

Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting
held on Wednesday, 29th May 2024
at the School Green Centre commencing at 19.30

Present: Cllrs Clarke, Grimes, Jahromi, Jones, Lias, Masseron, Matic, Montgomery and Peer,

Attending: B Winton (Clerk)
S Herring (Deputy Clerk)
J Mason (Finance Manager)
Bllrs Bell and Gray
8 members the public

1 Apologies for Absence

1.1 No apologies had been received

2 Annual Report

2.1 To receive the Shinfield Parish Council Annual Report

The Chairman provided the Annual Report for 2024 as attached.

3 Questions on the Annual Report

3.1 There were no questions on the Annual Report.

4 Any other business or questions that electors, registered within the Parish, may wish to raise

4.1 There was no other business.

5 Date of the next meeting

5.1 The next meeting of the Annual Parish Meeting will be held in May 2024, date to be confirmed.



29/5/24

Chairman's Report to Annual Parish Meeting

29th May 2024

The Chairman's report was supported by a PowerPoint presentation the text of which is given below.

Introduction

We have about 30 minutes to tell you what we've been up to and what we are planning for the future. After that there will be a short break and then we will get into the quiz with a chance to win £250 for a local charity or organisation

A year ago, we introduced the SHINE concept and we have been continuing to include this in everything that we do

Developments in 2023/24

One area we have been developing is how we can make Shinfield Parish a better place to live. We do that through continuing to run our Annual Community Litter Pick and have also invested time and resources in work at Deardon Orchard.

The worn-out bollards on the School Green have been replaced and we recently replanted the oak tree on the School Green. In the next few weeks will be installing some additional decorative screens. All of these are aimed at making the School Green a more attractive location. This will help tie it into the new public space that will be built between the School Green Centre and Lidl's.

In April last year we took on the operation of the Manor Ground having signed a lease with the University of Reading. As a venue it is already well used for football and cricket as well as having a regular weekday hirer.

We are especially proud of our Friday Fun Days which run every Friday during School Holidays (including this Friday 31st May). These are completely free for anyone who wishes to attend (although donations are welcome) and there is no need to book.

At other times of the year, we have also been developing a Baby & Toddler Group.

It is all very well us beavering away as a council, but we do need to tell our residents about what we've been up to. In addition to these meetings, we issue an annual "hard copy" newsletter which goes to every household in the parish plus we also issue a monthly newsletter. If you haven't already signed up for this there is a sheet here so that you can do it tonight.

By signing up to the Newsletter you will hear about all our events including 'Rockin around the Christmas Tree' which is back again on Friday 6th December 2024.

A recent success has been the retendering and re-opening of the coffee shop here at the School Green Centre in conjunction with Crumbs Coffee.

Behind the scenes we continue to work away on a number of issues.

One of these is our Traffic Working Party which aims to work with Wokingham Borough Council to reduce the volume of traffic travelling through the parish and the speeds at which some of that

traffic moves. We helped influence Wokingham to introduce the 30mph speed limits in Three Mile Cross and Spencers Wood and extend the lower speed limit further along Hyde End Road. We will continue to push for other improvements that will make our roads safer for everyone.

On a practical level we have attracted new councillors to the council and in November 2023 for the first time in decades we reached our complement of 15 councillors. Each new councillor brings fresh thinking and ideas to the council. As a parish we are now represented by a total of six borough councillors following the elections earlier in the month. Each of those councillors, parish or borough is here to help you, as is the Clerk and his team.

One area that has become increasingly important to us is what we do for children and young adults in our community. The largest attendances at council meetings have been to do with either school buses or Oakbank School. On the former we continue to push Wokingham to ensure that they do everything they can for our students and we are currently arranging a meeting so that parents can speak directly with the relevant officers and councillors for the borough. For Oakbank School we have made it clear to the school and Wokingham that as a parish council we want to do what we can to help. We have written to the Department for Education to make it clear that we would like to see a clear plan for improving the school. Our overall aim is that the students of Shinfield have the same educational opportunities as any other student in the borough.

You would expect us to look after your money carefully and we do! We even finished the year ending 31st March ahead of where we had budgeted to be. We have developed a longer-term financial plan that builds in the things I'm about to tell you about and we know what we have to do to achieve that plan.

