



## Enborne Parish Council

Jacqui Thaw, Clerk to the Council

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**PRESENT:** Mr John Leeson, Chairman

**In attendance:** Jacqui Thaw (Clerk)

Enborne Councillors Croney, Darley and Robinson

Approximately 5 members of the public

West Berkshire Councillors Stansfeld and Cole

Fiona Williams from Citizens Advice West Berkshire

Garry Poulson from Volunteer Centre West Berkshire

Mrs Robinson from Enborne and Hamstead Marshall Garden Society

### 1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

- 1.1 The Parish Meeting **RESOLVED** to sign the minutes of the meeting of 16th May, 2016 as a true record. The Chairman signed all pages of the loose-leaf minutes.

### 2. REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN OF ENBORNE PARISH COUNCIL

- 2.1 The Chairman of Enborne Parish Council in 2016-2017, Councillor John Leeson, gave a report on the activities of the Council in 2016-2017. He welcomed both residents and speakers for the evening and thanked the Parish Clerks past and present, and the Vice-Chairman, Alan Croney, for their particular contributions over the past year. He welcomed the Ward member present.

Following the resignation of the Clerk, Barbara Moffat, who left in February, Cllr Leeson thanked Barbara for her excellent service during her all-too-brief period with the Council, and wished her well for the future. He also thanked the Locum clerk, Janet Haines, for filling the gap and helping to hand over to the new clerk, Jacqui Thaw.

Councillor Leeson began by speaking about the Parish Plan. The questionnaire was delivered by hand, along with a leaflet advertising the Village Agent scheme, to all Enborne residences in mid-January 2017. Due to slow returns, the collection phase ran until the end of March. Enborne Councillors walked many miles in the aim to give the Parish plan the authority of significant resident input. Thanks to their tenacity, a return rate of almost 50% was achieved, which is excellent. Although some indication of results was hoped for by this meeting, the change of clerk and collection difficulties mean this will be delayed, possibly until the September meeting.

Councillor Leeson went on to report on the West Berkshire Site Allocation Development Plan Document (DPD) process. Enborne was represented at the Independent Inspector's examination hearing at Calcot Manor in July 2016 and in further consultation later but there has been no change in the content concerning the site at Long Copse Farm. Although the lease of the circus at its London location expired at the end of January 2017 (cited at Calcot to ensure no DPD change) there has been no movement here so it has probably been extended. As part of this exercise and concerning some other locations

too, the Council will monitor what appears to be some reluctance from West Berkshire Council to enforce planning permission conditions.

With regard to the venture by Gigaclear to provide superfast broadband Internet access to Enborne, which was expected to take place in early 2017, Councillor Leeson informed the meeting that, following delays, this is hopefully to be achieved by the end of the year.

Enborne Parish Council had participated in the Housing and Economic Land Availability assessment (HELAA) process and submitted a response supporting in principle some expansion of the Newbury urban area into already developed areas of Enborne if specific proposals were agreed.

Concerns about pedestrian safety on any further development would have to be addressed as a basic minimum.

Councillor Leeson reported on the recent news that West Berkshire Council has conducted a Ward and Parish Boundaries review with the aim of reducing the membership of the District Council by about 10. Indications so far are that Enborne parish will remain unchanged and remain in Kintbury Ward but that the Ward representation at West Berkshire Council will be reduced from two to one. *[Note: could be in Hungerford Ward with 3 reps.]*

Councillor Leeson also reported on the installation of the Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) scheme, with both signs in Enborne Row, on the Andover Road approach and the approach from Ball Hill now operational. Thanks were extended to Ward Councillor Anthony Stansfield for submitting a successful bid for a grant of £3,500 from West Berkshire for part of the cost. We await the outcome of speed surveys promised by West Berkshire to see how effective the scheme is proving to be.

Further improvements on the Parish's roads have been achieved by the addition of signs advising HGV drivers to avoid Church Lane and Boames Lane.

A first ever speed survey carried out along Enborne Road past the parish church in July 2016 recorded average speeds above 40mph in both directions with 1,250 passes over 50mph and an astonishing 100mph pass recorded on one occasion in a period of only five days. At a Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) attended by our local police they supported a need for a 40mph limit along that stretch. We would hope to see an approved scheme maintain the 40mph limit from the Newbury side of the Church Lane junction preferably all the way to Hamstead Marshall.

A request was made by West Berkshire Council for the Parish to contribute £750 to the library service. Advice from NALC and BALC was that as we did not have a library in the parish and did not have the General Power of Competence referred to in the Localism Act 2011, we did not have the power to make such a contribution. West Berkshire disagreed with this assessment but we deferred making a decision on any such contribution pending resolution of the dispute.

Working with the Council the Poors Charity is hoping the parish planning exercise will discover a resident willing to be our local Village Agent who will help in identifying charitable need in Enborne able to be supported by the Poors Allotment, of which the Council continues to be the corporate trustee. In parallel with this we are investigating possible ways better to use the field for the advantage of Enborne.

A resident has complained that we breached a Freedom of Information rule and the Information Commissioner's Office agreed. They resolved to take no further action but advised us on what we needed to do to improve. That advice is being progressed.

Councillor Leeson went on to explain that, despite increased activity this year, we have maintained our precept unchanged, with 54% of West Berkshire parishes charging more. West Berkshire increased its council tax by 4.95%.

