

**MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 6 May 2009 AT THE CHURCH HALL
PILGRIMS WAY, CHEW STOKE
AT 8PM**

PRESENT: Mrs G Slater (GS) - Chairman
Mr D Thompson (DT) - Vice-Chairman

COUNCILLORS: Mrs A Cunningham (AC), Mr A Hawkins (AH), Mr A Troup (AT), Mrs H Padfield (HP), Mr G Knight (GK), Cllr M Hanney (MH), Ms C Wood (CW) Clerk

PARISHIONERS: 7 Parishioners

APOLOGIES: Mrs J Brown (JB) and

1. READ AND CONFIRM THE MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2008 were agreed and signed as a true record. Although the Parishioners unfortunately had the minutes from the 2007 meeting!!

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Nothing to report.

**3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the 2009 APM for the parish of Chew Stoke. The order of events this evening is first to deal with the minutes from last year's APM and then there are five separate reports including my report as Chairman (as set out in the Agenda).

For those of you who do not know me, I am Gillie Slater and am Chair of the PC. Introduction of Councillors and our clerk is Carol Wood.

My first task this evening is to thank all the councillors for their hard work and support over the last 12 months; and a special thank you to Dennis for covering for me when I have been away on holiday. Also, I would like to express publicly the PC's thanks to Ian Bell, who retired from the PC recently after a number of years on the council.

Thanks also to Malcolm Hanney whose advice and "clout" within B&NES has been invaluable.

Finally a very special thank you to Carol, who works tirelessly as our Parish Clerk.

REPORT

This has been my first year as Chair and only my second year on the PC; and it has been an interesting year. The summary of the main events, the highlights if you like are:

1. We now have a small **Parish office** at Fairseat. This has enabled us to bring together the parish records for the first time in a long while and so information is more readily available for the councillors and our clerk. It is also a good working space for Carol. The improved storing of records is particularly helpful when dealing with planning applications as previous applications can be referred to. It is not acceptable to depend upon Councillors, a former Chairman and our clerk giving up space in a garage or a spare bedroom as has been the case in the recent past.
2. You will have seen, I hope, the recent **green leaflet** in which we have tried to let you know who we are and what we do. We hope that you find this useful. What we do is very varied – ranging from asking B&NES to come and unblock drains and gullies and fill in pot holes to commenting on sometimes complex planning applications or draft strategy and policy statements sent to us by B&NES. I feel very strongly along with the rest of the PC that we need to communicate this sort of information to our parishioners in better ways so as to reach more parishioners and, through that better communication, help to make our parish an even better place to live. We hope to come up with more ideas along these lines – and we are currently working on a new **website** for the parish – watch out for more news on this.
3. Just over a year ago we signed up with a new **cleaning/gardening contractor** (Hugo King) and we have been pleased with the results. We will be working closely with Hugo and his team to ensure we present our best side to the judges of the Village of the Year competition (entry going in at the end of May and judging in the second half of June and July).
4. **The ford/stream** – our usual problems with the stream were exacerbated by someone dumping a lot of rubble and spoil in the stream and the gulley. As some of you may recall, we had a village clean up the stream morning which showed wonderful community spirit and the spoil was moved down-stream of the ford. This year, partly due to the Village of the Year competition and partly because it was needed in any event, we decided to get both sides of the stream and the gulley cleared (and this work was done last Saturday). We hope that the riparian owners and villagers generally will try to keep the channels clear – as silt flows through of its own accord save in extreme weather and it is only stopped from doing this when larger bits of debris start to block the channels.

5. **Recreational areas** – there have been new/replacement litter bins and benches (really outside the recreational areas) and we had the remainder of the Quarry Hay footpath tarmaced.

Our 2 recreational areas have both been well used this year. There was a lot of activity in Rectory Field when we had our heavy snow and the field was also used by the Primary School for their Fun Run and Sports Day. We have planted some new trees in Rectory Field and have started some necessary work on some of the existing trees.

In 2008 we successfully applied for a grant to replace the old swings, install the safety barriers and make good some of the safe surfaces at the Bilbie Road play area - this work was carried out last June. We also added an additional litter bin in the play area and we have been really pleased with how clean and tidy the area has been kept. Our only concern is an increase in dog fouling (I will mention this in a minute).

