

# GREAT MILTON PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Great Milton Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2009 at 8.00pm in the Pavilion.**

Present: Mr Ken Rogers (Chairman), Mr Stephen Harrod, Mr Doug Colley, Mr Phil Ashworth, Mr Ian Bradley

Mr David Turner (County Councillor)  
Mr John Nowell-Smith (District Councillor)

In Attendance: Michele Block (Clerk)  
Pat Cox (Bulletin Reporter)  
13 members of the Public

## 1. Apologies for Absence

Peter Fewell  
Mike Block (Hard Surface Play Area Committee)

## 2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2008

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true and accurate record. This was proposed by Stephen Harrod, seconded by Doug Colley, and agreed upon unanimously.

## 3. Annual Report of the Parish Council

The Chairman, Mr Ken Rogers (KR), read the Annual Report of the Great Milton Parish Council. His report looked back on his first full year for the Parish Council (PC). The PC had welcomed two new members, Ian Bradley and Phil Ashworth, and said goodbye to John Davis (JD), who retired for family reasons. KR thanked JD for his pragmatic and knowledgeable input over the years.

KR also paid thanks to Michele Block for her professionalism and hard work as the Clerk and RFO, Pat Cox for her interesting reporting, Manny Stone for taking on the Editor's role of the Bulletin so seamlessly and Hazel Hand for her hard work as Advertising Manager of the Bulletin, which means that the Bulletin is virtually paying for itself. Finally, KR thanked all of his fellow Councillors for their dedication and support during the past year.

KR raised the subject of the Village Plan, the government scheme which proposes that each community should produce a plan for its futures development, however, there was insufficient interest in the village for the project and unfortunately, it could not be progressed. KR is hopeful that this may change over the coming year.

KR then explained about the village flood plan. After serious flooding in the village in June 2008, the PC, with support from David Turner, set up a Public Meeting with all the affected residents and public authorities to produce an action plan. The PC has seen a great response from SODC, Monson and Oxfordshire Highways, which has

resulted in action plans and timescales for repair and refurbishment of the village drainage system.

The Great Milton website has been resurrected by Phil Ashworth and is now nearing completion. The site has been designed by a professional company who specialise in village community site design. Hopefully it will go live later this year.

KR informed the meeting that Manny Stone had taken over as Editor of the Bulletin in September 2008 and has already made a few adjustments to style and content. The PC is hoping that this form of communication becomes even more appropriate for the current community needs.

KR then went on to discuss a few issues that had arisen over the year. The first was the Lower End Footpath. Unfortunately, after long discussions with Oxfordshire Highways, this footpath cannot be made safer or less steep to improve pedestrian safety. Over the next year, the PC will also be discussing the issues of traffic and parking, both of which are on the increase in the village and need to be addressed to find a positive solution.

KR expressed his relief that finally the houses and flats at Potts Close were now finished. Councillors had been able to visit one flat and one house on the Open Day and were impressed by the quality of the design. All of the properties, except the two non committed houses, have been let to local, or locally connected, people in need of affordable housing.

Finally, KR spoke about the village's red telephone box. The PC has ensured its future by taking on sponsorship of the box with BT, and is very thankful to Greenfords for its generous donation towards the first year's rental. The PC is also trying to obtain listing for the box, so that its future is totally secure.

KR finished his report and then took questions from the floor.

The Chairman received a question from Sally Lasson regarding the possibility of introducing a 20mph speed limit in the village.

David Turner explained that consultations are ongoing in Oxford City Centre with a view to introduce 20mph speed limits, however, at present these are not being rolled out to rural areas. KR confirmed that the PC does know that there is a speeding problem and is trying to address it. The Clerk explained about the ongoing speed tests that Oxfordshire Highways are carrying out in Thame Road and Lower End, with the view to having a temporary Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) erected in the worst hot spot, to try to deter speeding in the village. Mrs Lasson told the meeting that there was also a problem in Church Road, with the main offenders coming from the Manoir and Countax. KR did add that the Manoir currently have a training programme for new staff on safer driving. Discussion on this matter was closed as it was felt that the PC is already addressing this issue.

