

**MINUTES OF SPEEN PARISH COUNCIL ASSEMBLY
HELD ON APRIL 19TH 2004 IN SPEEN PARISH HALL AT 7.P.M.**

Present: E Vandyk (Chairman) G Foulkes (Vice Chairman) A Snook
WRB John C Woodhead P Calder J Booth R Wilson
J Huntingford (Clerk)

Members of the Public: 4 including Representative of Newbury Weekly News

District Councillors: P Bryant and M Franks

1. **APOLOGIES** T Tyler K Rai

2. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:** E Vandyk welcomed all those present, particularly Mrs Butcher (member of the Public) who used to be on the Council. She said she could not plan to rejoin at the moment. E Vandyk regretted that the number of Councillors throughout the past year had not reached the 13 allowed. He urged everyone present to pass the word around. E Vandyk then warmly welcomed Mr Keith Chantrey, Parish Chairman from Inkpen, who would be talking on ‘The Merits of producing a Parish Plan, and the objectives needed’.

3. Mr K Chantrey said how pleased he was to be invited and urged the Council to start a Parish Plan. As Speen have already completed a Parish Design Statement, the foundations would already be in place. Volunteers would be needed - in Inkpen they needed 15 but Speen would need nearer 50. CCB and WBC would need to be involved for advice. A set of Objectives would need to be listed – and a Questionnaire delivered to every house in the Parish to enable the volunteer Committee to draw up the objectives. The data obtained from the questionnaire would be analysed by a professional company and anonymity would be kept. A prize draw would help all the questionnaires to be returned completed. The whole process took Inkpen two years. They had a friendly printer, which helped enormously. M Chantry answered questions, one of which was asking how much ‘weight’ does the Parish Plan have with the Planning Department at West Berks Council. Apparently it carries quite a lot of credence, and Planning have to take the wishes of the residents (Parish Plan) into consideration at all times.

E Vandyk thanked Mr K Chantrey for his valuable observations.

4. **MINUTES:** The Minutes of the previous Parish Assembly were circulated, agreed and signed.

5..**MATTERS ARISING:** There were no matters arising.

6.**CHAIRMAN’S REPORT.**

A verbatim report of the report follows:-

“Thank you all very much for attending this evenings Annual Parish Meeting.

The agenda for the evening has been posted on the various notice Boards around the Parish and the Clerk, Julia Huntingford, can answer any questions arising on that agenda and has a few additional copies if anyone would like one.

During the last year, that is the year since the last Parrish Meeting, Council has remained under its 'establishment' of 13 Councillors. This is a matter of regret and, again, I would urge any eligible individuals to approach the Clerk or any other Councillor with a view to putting their name forward for co-option to the Council.

During the year Council has wrestled with the thorny problems of attempting to provide appropriate quality recreational facilities which will benefit not only to the neighbourhood but also the local community. It is somewhat problematical creating, at local residents direct expense via the Parrish precept, a quality recreational facility largely utilised by persons outside the district unless that brings benefit in some other way, for example by bringing in appropriate income, based on a return on capital, to the Council, by bringing economic activity to the district by, for example, increasing trade at the public houses or post office, by improving an eyesore or preventing a local amenity from becoming rundown. This is the more difficult if the provision of that facility actually has the potential for increasing problems for local residents by causing, for example, parking issues.

In this regard Council have considered the future of both Speen and Stockcross recreation grounds. At Speen the cricket club, having played there for some years, decided to move on leaving us with essentially an unutilised facility. Whilst that situation has improved somewhat as you will hear from Alan Snook later it did pose the dilemma as to what Council could do with an under-utilised building, namely the pavilion which will deteriorate with neglect. Council considered a number of options ranging from alternative use to demolition – luckily I believe these alternatives do not now need to be faced, short term at least, but suffice it to say that none of the alternatives we looked were, for one reason or another, either practical, acceptable or palatable. Why did the cricket club leave? The pitch was unacceptable and the outfield sloped – in other words good facilities, poor playing surface.

At Stockcross the reverse situation has had to be faced. There we have a pitch, which has the potential to be excellent for most sports but poor or non-existent facilities. The cost of a suitable pavilion is potentially high but, by building to a high specification grants may well be available. However the key question is not so much can we build a pavilion to complement the pitch but rather should council, for the reasons stated before, embark on such project. The decision remains outstanding and comments and thought would be welcome. Doubtless Alan will have something to say on this subject as well.

