**OAKLEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

Minutes of meeting held on 2nd April 2013 in the Village Hall, Oakley.

**PRESENT:**

Cllr Mrs J Walker (Chairman), 7 Parish Councillors, the Clerk to the Parish Council, and 0 members of the public.

**1. Apologies:**

Cllrs. Jones, R. Saunders & White

**2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 3rd April 2012:**

Copies of the minutes of the last meeting were circulated and there were no matters arising.

**3. Review of Turning Off Street Lights between midnight and 5.30am**

Councillors had received a few complaints about the scheme but the majority of residents were in favour. There had been problems with individual lights which had been resolved and a problem with faulty timers. New timers were being fitted now the clocks had gone forward and should be working properly by the end of April. Council confirmed that it was content for the scheme to become permanent.

Residents had asked whether the flashing lights on the zebra crossing in Lovell Road could also be turned off at night. Council noted that the lights were a legal requirement as the crossing could be used at any time.

**4.** **Discussion on clearing snow from and gritting footways**

Insurance company was content for Council to employ a contractor to clear snow and grit footways provided Bedford BC had given permission and appropriate risk assessments were carried out. Council had received one quotation for £35 per hour and Clerk to confirm that this included provision of grit/salt and to obtain further quotations. Bedford BC had yet to respond and Clerk would chase.

**5. Report of the Parish Council:**

**a) Chairman’s Report**

2012 had been a busy year for both the country and for Oakley. As well as the excitement of the Olympics and visits from our local torch bearer, the Queen’s Jubilee was celebrated. In a moving ceremony on the ridge at Browns Wood, Clapham and Oakley’s beacon lighting was one of only two Borough Beacon sites. Hundreds of local people turned out despite the weather being overcast and drizzly and were treated to rousing dance music and a wonderful ceremony. The Jubilee would also be commemorated in the village by a new Christmas tree on Grange Close Green which had kindly been purchased by the WI. The Chairman thanked them for their donation.

The new lease for the Playing field was eventually signed and the grant money promised to the ORA from the Football Foundation was secured. The changing room refurbishments had been completed and the Chairman thanked everyone involved at the Recreational Association for creating such a great sporting facility for the village. The Parish Council was funding a Boule pitch on the field to provide another type of recreational activity for residents and the playing field would also host the bi-annual carnival this year on 13th July.

During the year, the Parish Council had funded a new bus shelter on Station Road and further improvements to the allotments hard standing areas and had helped various local organisations - the Gardening Club for maintaining the village flower beds, the Day Care Centre, the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal, Oakley Air Cadets, Oakley Diamonds netball team, the Police Partnership (the Bobby Van), The Youth Club, Oakley Saturday Football Club and Pilgrims Cricket Club. Money would continue to be available in 2013/14 to support organisations whose members are mostly Oakley residents.

The scheme to turn off the street lights at midnight and switch them back on at 5.30am was approved by this meeting last year and by the Parish Council and the switch off happened in the late summer with very few comments.

Once again there were very few incidents of anti-social behaviour during the year and very little crime. Unfortunately there had been one major crime in the village recently so residents were reminded to remain vigilant. The police do respond to these incidents but residents should continue to report minor problems or nuisance issues on 101 so that the police have a complete record as police resources are allocated on the basis of reported crimes. Councillors were, of course, happy for residents to inform them too.

Last year’s Community Litter pick in the spring was well supported but unfortunately few came along for the bulb planting in October and it had to be abandoned. Another litter pick would be held on 20th April and it was hoped to beat last year’s turn-out of 29 villagers.

At the beginning of April, the new web site went live. The Chairman thanked Robbie Bays who had provided a fantastic new site. The web site was a brilliant resource for residents and visitors alike and it was hoped everyone would use it regularly. The Chairman requested any news stories, calendar events, links to village clubs and societies, old photos of the village etc. to ensure that the web site would remain current and useful.

The parish precept for 2013/14 had been frozen for the second year running as residents were still suffering due to the financial crisis. The Council still had significant reserves and would be using them this year to fund new schemes.