The second question from the floor was regarding the Manoir's flower lorry which now appears to be coming into the village again, after a long absence. KR confirmed that the PC did negotiate with the Manoir a while back, and the lorry did stop visiting the village. The Manoir got the flowers off the back of the lorry at a different location and brought them back to the village in a small vehicle. However, this proved to be impractical and it was also discovered that they were not insured off site. KR is hopeful that, at some time in the future, the Manoir will develop its field and make a turning and parking place for coaches, large lorries etc.

Charles Peers (CP) then asked KR about parking in the village, which greatly concerns him. It appears that there is a lot of on road parking in the village and CP's concerns are whether it really slow the traffic down, or is it more of a hazard, making it difficult to pass in places.

CP felt that perhaps the Forties could become one way, to avoid people driving all over the verges and destroying them. DT confirmed that he would ask Peter Ronald to come out and speak to KR regarding the problems.

#### **4/5. Parish Council Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 & Parish Council Observations on its Finances for the current year**

The Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) circulated the Great Milton Parish Council accounts for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 to all of those present. The total balance brought forward on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 was £20,420.69. Total payments for the year stood at £14,930.01, whilst total receipts for the year were £16,515.22. The balance carried forward as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 is £22,005.90. Of this total, £7,980 is funds held by the PC for the Pavilion Refurbishment, making the actual Parish Council cash balance £14,025.90.

With regards to the Budget for next year, the main point noted by the Clerk/RFO was that the precept had been increased to £13,000 (from £12,500 in 2008/9) to cover a slight increase in planned spending, mostly due to inflation. The budget for receipts in 2009/10 is £16,230, approximately the same as the previous year, with the budget for payments being £18,055. The Clerk/RFO pointed out a few areas of new spending including the Red Telephone Kiosk and a grant for the Pavilion Refurbishment in 2009/10.

#### **6. Annual Reports and Financial Statements from:**

##### *A. The Great Milton Recreation Ground Management Committee*

Andrew Noble (AN), Chairman of the Great Milton Recreation Ground Management Committee (GMRGMC), read out the report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. The Pavilion continues to be home to Little Owls Nursery, the Cricket and Football Clubs, Junior Sports, and other local societies and is used for various social and fund raising events. It also serves as the venue for Parish Council meetings and as the village Polling Station.

The Playing Field continues to be used for various ad-hoc activities and also more formally by the Cricket and Football Clubs, Junior Sports and for more diverse events such as the Church Fete, School Sports Day, and the Fireworks party.

AN explained that during the past year, the GMRGMC had restarted the Pavilion revitalisation project and also took significant steps to try and improve the appearance of both the Pavilion and Recreation Ground.

The Pavilion refurbishment has now been revised and the scheme has a more affordable budget. There was extensive consultation with all the users, agreement reached, planning permission sought and approved by SODC. GMRGMC is now currently in the process of submitting grant applications to a wide range of potential funders. The costs are estimated to be around £300,000.

As a result of the delays to the project, the Committee took the decision to redecorate the exterior of the Pavilion during the year to give it a much brighter and lighter

appearance. The GMRGMC was very grateful for the grants received from the PC and the Sheppard Trust to enable them to do this work.

AN then went on to explain that during the year, steps had been taken to reclaim the perimeter of the sports area, which had become overgrown. After extensive consultation with the sports teams and local residents whose properties back onto the Rec Ground, the committee had decided to clear all the banks to the north and east. The thorn bushes were causing problems for the football team, who kept having balls destroyed in the area and also for local families for similar reasons. The banks have now been re-seeded with wild flowers and meadow grass. AN thanked the Sheppard Trust for its support for this work.

AN reported that also during the year, the Horse Chestnut tree by the eastern entrance was felled as it had become infected with Bleeding Canker and was very dangerous. This made the committee aware of its responsibilities under the Owners and Occupiers Liability Act in relation to the condition of the trees on the Rec Ground. A tree survey has to be carried out every three years to ensure that if any tree poses a threat to the public, remedial action must be taken.

