

Annual Assembly 2019 – Speaking Notes

Item 1 Welcome and introduction

Welcome; an agenda and our Aims and Objectives for next year are available. Firstly, and in accordance with the Council's Risk Assessment, I have to say the following:

- Fire exits have been checked – most of you will know them better than me
- The action to take in the event of a fire is to evacuate the building; no fire drills are planned so if the bell goes head for the car park
- We are happy to take questions or comments at any time.

I would particularly like to welcome Wendy Davies, who has recently handed over as Chair of Woolstone Parish Meeting, and David Owen-Smith who is Chair of Baulking Parish Meeting. We have worked closely with both in a number of ways, but especially in the UB NP and the purchase of the defibrillators. Both have been extremely helpful, and for me it seems to be sensible to take any opportunity for neighbouring villages to work together, when it is in the best interests of all of us.

Item 2 Report by National Trust Ranger Andy Foley

Andy Foley, Area Ranger for White Horse Hill and Ashdown Park Estate, is regrettably unable to attend, but has provided some points that he would have made, as follows:

'Although the weather is wet and miserable in our parish it is encouraging that the climate is seasonal for the month and something that we have needed in the wake of last summer's heatwave.

As such I expect to see the Hill turning green very soon and more so with roadside field below Dragon Hill that we reverted to grassland last autumn. This hand sowing was completed with the generous help of the community and the initial indications are that it is coming along well. So much so that our sheep have been finding ways to get into the field and gorge themselves on the fresh new growth!

You may also have noted the entire field has had new fencing erected about it at a cost over £12000. It's our contribution to the Trust's wider strategy of restoring fragile landscapes i.e. chalk grassland and we're pleased to have played our part.

Similarly, you may have seen a lot of activity and heavy machinery in the car park and near the Ridgeway. This has been due to the sinking of a borehole to tap into the aquifer below the Hill so as we can provide a source of water for the soon to be introduced additions to our grazing livestock. Whether it be cattle or ponies joining the sheep we have yet to decide but new troughs are in place and more fencing will appear along the top road in due course. In distant days to come we also hope this will provide water for toilet facilities in the car park so watch this space. All works are subject to granted planning permissions and will have no effect on local water supplies.

So despite the rain, the Hill is gearing itself up for another busy season of events from Easter trails, guided walks, star gazing, school visits and of course, chalking the Horse and we very much look forward to you joining us if you can.'

Afternote: Chalking dates as follows: 6 July, 7 July, 25 August and 26 August. ½ hourly slots – just turn up! More details on the National Trust web site.

Item 3 Neighbourhood Plan update

Mike Oldnall reported on the UB NP, vice Rob Hart, chairman of the NP SG, who is unable to be here, as follows:

- A year ago (24 Apr) we held a public consultation event followed by ...
- End Apr 18 - public pre-submission consultation on the draft Plan for a statutory 6 weeks

- After the 6 weeks we considered the large number of comments and incorporated many of them
- End Oct - Following final editing and a 'Health Check' by a consultant we submitted the Plan to the VWHDC
- Early Dec – end Jan 19 - VWHDC then held a 6 week public consultation
- Jan 2019 - VWHDC collate the comments from statutory bodies and public
- End Feb - VWHDC appointed an Examiner (Mr A Ashcroft) and passed Plan and consultation comments to him
- Mar/Apr – we have been responding to questions and clarifications from Examiner
- Now – waiting for Examiners final report
- To come:
 - Incorporate his comments to create a plan which meets all the rules and is legally compliant
 - Hold the public referendum – which will be run like an election (but NOT part of 2 May elections) – probably in June. Postal and proxy voting will be possible.
 - If endorsed at the Referendum, the Plan will then be 'Made' (officially adopted)
 - and become part of the overall 'Development Plan' along with the VWHDC Local Plan parts 1 and 2 (if adopted by then)
 - Once part of Development Plan, it is used to help determine local planning applications
- Once adopted we are planning to produce a short booklet, summarising the Plan and all the policies, for distribution to all households in Uffington and Baulking (as we did with the CLP 4 years ago).

Item 4 – Report on 2018 / 2019

County Council - Yvonne Constance has sent her apologies.

I would like to thank all my colleagues on the Council, including Julia, very much for their support throughout another year. It has been another busy year and I do know that I push them quite hard, but I think we have achieved a lot. I especially wish to thank Karen and Paul, who are not standing in the May election. Paul was co-opted onto the Council 2 years ago and I would like to thank him for his contribution during that time. Karen has been on the Council for 15 years and has been a wonderful source of support, wise words and personal hard graft, in many ways – as councillor and Vice Chair. She took the lead on the village trail project and on replacing the playground equipment and was key to the restoration of the Old School Room - to mention but 3 in the last year or so. She took on the role of Curator of the TBSM in 2016 – what a change she has wrought there - and she has chaired the Uffington Museum Trustees. Karen, you will be missed, and I am glad that you are not going far! Our loss is the Museum's gain.

I would also like to thank all those who help with work around the village from time to time – especially in the summer and autumn – such as strimming in the play area and verges, keeping the ditch around the Jubilee Field clear, and turning out for the Jubilee Field tidy up sessions. The more the merrier and the easier for everyone else – e-mail me if you would like to join this group.

