

- **Achievements** – the most recent Ofsted report had been outstanding and everyone involved with the school should be proud of it. We are all hugely indebted to the Headteacher, Pam Talbot, all her staff and the children. Classroom 1 had been completely refurbished and upgraded. All-weather safety surfaces had been installed in the main play area and in the pre-school play area. Since last autumn, hot meals had been delivered one day a week and this had proved extremely popular. It was hoped to extend this service in the future and to offer the children more variety of meals.
In January a new On-line virtual learning facility had been installed which, as well as improving learning for the children, also allowed parents access to school activities and homework etc.
From September there will be a new Year 3 class in Dinton.
The merger with Dinton, planned over the last year, had not been without its challenges but the future for the school was positive. CB expressed thanks to all the staff and parents for their continued support for the school.

8. The Nicholas Almond Charity

In the absence of Ted Ferris, Jim Hayward, trustee of the charity, presented the report and accounts. The charity helps students and apprentices resident in Cuddington to buy books or tools. If anyone knows of anyone going to university or starting an apprenticeship who might benefit from a grant, please contact JH. The trustees had made one award of £150.00 in the last year. The Capital Reserves a/c as at 31.12.07 stood at £3953.22. The charity's income is derived from the sale of grazing rights to Poors Moor field within the parish. Traditionally, the rights had been auctioned annually but the lack of interest in grazing land and the auctioneers' increased charges meant that it no longer made financial sense to go to auction. The grazing rights had therefore been sold this year direct to Mr Gibson who had been a generous supporter of the charity over the years. The charity is administered by 4 trustees, namely: the parish Vicar by right, and three others elected by the Parish Council. Ted Ferris, an existing trustee, will be leaving the village in the near future. The matter of the 3 elected trustees will be on the agenda of the next Parish Council meeting. If anyone is interested in becoming a trustee of this charity, please contact JH. JH thanked Ted Ferris for his tremendous work and support for the charity over the last 40 years. SS also expressed thanks to Ted on behalf of the village.

9. Neighbourhood Watch and Action Group

Michael Pegge, Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator gave his report:

- Cuddington had another relatively quiet year as far as crime was concerned, although there were a few burglaries, a bit of criminal damage and some young people from outside the village taking drugs in Tibby's Lane.
- The records show that overall, in the Haddenham cluster group of villages, the number of reported incidents has fallen.
- Community Police Support Officers assigned to the Haddenham cluster villages which includes Cuddington, are Sue Jones and Caroline Day. Based at Waddesdon Police Station, they can be contacted using the Thames Valley Police single number **0845 8 505 505**.
- There are a number of Neighbourhood Street Wardens in the village and they each receive up-to-date crime information via the police messaging system 'Ringmaster' either by telephone or email. The authorities have now decided to extend this service to anyone who wishes to receive these messages from the Neighbourhood Watch central control room and leaflets are available from MP with information on how to register. Anyone interested in becoming an NSW should contact MP
- A further development of Watch schemes is the introduction of the Aylesbury Vale Farm and Country Watch, a free scheme open to farm, small holding and isolated homes. It is designed to deter crime and reduce fear of crime. MP has information leaflets available to anyone interested.
- Neighbourhood policing has been introduced recently. This involves having small dedicated teams of police responsible for localised areas. They will work together with partner organisations and residents to tackle problems of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour at a very local level.

10. Cuddington Post Office

Ken Birkby gave a report regarding Post Office closures and the likely effect on Cuddington:

- Current network stands at 14,300, down from 25,000 in the 1960s. Now planned to close 2500 over 12 to 18 months from October 2007.
- Losses currently £4m per week, subsidy is £3m per week. 4 million fewer customers using the post offices than 2 years ago, largely due to the fact that the Govt has taken away services such as TV licences, passports, benefits and pensions now paid direct to bank accounts etc.
- Some estimates say that 1000 village shops could close .
- Closures are to be phased across 50 areas, but at different times so there has been no national concerted co-ordinated campaign of protest which seems to have been a deliberate 'divide and rule' plan by Post Office Limited.