On a more positive note, AN informed the meeting that the incidents of vandalism and dog fouling seen in previous years seem to have declined during this year.

AN reported that the proceeds from the sale of the “garage strip” in 2003 continue to be invested according to the guidelines laid down by the Charity. The Rec Committee thanked the Parish Council for financing the grass cutting, the grounds maintenance and insurance for the year and thanks were also made to the Trustees of the Sheppard Trust for their continued support of the GMRGMC activities.

The Treasurer’s Report and Accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 showed that the Charity held cash reserves of about £2,000 at the end of the year.

Disability Discrimination Act – the Trustees are aware of their responsibilities under this legislation and have a plan to address this issue.

Finally, Mr Noble summarised his report by thanking all committee members for their efforts during the year, plus all those people who have given their time throughout the year to help maintain the Rec Ground, Pavilion, and Play Area for the benefit of the community.

#### *B. The Sheppard Charitable Trust*

Rev Victor Story (Ex-Officio Trustee of the Trust) read out the 2008 report to the meeting.

The seven Trustees met three times during the year and received twelve grant applications. All were approved and by the end of the year, nine had been paid totalling £8,825. Some of the groups benefiting from these grants were GM Football Club, GM Recreation Ground Committee, Neighbours Club, Great Milton Toddler Group, Little Owls and Great Milton Junior Sports.

The four grants still to be paid out total £10,800 and are for the Recreation Ground Committee, Friends of Great Milton School and the GM Parochial Church Council.

Total income for the year was £10,836.42, expenditure by way of grants and admin costs totalled £9,043.45. This gave an excess of income over expenditure of

£1792.97. When this figure was added to the Balance of the Income fund at the end of the previous year, £17,747.84, the balance in the fund totalled £19,540.81. Allowing for the grants not yet paid, £8,740.81 is available for disbursements in grants.

Rev Story did add that he would welcome new applications for funding from community projects within the village, although the Sheppard Trust do look for evidence of self help from applicants. All the dates of the meetings are published well in advance in the Bulletin and applicants must adhere to these deadlines.

#### *C. Kent & Couling Charity*

The Rev Victor Story read the report from the Kent and Couling Charity. The Charity was set up to provide winter fuel for the poor and needy of the Parish. The Trustees of this charity are the Rector, Mrs Rita Booker and Mrs Cynthia D'Anger.

Income for the year amounts to about £370 per annum. Last year it was decided to give £30 vouchers to the recipients to spend as they wish at the Village Shop. This arrangement was well received, and 12 people received such vouchers making the total expenditure £360.00.

Rev Story urged Parishioners to let the trustees know of any people who are 'in need' and they will do their best to support them.

#### *D. The Old Field Charity*

Niki Patrick (NP), Chairman of The Old Field Charity, read out the Annual Report for 2008/9. The Old Field AGM was held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008 when Hazel Hand and Fred Smith were elected as representatives of the Parish Council. This year's AGM will be held on 14<sup>th</sup> May in the Fullers Field Community Room.

During the year, the Old Field Committee (OFC) repaired and improved the stile at the top end of the Field and planted bluebell, snowdrops and other bulbs in the woodland area.

In May, the Committee received advice on the future management of the pond and the result was to either run the pond as a conservation pond or as one that was aesthetically pleasing. The pond was reported to be in good health with newts, a couple of ducks and moorhens present. The committee felt that the main thing is to keep the wildlife in the pond and to clear some weed and keep the water open.

The OFC planted hawthorn whips along the boundary hedge where a car had previously come through hedge. The committee had also given permission to the Hayes family to keep horses in the field up until May, to keep the grass down and help wild flowers to come through.

The OFC accounts are in a healthy condition despite the current economic climate. The Charity's funds are invested in a COIF and unfortunately due to the economic trend, the investment fund has dropped in value over the financial year. The account balance carried forward was approximately £8,000 in the current financial year.

Niki Patrick received a question from KR regarding coppicing and whether OFC had considered it in the woodland area. NP confirmed that they had discussed it, but as

yet had not done anything about it. NP confirmed that there may be some hazel available for baskets/fencing etc later in the year.

