

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL *NEWSLETTER*



Winter 2005/6

Dear Parishioners

Welcome to this first edition of the newsletter from your Council.

You may be wondering why we have decided to produce a newsletter when we already publish information on the noticeboards, the website - www.witcham.org.uk, and from time to time the monthly "What's On" delivered to each home in the village. Well, we have decided to apply for Quality Parish Council status, which is really a must for every Council to achieve now. It enables councils to work more closely with others in the delivery of local services and better represent the community. It provides a benchmark for standards. I am also delighted to report that our Parish Clerk successfully achieved the Certificate in Local Council Administration in August, and this will facilitate the Council moving forward to acquire Quality Parish Council status.

Our newsletter will be published on a quarterly basis and we hope that you will find it useful and informative.

Yours
Ashley Bamforth
Chairman

The Council has set the Precept for 2006/7 at £9000. This is a rise of £460, the first rise in two years. ECDC advise that based on Band D property the total Council Tax this will be approximately £1255 per annum.

Village Development Plans

The Council recognises that a new village development plan is needed, the previous one was completed 1999. The Council has been building up reserves to help with future development eg for improvements at the village hall. The Council will be looking to parishioners to join a working party to develop the plan. *It's your Village!*

The Council is also mindful that the cemetery is nearing capacity and needs to look at options to provide facilities for burials for the future. Obviously with limited income the Council feels it must take steps to set aside funds for this now. At the present time we are told there are no sources of funding to help us with extending the cemetery or opening a new one. Accordingly we are aiming to set aside £3000 this year.

What does the Parish Council do?

1. Direct responsibilities:

- *parish cemetery*
- *recreation ground/play areas and equipment*
- *street lighting*
- *grounds maintenance*
- *bus shelter*
- *village sign*
- *noticeboards*

2. Consultative Body

- *Planning*
- *District, County Council, National Policy*

3. Making sure some other bodies live up to their responsibilities.

Street Lighting

All street lights, except the light on the village hall drive and the four in Headleys Lane, have now been adopted by the County Council. This has reduced our costs considerably over recent years and indeed we have recently contracted with the County Council to provide energy and maintenance services for our remaining lights at a reduced cost.

Traffic Calming

Unfortunately there has been no response from anyone to lead the proposed Speedwatch scheme following the public meeting last April. The Council is still keen to support this scheme and would be pleased to hear from anyone willing to lead a working party and report back to the Council.

Two bids to the Jointly Funded Minor Highways Improvements Programme 2006 for funds to reduce speed through the village and complete the cycleway route between Sutton and Ely by linking the 1.5km between Witcham Toll and Wentworth came bottom of the list once again! The Council will keep trying and looking out for other funding initiatives to complete these projects.

Public Rights of Way

The Council has joined the County Council's Parish Paths Partnership. During our first year we are carrying out an assessment of the Public Rights of Way and have received a grant of £50.

Grasscutting

The Council regrets the poor standard of grasscutting during mid and late summer. We hope to resolve these difficulties and are currently looking at appointing a new Groundsman or contractor for Spring 2006.

Cemetery

The County Council has agreed to improve parking by lowering the kerb and improving the verge surface.

The Council has started checking the stability of headstones as advised under Health & Safety requirements. Loose ones were laid flat and we tried to trace families so that they may arrange re-erection in accordance with NAMM guidelines by a registered NAMM approved stonemason.

The Council is aware that space at the cemetery is becoming limited and is looking for alternative options. Following removal of the old shed from the cemetery, enquiries were made about the status of the land on which the shed stood. We were wondering if this land could be used for burials and needed to know if the land was consecrated in the original consecration of 1937. On enquiry with the Diocese we discovered that although the records in the burials book claim the land to the north of the pathway is consecrated, the Diocesan records show that it was not included in the original act of consecration. Burials have taken place in this

parcel of land since October 1950 and all are stated as being in consecrated ground. We are intending to request the Bishop of Ely to consecrate most of that area of land and to re-consecrate the original area at the same time. If anyone has any concerns please do contact the Clerk or Chairman.

Recreation Ground

The Council is still awaiting the outcome of the application to register the recreation ground as a Village Green. In the meantime our RoSPA Safety Audit recommended we ban flying activities, eg. kites, due to nearby overhead powerlines, nor is there to be any climbing or hanging from the basket ball apparatus. Temporary notices have been erected and more robust ones will be erected soon.

Youth Provision

We are currently looking into providing a weekly facility for young people working in partnership with Cambridgeshire Youth Service. Initial programme to run from Spring to Christmas which would include programme of summer activities.

Consultation

Over the last quarter the Council has been engaged in the consultation process with the District Council on the new planning arrangements – the Local Development Framework, and with the County Council on Location and Design of Major Waste Management Facilities. These new planning arrangements are brought about by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which emphasises the requirement for sustainable development.

The Council has been invited to participate in consultation processes with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service. There will be regular monthly contact with our Community Beat Officer who will also be holding surgeries in the village from time to time.

Royal Mail

The Council has been following up complaints regarding erratic deliveries of post in all areas of the village

Sewerage System

Problems at The Slade are being monitored and the Council is following this up with Anglian Water and East Cambs District Council's Environmental Department.

STREET CLEANING - proposed dates (early Friday mornings)	
17 March 2006	21 April 2006
26 May 2006	

RECYCLING COLLECTIONS (Tuesdays)	
7 March 2006	21 March 2006
4 April 2006	19 April 2006 (Wed)

PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS (Tuesdays)	
14 March 2006	11 April 2006
9 May 2006 – AGM	16 May 2006 – APM
Meetings are held in the Village Hall, business commences at 7.30pm. There is an opportunity for the electorate to attend these meetings and provision for public participation/question time commencing at 7.15 pm. Please see the noticeboard to view agendas and minutes, and any changes to proposed meeting dates.	

NAME	CONTACT
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COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS	
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