

REPORT OF OTTERBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 15 APRIL 2008

The Chairman, Cllr Dick Oldham, welcomed all to the meeting

Chairman's Report for 2007/2008

The Chairman opened with a resumé of the most notable events.

Councillor Kevin Stafford and Councillor Wendy Andrews had joined the Parish Council. There had been a large number of matters dealt with over the year. The bus shelter near to Oakwood Avenue had been replaced, completing the current bus shelter renewal programme. The Sports Club Lease of the pavilion and use of the recreation ground had been resolved. The area around the Youth Facility had been landscaped. Much time had been spent on designing, planning and preparing bids for the replacement of the Children's Play Area. The opportunity to purchase the freehold of the Recreation Ground had been presented by Southern Water, as too had the opportunity to purchase the woodland areas of Sparrowgrove and Oakwood Copse. There had been another incursion onto the Common by travellers which had necessitated the review of the Common's security measures. A sign audit of all the village signs had taken place and several signs had been removed or re-sited. The war memorial had been cleaned and the conifers cut back to improve the area. The picture in the Old Grave Yard on Kiln Lane of the original Chapel had been repainted. The Village Design Statement had been completed and after adoption by Winchester City Council would be used by both the District and Parish Council in planning matters. In addition, there had been several challenging planning applications during the year, particularly those that would add to the number of heavy vehicles using the local roads.

In coming months, two new Countryside Access Boards with maps of the local area and suggested walks would be erected at the Village Hall and Recreation Ground. Three new Parish notice boards would replace old boards at the Recreation Ground, the Common and the bus shelter opposite The White Horse PH. A new street light would be installed on the access road to Otterbourne School.

More generally, the Council had been involved in consultations about the new Park and Ride site, the Local Development Framework which looks at future housing and planning policy in the Winchester District, the Winchester District Safety Initiative and the Winchester Air Group which lobbies for more recognition of local input on matters such as aircraft noise.

Lastly, although crime rates had been reported as low within the village, there had been the horrific murder of Georgina Edmunds, leading to the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting. The investigation is still ongoing and it is hoped will be resolved soon.

Report of Planning and Highways Committee

Cllr Ian Phillips reported that 49 planning applications had been received in 2007/08, the majority of which were for alterations or extensions to existing properties. The Parish Council had been involved in a number of commercial building applications in the Poles Lane area. Reflecting local views and in conjunction with neighbouring Councils, the Parish Council had strongly objected and was grateful to local residents who had written with comments and objections. A few applications for infill housing had been received and

a supportive line had been taken if this provided affordable housing in an appropriate location.

The Parish Council thanked Cllr Suzanne Hudson and her team for the excellent work on the Village Design Statement, in particular: Valerie Etteridge, Dorothy Karnik, Michael Warne, Andrea Bassett, Liz Curtis, Julie Ayre, Ann Bailey, Pam Cole, Charlotte Bailey, Betty Mobbs, Dick and Vera Oldham, Keith Smith, Ian and Cheryl Stockdale, Philippa Wrightson and Roger Zebedee. The Team had worked very hard for two years to reach the final stage. Thanks were also given to the 107 residents who attended the two Exhibitions in the Village hall and to the organisations which responded to early consultations. The Draft Design Statement was on the Parish website www.otterbourne.parish.hants.gov.uk as well as the WCC website for six weeks statutory consultation to 25 April. Winchester Planners would then ask the Team to consider written comments and respond to them, before agreeing adoption. The 45 page colour document would go to printing and every household would have a free copy delivered. The Parish Council had received support from the Awards for All National Lottery to carry out the project. It will be a valuable document for the Planning Committee to refer to in the future.

Report of Recreation and Amenities Committee

Cllr Roger Zebedee reported that activities during the year had principally involved the open spaces of the Parish, namely the Recreation Ground, the Common and local woodland. At the Recreation Ground, considerable work had been undertaken by Cllr Williams on the project for replacement of the Children's Play Area. It had been hoped that funding would come from a Big Lottery grant, however this had been unsuccessful. A further grant application had been submitted to Veolia Environmental Services and the outcome would be known at the end of July. In addition, the Parish also planned to use the WCC Open Spaces Fund. Funding would be available for the main part of the project, but depending on grant availability some items might need to be added at a later date. Much work had also been undertaken on the renewal of the Lease of the Recreation Ground with Southern Water and also the sub-Lease to Otterbourne Sports Club. One significant area of disagreement still needed to be resolved with the Club before the sub-Lease could be signed. More recently, Southern Water had offered the freehold of the Recreation Ground to the Parish Council. This was currently held on a 21 year lease. Negotiations had started, but a considerable difference in the valuation of the land existed.

The Parish Council had taken a keen interest in the sale of Sparrowgrove and Oakwood Copse by Southern Water. A community group had been formed including Parish Councillors from Otterbourne and Compton & Shawford. Temporary funding had been secured and it was hoped that the purchase would be completed successfully. A management plan for the woodland would be prepared.

On Otterbourne Common, an incursion by travellers had led the Parish Council to examine the need for more extensive security measures. Reinforcement of the area with additional ditches and bunds had been proposed and the works were out to tender. The height restriction barrier to the Recreation Ground had also been repaired to secure the grounds.

