

**Minutes of the Souldern Annual Parish Meeting held in the
Village Hall on Wednesday 9th May 2012 at 19.45**

Present:

Mr A Martin (Chairman); Mr C Rothero; Mr D Blunt; Ms K Draper; Mrs S Barrett; Mrs J Coleman; Mr J Carey; Mrs H Blunt; Mrs A Prescott; Major Gray; Mrs J Clifford; Mr R Deeley; Mr N Oakhill; Councillor M Kerford Byrne; Mrs J Martin (Acting Clerk)

Apologies were received from Mrs D Gray; Mr P Prescott; Mrs J Carlisle; Mr D Couzens; Mrs C Couzens; Mr D Summers; Mrs R Summers

The Chairman welcomed all to this annual meeting, acknowledging the Council's appreciation of support from residents. He reminded all present that all Souldern residents were also welcome at normal Parish Council meetings.

1. The Minutes of the previous Parish Meeting on 18th May 2011 were approved.
Proposed: Mrs A Prescott; seconded: Major Gray

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman noted that the past 12 months had been relatively quiet, perhaps reflecting the tranquil nature of Souldern. However, he had a number of issues on which to report.

Parish Council: The Chairman expressed his pleasure that Yvonne Williams had been willing to take over the role of Clerk to the Council towards the end of 2010. As she settled into the role, it was soon evident that her experience and personality were to be an asset to the Council. However, it became apparent during the year that Yvonne was suffering from cancer and she passed away the previous week. The Chairman expressed the Council's condolences to Yvonne's husband and family.

The Chairman was pleased to report that both Jill Coleman and Sue Barrett had settled in well to working with Parish Council, and thanked Jan Martin for looking after the finances.

Village Welcome Pack: The Chairman thanked Ann Prescott and Barbara McGarry for producing and distributing the Village Welcome packs, which provide a wealth of information to help new arrivals settle in. He asked anyone aware of new people coming to the village to let either Ann or Barbara know. Any suggestions for additional information for the packs would be appreciated by Ann and Barbara.

Flower planting: The Chairman thanked Marc Ballman for looking after the flower bed on the corner of Bovewell. It is well established now and there always seems to be something colourful to admire.

Playground: The Chairman thanked Susan Jones, Martin Garrity, David Blunt and their band of volunteers for maintaining the playground equipment, both in terms of safety and appearance. Their work in gaining external funding for a new sports wall was appreciated, and the newly sited equipment provided leisure opportunities for young people while reducing the noise heard in Bovewell.

The Chairman stressed that this was a critical year for the playground, as David, Sue and Martin wished to hand over responsibility for the playground to some new enthusiasts. If the Council's efforts to enlist the help of new people to look after the playground were unsuccessful, it would be inevitable that deteriorating equipment would gradually have to be removed and eventually the playground would have to close. The Council hoped that willing volunteers will come forward to help and this eventuality can be averted.

Nancy Bowles Wood: The Chairman thanked Romney Summers and the Wood Management Group for another year's work ensuring the wood remains an asset to the village. The wood is recovering well from the essential tree management project of two

years ago, and it is time to let it settle down and encourage new growth, both at tree level and ground level. Nick Oakhill and Tim Vincent were thanked for planting some new hedgerow by the glade, as well as establishing a nursery for replacement plants as necessary. Romney has decided to stand down from chairing this group for a year and Len Barrett has enthusiastically stepped up to take her place.

The Chairman highlighted that a recent planning application to erect three stables on the field adjacent to the wood could adversely affect it. The Council is very concerned that the bridleway up to the wood would soon become impassable to pedestrians if significant motor traffic was allowed. The Parish Council has submitted a report to Cherwell District Council detailing the reasons for its objection. There have also been letters of objection sent to CDC by a number of villagers.

Village Roads and Emergency Action: The Council purchased three more grit bins for the village, which were in place and filled in time to deal with the snow and ice. There are now seven bins around the village, hopefully located at strategic places to ensure good coverage of the village roads. Oxfordshire County Council is now charging for all but the first grit delivery of the year, at the rate of £100 per one tonne bag of grit, which the village is required to purchase, store and move around the village to refill grit bins. Fortunately, this last winter was reasonably mild and refills of grit were not necessary, but concerns remain for future years.