The slide in the Bilbie Road play area will have to be replaced in 2010 – to comply with new regulations; we have applied for a grant to fund the new slide but if we are not successful then we will have to fund any new slide from the precept.

The only other thing of note is that we have had an inspection of all the trees carried out and quite a bit of work has been identified – nothing has really been done for some years and so work is needed partly to remove one or two dead trees and branches and partly for good husbandry so that the trees continue to give us pleasure for many years to come. Some of this work has been carried out (Bilbie Road play area) and the rest of the work (in Rectory Field) will be done over the next 12 months.

Dog mess – seems to be a growing problem at the moment especially in Rectory Field and we are looking into asking the B&NES dog wardens to make some unannounced visits to Rectory Field over the coming months and adding a sign or signs at the entrances to the field (and one at the Bilbie Road play area emphasising that dogs are not allowed in the play area).

6. **The airport** – in December last year we were given a presentation by James Gore and Mike Littleton (from BIA) all about the proposed planning application (now submitted) for the expansion of buildings on the airport site. The presentation was interesting and informative. The airport is not in our parish and so we have no formal role as regards the planning application but we did voice our concern with our guests about the increase in traffic coming from areas south of the Chew Valley and going through our village and other villages in the valley to reach the airport. If the numbers of passengers increases it follows that this traffic will increase proportionately. Our guests confirmed that they would be meeting with B&NES to discuss such subjects – but we have nothing more concrete to report so far.

- 7. Planning** – it was generally a reasonably quiet year compared with the previous year. The majority of applications are supported by the PC and are granted by B&NES – but when assessing any application our planning sub-committee follow (as they must) the rules and principles set out in the Local Plan including those relating to Green Belt , AONB and Conservations Areas, as appropriate. Special thanks to Joanna Brown for working very hard in her role of Chair of the planning sub-committee. Applications of note were the wind turbine and later the new sixth form block for Chew Valley School – which did at least result in the school realising that they are in CS and not in CM! By the way, I hope you have noticed the new village signs on the main roads in and out of the village – the one on Chew Lane has been moved to the far side of the school (the correct parish boundary) just to clarify this. Different regime – pre-application meetings with planning officer; changes in the way B&NES handles enforcement; development plan and spatial strategy etc.

Enforcement – we have had a frustrating time with the enforcement officers at B&NES. They have been hampered by under-staffing (although this has now changed) and have been extremely disappointing in terms of keeping in touch with us and moving matters forward. The only item I intend to mention specifically is the smoking shelter outside the Yew Tree Inn, which was erected without planning consent. The planning officer allowed the owners to make a retrospective application for consent (normal practice) and this application was made eventually but was refused by B&NES (and the PC did object). The owners have now appealed that decision to the Secretary of State (as is their right) and we are in the middle of that process.

- 8. Radfords** – the credit crunch has changed and complicated things and we are not much further forward than we were this time last year, in some ways. The position is that the planning for the houses, employment units and community building has been granted subject to the completion of a planning agreement. This agreement is still being negotiated but we are hopeful that it is now close to being completed. You have all seen the sales office and Charles Church intend to build 20 houses this year – the 12 affordable homes and 8 others. They say they want to get going with the work just as soon as the planning agreement has been completed. We had a competition to choose the names of the main road in the development and the side road into the employment units and the community building – the result is that the main road will be called “Dairy Way” and the side road will be called “Bell Lane”. There is no definite news about the surgery save that the Chew Magna doctors and their representatives are still in talks with Charles Church.
- 9. Footpaths** – much time was spent by councillors on the diversion of the Long House, Church Lane footpath which also included the designation of another stretch of footpath as a “formal” footpath.

