Stephens was accepted as a Trustee in June 2014. Ted Hooker resigned as a Trustee in January 2015 and has not yet been replaced.

### 135 **WBC Councillor's Report by Councillor Paul Bryant**

As expected, the District Council has had a further reduction in the grant from government. The Council Tax has remained the same although it has resulted in a modest increase in funds from the tax resulting from new housing. Government has provided a lot of additional funding in the form of specific grants that have to be bid for by way of project proposals. An example is funding for the A4 Calcot Pinch Point project funded by the Department of

Transport. Overall the Council has balanced its budget with a small overspend estimated at about £½m as opposed to an under-spend of about £¼m last year – this on a budget of some £145M. This gives a band D tax of £1319.66. Comparison with other councils is not easy as some are two tier (District and Council), some small Unitary councils like West Berkshire, some large unitary counties but by and large West Berkshire is in the middle of the pack.

On transport, our roads have fully recovered from the floods and in general our roads are in a very good condition. In this Parish, Love Lane resurfacing is complete with the removal of the hated road humps and the installation of further build-outs to reduce traffic speeds particularly near Shaw-cum-Donnington School where there is now a safer place for children to cross the road. However, whatever you do, build-outs, humps or nothing it will receive adverse comment. Kingsley Close has been resurfaced and Dene Way will be resurfaced in September.

Following the floods there have been many flood prevention schemes. Just over the border there has been a scheme to prevent flooding at the cemetery and Cromwell Road. In the upper Lambourne there are several schemes some of which are aimed at storing flood water that will prevent the River Lambourne through this Parish rising to the same extent as it did a couple of years ago.

Both of our schools are ranked as “good” by OFSTED. However, Trinity has decided to be an academy and is therefore no longer the responsibility of the Council. In general our schools are performing well although their OFSTED gradings seem to wander but exam results put West Berkshire above average. There have been a number of extensions to schools and one has just gained planning permission at the Willows. A new junior school is expected to be built on the college site.

Work is well advanced on extending Superfast Broadband into the rural areas with the expectation it will reach 95% of premises by the end of 2017.

West Berkshire has weathered the economic downturn well but is now benefiting from the upturn.

Responsibility for local health prevention services was transferred to the Council from the NHS about a year ago. The aim is to break down the barriers between the NHS and social care. The areas that are now the Council’s responsibility include sexual health, alcohol and drug misuse, public mental health and dental public health. Although it is early days, the indications are that the changes are benefiting the public. Recent government changes have required us to provide care for those with “substantial” requirements in addition to those with “severe” needs. The government has not provided the Council with funding to meet this additional requirement and the Council is taking legal action with other councils to attempt to get funding. Although it is attractive to provide care for those with lesser problems, it is very expensive.

In planning our efforts have been to find places to build the remaining 2,700 houses to meet the target of at least 10,500 homes between 2006 and 2026. I reported on this process last year with the expectation that it would be resolved in December 2014. This has been delayed until the autumn. A short list of possible sites was produced but the response to the consultation resulted in 4000 responses with several thousand issues and these are taking a long time to analyse. The North Newbury site was rejected but the proposer has put in a planning application that should be determined in June or July. It is highly likely that it will be refused as being against policy – it is outside of the settlement boundary. It is likely that the applicant will appeal against the decision and the main argument will be whether the Council has a five-year supply of land for housing development. The Council is confident that there is such a supply.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment is progressing in partnership with other Berkshire councils. This has yet to report and may require an increase in the number of homes needed but unlikely to indicate a reduction. There is a continuing demand for housing with the ever-increasing population.

At last there is an approved planning application for the redevelopment of the Stirling Cable site for housing together with a two-way road from Sainsburys to Hambridge Road. The Market Street proposal is progressing and will provide a gateway into the town for rail travellers. This will mainly be a housing and car parking development. A redevelopment of the London Road Industrial Estate is progressing with the appointment of a partner; this will take some years to complete.

The Council Infrastructure Levy is now in place replacing the S106 for mitigating the effects of developments. Parish councils will receive a porting of the Levy for developments in their areas. Unfortunately it will result in a considerable reduction in funds for desirable developments in the areas of a development.

Our commons have now been passed to BBOWT (Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust) for management. The view is that they have a lot of expertise in looking after wild areas and have access to funding streams that the Council does not. This is proving a success and we are confident that the future of our commons and Snelsmore, in particular, are well assured.

In conclusion I hope I have been of help to the Parish during the year. It has been a pleasure to serve you.

During the past year my Council responsibilities have not changed and are:-  
Chairman Western Area Planning Committee  
Chairman of Transport Policy Task Group.

and a member of:

Planning Policy Task Group.

Newbury Town Task Group.

District Planning Committee.

Licensing Committee

Governance and Audit Committee.

Joint Personnel Committee (Deals with staff council relations).

Snelsmore Common Advisory Committee.

Outside duties have been:-

A Member of:

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

Greenham Trust.

Donnington Trust.

Speen, Shaw & Donnington Neighbourhood Action Group.

Harwell Site Stakeholders Group.

I have attended meetings of Shaw-cum-Donnington, Speen and Boxford parish councils.

136 **Resolutions**

No resolutions had been received

137 **Presentation by Arlene Kersley, CCB's Rural Housing Enabler for Berkshire**

Arlene gave a presentation, accompanied by slides on Rural Housing, Affordable Homes for Local People.

138 **Any Other Business**

There was no other business

139 There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.30pm