Report of Finance Committee

Cllr Wendy Andrews reported that the audited accounts for 2006/07 had been approved by the external auditors without any recommendations. An overview of the unaudited accounts for 2007/08 was given. The main items of expenditure after the Clerk's salary had been: replacement bus shelter at Oakwood Avenue (£7,240); Recreation Ground maintenance (£2,385); Village Design Statement (funded by Awards for All grant). Over the past year a number of contracts had been put out to tender leading to competitive quotes and some reduction in costs. The main items of income had been: Bank interest (£5,483 - up £1,000 on last year); Sports Club rent (£1,459 in respect of one pitch only).

Spending plans for 2008/09 were as follows: Precept £26,601 (an increase of 2.3%, to a total of £38.16 per household) covering regular expenditure. Major further expenditure under consideration was: Children's Play Area total refurbishment (c£55,000); potential purchase of freehold of recreation ground (unknown); potential grant or loan to Village Hall Committee for an extension to the village hall (£6,000); reinforcement of the Common boundary markers and bund (c£7,000); potential contribution to maintenance of Sparrowgrove and Oakwood Copse (unknown); purchase of three parish notice boards to replace old ones (£2,500); purchase of two new Countryside Access Boards (£500); street lighting provision for future years and funding in 2008 towards a street light on the access road to Otterbourne School (£1,000). Much of this would be funded by a reduction in reserves which had built up substantially over past years. Winchester Open Spaces fund would also be utilised and grants would continue to be investigated wherever possible.

Presentations on:

The Otterbourne Village Hall Committee and Stage Productions

The Chairman, John Pitman, who had been part of the Committee for the past 34 years, addressed the meeting. OVHC was a Registered Charity and as such had to submit annual accounts. The Committee was made up of 10 representative members from groups such as the Parish Council, Women's Institute and Dog Club. There were 7 elected members and 2 positions for co-option. Numbers of representatives (10) to elected/co-opted members (9) ensured balance of power was maintained. The Parish Council acted as Custodian Trustee and guarantor for the Village Hall. OVHC was a non-profit making organisation and all money earned was reinvested for improvements. Major fundraising events included Pantomime performances, Concerts by Otterbourne Brass and the Palm Court Quartet. The Letting's Secretary, Terry Revell, ensured a full programme of regular users including groups such as: the WI, Flower and Garden Club, Dog Training, four separate types of Dance Classes, two Art and Craft Classes, Yoga and Pilates, Stroke Clubs, Toddlers and Mini-Gym, Lacemakers, Otterbourne Brass and the Inner Wheel. In addition, the Chiltern School for children with dyslexia was an integral part of the daily programme. The School had grown in numbers and required further space for the 2008/09 year. In recognition of its commitment and the financial benefit to the Hall, a new extension to the John and Betty Mobbs Room was planned by OVHC for completion by the beginning of the Autumn Term. The Chairman thanked his excellent Committee for their hard work and support and would welcome new younger members becoming involved.

The Top of the Hill Cricket Club

The Chairman, Ron Emery, who had started with the Club in 1979 addressed the meeting. The 'Top of the Hill', named by Fred Bianchi, had begun play with 6 boys at the top of Pitmore Road in a back garden. Assisted by John Rice, an all rounder with Hampshire, it had moved first to the Common and then in 1985 to Elderfield. The current numbers attending were around 100 boys and girls, aged from 5 – 12 years old. Winter coaching took place at either the Village Hall for younger ages or Thornden School. Older members often progressed to the Southern Water adult team and many had gone on to play for Hampshire Boys or even, notably Chris Tremlett, for England. Thanks were given to Sue Emery for her help with finances and match teas, Dawn and Paul Emery, Elderfield staff and residents for the venue and support and to all the Club's coaches. New coaches were required for the future and future members always welcome.

Otterbourne Brass

The Chairperson, Helen Davis addressed the meeting. The band had been founded in 1974 by John Knight. It had started as Hampshire Concert Brass, later becoming the City of Winchester Brass. In 1980 the band used the old Village Hall and performed its first concert there in the mid 1980s. When the new Village Hall was proposed the band was invited to become part of the village and changed its name to Otterbourne Brass. In 2006, in the new Village Hall the concert sold out to over 250 people and this year sold out a matinee in addition. The organisation was self-financing and besides Village Hall concerts performed at events such as P&O sailings. Awards had been gained in competitions for the Wessex Region which Otterbourne Brass won in 2006 and this year for the West of England in which the band came 2nd and will continue to the national finals at Harrogate. Thanks were extended to Chris Davis OBE and Director of Music for Otterbourne Brass and to all concert goers.

Otterbourne Allotments Association

The Chairman, Ron Emery read a letter from its longest member Bert Carter, who had held an allotment for the past 50 years following on from his father 60 years previously. The allotments, on Boyatt Lane used to extend further into Pitmore Road but were used for the development of Lincoln's Rise. The site currently consisted of 40 allotments with about 69 holders. Each allotment was split into rods, one rod measuring 5 ½ yards, and allotment areas varying from 5, 6, 8 and 10 rods in size. The tendency was for smaller allotment sizes today, with more use by ladies than previously and at more varied times. A short waiting list always existed. Many changes had occurred over the years. At one time chickens and pigs were kept on site, but were no longer allowed. In 1948 a water supply had been connected and later the garage store was taken over. In 1979 the Gardens and Allotment Association had been founded and rent was collected every year. More recently, in 2007 a toilet was built and later deer fencing erected of which more is proposed in 2008.

The Chairman, Cllr Oldham, thanked the speakers and parishioners for attending and the Meeting closed at 8.45 pm.