

Wendover Annual Parish Meeting April 8th 2009

Welcome

Good evening. I'm Sue Toft Hunt and Chair of the Parish council, and I take it as a real honour to be able to stand here tonight to welcome you all to the Wendover Annual parish meeting, and especially to thank you all for giving up your evening and showing an interest in what is happening in Wendover. Not only that, but we didn't want to eat all the food ourselves.

Our objective tonight is to give you a report on what the council has been doing and what it plans to do.

In addition we have 2 guest speakers here - Group Captain Garry Tunnicliffe who is the station commander at Halton and PC Mick Griggs who's here today as our local police presence. The format is that we'll each give our reports and then take questions after each one.

Following all the speeches we'll take some light refreshment and you'll have a further opportunity to talk to the council team.

Introduction

If you had asked me a year ago what I thought I might be doing today I would never have guessed I'd be here to report to you the residents of Wendover regarding the Parish Council work for the past 12 months.

Now I'm going to start off by addressing a couple of the major problems that we've faced this past year. Every-one wants to know about these so let's get them out the way. Then we can look at the good bits for now and the future. Because it is really the future of Wendover that we are about.

A year ago and some council issues

Over the past year the Council, and many of its members, has been on a journey. A year ago the Council looked very different. Over a prolonged period of several months it went through a very rough time with internal strife such that business was not moving forward as it should and which culminated in a rapid succession of resignations and then the election of 9 new Cllrs. in June. I was one of those.

Due to all the issues the Council decided to have an independent consultant to conduct a review of how the Council was operating which resulted in a long list of recommendation for the new council to implement. These became the basis for the Way Ahead Project.

Wendover Annual Parish Meeting April 8th 2009

The Way Ahead

We wanted to ensure that the council was able to serve the community efficiently and effectively through improved council teamwork and the modernisation of Wendover PC processes and procedure, and thus to overcome its internal difficulties and that we do not repeat the past mistakes. By putting in place the proper procedures and team-working we were able to greatly reduce the risk of expensive grievance litigation.

The action plan addressed all aspects of the councils work and caused us to rework the Councils committee structure so that it was simplified and reduced the overheads of too many small committees. Alongside these committees are the Working Groups which enable us to include non-councillors into these working groups. These are comparatively early days but it is coming together well now.

At the same time we adopted new Council regulations based on recognised national models and updated our policies and operating procedures in order to reflect changes in legislation.

Further actions were to ensure that the new Councillors received proper training for their new roles. So all councillors had training and the later courses were opened up to other local councils. These were so well attended that we were able to cover the costs.

A key strand of the project was to improve Communications , so as much as possible is published on our web-site, in the press and through the newsletter – the first one of which went out in January.

By February of this year the majority of the project actions had been completed and what remained were some long term items. So we decided to close the Way Ahead project and to move forward with the remaining key items individually.

It has been a difficult year or more for the council team, it has taken a lot of effort from many people, but I do believe that you now have a properly functioning council.

Land issues

Another issue that the council has had to deal with is commonly known as the Back Street Land issue. The ownership was not clear on this small piece of land as the original deeds could not be produced so the Parish council

Wendover Annual Parish Meeting April 8th 2009

submitted various other items of evidence to the Land Registry. Certainly the Council had always believed that they owned the land and had paid for its maintenance. The Land Registry rejected all other claims to the land in Dec 2007 and in December 2008 wrote to the council that they were considering granting full freehold title to the Parish. However Bucks County Council produced their report that the land was part of the highway which meant that no ownership could be registered.

Although there appear to be some elements of the report that could be challenged that is not the direction that the council wants to take. What is actually happening is that we are talking to BCC on how to get back the money that we have paid out for the maintenance in the past and how to manage the land in the future.

This year and next

Now – enough of the internals of the Council let's look at what has actually been achieved around the village this year and take a look ahead. What we have done, where we've spent your money what we plan to do.