- Announcement regarding Bucks closures will be made on 17th June 2008, following which there will be 6 weeks local public consultation. However, we are told that 'prior to this, each Area Plan will be subject to a 12 week intensive pre-consultation process which includes a substantial amount of local stakeholder involvement'.
- Looking at our area geographically, with POs in Long Crendon, Haddenham, Thame and Stone there is no doubt that Cuddington is vulnerable.
- Around 500 of closures will get Outreach support; mobile, hosted service, partner service or home delivery.

Actions to date:

- The Parish Council and Village Voice have joined to organise a petition.
- Letters have been sent to MP John Bercow.
- Articles have been produced in Village Voice.
- Petition forms have been delivered to every household in the parish (250) and 223 in support have been returned. KB thanked the 30 or so helpers on this project.
- Forms were also being signed by residents and businesses in other local villages and parents of schoolchildren who use Cuddington post office.
- Important that as many individuals and businesses especially are encouraged to write letters of support – it could make a difference.

Future Actions:

- KB asked for volunteers to form an action group for a short one-off campaign of action – lobbying and publicity particularly.

SS thought we would need media help and offered her staff and office facilities to assist in the campaign, and hoped that others would come forward as requested.

The shop and PO was very important to the village, particularly for older people and it was very much part of the history of village.

KB said that unfortunately Post Office Limited had no interest in the shop, they were only interested in their own business profitability.

Mike Levitt said he thought a campaign would have more impact if Cuddington did not work in isolation but involved other parish councils in Bucks and also pressed the District Council in this issue.

Chris Blumer said that Dinton would support a campaign.

KB suggested that at the next Parish Council meeting, several more people came along to give their views to Michael Edmonds and David Smith. Previously, when he had asked if Bucks CC would do the same as Essex CC, they had said that the CC intended to re-assess the issue.

SS said she hoped people would attend the next PC meeting and that an action committee could be formed.

11. Parish Council Report

Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month in the school.

Attendances by parishioners had varied from 6 to 26. The Council represents the parishioners and need to know their views. SS thanked the councillors for their support and assistance over the past year.

▪ **Finances**

A copy of the draft Final Accounts as at 31 March 2008 had been circulated to those present. These showed expenditure of £20,914.00 against a budget of £30,035.00, and receipts of £10,226.00. Current A/C balance stood at £20,685.00. SS gave a brief explanation of several items.

There were no questions or comments from the floor.

▪ **Achievements**

One of the main efforts has been to keep the village looking smart and attractive through regular grass cutting of the greens and verges, sometimes made difficult by the number of parked cars and vans.

Extra dog bins and bag dispensers had been sited.

There had been a lot of discussion on a teenage activity area at the playing field. SS asked anyone interested to go along to the PC meeting to express their ideas.

▪ **Planning Applications**

There had been 43 applications this year, against 19 last year, including 8 for trees to be removed. 5 applications had been turned down.

▪ **Traffic Action Group**

Michael Pegge gave a report.

The vehicle activated sign on the Aylesbury Road was not working properly and it had been arranged for an engineer to attend.

The Police would be carrying out radar speed checks around the villages.

TAG had made a number of complaints about the state of the road in and around the village. BCC is to invest £3.25 million on highway maintenance in 2008/09. They had planned a 'blitz' in local community areas, schedules for completion by October 2008. BCC area technician is David Smith and he would be responsible, with TAG, for determining the schedule of work and priorities. If anyone sees a problem, they should report it to Highways on Call, tel. **0845 230 2882** and this will ensure the problem gets on the list to be dealt with.

A new instruction had gone out to the BCC contractors, Fitzpatrick, that when a pothole was being repaired, the gang must examine the road surface 25 metres either side and repair any other faults that are apparent.