After much deliberation the PC concluded that it was happy with the proposals and so, when the formal application for the diversion was made, the PC did not object. However, the Open Spaces Society did object and so the matter went to committee at B&NES; the committee dismissed the objection but the Open Spaces Society have now appealed to the Secretary of State – not sure why they feel we need to be "protected" in this way but it is out of our hands now. We have been told today that the Open Spaces Representative has withdrawn their objection so this has now been passed. We are also trying to make progress with the un-registered footpath behind the school off Chew Lane to get it designated as a footpath – as many of you know, this has been pending for many years and B&NES have just not dealt with it; we think we could see progress on this over the coming month or so.

10. **Highways** – speeding has been the main issue along with the volume of traffic. We debate this problem constantly and the only clear conclusion is that there are really no easy answers. We are doing the best we can to work with the highway officers from B&NES. What has happened is that, as a result of the PC raising the issue at a PACT meeting, speeding in the area was given some priority for a while – we had the police with speed cameras on an intermittent basis on Stoke Hill and Walley Court Road and a flashing sign on Walley Court Road for a time. Sadly, we understand that this will not continue. We will have a report on police matters from Paul Cornelius on behalf of Glen Lord and I will leave it to him give you any further information that is available.

We have had a problem from time to time with inconsiderate parking along Pilgrims Way when dropping and collecting children attending the Primary School. We have had extra bollards put in to stop the parking on the pavement (that can force children and mothers with pushchairs to walk in the road) and our community police officers have "spoken" to a number of drivers. The section where children cross from Quarry Hay has been the real problem – if cars park over or very close to that area it reduces visibility greatly and makes it much more hazardous to cross there. Our dilemma is that we really do not want to put in large signs to try to deal with this problem – they tend to ruin our delightfully rural village – and so what B&NES are going to do is to paint a different surface on the road in that area to mimic a sort of crossing. The same will be done with the section of Pilgrims Way further up where there is no pavement. It is hoped that these markings will make drivers more aware of the fact that they need to look out for pedestrians in these two places.

Stoke Hill traffic calming scheme – B&NES highways found money for this project unexpectedly right at the end of the last financial year and the traffic calming work will be carried out, we believe, at the end of May. A section of the road from the Breach Hill Road junction going up Stoke Hill will be narrowed so that it is one lane only and we are hopeful that this will slow down traffic on Stoke Hill. The work will mean

that the missing section of pavement is put in. No scheme that makes the general street scene more cluttered with signs and concrete is ideal but we have concluded that the situation with speeding cars is so bad that we have to give priority to the safety of pedestrians, especially children who need to walk up and down Stoke Hill to school.

Question: Is the pavement going to extend down to Woodford Lodge

Answer: Not at present – it was felt that if the traffic builds up entering Stoke Hill this could cause an accident.

Question: Could we request if the 30mph sign could be moved further down and the 40mph have wording warning that the 30mph is imminent.

Weight restriction on A368 (at Churchill/Burrington)– we have been concerned about this along with other villages – Winford and Chew Magna in particular. It seems to be a scheme (devised and operated by North Somerset) that has not been thought through well and, whilst, there has been some benefit to the relatively short section of the A368, it does appear from the monitoring that there has been a substantial increase in HGV traffic through the B roads of the Chew Valley. We have objected strongly to the scheme (which is still temporary) as have other villages and also B&NES (as the road in question is in North Somerset). Malcolm has been very active on this point. We do not know how this one will turn out at the moment.

3 year capital highways programme – this has been forwarded to us recently by B&NES in draft form for comments and we have objected in strong terms to the lack of mention of the last section of the Bristol Road footpath and also further traffic calming on Walley Court Road. We will continue to pursue all of this as vigorously as we can.

GOING FORWARD

Whilst this is primarily a report on the last 12 months, I would like to add a few words about plans for this coming year and beyond.

First, we will be entering the **Village of the Year competition** – and thank you to Dennis for working so hard on this over the last few months. I hope you have all received the flyer that we have prepared giving details of this – we have more available if anyone needs one. I hope that the competition will be great for increasing the community spirit in the village and just having some fun – lets hope we have a good summer as everything looks so much better in the sunshine! All ideas relating to this are most welcome – please contact our clerk or Dennis.

Highways will continue to be the hot topic – we will be working on the possibility of a traffic calming scheme on Walley Court Road and the completion of the Bristol Road pavement (dependent on the landowners affected agreeing to give up the land that is needed for this).