I would like to welcome Nigel Puddicombe and Dale Pilchowski to the new Council, which takes office from 7 May. The Vale received 6 nominations for 6 places, so the election was not contested and there will be no need to vote for parish councillors on 2 May..

We think and hope that all we do is in the best interests of the village, but we need feedback from residents on what we are doing, and what we should be doing, on your behalf. Some of the highlights of the year are:

The NP. Covered earlier – but to get our own NP adopted will be a huge achievement for Uffington and Baulking.

Fund raising and restoration of the Old School Room. Karen and I raised a lot of money and also spent a lot! We are extremely pleased with the result, in that the building looks as it did before, but with the difference that it is now in an excellent state of repair, and we have put a healthy amount into

a reserve account for when something serious goes wrong in the future. Routine maintenance is the responsibility of the PC as owners of the building, and is funded through the precept; the reserve is for major projects. Andrew Townsend Architects were our advisers and project managers and we could not have managed without them.

Defibrillators. There are now 6 of them around the three villages and our thanks are due to one of Yvonne Constance's OCC funds and to the WHST for their grants, and to the Russ family who provided informative, helpful and amusing awareness sessions to over 90 people.

Kissing gates on FP 12. Thanks to the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment and to Grundon Waste Management, who provided the funding, the footpath from Jacks Lea to Uffington Gorse has been greatly improved with the four new kissing gates. Thanks are also due to Robert Sharp who donated a fifth kissing gate on this FP. The PC made a small contribution from S106 funds.

The Speedwatch group. I would like to thank the nine residents who have come forward for training and are now able to operate the SID (Speed Indication Device) – which is not a 'Speed gun' as operated by the Police and which incorporates a camera. We have had a few sessions and the point of the initiative is to deter speeding in the village – one of the most important actions arising out of the CLP. If a driver is clocked at over about 35 mph then we inform the Police and they should write a warning letter to the driver. We are looking to buy a SID, in conjunction with other villages, and so the group will appear from time to time to remind people not to speed through the village. The effect of seeing some people in yellow jackets on the side of the road usually has an immediate effect.

Legally, we completed the registration of the PC's title to the Old School Room and the Burial Ground and sorted out legal matters relating to the structure of the Uffington Museum Trust and Jubilee Field Trust (JFT). Having taken legal advice on the JFT, we have set up a management agreement between the Trustees of the JFT (who are the members of the PC) and the PC so that the PC manages the JF on behalf of the Trustees. That was what was happening anyway, but is now legally correct. The AGM for the JFT will be held at the June PC meeting.

WW1. We planted a tree on the JF to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1.

S106 funds. From the S106 funds, we assisted with the purchase of a trailer for 1st SITV Scout Group, the kissing gates on FP 12 and we have bought new benches and tables for the Jubilee Field – currently going in.

Planning. We commented on many planning applications. What is known as the Fernham Road application for 20 houses is contentious; many objections were lodged and it has taken the Vale a long time to determine it. We now know that the District Council is recommending a refusal (in principle) as the location of the application site is outside the boundary of the established settlement. The applicant is aware of the recommendation and has advised he will be appealing the decision. In line with the NPPF and PPG, the DC has agreed a time extension with the applicant for the proposal until April, so some of the technical matters can be addressed before the appeal.

GDPR. We successfully negotiated GDPR implementation – which seemed a little like the 'millennium bug' as we moved onto the year 2000 – a lot of fuss about not very much, but we did update all the privacy policies and are more conscious of data protection issues.

Some of those achievements will seem quite trivial, but all require consultation with other interested parties - sometimes more than once – and which results in something actually being done by somebody.

Item 5 Communications

We want your feedback on improving communications around the village. If you look at the survey you all have with the agenda, you will see some questions. In Q2 there is a list of various means of getting the word out – there seem to be lots of them, but all too often, I hear the cry 'But I did not know about that'. How can we do better? We need your input. Or, is it a matter of 'you can take horse to

water, but you can't make it drink?'

What do you think about the Courier? It costs us c£350 each quarter, mitigated by some advertising income and it is distributed free to all households in the UBW villages. It is more expensive in colour but more interesting to have photographs.

We would be very grateful if you could complete the survey and leave it in the Shop, or give it to one of us, by 30 April. A copy will be distributed with the Spring 2019 Courier and an on-line version will be available via a link which is on the questionnaire and will also be sent out later this week on the village email.

Afternote: At the suggestion of a member of the audience, it was agreed that PC minutes would be published on the PC notice board (subject to space being available) with immediate effect.

Item 6 Objectives for 2019 / 2020

Any comment or feedback on the objectives for next year would be helpful (but those you have now should actually be labelled as a draft). The new Parish Council takes office on 7 May, so there will be a new council from that date and it should review these objectives before they are adopted.

Item 7 – Report by District Councillor Robert Sharp

Robert Sharp reported on:

- The new pool at Abingdon
- The Vale's Housing Infrastructure Fund bids which have secured £284M for a new bridge over the Thames and a 'Science' bridge at Harwell.
- The Vale DC is in the top 3 or 4 councils in England for recycling, but residents should be aware that 10% is contaminated (e.g. nappies in the green bin). A trip to the recycling centre at Ardley was recommended. 'Binzone' on the Vale website is helpful.

RS congratulated the PC on their work in the last year.