Two other points need to be raised. The first is the threat posed to Speen Church by the effective withdrawal of the incumbent. Edward Hall has led a sterling fightback against potential closure. Council has supported Speen Church for many years and has and will continue to, to support the campaign to keep it open and fully functional.

The loss of any amenity in the community is to be regretted – during the year Stockcross Bowls Club closed after 72 years for example.

Finally I would like to express Council's concern over the planning process as regards mobile telephone masts. Speen has potentially suffered at the hands of a seeming failure by WBC to handle an application appropriately. Whilst we had hoped that the issue had been resolved by negotiation this may now not be the case. Council is concerned about the planning process as well as about specific applications for mobile phone masts. We will make the appropriate representations on each application on its merits but it must be appreciated that Council's powers are limited in this regard. "

7. COMMITTEES

- a) Ladywell, The Pound and the War Memorial. Mrs Butcher gave a brief description of the Ladywell and the Pound, full of daffodils and looking very attractive. A restful place to visit. Parishioners enjoy visiting and throwing coins into the water. At the War Memorial a post and the chain has been knocked down again by motorists, and her son Tony Butcher would be repairing it tomorrow. E Vandyk that both Mary and Tony for all the work they undertake over the year on behalf of the Parish.
- b) Stockcross and Marsh Benham Recreational Grounds. A Snook reported that the grass had been cut regularly at Marsh Benham and the swings had been inspected. The boundary fence is slightly damaged and may need attention soon. At Stockcross there is a problem of rubbish distributed in the car park. T Butcher had 4 bags filled last week. We may have to buy a new wheelie bin, and attach it to the fence post. A Snook said he still hopes to hear from Sutton's regarding the ownership of the strip of lane in front of three houses, bordering the recreational ground. A Snook said that the Car Park gate may have to be locked, and a key made available. The purchase of new signs for the car park regarding rubbish, would be discussed at the next meeting.
- c) Speen Recreational Ground : A Snook said that the ground is looking good, two football groups are interested in using the facilities, starting soon. They would be supervised by licensed Coaches on Saturday mornings. This would be a good source of revenue. One or two items or work had to be done by the Parish Council first and Quotes were being obtained.

8.. **FINANCIAL** The Responsible Financial Officer, J Huntingford (Clerk) said that the draft accounts were with the Internal Auditor at present. Forms had been received from Hacker Young and Notices are on the boards indicating when the public can view the accounts, and where. The Bank of Ireland stood at 31/3/04 £24354.12 and the Lloyds current account had £1403.08. There were no creditors at year end. Total VAT reclaimed had been £1485.74 during the year. The Precept was £13000. The Chairman thanked the Clerk for her hard work.

9..**DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORT:** Mr Paul Bryant spoke on behalf of the District Councillors. He said that it is now a year since the District Council Elections that left the Council hung with 20 members from the Conservatives and 20 from the Liberal Democrats. The casting Vote from the Chairman ensured that the Liberal Democrats had control. This had surprisingly worked quite well. Planning has been through a difficult period, with many changes of staff. A backlog of work meant that some problems got through, such as the Mast at Battle Close. Things were now improving, however. The disposal of rubbish was still a concern, with Pinchington

Lane tip being very busy at weekends. Housing and Social Services have had a poor rating. The desire to keep the elderly in their own homes for longer has meant more Carers , who are in short demand. Schools in the West Berkshire area are quite buoyant and overall in a good quality.

In summing up P Bryant said that Speen and Stockcross appeared relatively quiet, with few planning applications of concern. He mentioned vandalism and hoped that this would not get worse. He thanked the Chairman and Council for efficiency and friendliness and looked forward to the coming year.

10.. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

- a) Mrs Butcher asked if the 'Draft for Approval' could be written on the draft minutes in a different way, so that they were easier to read. The Chairman agreed to see to it.
- b) P Calder reported that some work needed to be done to the old cricket pitch at Speen, and goal posts need to be taken out of concrete. K Rai had left a message with the Clerk to say that he was getting two Quotes. P Calder would Quote from his Company Dashwood Construction Ltd .
- c) A letter regarding the Public Licensing for the Lord Lyon Public House at Stockcross was read and there were no objections.

The Meeting closed at 8.30 p.m. and the next meeting is the AGM on May 17th at Speen Village Hall at 7 p.m.