The overall themes, apart from more of the same on all the usual topics, are **communication and participation**. It will be very interesting to see how we fare with the new website. We have also tried to improve the PC notice-board at the garage shop and generally provide more information to parishioners.

We will have an opportunity for questions from the floor at the end of all of the reports and so please hold on for a little bit if you do have a question – you will be glad to hear that my report is the longest (at least I expect it is!).

4. FINANCIAL REPORT – Ali Cunningham

I am part of the Finance Committee within the PC and we have the job of budgeting each year and setting the precept.

At the end of 2008/09 financial year we were happy that our initial forecast had been pretty accurate.

The financial sheet you have fully explains the amounts we predicted we would need, what we actually spent and our predictions for the coming year. The first column is the budget figures we decided on in February, and the fourth column the actual amount paid. Column 5 shows the over/under spend and the 6th column are the budgets decided for 2009/10.

The **Village cleaning** cost was set at £5500 last year as we were unsure of the contractor who would be taking over the cleaning contract. However, there was not a major increase and the cost was well under by £1558.

Rectory Field Grass Cutting – has been approx £800 for the last few years.

Clerks Salary and Expenses - Salary is paid at the set rate, but there was slight increase in expenses to cover printing, stationery etc.

There was a contingency sum of £500 for **Rectory Field**, which we did not spend, but did spend the £1000 on tree planting and maintenance. We received £200 from our insurers for a damaged bench.

The Stream budget of £1500 for clearance and maintenance was all used.

Only £500 spent up to March – more cleaning has been carried out since, but obviously this expense will reflect in this current years accounts.

Bilbie Road Play Area – No fencing or tree maintenance was included or carried out. The new equipment was allowed for, the budget of £6000 was slightly more than required. The inspection fee included was not required as B&NES has decided not to charge for this service, and also the £320 allowed for the new litter bin has actually been included in the section below "Benches".

The **Audit fee** was slightly higher this year and the **Insurance** slightly lower. **Hall Hire** is the monthly fee paid for the use of the hall for our meetings. There were no additional costs for **Printing and stationery**, as Carol did all printing herself which was covered by the clerk's expenses.

We made our usual contributions of £75 to the **parish magazine**, £50 to **CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England)** and £188 to **ALCA (Avon Local Council Association)**. **The Benches** total was slightly under budgeted here, but if you recall we did allow £320 under the play area section for a new bin. We have replaced the bin at the bus stop on Bristol road, added a bin in the play area and positioned another by the village map. We have replaced the bench by the stream in Pilgrims Way and the bus stop bench on Bristol Road.

The £1000 under **Footpath Maintenance** was the cost of the new tarmac surface on the Quarry hay path.

We only required £330 of the £500 budget for **General Repairs** and this covered the installation of the benches and bins, and also the replacement of a wooden gate post at the entrance to Rectory Field. The **Contingency Sum and Councillor Expenses** were not used. The **Parish Office** has been a valuable addition this year. Initially we were just renting a small space for storage. We now have an office where Carol can work and much more storage space. As these additional cost were not predicted, we did under budget by £864. So at the bottom of this page you can see that our expenditure budget for 08/09 was £24,408 and actual spend was £20,404. On page 2 are the details of the income. The bulk of our income comes from the **Precept** received from B&NES. The total of £11,000 was received. A further £3196 was received for **village cleaning** - £96 more than expected. We anticipated the **grant towards the play equipment** to be £5000, however we only received £3846 . The bank **interest received** and the **VAT refund** was also slightly less than predicted. Therefore, our anticipated income was down by £1096, which reduces our total to £3022. This gave us a balance of £7602 in the bank – which is slightly more than we have had before, but the guidelines advise we keep a bank balance of approximately 6 months precept to cover for anything major , like storm or flood damage for instance, that we may not be able to claim for under our insurance. So as you can see there are as many items that we save on as there are items that we have to spend more than anticipated. As I am sure you are all well aware, we have been forced to increased the precept for 2009/10 , and to explain this increase we have detailed this in the end column. As you will see, alot of the figures are similar to what is put into the budget every year, but there are some items which have been increased and added, so I thought I would just high light these :- We have been quoted £3876 for the **treework required in Rectory Field** – apart from some minor works and extra tree planting, no major maintenance of the trees has been carried out for a number of years. We felt that we needed to leave the **Stream clearance** costs at £1500 as we hope to clear the stream on a more regular basis – maybe upto 3 times during the year. **Contingecies and General Repairs** have been increased by £500 each, as we are well aware that costs are increasing for most things, and considered that this would be prudent. **The Parish Office** expenses have been included this time – a total of £1267 for the year – again an additional cost, but a well needed resource. And finally a figure of £1000 to cover costs relating to our entry into **The village of the Year** competition. However, Dennis who is co-ordinating our entry was not present when this was proposed, and has said that he is doubtful that that sum will be required, so this will be carried forward to next year if unspent. So our predicted outgoings for 09/10 will be £20,377. With the **precept raised** to £15,000 and the cleaning budget of £3200 from B&NES, plus the other smaller amounts due, we will receive £18,400. A deficit of almost £2000, but we have sufficient funds in reserve.

