

*Approved*

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 24 April 2007 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

**Present:** Mr D A Bamforth – Chairman  
Mrs S J Bell – Clerk  
25 members of the public  
Mr Gerald Coteman, Focus Group (Parish Plan)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Sheila Saberton (dominoes)

**Matters Arising:** There were none

## **PARISH PLAN**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Gerald Coteman, Focus Group – Parish Plan who gave a presentation on the recent survey results for compilation of the Parish Plan. When comparing results with the survey undertaken for the Village Appraisal of 2000/1 there was evidence of similar trends. Priority issues were still speeding traffic, improvement in facilities at the Village Hall and public transport issues – also affecting access to health care.

Recycling, protection and maintenance of public rights of way, and support for winter closure of droves were also of some significance in the vast majority of peoples' minds. 62% of the household survey questionnaires were completed and returned and 55% of the personal survey returns were completed and returned. 77.5% of households had completed and returned the questionnaires in the previous survey.

80% of respondents felt safe from crime and there was support for good neighbour schemes. 90% wanted dog waste facilities. 82% against 2 weekly refuse collection. 92% felt streets were in good condition but bus shelter and verges require attention.

Two thirds of respondents use Village Hall. What's On was important for 85% of respondents. 57% supported village shop facility at the Village Hall and 40% supported fast food van. However 85% did not respond to questions about Post Office which is provided at the Village Hall one morning a week. Good support for keep fit and leisure facilities at the Village Hall. 75% said pub was important, however 44% rarely visit and 19% never visit.

St Martins Church is important for worship for 24% of respondents and 87% felt it was important for historical reasons, and 54% as a focal point. 50% say important for weddings and funerals. 97% not interested in involvement with Parish Council.

The Chairman thanked Mr Coteman. Mr D Hill, Chairman of the Parish Plan Working Party advised that there would now follow a consultation period during May so that people could comment on the plan which would be forwarded to Mr Coteman to pull together for final document.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hill for leading the group and all his hardwork.

## **RECREATION GROUND AND DEVELOPMENTS TO SUPPORT VILLAGE HALL FACILITIES**

Chairman gave a report on recent activities to acquire the land at the rear of 2 and 2a Martins Lane following recent opportunity presented by the builder at 2a Martins Lane. The Council is responding to the Auditors to ensure correct and lawful procedures are followed and it is hope it will soon be possible to swap the land at rear of 2 and 2a Martins Lane for the verge subject to covenants.

Mr Lucas asked if the trees in the verge could all be preserved. The Chairman said the ECDC Tree Officer had suggested covenants be included as part of the contract but builder would like to remove one tree which the Tree Officer accepts subject to a replacement being planted within the curtilage of the property. The Chairman said he hoped shrubs would be planted in the verge by the fence.

## **ANNUAL REPORT AND SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS 2006/7**

The Chairman introduced the report, which had been circulated at the meeting. A copy to be circulated to each householder. He thanked the Councillors for all their hard work over the past term of office; Mark Wilkin, Paul Chambers and Don Saberton would not seek re-election. He paid special tribute to Don who had made a valued contribution in his services to the village for 30/35 years. The village owed a huge debt of gratitude to him - council, cricket, village hall, mowing - always willing to help everyone. Three Councillors, David Saberton,

Chris Watson and himself will serve for another term and casual vacancies will be advertised to fill the three vacancies in due course.

The Chairman highlighted various items in the report and gave further explanation – in particular he was pleased that the Council had been accredited with Quality Parish Council Status. He thanked Sue Bell, Parish Council Clerk, for her work in guiding the Council and putting together the portfolio. This accreditation demonstrates the Council's efforts to perform to a prescribed standard, encourage public involvement in parish issues and keep everyone informed of the Parish Council's activities. It should enable the Council to have control of more affairs in the future.

Next year the Council will focus on issues highlighted in the Parish Plan. The cemetery is getting full but the Council is unable to secure any of the adjoining land at present. The Council intends to support St Martin's Church which needs to replace the central heating system and hopes to improve facilities to encourage more community use.

### **PRECEPT 2007/8**

The Precept had been held at £9000.

### **ANNUAL REPORTS FROM VILLAGE GROUPS**

Bowls Club. Mr Nigel Pate reported a year of much activity with club nights and league matches.

Cricket Club. Mr Nigel Pate reported the 1<sup>st</sup> team had been relegated and there had been several injuries. He thanked the Council for the nets which had been erected and the club was working out the problems with those concerned regarding positioning of the nets.

Chairman reported that there was an interest in setting up an archery group in the Village Hall.

Neighbourhood Watch. Mrs Diane Scotting reported there had been a few burglaries recently and urged everyone seeing anything suspicious to contact the police immediately and to keep the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators informed. Useful if Mrs Scotting could be advised when police surgeries are planned in the village.

Archive Group. Mr John Wells reported the Group had obtained funding for a camera and laptop. He was hoping to set up a new website accessed via [www.witcham.org.uk](http://www.witcham.org.uk). John Wells and George Hollis are available to assist anyone wanting to use computers.

Youth Club. Chairman reported that Village Hall had been booked for a programme of activities from now until November.

### **ANY OTHER PARISH BUSINESS**

Mrs Mydatt reported noise nuisance at the Elean Business Park, car and motorbike racing. To be referred to Council.

Droves. Chairman reported that the County Council work on cutting back Bury Road had been extensive, clearing shrubs, trees to a width of up to 50 feet. This was contrary to Parish Council support and a site meeting was being arranged with Senior Rights of Way Officer. Members of the public asked if the 'byway' status could be amended.

The Chairman thanked Mr Alan White and Mrs Brenda Daters for the support to Witcham over the years as District Councillors. Alan had served on the District Council since its formation in 1974. The County Council representative, Mr Philip Bailey, had moved away and the elections on 3 May 2007 will be to fill 2 District and 1 County Council positions.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Chairman ..... Dated .....