One very large scheme which was being considered was to introduce traffic calming around the village either through the purchase of speed cameras or physical measures to slow traffic. A petition had been received from residents about Pavenham Road and the cross roads end of the High Street and also a request for measures to be installed further along the High Street towards the Reynes Drive junction. As any measures would have knock on effects elsewhere in the village, Council had asked the Borough to come to the May meeting to discuss which methods would be best for the whole village. This would potentially be an expensive project and would take some time to complete so residents would have the opportunity to contribute to the debate before a decision was made to proceed.

Chairman noted that the rural skips would be in the village over the weekend of 13th and 14th April and that this would be the only visit this year.

She then thanked Barry Holmes who had done a great job yet again of editing the village newsletter. Barry had indicated that he would like to retire from the job and so Council was looking for a new editor. One resident might be interested but anyone else who was interested was asked to contact the Chairman as soon as possible. If several people volunteered it might be possible to set up an editorial team. Chairman also thanked the Clerk, Ann Paice for her work behind the scenes which helped to make village life so pleasant and Mark Hobbs and Jake Walker for cleaning the bus shelters and litter picking. When visiting other areas and seeing the dirty bus shelters and litter on the road side, residents could appreciate how relatively clean Oakley is. This would be Jake’s last year before he went to university and she wanted to take the opportunity to thank him. Finally, she thanked all of the parish councillors who give so much of their time to help make the village a better place for everyone.

**b)**  **Parish Precept 2013/14:**

Changes to the Council Tax calculation would reduce Oakley’s Council Tax base by 3.1%. However, the Borough Council had agreed to compensate Councils whose tax base had reduced up to the level of the 2012/13 precept. Therefore the precept had been set at £48,552 and Bedford BC would pay a grant of £1,548 to raise funds to the 2012/13 level of £50,100.

**c) Draft Accounts for 2012/2013:**

In 2012/13 income amounted to £64,992.27 and expenditure to £47,966.40. Income decreased by approximately £1,350 largely because of a reduction in the VAT refund. The VAT refund in 2011/12 took account of the monies spent on the bollards around the Green in 2010/11 and the only capital expenditure in 2011/12 was the Christmas tree kit and a litter bin.

Expenditure decreased by approximately £355. £8,000 was spent on legal fees on the lease and rent for the cricket field, £1,700 on a new swing seat and repairs to the playground surface and £709 on the Diamond Jubilee. This was offset by reductions of £2,000 in insurance costs with the change of provider, £3,900 on the allotment and orchard sites as there were no setting up costs, £2,500 on the bottle bank as a new bank was purchased in 2011/12, £1,300 on the Newsletter as only 3 editions fell into financial year compared with 5 in 2011/12 and £1,200 on capital expenditure. Council made grants and donations totalling £5,517 to the organisations listed by the Chairman.

**d) Planning:**

During 2012/13 the Parish Council was consulted on and commented on a total of 27 planning and related applications, compared to 35 in 2011/12. Most were for relatively minor works or tree works and Council objected to 2 applications on the grounds of overdevelopment of garden land and development outside the Settlement Policy Area. The Roxton gypsy & traveller site had recently been granted on appeal and the Inspector had recommended returning to the 44 pitches originally designated for the Borough area as he did not consider the Borough Council’s consultation on the number of sites required to be sufficiently robust. Meadow Lane would not therefore provide enough pitches. Bedford BC was currently considering the Inspector’s report and had recently submitted a planning application for a 14 pitch site on Fairhill land behind Sainsbury’s. Cllr. Olney noted that there had been few problems with the Kempston Hardwick site and, if approved, the Fairhill site would be run in a similar manner.

Cllrs. Olney and Sansom had attended the Allocations & Designations Plan Inquiry. The sites proposed for development opposite the Bedford Arms and in the High Street had been rejected by the Inspector and the therefore the Settlement Policy Area boundary would remain as proposed by the Parish Council.

**5. Questions from the Floor:**

Chairman noted that one resident had volunteered to help preparing the Newsletter. Cllr. Olney also volunteered. Cllr. Olney and Cllr. Sansom, who already helped with the Newsletter, agreed to meet with him and the editor.

Chairman then thanked councillors for attending and closed the meeting.

 Chairman