

Chipping Norton Town Council – Report for the year 2008/9

Changes to the Council

At the start of this municipal year John Osmond resigned from the Town Council. At the subsequent by election Graham Birks was elected to replace him. Sadly Graham Birks died in January and this was followed by the resignations of two long serving Town Councillors, John Grantham and Pat Lake, who will be sorely missed for their knowledge, wisdom and calmness at meetings. The successful candidates at the by election on 2nd April 2009 were Sue Bartholomew, David Smart and Honour Stobart who have now joined the Town Council.

Staff

The Town Clerk's office has seen some staff changes this year. Sarah Brown has been replaced by Jill Walker, as the Town Clerk's secretary. Roy Watson is no longer with us and we now have Stuart Silman as a part-time General Assistant. They have both fitted in well with the existing staff. Janet Griffin has now recovered from a back operation and she continues to look after the accounts records and Terry Palmer remains Town Hall Keeper.

I would like to extend my grateful thanks to our excellent team of staff and especially the Town Clerk, Vanessa Oliveri.

Council Committees

The Council has four main committees, Finance and General Purposes, Recreation, Town Hall and Cemetery combined with Pool Meadow.

The Finance & General Purposes Committee

The committee keeps a tight rein on the finances and they have managed not to increase the Town Council share of the precept. At present the committee has an acting Chairman, Cllr. Alcock, following the resignation of Pat Lake. They continue to deliberate on the future of Greystones House – this is not a straight forward problem to solve.

The Recreation Committee

The committee is chaired by Cllr. Mrs. Coles, who has now seen, after a considerable time and much hard work, the installation of the MUGA and additional new pieces of recreational equipment on the New Street recreation ground. This has now been completed and is being used by many young people. The re-seeding of the grass is being carried out this week. This is a wonderful new asset for the youth of this town and I hope that they will appreciate and look after it.

The first Sports Awards for young people were presented this year. This was an initiative of past mayor, Graham Beacham. Hopefully this will become an annual event.

The town also have another new playground at Cornish Road, which I had the great pleasure of officially opening. This was instigated by the Hailcorn Residents Association who raised over £60,000.00 which is an outstanding achievement of team work and has provided another excellent facility for the young people.

Town Hall Committee

The committee is chaired by Cllr. Mrs. Burrows and is responsible for the maintenance and improvements of the Town Hall. Repairs to the outside steps and alterations to the first floor bar area, disabled toilets and replacement of the wooden floor in the upper hall are priority tasks so far this year.

The Town Council have been awarded a £95,000.00 grant for this work to be undertaken and we await a possible further grant from TOE.

Cemetery & Pool Meadow Committee

The committee is responsible for the Worcester Road Cemetery, Closed Churchyard and Pool Meadow. The maintenance of these areas is a constant battle against nature. The snow this winter has caused damage to some of the trees which are now being tidied up. The committee organise, if possible, two cemetery clear up days a year where volunteers can help.

The next cemetery clear up day has been arranged for Saturday 9th May 2009.

The committee still continues to have problems with un-authorized memorials and kerb stones. Following a legacy the Town Council received last year which was to be spent on the cemetery, we now have an avenue of flowering cherry trees and a new memorial bench commemorating this gift.

The flooding problems at Pool Meadow have now been rectified with the installation of a new metre diameter culvert next to the existing pipe and the eroded paths have been restored.

The Green Gym volunteers still come on a regular basis to carry out work of clearing and maintenance in the Closed Churchyard, Pool Meadow, Station Road Common and the William Fowler Memorial Woodland. The Town Council are very grateful for all of their help.

William Fowler Allotments

All Town Councillors are Trustees of the William Fowler Allotments. The committee of Town Councillors and allotment holders meet regularly under the Chairmanship of Cllr. Mrs. Coles. This year security has been improved by erecting locked gates. Also large areas of unkempt allotments have been cleared of brambles and rubbish. These allotments will now be divided into smaller plots and re-let.

Planning

In addition to the comments on planning applications received the Town Council have replied to the Local Development Framework Core Strategy consultation document for developing a possible eight hundred homes by 2026. The Town Council expressed major concerns with the document which didn't show an increase in jobs and improvements to the infrastructure of the town.

The planning group are still actively working with the other authorities to try and solve the problem of a site for the new youth club in the town.

Leylandii trees have been cut down on the new hospital site in London Road but we still await to see the start of any building!!

CCTV

A group of Town Councillors visited the Witney control centre to see CCTV in operation. After some debate the Council agreed to have CCTV in principle providing WODC could source the funding.

Flower Beds

The town centre flower beds are now looking the best that I have ever known them. Thanks must go to Toparius for sponsoring the work.

Clean Up Days

The Clean Up days which are held on the 15th of every month and are initiated by Cllr. Mrs. Burrows who gathers volunteers together to carry out the tidying up of the town.

Saturday Morning Information Centre

The volunteer run Saturday morning Information Centre which is held in the entrance foyer of the Town Hall has re-opened for the Spring/Summer months.

The Town Council are extremely grateful to all those who give their time so willingly.

Civic Activities

The year began with the presentation to Drs. Sheila and Bruce Parker of Honorary Citizenship of the town. Two very worthy recipients having given a life time of service to Chipping Norton.

The un-veiling of the Blue Plaque on the War Memorial to commemorate the life of Sir Montague Stopford put the town on the map. On the evening of the un-veiling of the Blue Plaque the town hosted most of Oxfordshire's military and civilian dignitaries. Another event which spreads the name of Chipping Norton is the two week Music Festival – competitors now come from as far a field as London.

The weather this year was dry for the Late Night Christmas Shopping evening which greatly helped to increase its success.

Thanks must go to Pat Lake again for organising the Christmas trees and to all his volunteers.

This town is a great place to live and work. There is a sense of togetherness and I hope that this will continue.

The town to stay healthy and vibrant must continue to grow but I feel that this should be a gradual progression. We are in very difficult times and like many other towns we are having difficulty in attracting new jobs but we must be optimistic for the future.

Cllr. M. Jarratt – Town Mayor

23rd April 2009