

The Annual Parish Meeting for East Garston was held in the Village Hall on Tuesday 21st April 2015 at 7.30 p.m.

MINUTES

1. **Present:** Councillors: - Jonathan Rabbitts - Chairman, Chris Tonge, Sue Tulloch, Jane Haddock, Deana Carpenter and Alan Breadmore (Clerk). Guests: - Rev. Martin Cawte, Graham Jones and Gordon Lundie (District Councillors). Parishioners: - 32. **Apologies:** Brian Cowan, Christopher Vaughan, Richard Benyon MP.
2. Chairman Jonathan Rabbitts opened the meeting by welcoming those present and outlining the agenda. He commented that it had thankfully been an uneventful year and that he was encouraged by the many active community groups. He announced that 5 Parish Council members had been re-elected unopposed in the election. Brian Cowan had stood down and the chairman thanked him for his service. The Parish Council are anxious to co-opt any parishioner who may like to serve on the Parish Council. Anyone interested should contact any councillor for more information.
3. The draft Summary Financial Report of the Parish Council was distributed and explained by the Clerk. Normal operations were within budget. He highlighted that particular attention had been paid to maintaining fences and street furniture and that a contribution had been made to the new Community Defibrillator and the maintenance of the Wantage bus service. The Community Grant programme had proved again to be successful and Councillors had determined to continue the programme in the 2015/16 financial year. Funding had been provided this year to the Church, the Social Club and the Football Club. Further information and application forms are available from the Clerk.
4. Alan Breadmore provided an update on the Community Plan project to bring Superfast Broadband and improved mobile phone reception to the village. He reported that he had been assured that the SFB project was still on target to be delivered by September 2015. There has been evidence that the service is becoming a reality with installation work taking place in Lambourn and Great Shefford and the service is already live in Boxford. The Vodafone Rural Open Sure Signal project (to bring a 3g service to East Garston) continues to move forward but slower than the community would wish. Two householders have kindly signed contracts to install the appropriate equipment that will serve parts of the village with two more in negotiation. However it seems likely that no installation will take place until SFB is available. A question was asked regarding how the service would manifest itself to the user and the AB replied that a new contract (and some technical changes by BT) would be required with the user's Internet Service Provider.
5. Gordon Lundie and Graham Jones reported on West Berkshire Councils activities. They explained that from a financial perspective it had been a year of flat income and rising costs. The financial strategy is to ensure that more income collected through Council Tax would stay in West Berkshire rather than going to central government. Particular emphasis has been placed on flood recovery and prevention due to last year's problems and the emphasis has been on resilience, Thames Water has been put under particular pressure to deliver. Partly as a result of flood damage the need for road maintenance has been high and an additional £4M has been made available for road repairs (on top of the original fund of £20M). They emphasised their support for the SFB programme. There has been additional focus on expanding and increasing expenditure on care, especially care for the elderly in homes. The District has a responsibility to provide between 3000 and 4000 homes under the governments housing plans. The District housing plan is currently out for consultation. There are no proposed plans for additional housing development in East Garston. Public transport is also under pressure, especially cross border services. WBC has supported the Swindon and Wantage services. Community health is also a priority, especially preventative, thus initiatives such as the Community Defibrillator are welcome and supported.
6. AOB: -
 - a. Rev. Martin Cawte spoke of the importance of the church building to the community and encouraged all of the community, not just worshipers to cherish and use it.
Questions were asked from the floor regarding the following items, any follow up will be handled at the next Parish Council meeting.
 - b. Why is website not up to date? – This is being addressed and a new website is planned to be in place by the end of June. This will be easier to maintain and thus more timely.
 - c. c/f from b. Thus Parish Council minutes are not readily available. An interim solution will be put in place until web site is back up and running. Use of notice board and East Garston News.
 - d. Concern over speeding on Newbury Road. All councillors agreed that this is a problem, however enforcement is the problem, the Police are unwilling to enforce. Alternative physical speed restrictors were discussed. Parish and District Councillors will investigate what is possible/permissible.
 - e. Concern was raised regarding the danger of indiscriminate parking adjacent to the War Memorial junction. Councillors acknowledged the problem but requests for cooperation from residents were sometimes unheeded.
 - f. A request for an update regarding the research project by Leicester University was requested. Councillors replied that it appears to have died a death but they would follow up.
 - g. Councillors were asked if they knew of any plans for development on the field to the south of Rogers Lane. Councillors replied that they were aware of "surveying" activity but had not received any request for planning permission. They emphasised that the field is outside of the village "envelope" and that the district plan does not include any additional housing plans for East Garston. For these reasons the Parish Council are likely to oppose any plans submitted. Any plans received would be available for full public consultation.

- h. The Chairman highlighted a concern over increased littering in and around the village and asked that everyone takes some responsibility in maintaining our beautiful village.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking attendees and all of the speakers.

The Meeting closed at 8.35 p.m.