BCC had been persuaded to build and pay for a flight of steps, with railings, at the centre of the severe slope outside Swan Hill cottages. It was hoped these would be completed fairly soon.

JH said the council would be trimming hedges and reminded people that the council is entitled to trim any overhanging branches. They would also be washing signs and treating pavements.

SS said she and JH had gone round the village marking potholes and road areas requiring repair.

- **Footpaths**

SS said it had been hoped to have a proper map of local footpaths available this year. Unfortunately, this had not been possible but she had produced an interim map which was available free of charge in the shop.

Hedge trimming had been carried out in Dadbrook. AVDC would pay for any strimming carried out and the PC would be submitting a bill in May for work already done.

- **Website**

This was not working as well as was hoped; it was taking too long to be updated. PC would investigate.

- **Children's Playground**

SS said the area had been updated and resurfaced. It was intended to ask children what new things they would like in the play area but in the meantime the existing equipment would be refurbished.

There was now a notice displayed reminding everyone that no dogs are allowed in the area.

12. Any other items for discussion

- **Best Kept Village**

SS said she hoped everyone would make an effort to make the village as attractive and tidy as possible. Although we have the village swept by the council twice a year, we are not allowed to book this to coincide with judging. If those who are able and willing would tidy the area outside their house, this would be a great help. She felt we were lucky to live in such a beautiful village and to win, or to get good marks, in the competition was something to be proud of.

JH said the judging in the two competitions would take place during the last week of May up to late June. Peggy Cattell said Village Voice would print details.

Peter Wenham said it was difficult to keep the village looking beautiful, with the number of large lorries using the village roads verges are being destroyed. Would this affect the judging? JH said the judges were realistic and do making allowances for building work being carried out. It was suggested that residents having building work done could ask suppliers to send deliveries by a small lorry when possible.

Spicketts Lane is a particular problem area. SS said that Mike Cottman knew he was expected to make good at the end of his building project.

- SS reported that the 'ugly' telegraph pole recently erected in Lower Church Street had been removed. She said that as the village was a conservation area, she hoped the PC would be able to start a campaign to get all wires underground.

- **Parishioners Questions**

Footpaths: Angela Sanderson apologised for not having been able to produce the footpath map as she had promised; this would be done as soon as possible. She also commented on the state of the footpath near the sewerage works and said the footplate of the stile was missing. Part of Tibby's Lane was now under water due she thought to sawdust, leaves and chippings blocking a ditch. Would the PC try to bring the landowner and farmer together to discuss responsibility for keeping the paths clear. SS said she would undertake that.

David Brown said that the footpath in Dadbrook area was spoilt by the amount of dog mess around. SS agreed to investigate the provision of bins and signs.

Planning: Angela Sanderson said she was concerned that there did not seem to be a coherent PC approach to planning in the village. Rather than seven individuals each expressing their own ideas, was it possible to formulate a PC policy which reflected the thoughts of the village? Stephen Turner and Jim Hayward both expressed the view that planning law would make it very difficult to have an effective village planning policy. AVDC is governed by set planning rules and in fact very few planning applications were referred.

Fete: SS said that this year's fete would have a Victorian theme. Her Majesty had graciously consented to open the fete, escorted by John Brown. As always, the Committee would appreciate any offers of help.

A parishioner who was an amateur artist said he was very interested in trying to raise money for a charity within the village. SS said the fete raises money

for the Playing Fields, church, Sunshine Club, village hall and various village societies etc. and suggested he might like to discuss taking a stall at the fete.

Post Office: parishioner asked about future efforts to save the Post Office after the announcement in June. SS suggested that time would be given at the end of the next PC meeting for open discussion on the PO/shop campaign. Jim Hayward suggested contacting the Bucks Association of small councils and getting a view from them. Ken Birkby said if anyone had any ideas regarding publicity etc, they should come forward as soon as possible.

There being no further comments, Sherry Scott thanked everyone for attending and for showing interest in maintaining Cuddington as a beautiful place in which to live.