

**MINUTES OF THE SPEEN PARISH COUNCIL ASSEMBLY HELD IN STOCKCROSS VILLAGE HALL ON 14<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2003 AT 7.30 p.m.**

Present: E Vandyk (Chairman) G Foulkes ( Vice Chairman) A Snook, WRB John, A Martin, P Calder, C Woodhead, K Titcombe, R Tolcher M Butcher R Wilson J Huntingford ( Clerk) T Tyler

District Councillor: Dr P Bryant

Members of the Public: 5 including a representative of Newbury Weekly News.

**1. Introduction by Chairman:** E Vandyk welcomed those present and said that he was pleased to see that all the Parish councillors were present – this showed commitment. He then introduced Mrs Sylvia Fones from the Newbury and District Cancer care Trust and invited her to speak.

Mrs Fones said that the Trust had been established for 19 years but it was still apparent that many Doctors and many of the public were not aware of the good work the Trust undertakes in this area. They are now trying to raise their profile, and were talking to Parish Councils, Women's Institutes and other groups, as well as holding an educational seminar for the medical profession every other year. The Trust depends on grants and donations. So far more than one millions pounds have been received. The Trust supports the Rainbow Rooms for terminally ill cancer patients in Newbury Hospital, and already funds of over £90k have been put aside for the new hospital. Work is done in conjunction with the Social Services, and equipment hired out, sometime 10 requests for this per day. Drivers are trained specially to accommodate patients going for treatment at Hospitals, and carers trained as home visitors can be arranged. Sometimes extra work can be organised such as collecting children from school and walking the dog. Mrs Fones finished by saying that they were looking for more drivers and home visitors.

E Vandyk thanked Mrs Fones for her most interesting talk.

**2. Apologies:** nil

**3. Minutes:** These were circulated around the room and eventually were agreed and signed.

**4. Matters Arising:** See the Chairman's Report.

**5. Chairman's Report:** E Vandyk stated that given this was his first meeting as Chairman of the Parish Council may he would like to take this opportunity of paying tribute to his predecessor as Chairman, Roy Tolcher, without whose energy and enthusiasm during his period in office some of the achievements during the year in question would not have come to pass.

Roy had not been well during the year and E Vandyk said he was delighted to see him at the Parish Assembly and looking in good health. Roy has not stood for re-election to the Parish Council so, as things stand, he will not have the benefit of his advice in future. E Vandyk said he had some remarks to make later on about the number, or

rather the lack, of people who have stood for election to the Council and he hoped that Roy would, should his health and family permit it and following E Vandyk's later comments, consider putting his name forward for co-option to the Council.

E Vandyk stated that during the year, by which he meant since the last Parish Meeting in April 2002, steady progress has been made on a number of fronts. In some cases, whilst the results came into effect during the year, they had been the product of many years hard work, the actual coming into force of the B4000 weight limit being a case in point. Roy Tolcher was deeply involved in promoting the B4000 weight limit from the Council's perspective and E Vandyk said it was upsetting that no representative of the Council was invited to the official opening at the B4000 / A34 inter change, within our Parish boundary, as it would have been fitting that Roy should have attended and represented the Council.

E Vandyk said he did not feel it is necessarily helpful to dwell on past difficulties but it was a matter of public record that Council has had its differences with the ward member, Steve Pascal, over a number of years. This has, E Vandyk suspected, necessarily altered Council's relationship with WBC and it is to be hoped that following the elections for WBC in May that Council will be able to work constructively with both of the members for our electoral district. E Vandyk said that Paul Bryant has done a wonderful job as acting as our effective Ward Councillor for the last few years and that he would like to thank him for carrying out that role. E Vandyk said that he was aware that Paul was standing in the new electoral district for WBC and, as a consequence, Council might be acting with him in a more direct capacity after May 1.

E Vandyk said that whilst the B4000 was the big news for the year there have been many other achievements.

The Speen lane traffic scheme seemed to be making progress, the Stockcross bus shelter had been renewed and, were the Speen bus shelter on a bus route currently Council would turn its attention to it. The bus shelter in Speen will have to be dealt with in some way but clearly it, or its replacement, must be on a bus route.

The major potential project going forward is the changing rooms at Stockcross recreation ground. Council looks favourably on this in principle but remains concerned about the costs not only of building it but also maintenance. It is essential that such upgraded facilities get used and derive an income for Council to offset cost.

In that context E Vandyk said he was sad to report that it seems that the cricket club have abandoned the Speen Rec as their location for this coming season. E Vandyk asked that if any one was aware of a cricket club looking for a venue please let Council know. The Speen VDS has been completed and congratulations should go to those involved for their effort in producing a most worthwhile document.

Council was represented at the one Vodafone liaison committee meeting held during the year. This project is effectively now completed.

E Vandyk said it must be appreciated that Council's ability to influence events is limited. Council would, for example, like to be able to assist with the current issues about the footpath in Speen. Apart from as a facilitator it simply cannot do anything.

Council performed its statutory obligations as regards planning applications during the year and, again, E Vandyk did not believe there is any one planning application which required bringing to the attention of the meeting.