Royal Jubilee: The Parish Council, through a number of task groups led by Lawrence Williams has organised a day of celebration for the Royal Jubilee on Monday 4th June. Details have been distributed around the village, and it is hoped that all will join in. As well as Fun and Games on the Playing Field, a Village Tea Party in the High Street and a BBQ at The Fox, every child under 16 will receive a celebration mug. The Chairman thanked Lawrence and all the helpers who have worked hard to plan this special day.

Initiatives for the coming year: With significant changes in planning policies, at national and local level, the Parish Council believes it is important for the village to know what it wants and what it does not want in terms of possible development and services in the village. To this end, it is intended to develop what is called a Community Led Plan. A small working group will be needed to carry out this important work, which will form the basis of the next step, the writing of a Neighbourhood Plan. It is hoped that a good cross section of Souldern residents will be actively involved in producing these documents, both of which should be referred to by the planning authorities when considering any planning proposals.

Thanks: In conclusion, the Chairman thanked all Parish Councillors, Yvonne and Jan for their time, support and commitment to serving the village during the year. The contribution made by other residents of Souldern who serve their community in various ways was also recognised. Without these people, the village would not function so well as a community.

4. Financial Officer's Report

The Responsible Financial Officer reported that in 2011/12, income net of VAT exceeded expenditure by approximately £20. Though this might suggest a remarkably accurate budget for the year, there were some counterbalancing variations at the detailed level.

Compared with the previous year, income and expenditure were considerably higher, mainly because of the purchase of the sports wall, and the grant income obtained for this. Sufficient funds were gained (mainly from Viridor, with a much appreciated donation from Souldern United Charity) to cover the costs of this, without needing the funds set aside in the budget. As well as purchasing 3 additional grit bins this year, tree surgery was required and carried out on the trees around the playing field, and on the willow by the pond. As agreed by the Parish Council, the rent of the village hall was paid for the visiting Post Office each week, to ensure this service could be continued. It was also agreed to make available some funds to support the village Jubilee celebrations in June 2012.

The precept for 2012/13 was reduced slightly (from £6000 to £5700), reflecting the Parish Council's careful financial control.

The accounts for 2011/12, once approved by the Council, along with all supporting documentation would be available for inspection between 6th June and 3rd July 2012.

5. Matters Arising

- a.** A summary of the minutes was felt to be useful. It was agreed that such a summary would be posted on the Parish Council notice board, and published in the Three Parishes.
 - b.** It was confirmed that the Council ensured that all planning applications were brought to the attention of those most likely to be affected. It was agreed that additionally a notice of such applications would be posted on the Parish Council notice board.
 - c.** Major Gray commented that the pond needed attention. The water level had lowered considerably as a result of interference with the plate retaining water. Ways of restoring this plate in a more permanent manner were being investigated. The flow of water into the pond had also reduced, and weeds had consequently taken hold. Richard Deeley offered to investigate the problem and attempt to resolve it. It was agreed that it was desirable that improvements could be made before the Jubilee celebrations. The Chairman would provide to Richard details of individuals willing to help.
 - d.** Cherwell District Councillor Mike Kerford Byrne conveyed information regarding developments at district level:
 - i.** Plans had now been deposited for a new hospital in Bicester with both in-patient and out-patient capacity. The plans would be considered at the June Planning meeting.
 - ii.** The Tesco store Bicester would be moving to Bicester Avenue, and the old site would be used to provide dual lane entry into and exit from the extended Bicester Village site.
 - iii.** A Park and Ride site for 700 cars is to be developed near the service station. This will provide additional capacity into Oxford Monday to Friday, and overspill parking for Bicester Village on Saturdays and Sundays.
 - iv.** CDC council tax for 2012/13 will not increase, mainly as a result of the merger of management functions with South Northamptonshire District Council.
 - v.** The Local Development Framework will be considered by the CDC Executive at the end of May and will then go out for consultation. This will set the scene for planning in future and may benefit villages.
 - vi.** From 2013/14, the audit fee will be waived for councils with an income less than £10,000.
- 6.** There being no further business, the Chairman thanked all those present for attending and the meeting closed at 20.40.