5. POLICE REPORT – Paul Cornelius

PC Glenn Lord sent his apologies as he retires next week. A replacement Beat Manager is awaited. Paul Cornelius read out crime figures for the whole of the Valley for last financial year. Last quarter of 09 and increase in criminal damage (car breakage) valley wide increase – someone now has been arrested for 7 of these offences. 31.6% last year. New Policing Pledge.

Speeding – safety camera partnership Parish Council needs to contact them and keep on to ensure that they visit our village. Contact through the police website. Dog Warden – Police contacted to ensure they visit the villages. No Cold Calling Zone – mentioned at the PACT meeting with mixed reaction – which also affects Church Collections etc as well. Ring the 0845 number of the PCSO's and someone will be sent out to deal with it. Suggested that the Groups within the village are visited by the PCSO's to explain about No Cold Calling Zone. Parking on the pavements which has hopefully now been rectified and will make things easier when the road markings are in place and tickets will be issued if they break the law. On 14 May speed cameras will be around.

6. NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH – MRS JENNY IRESON

Mrs Ireson was unable to attend the meeting so her report was read out by GS (Chairman)

Firstly I would like to record my personal thanks to Glenn Lord for all the help he has given to myself in Neighbourhood Watch matters and to Roy in his work with the Chew Valley Action Group and the PACT meetings. We both wish Glenn a happy retirement.

As he will have explained, the crime figures in the Chew Valley have risen a little but compared to other areas, they are still very low. This is largely due to some excellent work by the personnel on the Chew Valley North beat, led by Glenn.

We are lucky to live in a relatively crime free area but it does mean that Neighbourhood Watch is not as close to the front of our minds as it perhaps should be during this recession. Contacts for the village *are* receiving more warnings from the Police. There have been break-ins in the area and cars have been broken into, with doors wrenched open in Chew Magna, and yet some of us *still* leave valuables on show.

Cold callers are trying to be more subtle. Offenders showed an I.D. card at one home. They claimed to be installing a washing machine next door and said that they had to lower the water pressure. One suspect led the resident into the kitchen where he ran the taps and pulled out the washing machine. While this was happening the other culprit removed property from the location.

This is a slight change of tack from the usual waterboard method.

We are asked to pass this message on to all elderly or vulnerable neighbours, friends or relatives, and recommend that no entry is allowed to anyone they do not know.

We are ALL asked to be extra careful to secure our homes and property and help to bring those crime figures back down.

7. REPORT ON UNITED CHARITIES- Hilary Padfield

Annual meeting took place on 24th of November 2008 at 3 Quarry Hay.

Those present were:-

Mrs Hilary Padfield

Mrs May Witt

Mrs Gillian Wring

Mrs Mel Jameson

The Current account at the date of the meeting stood at £165 (this was the interest earned)

This year there were 6 beneficiaries who were given £25 each which left (at that time) a balance of £15 to be carried forward for next year.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Vacancy for Councillor – We currently have a Vacancy, please let the Parish Clerk know if you are interested.

Ended at 9.10pm