Our biggest income source is the precept which is our share of the Council Tax you pay. Last year we kept the increase to 5% increase when inflation was much higher. This year we set a 4.5% increase. The next big source of income comes from the room hires here at the School Green Centre, at Spencers Wood Pavilion and at the Manor Ground. We've been growing that business steadily and will continue to do so over the coming years. We have also been keeping the facilities in good condition and have recently redecorated the Grazeley room to keep the building fresh and attractive.

Which leads me very nicely to the most recent piece of good news for the council. The Royal Institute of British Architects holds an annual competition to consider the best new buildings in the country and I am very pleased to announce that the School Green Centre was a Regional Award winner.

Future developments in the parish

Having brought you up to date with what we have done, what's next for the council

In terms of making use of the School Green Centre, now would be a good time to tell you about the agreement we have recently signed with Shinfield Studios that will allow us to use the Ryeish Green Room here as a specially designed cinema space. We will have retractable seating with a maximum capacity of 80 seats and state of the art projection and sound systems. These are being provided at no cost to the parish council by Shinfield Studios to allow them to fulfil a planning obligation. It is our intention to use the equipment to show films to generate funds to reduce the pressure on the precept. Mostly these will be on Fridays where we tend to have room vacancies, but we will also be showing special film seasons at other times starting with our October "Singalong a Cinema".

As you can see in the top right-hand corner the room remains available for other activities.

Elsewhere in the parish the University's work at what will become the High Copse pavilion is developing well. As for the Manor Ground, this is something that will be transferred to the council to operate.

While High Copse will allow us to better meet the demand for football and cricket in the parish we are also conscious that there is a demand for other sports which is why we have been developing our own plans for the refurbishment of Millworth Lane.

The following gives a flavour of what will shortly be included in our planning application.

Millworth Lane sports park

- We will be extending the size of the main car park to make sure that the pressures on the Millworth Lane itself are reduced
- The Pavilion will be refurbished to provide better toilet facilities for those using the facilities
- There will be what is called a traverse climbing wall which will be free to use at all times
- There will be two courts for netball and basketball as well as a 3g court which is 5-a-side sized
- We hope to rent some space out to a personal fitness trainer
- There will be a pump track for cyclists
- Using the spoil that we dig out we will also create an event space for potential community use
- Initially we will be adding in two padel tennis courts on a pay as you go basis
- Connecting all of these will be a running track which will be illuminated by solar powered bollards

Some of these facilities will be "pay as you go" to earn money for the council but we will also work with the schools to allow them to use the facilities and our budget plans also allow for sports co-ordinators to help establish new sports clubs in the parish that can then go on to hire the facilities as well.

Another major upcoming event will be 'Shinfield Art Showcase' here at the School Green Centre in February 2025. We recently put out our first invitation for expressions of interest from artists and in the first few days have received over 20 such expressions. We will also be working with groups such as Arts4Wokingham and MoreArts. Also look out for opportunities to participate in a collaborative art project that will be on display at the exhibition.

Some other ways that we will be contributing to improvements in the parish are:

1 – We will continue to run our Annual Grant Scheme and have recently launched the 2024 round for which we have up to £30,000 available this year

2 – Like many people we were very disappointed in Wokingham's decision to close the community flat at Frensham Green. We do want to increase our presence in the north of the parish and so we will be working with them on the Healthy Activity and Food (HAF) event on the 1st August.

3 – As part of making the parish a more interesting place to live we will be looking at opportunities for Public Art in the parish using a mix of developers funds and other fund raising

4 – We will continue to maintain a focus on Education provision within the parish

5 – We will also continue to provide financial and operational support to Spencers Wood Carnival

6 – We are just about to embark on a project to explore what options are open to use across all our buildings to make more use of sources of microgeneration such as solar panels, ground source heat pumps and any other viable options. We already get 40% of our electricity for this building from solar panels and there is more that we can achieve.

That is just a flavour of what we are planning but we want this to be something we do with our residents NOT to them!

You can get involved by keeping up to date with what we are doing through our newsletter or coming along to any of our meetings. There is always an opportunity to ask questions. Finally, we are here to help, and you can just ask one of your councillors or the Clerk and his team. Just the other day the Clerk was able to help a couple of residents who are having difficulty with their management company and are considering forming their own Residents Association.

Thank you for listening!