

# Annual Parish Meeting

7:30 pm Thursday 21st April 2016  
Shawford Parish Hall

With an election scheduled for Thursday 5 May, this is your opportunity to hear from, and question, the outgoing Parish Council about its activities over the past year.

## What is a Parish Council?

A Parish Council is the lowest, or first, tier of local government. They are elected corporate bodies, have variable tax raising powers, known as the 'Parish Precept' and are responsible for a specific geographic area normally made up of a traditional settlement in our case Compton and Shawford.

Activities fall into three main categories: representing the entirety of the local community, delivering services to meet local needs, and improving quality of life and community well being.

Local councils can help to provide and maintain a variety of important and visible local services including allotments, bridleways, burial grounds, bus shelters, car parks, commons and open spaces, community transport schemes, community safety and crime reduction measures, events and festivals, footpaths, leisure and sports facilities, litter bins, public toilets, planning, street cleaning and lighting, tourism activities, village greens and youth projects. However, many of these functions are undertaken by the City of County Council the Parish Council often acts as the 'go between' to request work to be undertaken by these organisations.

One of the Parish Council's prime functions is to reflect the views of all parties throughout the parish. Not just the small and sometimes vocal pressure groups. It is sometimes difficult achieving the correct balance. This is why it's important that Parish Councillors are elected or appointed from a broad geographic and demographic spread from within the Parish.

Parish Councils have unpaid councillors who are elected to serve for four years, unless a casual vacancy arises which may be filled by a by-election or by co-option. A chair is agreed annually by Councillors at the annual meeting which normally occurs in May. A Clerk is appointed, who works with Councillors and the City Council to ensure proper process is followed and he/she is also the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) for control and accountability.

## Compton and Shawford Parish Council

There are nine Councillors either elected or appointed if 9 or less seek election. The Parish Councillors for the 2015/16 year were Councillors Alison Cordery, Angela Jeffrey, (resigned 25.02.2016) Mike Goulding, Naomi Sadler, Mike Southgate (Chair) Una Stevens, Marc Townell, Adrian Walmsley, Myra Wilkinson and assisted by our clerk David Drake.

The quorum for decision making is 3 Councillors. Some Parish Councillors have a specific area of responsibility such as Planning, Finance and Administration or Open Spaces. They take responsibility for these areas and report back to colleagues and the Chair. They may

appoint committees or act alone.

The Parish Council meets for a minimum of 6 times a year and an annual Parish Meeting. It has the flexibility to meet at other times if business or special issues require. In addition, any committee meetings are open for public attendance.

Contact between Councillors is maintained by e-mail and voice between meetings with any decisions reported at the subsequent Parish Council meeting. Residents are encouraged to raise issues directly with an appropriate Parish Councillor by portfolio or geographic responsibility. Alternatively, contact can be made via the Clerk or Chair. The Parish Council website, Parish Magazine and notice boards all give full contact details. There is also a specific contact form on the website and a voicemail at the Parish Council phone contact number. Residents are also encouraged to report matters of concern such as fly tipping, road potholes (fix my street) direct to either HCC or WCC. These organisations have websites for reporting such matters which is often quicker than going through a Councillor and has the additional benefit of allowing progress to be chased and checked.

Draft minutes of each Parish Council meeting are normally available on the website within a week of the meeting. Whilst not an approved record they give residents an idea of the subjects discussed and decisions reached.

Public participation at parish meetings is normally restricted to fifteen minutes where the main meeting is suspended. This allows questions, comments and observations to be made by members of the public. Progress has been made in the last year to allow more flexibility for public participation whilst maintaining the integrity of the meeting. This allows Councillors to debate and reach decisions in an appropriate manner. Improvements have also been made to keep the meeting to time. This has been achieved by encouraging routine matters to be handled outside the meeting and avoiding reading out paperwork already circulated, which allows more time for questions and debate. Improvements have also been made for approving decisions by removing the complexity of proposers and seconders.

Our website continues to be the envy of other Parish Councils and my thanks to Adrian Walmsley for all his hard efforts and for providing a seamless transition to a new website.

## **Planning**

Councillor Una Stevens was the Convenor for the year. She has worked with District Council members and officers to advise residents and to try to ensure adherence with agreed policy. Housing extensions, and small developments can cause local tension and concern. Councillor Stevens has developed a good dialogue with officers at Winchester City Council. We have a duty to reflect all opinion both for and against planning submissions. Where there are areas of concern the policy has been to ask for such developments to be submitted to Planning Development Committee. This is made up of City Councillors who have received planning training and advised by professional planning officers. This referral if agreed allows local concerns to be voiced and tabled at that committee. However, this does not mean a development will be rejected as the planning policy is complex and driven by both local and national policies.

During the year we received a number of complaints relating to building works in the

Southdown area. This included noise, poor parking, deliveries, road and verge damage. It was the cumulative effect of five developments all under way at once. We supported an initiative by the Chair in his City Councillor capacity for the Planning Department to introduce a 'neighbours best practise' code of conduct. This will now be included within the planning consent approval documentation for appropriate developments. This will ask developers and owners to liaise with neighbours about concerns, deliveries and other issues.

### **Open Spaces, Playing and Recreational Facilities**

Councillor Myra Wilkinson has been responsible for this vital part of our village life, liaising with the various Sports Clubs, neighbours and users.

