



**Annual Parish Meeting of the parish of Ogbourne St George
In the Village Hall, Thursday 9th May at 19:30pm**

Chairman's Report

Councillors have once again given freely of their time and effort for another year, to serve the community, with some notable results.

Parish Plan: Councillors have helped the Parish Plan team, which has done great work through 2012 and 2013. The survey that went to all parishioners had a response rate of almost 50%, which is very good for any survey. The responses highlighted four key areas: Traffic, Leisure, Local shop, and Renewables.

Traffic: The Traffic Action Group, led by Wendy Reardon Smith, has produced an excellent report on the Traffic Calming Measures that can be applied. That plan is available to all on the village website, in the Community Parish plan section. Meetings with Wiltshire Highways were positive, and we hope they will deliver on their promises of action in 2013.

Chapel Gardens has a problem with parking that creates considerable inconvenience to residents so it is proposed to create a parking area in front of the bungalows.

The PC is consulting with residence of Bottom Lane on how to improve traffic in that area.

Community Speed Watch : This moves slowly – we still have at least six volunteers waiting for training from Wiltshire Police. But the trainer left and the equipment is currently not available. A second Traffic Census confirmed there are a significant number of drivers ignoring the speed limit. However Wiltshire police are now excited about community support, so we may see movement. In the meantime, PC Tibbetts and others are conducting spot checks.

Leisure: The Playground by the village hall is in need of improvement. The Bell Field remains a village asset, but access problems prevent it from being used by the school.

Local shop: Much interest was expressed in having a shop in the village again. A special meeting was held in the School Hall. Some 60 parishioners attended, with a large majority in favour of supporting a village shop. There is now a proposal from Damien Convey to build a shop on the Bytham Road. The PC is waiting to see the detailed application.

Renewables: Cllrs Kevin, Ineke and Keith, plus ex-Cllr Paul Rouse are the team. We are keen to not only be a resource for information (e.g. grants available), but also Demonstration Sites so that people can get hands-on experience of renewable in action.

Village Hall: The hall is a still a focal point for the whole community, especially the pre-school classes. The old lease expired some time ago, but renewing it is complicated by two leases with two separate organisations. Timothy George has persevered with the Diocese, the PCC, and various solicitors to try and unravel the tangle. In the short term, we have agreed to renew the lease for the village hall. But the legal costs for the leases are much higher than initially estimated. Hence the Precept increase from £4750 to £6500. In the long term, everyone recognises we need a much improved Hall, which will need serious fund raising. Maddy Cole deserves recognition for the work she put into that subject. It is hoped that over the next four years, a new Village Hall committee will be established, funds for a new hall can be raised, along with acquiring the freehold and establishing a new charity to own and run it.

Planning and Highways: This past year has seen some exceptional planning applications, not least the Pooles Yard and Jubbs Lane developments proposals. Pooles Yard has been approved as mixed housing (15 houses), with some community benefits (a village green opposite The Parklands). The proposed Jubbs Lane development offered the village a considerable amount of land for leisure activities. The proposal was presented at a Public Meeting. But after much discussion with parishioners the PC rejected the application, and this was later withdrawn by the applicants.

Housing Needs Survey: This was a survey conducted for the PC by Wiltshire, to find out what affordable housing is needed in the parish. That covers low-cost freehold and rented accommodation. It concluded that up to six new rented houses were needed for the next few years. This helped guide the PC on housing development. The PC is also

keeping a register of local people who want rented or low-cost housing in the village. Three names are on the list so far. These should be given priority by whichever housing association is involved with the Pooles Yard affordable housing.

Pothole and road works: Timothy George has lead for the PC and submitted a long list of issues to be addressed around the village; various potholes, Bytham Road, Church Lane etc. Timothy has met with the Highways Authority on site to review the list and prioritise our requirements. It might be said that Highways is slow to respond, probably because of budget cuts, but we continue to prompt them for action.

Street lighting : We have discovered that since the formation of Wiltshire Unitary Authority we have not been receiving the Pathway Lighting Grant. We have received a refund of £298 for both 2012-13 and 2013-14. Thanks to Richard Iliffe, we now have a complete list of the lights we own and a list of issues, and he has got SSE fixing the problems. An audit of lighting assets has been performed and added to the asset register.

Footpaths: Our linesman does good maintenance on the footpaths that are easily accessible, but there are many more in this parish. We have applied to PIGS (Pathways Improvement Grant Scheme) for a grant to improve the condition of the path from the High Street to Bell Field. Dick Millard (from the Friends of the Railway Path (FRP)) recently gave us an excellent talk on activities along the path. They have defined 16 projects for the path, and projects 8 to 10 are in Ogbourne St George. Details are in the previous PC minutes, they will be looking for volunteers. See <http://www.friendsofthepath.org.uk/>

If you know of problems with footpaths, styles and fences, please let me know.

Litter: Previously, we had an occasional Litter Picking Party, and 20 or so villagers would scour the village for Litter Hotspots. Now, we have a regular Litter Patroller - Dave Child – and he deserves our thanks for his generous voluntary work. More volunteers are welcome – the Council can provide more equipment.

Coronation Gardens: The bench has been replaced – thanks to a grant the PC got from the Marlborough Area Board. Thanks also to Cliff Freeman for installing it, and to Earthline who rebuilt the wall. Members of the community have volunteered to improve the planting. We could use more involvement like this and the Council can contribute.

Feedback from parishioners: Parishioners have given the PC very positive feedback on the current distribution of roles and responsibilities among councillors. It makes sure that at least one councillor has a good understanding of all major topics/issues before meetings. It also means that fewer issues are deferred to later meetings because councillors need time to understand the issues.

Parishioners have also told the council they think the council is much improved and 'cleaned up'. This was endorsed with applause from the public in attendance at the last meeting. A good part of this cleanup was the work started by Keith Wallace. The PC has adopted new financial procedures, standing orders, and improved policies and procedures.

We're continuing the effort to improve communication, with much more content on the village website, and more regular contributions to The Dragon Newsletter. For which we owe thanks to Megan and Andy for editing and publishing it every month.

Changes in personnel: Keith Wallace and Richard Iliffe have now retired as councillors, and our previous Clerk (Cliff Freeman) has departed after 33 years employment. We thank them all for the positive contributions they've made over the years.

We're very grateful for Kevin Howard bridging the gap as Acting Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. We now have our new clerk, Angelina Grieve, which coincides with the elections, and the arrival of our new councillors, Ineke Scott, Michelle Cook, and Gordon Mudge.

We all look forward to working with Angelina and our new councillors over the next four years, and continuing to serve our parish and community.