

The Annual Parish Meeting for East Garston was held in the Village Hall on Tuesday 15th April 2008 at 7.30 p.m.

MINUTES

1. Present:
Councillors:- Chris Tonge - Chairman, Jonathan Rabbitts, , Peter Smith, Gordon Swapp, Monica Eyre and Alan Breadmore – Clerk
Guests:- Sgt Andy Bone, Stuart Clark, Gordon Lundie
Parishoners:- 27
Apologies: Cllr. Brian Cowan, Rvd Tony Cumberlidge, Graham Jones, Richard Benyon MP.
2. Chairman Chris Tonge opened the meeting by welcoming those present and outlining the agenda. He explained that Joanne Rabbitts had retired from the role of Clerk to the Parish Council after 8 years and having paid tribute to her hard work, presented a framed photograph of a village scene as a memento of her service.
3. The Summary Financial Report of the Parish Council was distributed. There were no matters arising.
4. Sgt Andy Bone from Thames Valley Police described the forces approach to community policing. He stressed that the focus forum was the Lambourn Valley Neighbourhood Action Group which was active in addressing problems as perceived by local residents. East Garston Parish Council is represented on the NAG as well as other parish councils, professional agencies and residents from all age groups. The objective of the community policing strategy is to improve the quality of life for residents. There are currently 6, soon to be 7 officers in the Lambourn Valley.
5. Stuart Clark, Principal Engineer from West Berkshire Council, outlined the conclusions of the report into the flooding of July 2007 and the key actions to be taken. He addressed questions from the floor – it was clear there is still uncertainty regarding the various roles in flood prevention/management. Cllr. Lundie stressed that the key responsibilities were with the Environment agency, the Parishes and residents and that the WBC role was to co-ordinate which he stressed that they were taking actions to improve. One key aspect was Emergency Planning awareness and training for Parish Councils. The emphasis should be on management and that all bodies should continue to put pressure on the Environment Agency to provide clarity and support. Stuart Clark offered to revisit the village to offer specific advice. This was welcomed on behalf of the meeting by the chairman. Action: Chairman/Clerk to follow up.
6. Gordon Lundie reported on West Berkshire Councils activities on behalf of himself and Councillor Graham Jones. The key points were as follows
Flood management and emergency planning
Waste collection- more recycling, new waste management contract
Environmental Management – a priority but controlled. E.g Wind Power is supported but the recent proposal was rejected as inappropriate, not because WBC is against in principal.
Support for Neighbourhood Action Group
Planning – development to be focussed on the east of the district
Council Tax to be held as low as possible
A question was asked re liability if a children's cycling facility were to be established in the village. Cllr. Lundie agreed to investigate and work with PC. Action Chairman/Clerk to follow up.
7. Maria Carver gave an update re the proposed community shop. Purchase of the existing shop is being progressed. Donation/loans and the purchase of shares were invited. Grants have been applied for from various sources. An NVQ training scheme is to be established for volunteers working in the shop.
8. Alan Breadmore described the concept of building a parish/community plan and some of the potential benefits. The parish is amongst only 20% of West Berks village to have not yet started to build a plan. It was stressed that all parts of the community should be involved and that it was not a parish council initiative, although they would likely be represented. There was some discussion re the benefits and the work involved. In particular there was scepticism re the benefits, other than financial, A resolution was put to the meeting " Should we develop a community plan for East Garston" The resolution was passed by 19 votes to 3. Action Chairman/Clerk to enable a kick off meeting for those interested in participating. 8 people expressed an interest in becoming involved.

The Meeting closed at 9.35 p.m.