Witchell

The Witchell meadow has had a spring clean and the undergrowth cut back so we can now see a really lovely pond there. Hopefully the surrounds will become a wildlife refuge. I'm also very pleased that we can work with the Rotary club who have offered a table and benches for the field so that we can sit and enjoy the vistas.

London Road Skate Park

The skate park in London Road has progressed considerably. The equipment is in place and it is being used very enthusiastically by the youngsters. Although we've already installed a Vehicle Activated Sign to slow down the approaching traffic, we do need to create a safe crossing and entry into the park as the next step. Unfortunately that request has got stuck in County Council reorganisation but we keep on chasing for it to start and are hopeful that this will move in the new financial year.

The plans for this site include adding a BMX track and to move the half-pipe from Ashbrook to this site, but none of this can proceed until we know where the entrance and crossing will finally be sited by BCC.

Wendover Annual Parish Meeting April 8th 2009

Allotments

At the other end of the London Road site are some 15 allotments – and they look great now they are in their 2nd year. These have proved so popular that a waiting list built up so, in response to that, when the Parish Piece field came available, the council decided to create more. This both improves the council income and provides more opportunities for those living and working in Wendover to take to the 'Good Life'. There has been excellent take-up already, but this is a big site and there are still a few plots left if any-one here wants to join us – just call in at the Clock Tower.

London Road site

While we're talking about the London Road site some other plans there. Between the skate park and the allotments on the London Road site there is a large area of spare land. The plans for this area are that there should be occasional parking made available when there are major church events so that we can alleviate the parking issues there. A further project will be the creation of a memorial wood. One tree will be planted for each of the Wendover men who fell in the 1st World War. Planting should start next autumn – of course that's a long term project as it will take several years for this to mature.

Play equipment

Over the past few years there has been steady improvement in the play facilities at both Ashbrook and at Hamden Meadow. Last year we added some exercise facilities for adults which have been well used and there's a small budget for more equipment for next year. However this is an area where we think we may be able to apply for grants to supplement the councils own budget so we hope to do more.

Trees

Trees are a very important part of the Wendover environment so we have been really sad to lose some beautiful chestnuts which became dangerously diseased and had to be felled in Ashbrook. We took some urgent decisions and replanted some new trees in Ashbrook which will, in time, improve the outlook. You can now see the 12 new trees in Ashbrook, comprising a mix of lime, bird cherry, wild cherry and sorbus to replace the 10 chestnuts that had to go.

Wendover Annual Parish Meeting April 8th 2009

Xmas Lights

In September last year the Chamber of trade came to us with a proposal that we jointly fund some new Xmas lights. In the final event they couldn't raise quite as much funding as they hoped so the Council stepped in to cover the shortfall and ensure a cheerful outlook in the High Street. Lots of people have said how lovely they all looked. I hope it cheered us all up in these difficult economic times.

Fair Trade

Back in 2006 the Council agreed to start the work towards joining in the Fair Trade scheme. So far the Council itself has adopted Fairtrade products where-ever possible, but now we need to consider how we move this forward.

Promoting Wendover

As I hope you know, the Parish Council runs the tourist information office in the Clock Tower. An important element of our activity is the promotion of Wendover as a visitor destination, but this also provides a wide range of information for residents to access for their own travels in UK. A new edition of the Wendover guide was recently published.

We also provide a series of entertainments, as well as the, markets on the manor waste to encourage people from a wider area to shop and stop in Wendover. In this way we want to support the local economy and keep Wendover vibrant.

Communications

Communications is a critical item for the Council, and especially not forgetting that this is a 2-way process. We want you to know what is happening – so you have already seen our newsletters and there will be more of these. Also we want to improve our website so that you can get an update at any time convenient to you.

Then we need to know what your issues are. We need you input and feedback.

The Parish council is very keen to involve the public. To this end we are asking you to vote about the type of issues that you would like us to consider as priority in the future these might be Security, Community or Environment