The Chairman's Report concluded by bringing the meeting's attention to the fact that there is a vacancy on the Council and he appealed for an enthusiastic resident to fill the vacancy, working together with residents to improve the locality.

### **3. WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL**

3.1 West Berkshire Councillor Cole gave a report on the activities of West Berkshire Council over the last year. The death of Roger Croft, leader of the Council, was a great loss. He expressed his confidence that Graham Jones, who had been elected, brings experience and that he would also do a very good job.

Regarding the ongoing exercise to reduce the number of Ward Councillors from 52 to 42, West Berkshire Councillor Cole clarified that Parish Councils would remain unaffected by the changes. The possibilities for Enborne are that we would either remain part of a reduced Kintbury ward with one member or Enborne and Kintbury may both become part of Hungerford with three members. We would not know the outcome of this for some months.

West Berkshire Councillor Cole reported that the DPD has recently been approved by the Planning Inspector. This means West Berkshire Council is now stronger when it comes to resisting attempts to build houses wherever a developer wants. Newbury is attempting to do its own planning with which Enborne has been invited to be involved. Some discussion should ensue. The idea of devolution of services to parish level is still alive, but it was felt that this doesn't work at small parish level. Financial constraints are still very much in evidence, but Councillor Cole expressed the view that West Berkshire Council are able to handle it, having been in this position for some years now.

Cooperative working with other councils was being looked at to alleviate pressure on resources.

West Berkshire Councillor Cole explained that Councils are allocated a share of the business rate income, 22% in West Berkshire, with the average nationally being 50%. He expressed the view that if West Berkshire Council received 50% of such income we would be financially comfortable, but that there is no sign of this in the near future.

On a more positive note, a resident reported that she had had a good response to a pothole repair request, with a temporary repair effected quickly, followed by a permanent repair soon afterwards. Potholes (or other problems) can be reported via West Berkshire Council's website.

A resident suggested that West Berkshire Council stop turning industrial estates into housing. Councillor Cole reported that it wasn't possible to stop this.

### **4. VILLAGE AGENTS**

4.1 Garry Poulson, Director, Volunteer Centre West Berkshire, gave an overview of the Village Agent scheme which, following its inception nearly four years ago, now has 26 agents in 23 parishes in West Berkshire. Village Agents are people living in the locality, who are recruited and trained as a good neighbour.

Garry outlined the types of issues Village Agents help individuals with, from information about befriending, to Citizens Advice, where to go to obtain a Blue badge, informing of community groups, potential help with shopping and transport to hospital appointments, and more. Some of these may be things that people already know about, but perhaps they don't want to impose. The person may know the Village Agent personally and therefore may feel more comfortable seeking help.

Garry reported that monthly meetings are held for Village Agents, at which they receive more information, including presentations from organisations such as Trading Standards. The commitment required could be as little as an hour a week or even a fortnight.

They are currently trying to build up referrals from Adult Social Care, but equally individuals can self-refer or be referred by friends, neighbours or their GP. There is no need to register for the scheme.

There is currently no Village Agent in Enborne, although some neighbouring parishes, including Speen, Hungerford and Kintbury all have an Agent.

## **5. GIGACLEAR RE SUPERFAST BROADBAND**

Due to a mix-up this presentation did not take place.

## **6. CITIZENS ADVICE WEST BERKSHIRE**

6.1

Fiona Williams gave a presentation on the work of West Berkshire Citizens Advice where she is an outreach co-ordinator. She began her talk by demonstrating how her own experiences with ill health over the last year, since talking at the previous Annual Parish Meeting, had really brought home how many of us are only one life event away from needing help. During her treatment, Fiona encountered a large number of people on the same journey, who faced discrimination, had employment issues, faced a reduction in income, struggled to claim benefits, and were made to feel guilty when they were unable to go into work.

Fiona went on to talk about Kintbury ward's use of Citizens Advice West Berkshire in 2016/17. Citizens Advice had seen 101 people from the ward with 414 issues, ranging from benefits to employment, debt, housing and legal issues. Of these 101 people, 12% had reported improved health and capacity to manage. In addition, Citizens Advice specialist Carers Service has helped people of the ward to be £23,822 better off this last year with payments relating to sickness and disability benefits. In addition to this help, Citizens Advice are able to access other charitable funds for those in severe hardship. Fiona thanked Enborne Parish Council for their donation of £200 in 2016/17 and support in previous years. She spoke of the uncertainty at present with further funding cuts, meaning that Citizens Advice in Newbury is now closed on a Thursday and Friday. She also mentioned a new service whereby people will be able to seek personalised advice online via the Citizens Advice West Berkshire website. This was due to be launched imminently.

## **6. ENBORNE AND HAMSTEAD MARSHALL GARDEN SOCIETY**

Mrs Robinson informed the meeting the Flower Show this year will take place on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September. This is at present the only event of its kind in the Parish, whereby the community can come together. The Parish Council was thanked for supporting the Fete and Flower Show in 2016/17 with a donation and manning the BBQ. Mrs Robinson expressed the hope that the Parish Council would support the event in 2017. Agreement was given in principle.

**7. RESIDENTS' QUESTIONS**

- 7.1 Residents' questions centred around the Superfast Broadband project. The view was expressed that there is work underway around Newbury and that is positive. A number of reasons were put forward as reasons for the delay, including road closures and work on water mains. However, no official explanation had been given by Gigaclear.

**8. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

- 8.1 The date of the 2018 Annual Parish Meeting was set as Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2018.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm.

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