Again Council's budgeted expenditure did not appear to be significantly different from actual expenditure although the accounts to 31 March are not yet available. One variable has been the position of Clerk. For some three months during the year the Council had no Clerk and Councillors performed the various functions themselves – E Vandyk said he would like to thank those involved.

E Vandyk stated that Council were lucky to be able to recruit Julia Huntingford as its clerk and should count itself lucky to have her services.

The Code of conduct also came into effect during the year and, despite some initial teething troubles, does not seem either to have caused problems in administering it or with the Councillors to whom it applies. This has not necessarily been the picture in other Parishes.

E Vandyk stated that Council consists, or is supposed to consist, of 13 members from the local community. 6 people stood for election, of whom only one was from Speen. Ideally on a mathematical basis Council should have eight from Speen and 5 from elsewhere, including Stockcross, although the Parish is not warded.

E Vandyk said that two existing Councillors, who had said they intended to stand, somehow forgot to get their papers in on time and assuming they were prepared to be co-opted that would reduce the deficit to 5 members. If Roy Tolcher were available the deficit would be four. E Vandyk asked for support for the Council and for people to put their name forward for co-option as Councillors.

## **6. Reports from Committees:**

- Stockcross and Marsh Benham Recreation Grounds
  - a. Stockcross Recreation Grounds. A Snook reported some activity – letting to Football Clubs, 3 are now on an official basis. The Rent has been paid. There is a discussion going on, on one agreement but A Snook said that it would be sorted amicably soon. The AFC Juniors – some 50 boys practice regularly with coaches.
  - b. A Snook reported on the strip of Land by 21,22,23 – a document had this evening come to light which will be examined. The Land is the responsibility of the householders.
  - c. Cars – still being parked in the Stockcross Car Park, we are finding out the owners.
  - d. Marshall Benham – hedge cuttings still there, wire fence still worn.
  - e. Stockcross Changing Rooms – Suttons have agreed design, but it is not yet clear if permission to go ahead has been given.

- Speen Recreation Ground – P Calder reported that the ground is in very good order and the grass was being cut regularly. It was cut twice last week. The Cricket Team have moved elsewhere and the Chairman asked that an Advert might be placed in the Newbury Weekly News. The Representative from the floor said that she would oblige, in her write up. Some vandalism had occurred but because of notices that had been put up, this was minimal. The Roller had disappeared along with the Cricket Team and as it is valued at £500 on our Insurance the Clerk was asked to chase up.
- Ladywell, Pound and War memorial – M Butcher reported that the Pound was clean and tidy and that the LadyWell looked lovely at present with all the Spring flowers in bloom. The posts and chains at the war memorial are to be painted soon. There will be no flowers from the Women's Institute this year as the Branch had closed down, however M Butcher had plans to put flowers there and a water bowl to keep them watered. E Vandyk thanked Mrs Butcher and her son, Tony, for all their valued help.

**7. Thames Valley police :** The Sergeant at Newbury had sent a message via the Clerk to say that his men were too busy policing RAF Welford so that no one was available to attend the meeting.

**8. Financial report:** The Responsible Financial Officer A J Huntingford (Clerk reported that the Final Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2003 would not be completed for some time, as details were only just coming in. However she reported that the Deposit account had been moved to Bank of Ireland in November last year, as their rates were much better. Base minus 0.5%. Bank of Ireland specialise in Parish Councils. Council had received £688.19 in interest during the year. Precept was £11600. End of year balances were as follows: Bank of Ireland £27742.07 and Lloyds CA £1648.56. Council have reclaimed the sum of £1277.10 in VAT. Expenditure had not exceeded Budget in any considerable way. The Internal Auditor Mr A Kirke would be checking the Accounts later in May 2003, prior to submitting them to Messrs Hacker Young.

**9. District Councillors Report:** Dr P Bryant said that he was disappointed so few people had attended the Parish Assembly. He suggested that by and large people are content with what the Parish does for them. He said they are far more likely to form pressure groups to complain, than work through the Parish Council. At the forthcoming Election he is not expecting more than 30% turnout. Democracy is expensive. The District Council is lacking in money. However there are still areas where the Council has some powers – the imposition of the weight restrictions on B4000 is welcome. Traffic Calming remains a moot point for many Councils. Dr P Bryant believe that electronic cameras were the best. He said he was appalled by the technique of filling potholes with asphalt and patting it down with the back of a shovel. The state of rural roads leaves much to be desired.

Dr P Bryant said that perhaps Newbury's worst problem was that it had a large number of industrial and housing developments recently and that, in his opinion, the infrastructure has not been improved to match. Poor infrastructure is the reason for the interminable debates over pedestrianisation or not.

Dr P Bryant said it had been a pleasure to work with Council and he was impressed with its dedication and wish it success in the future.

**10. Matters for Consideration or Information:** - none had been received.

**11. Closing the Meeting:** The Chairman, E Vandyk, thanked all those who had attended and particular thanked those who are standing down as Councillors this month and for all the work they had done over the years. He noted M Butcher had been a Parish Council for 35 years. He concluded by saying that there were 7 vacancies on the Council and would those present please ask around. In particular Council needed representation from Speen.

**The Parrish Assembly closed at 8.35pm and the May Meeting of Council is booked for 19<sup>th</sup> May at Speen 7 p.m.**