We have a good variety of recreation and sports facilities in the parish for all ages, which are well used at different times of the year. This year we have replaced the play equipment at the QEII Field, this has been well received by many local residents and users. We continue to inspect all equipment and maintain it to the appropriate level of safety. We welcome reports of any concerns relating to the safety of play equipment. The Memorial Playing Field continues to be busy throughout the year with cricket and football - although not normally at the same time. The Sports Club's various events notably their summer Friday barbecue sessions continue to be a back bone of village life in that area.

We were also the grateful recipient of a young Oak Tree donated to us by the Landscape Group and planted in the QEII Field.

The tennis club continues to make its contribution towards the health, well-being and recreation of the area and it has many members from within our parish. We have been in discussion with the club regarding a fourth tennis court at the MPF. After much local debate and consultation by the Tennis Club and others we are currently concentrating on an area in the car park. No decision has yet been made we are awaiting detailed drawings and costings for options in this area for the Parish Council to consider.

### **Otterbourne MUGA**

We were delighted to donate funds, that we were unable to use from our open spaces fund allocation, to our neighbours in Otterbourne. This helped them with construction of their Multi Use Play Area at Oakwood Recreation Ground, which is very close to our boundary and we are sure will also be used by residents from our parish.

### **SOCCT**

We supported the SOCCT Woodland Charity who maintain 25 acres of natural woodland at Sparrowgrove for the recreation and enjoyment of the local community. The Bluebells in May are delight and there is much insect, animal and bird life to enjoy. The Charity is always short of volunteers for their monthly working parties, please consider helping.

### **Footpaths and Environment**

Thanks to John Wilkinson OBE for his excellent work keeping up the pressure to maintain the downland, footpaths and map boards. He has also undertaken sterling work ensuring the historic Compton Place Tudor gateway is maintained and repaired.

We have a new team of Rangers responsible for the maintenance of Shawford down. They have already embarked on a programme of scrub clearance and continued work on Anglo-Saxon lynchets. This is to be followed by a new management plan to include regular scrub clearance and grazing. Until recently there were 7 cattle on the down.

The footpath from Southdown Road to bottom of the Down has been cleared by two local volunteers. We managed to secure a replacement bench for the top of this path.

### **Parking, Cycling and Road Safety.**

Parking and road safety remain areas of key concern and the subject of many exchanges. However, these are primarily the responsibility of HCC for road safety and WCC for parking. Our role is to reflect local concerns from across the parish and to attempt to balance the often competing demands. The new parking restrictions around in the station area were introduced before Christmas reflecting experience gained from previous schemes. The overall feedback is that these have largely worked. The inevitable downside is that parkers continue to seek the one remaining piece of spare grass or tarmac to park upon. Displacement of parking towards Twyford has caused some issues and, whilst it is not within our jurisdiction, we have given help and support to introduce a temporary white line pending a longer term solution.

We are working with the Shawford Residents Association and The Shawford Rail User Group to improve parking facilities at the station itself. However, this has got caught up in the re-franchising of the rail service later this year. The Parish Council has made its own representation to the Department of Transport and rail bidders to maintain the existing service and provide station infrastructure improvements such as parking.

We worked with South West Trains and WCC to provide additional lit undercover cycle facilities at the Station.

We are pushing for further work to be undertaken on completing National Cycle Route 23 through Compton from the South Park and Ride into Otterbourne. We have been working on this with Sustrans and WCC and are prepared to consider assistance with funding.

### **Public Transport**

This year SWT agreed to an all year round hourly Sunday rail service. We are very supportive of the Bluestar bus service and delighted they increased the service in September to every fifteen minutes in peak and we still have a good evening service with last buses around 23.30 later on a Friday and Saturday. We keep an eye on the 63 bus service but it is always going to be a subsidy cut target.

### **Highways and Pavements**

Councillor Alison Cordery has been the Portfolio Holder and has done an excellent job of trying to keep many aspects of our area neat and tidy. Alison has responded to public requests for new and replacement benches throughout the parish. She has co-ordinated the six weekly visits by the Parish Lengthsman to cut back vegetation and keep paths swept and usable for all. We would respectfully remind residents that it is their responsibility to ensure their boundary vegetation with the pavement is cut back and does not encroach and reduce the width of footpaths. Logs, boulders and other debris left on the grass verge can also form an obstruction which can cause damage to vehicles

and people particularly in an unlit area.

Finally, our thanks to the unsung heroes who regularly clean paths, pick up litter and generally try to ensure we live in a good place.

### **Financial Management and Administrator**

Councillor Angela Jeffrey was the Portfolio Holder until she resigned in February, ably assisted by the Clerk and Councillor Mike Goulding.

Our annual budget request submitted to the City Council remains fixed for the seventh successive year. We expect the accounts to show a small surplus this year, thanks to careful management and success in obtaining grants, particularly, from Winchester City Council, which enabled the us to replace the old multi-play unit at the QEII Field.

Given the amount of equipment that has been purchased in recent years, there is a strong possibility that it might be some time before we will again have access to City Council funds for the provision of play and sports equipment. As a consequence, the council has increased its maintenance budget and its sinking fund for the provision of replacement equipment from £5,000 to £10,000.

Finally, Councillors Cordery and Walmsley are standing down this year.

May I thank all Councillors and other volunteers who served during the year, for their contribution, time and hard efforts on behalf of the local community.

However, I would like to extend a very special thanks for Adrian Walmsley who will have completed 24 years service in some shape or form for the Parish Council. It will continue as he has kindly agreed to continue to mastermind and maintain our website.

Mike Southgate Chair 22/4/2016