*E. The Hard Surface Play Area Committee*

As Mike Block (Chairman) was unable to attend the meeting, Jon Devitt (JD) read out the Hard Surface Play Area Committee (HSPA) report for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. There were a total of 30 members this year (mostly family memberships), no change from 2007/8. Through the generosity of The Sheppard Trust, the HSPA was again able to offer heavily subsidised coaching courses for Great Milton children, both through the tennis club and for the school, a great help in attracting family members.

The Committee were pleased to welcome Nollag McGrath on to the Committee as treasurer, taking over from Susan Read. The Chairman thanked Susan for her hardwork in this role over the last few years, and confirmed that thankfully she will be staying on the committee to concentrate on co-ordinating the coaching programme.

Total funds as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 stood at just over £11,000, however, this money can only be spent on the upkeep of the court itself. After consultation with the Parish Council and the School, outline plans for a new hard surface play area for use by the School and for multi-sports, have been drafted. A survey of the village has now been completed, which indicates that parishioners are in favour of the new play area. Of the 106 households that responded to the survey, only 2 were against the development. Therefore, the HSPA is beginning the process of contacting funders, with a view to raising the necessary finance.

JD went on to explain that both the adult and children's coaching courses were as popular as ever – 42 children and adults completed a 12 week course and free coaching was provided at Great Milton School.

Two Sports Activity weeks for children (both members and non members) were held in the summer holidays. More than 60 children enjoyed ten days of sport run by our coach, Neil James, jointly sponsored by the HSPA and The Sheppard Trust.

HSPA also held a summer Fun Day in July, which was open to everyone. Thanks to the Sheppard Trust, the HSPA was able to provide a Bouncy Castle and had new "Short Tennis" equipment available. This was a great success with 20 children taking part in mini tournaments and receiving prizes. This was followed by an 'American' mixed double tournament for the adults. Those attending enjoyed a DIY BBQ.

Finally, JD rounded off by reporting that during the year, the HSPA had a number of tennis matches (a variety of ladies, mens and mixed doubles) against Thame, Bicester and Horton-cum-Studley. This summer the club hopes to play more matches against those clubs and fresh opposition.

**7. To Receive the observations of the County Councillor and the District Councillor**

*Mr David Turner, Oxfordshire County Councillor*

During the past 12 months (April 2008-March 2009), David Turner (DT) explained that he had served on the following Committees: Children's Services Scrutiny, Planning and Regulation, Cotswold & Malverns Transport Partnership, Oxfordshire County Council South Africa Link Group, Oxfordshire Youth Advisory Group

(representing the voluntary sector), Rural Children's Centres Steering Committee, Young Carers Review and Raising Educational Achievements Review. DT is also a member of the Shadow Cabinet, with the portfolio of Schools Improvement and also the lead member of the Cabinet for Children's Services with regard to schools improvement.

This year's County Council Tax budget showed an increase of 3.75% compared to last year's increase of 3.9%.

With regard to education, DT reported that the results in GCSE's and A levels have shown a steady improvement over the last few years but there is still much to be done to raise the performance to match similar local authorities. These results were the main reason for the County Council being downgraded from a four star Council to a three star Council in the governments recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

DT reported that he was extremely pleased that Great Milton has been awarded the Children's Centre. This scheme is extremely worthwhile and gives lots of information and services to families in the surrounding villages.

DT confirmed that the bus services for Great Milton (103 and 104) have remained intact following the decision in 2007 to continue the subsidy until June 2011. The new National Bus Pass Scheme for people over sixty is encouraging more people to use buses, improving the viability of rural bus services.

DT then moved on to road maintenance and explained that the County Council has a huge backlog of outstanding road maintenance, and for the third year running no improvement in investment levels, which is disappointing.

DT commented on the continuing saga of the plans to close the bridge over the M40 at junction 7 for major repair work. It would appear that the deterioration in the bridge is not as far advanced as was originally feared, and a report has been sent to independent specialist consultants for review and comment. It would appear that the work is unlikely to commence until late summer/early autumn this year, and that the work will not cause the same level of disruption to traffic as originally thought.

