

The Annual Parish Meeting for East Garston was held in the Village Hall on Tuesday 16th April 2019 at 7.30 p.m.

MINUTES

Present: Councillors: - Jonathan Rabbitts - Chairman, Chris Tonge, Sue Tulloch, Deana Carpenter, Annabelle Eyre, David Ruse and Alan Breadmore (Clerk). Guests: - Graham Jones (District Councillor). Parishioners: - 27.

Apologies: Karen Sperrey, James Pryer, Paul St Pierre (Environment Agency).

1. Chairman Jonathan Rabbitts opened the meeting by welcoming those present and outlining the agenda, noting that the guest speaker was unable to attend due to ill health. He outlined some of the activities of the Parish Council over the past year; including the installation of new gates in the Millennium Field and the continued focus on reducing speed and improving road safety on Newbury Road. He noted that new village "gates" had been installed to highlight the start of the 30mph zone. The management of the road salt bins is now solely the responsibility of the Parish Council and he asked that users are reminded that the salt is for use on the Parish roads and footpaths only, since there have been instances of removal of salt for unauthorised purposes. He explained that the Parish Council continue to look at options for improving the parking situation on Hillside but realistic alternatives were running out. He reminded parishioners that the outdoor gym was now installed in the Jubilee Meadow and encouraged parishioners to make use of this valuable facility. He welcomed the fact that a café was now open in the old shop building and encouraged parishioners to support this local enterprise. He also noted that a new vicar, Reverend Julie Mintern, had been appointed and would be in place in July. He acknowledged the support of those parishioners who regularly contribute to maintain the village and also to those who participated in the two "clean up days" held this year. He reiterated that Clerk, Alan Breadmore is standing down from the role this year and that Councillors were actively seeking a replacement, anyone interested should contact him. He concluded by thanking his Councillors and the Clerk for their sterling work throughout the year. Finally, he observed that due to the local-government ward changes, East Garston would no longer be represented by two councillors in the Lambourn Valley ward but by one in an expanded Downlands ward. He thanked Graham Jones and Gordon Lundie for their support over the years.
2. The draft Summary Financial Report of the Parish Council was distributed. The Clerk explained that the Parish Council had broadly operated within budget and to plan over the past 12 months. He then went on to describe the main areas of focus for the Parish Council's activity. These were Village Maintenance and support for Community Projects and Facilities as well as enabling the maintenance of the rural nature of our community. Grants had been awarded to 4 Legs Radio, Village Hall improvements, Allotment Association water services and the weekly Wantage bus service. Discretionary funding had been used to support WBC Library Services, specifically for Lambourn, Hungerford and mobile services. Capital purchases of a new strimmer, projection equipment (grant aided) had been made. In addition, an outdoor gym had been installed in the Jubilee Meadow which was entirely funded by a grant from Thames Water.
Priorities for the coming year will remain broadly the same with no increase in Precept. However, provisions have been made for flexibility in the budget to help mitigate the "devolution" of services by West Berkshire Council. Reserves to cater for emergencies are maintained at an appropriate level. The Annual Financial Summary and supporting documents will be available on the website, once approved by the Parish Council. A question was asked regarding CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) payments. There are no current or pending CIL payments in the Parish.
3. David Ruse, Parish Councillor and Secretary to the Friends of Lambourn Library outlined the new initiatives implemented at Lambourn Library and the many services available there. A copy of the content of his presentation is available [here](#). He also made a plea for more volunteers so that Lambourn Library services may not only be maintained but extended.
4. District Councillor, Graham Jones reported on West Berkshire Council's activities. The main issue has been the significant reduction in the financial contribution from central government; four years ago, this contributed 25% of WBC's revenue but is now zero. The result has been a series of difficult funding decisions but support from volunteers and Parish Councils has helped to mitigate this. Escalating social care costs, which now account for about 60% of expenditure, are an ongoing problem. He acknowledged the support of the Parish Council for their help with libraries and buses in particular. He stated that WBC continues to look for innovative ways for cutting costs or raising funds citing examples of solar panels for Council premises and the West Berkshire Lottery. He closed by saying how much he had enjoyed representing East Garston at WBC for 22 years and that he will continue to pay an interest in local affairs despite his retirement from District politics. The Chairman thanked Graham for his support over the years and a formal vote of thanks was made by ex-District Councillor and parishioner John Davies.
5. Any Other Business
 - a. The Chairman asked for feedback regarding the recently distributed East Garston Annual Parish Newsletter in order to assess whether to continue publishing.
 - b. Parishioner Penny Locke briefly addressed the meeting and enquired whether any residents would be interested in measuring their carbon footprint and then looking for ways to reduce this, following the principle of 'think globally, act locally'. If you would like to discuss any ideas with her, please contact penny@pennypost.org.uk
 - c. Parishioners thanked the Parish and District Council for the repairs to School Lane following last year's request.

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

The Meeting closed at 8.25 p.m.

Additional material is available on the Parish Council Website www.eastgartson-pc.gov.uk