DT then reported on Older People Homes in the district. The new homes replacing older ones project continues to bring provisions up to modern standards, for example larger rooms for residents, and the shared room situation is being removed as it was unpopular.

DT informed the meeting that a new list of reliable tradesmen has been compiled by OCC and this list can be viewed on the council's website. OCC is also currently rethinking its plans on pedestrianising Queen Street, and the latest edition of the Public Transport Guide for Oxford City and Oxfordshire is now available. The Clerk did add that this leaflet is available in the Great Milton shop.

Our County Councillor spoke of the Youth Service which provides two 'Chill Out' source of grants for young people's activities. One is for capital items and one is for revenue items. However, the major problem in the Youth Service is still employing youth officers.

The threat of houses being built at Grenoble Road remains following the Independent Inspector Panel's recommendation to have a selective review of the Green Belt at this location. All proposals to build on this land must be watched and opposed.

Finally, David Turner reported that the new initiative by Thames Valley Police called Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAG's) to concentrate policing on the issues which concern individual communities is taking some time to bed in, but success stories are starting to happen. DT feels it will have a good effect in our area.

Mr Turner commented on how much he has enjoyed working with Great Milton again this year and for the past twenty years, and how he was looking forward to working with the Parish Council and village again in the forthcoming year, as long as the electors on 4<sup>th</sup> June are kind to him!

DT received a question on the flooding in Sworford Lane by the disused railway bridge, which was answered by the Chairman of the PC. KR explained that work had been carried out at the source of the problem on Sworford Lane, and hopefully there will not be a repeat of the deep floods experienced this year. However, KR did add that he thinks the road will always be subject to flooding because of the layout of the area and the fact that it is on a flood plain. Therefore, if anyone sees a flood at that end of the road, then please telephone Oxfordshire Highways and ask for it to be resolved.

KR was informed by a resident that there is a ditch in existence that runs from the road pipe down to the river. KR confirmed that he would inform David Baldwin of Monson about this matter.

KR thanked David Turner for all his help over the past year.

*Mr John Nowell-Smith, South Oxfordshire District Councillor*

John Nowell-Smith (JNS) reported that the main business of South Oxfordshire District Council during the past year has been the merging process with the Vale of White Horse. The results of this will not be apparent yet but will hopefully appear over the next year or so as a reduction in Council Tax. This year's Council Tax increase has been held at 2.9% increase.

The waste collection contract has been awarded to Verden who have replaced Grundon. Another change has been the decision to replace Soll as Manager of the Council's leisure centres.

Greenbelt issues are continuing particularly those surrounding Grenoble Rd. The Planning Department is gradually being reorganised, but unfortunately, contradiction within the Department itself is a big problem.

JNS received a question regarding SODC's budgets and income. JNS replied that the District Council's portion of Council Tax rose by 3.5% this year, as its grant from central government is much less than in previous years.

Finally, JNS added that the District Council continues to improve its website, which received an award this year. It is a great place to look for SODC information.

KR thanked JNS for this information and for the support he has given the Parish Council over the last year.

**8. To consider resolutions of which written notice has been given**

a. *Parking in the Village/Grass Verges*



Ken Rogers (KR) commented that this subject had already been covered and discussed in the Chairman's report. The Parish Council is currently looking into this major issue in the village and would be working on a plan and trying to come up with solutions over the forthcoming year.

*b. The Forties*

KR again confirmed that this subject had already been discussed earlier and that hopefully, after discussions with Peter Ronald at Oxfordshire Highways, a solution could be found to the never ending erosion of the grass verges.

**9. Any Other Business**

*a. Vacant Seat on the Parish Council*

Due to the recent resignation of Councillor Richard Pearce, the Chairman asked that any parishioners who would like to join the very friendly team of Parish Councillors to come forward and make him/herself known to either KR or the Clerk, Michele Block.

The meeting was declared closed by the PC Chairman, Mr Ken Rogers, at 9.50pm.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_