Garsington Parish Council

The Monthly Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the Village Hall on Monday 4th December 2006 commencing at 7.30pm

The Chairman, Councillor Godfrey Eden presided; present were Councillors David Baker, Anne Eastwood, Cliff Shuker and John Hieatt. Also present were District Councillor Ann Tomline and seven residents.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologises were accepted from Councillors Paul Bolam and Gurdip Saini who are both away on family business and County Cllr David Turner who is attending a meeting in Oxford.

2 Public Participation

Cliff Moss asked if anyone had been found who would take responsibility for locking the Sports Club car park gate. The Chairman said that a notice had been placed in the Newsletter but there has been no interest so far.

Cliff Moss asked for clarification about the proposed ‘ball games area’ within the land off Oxford Road. It was explained that there had always been an allocation of space for an informal ball games area and that local residents are supportive of this.

Ernie Tipping asked if there could be signs warning drivers that there are sometimes horses using the roads in Garsington. He said that highways maintenance work in Oxford Road had still not been done. Cllr Mrs Tomline commented that the County Council is aware of several outstanding works – the recent heavy rainfall had brought many new problems.

Chris Wright said that he was concerned about the number of cars parked outside the Greenwoods premises on Pettiwell. These are making a dangerous road even more dangerous. Cllr Mrs Tomline said that the County’s Enforcement Officer is aware of the problem. It was understood that Greenwoods may appeal against the recent planning decision which had refused an application to extend the premises.

Chris Wright said that The Green and many grass verges in Pettiwell had been damaged by large vehicles that were now using the route more frequently. Cllr Mrs Tomline said that direct complaints to the companies which owned these vehicles might be effective. Erecting barriers to protect verges has several problems.

Several residents commented about problems caused by the recent heavy rains. These were particularly severe in Elm Drive and around the shops. The Council will be discussing this matter later in the meeting.

3 Declarations of Interest

None

4 Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th November 2006

These were approved and signed as a true record.

5 Matters Arising from the Minutes

a. The Clerk was asked to obtain a supply of heavy duty black sacks for Mr Tipping.

b. Cllr Shuker queried whether the wooden bollard outside Gate 1 of The Manor in Southend is still in place.

c. The Chairman thanked Cllr Shuker for dealing with the fouling of the children’s slide in the playground.

d. Cllr Mrs Tomline said that the District Council planning enforcement team is dealing with the problems in Tadpole Lane.

6 County Councillor’s Report

Apologies and Christmas good wishes had been received from David Turner.

7 District Councillor’s Report

Cllr Mrs Tomline reported on conversations with council officials about the possibility of the Parish Council receiving grants towards the costs of the amenity space project off Oxford Road and the planned extension to the Sports Club. She said that the processing of the Council’s application had taken far too long and might still take several months to resolve. The Clerk said that he has also been in contact with the assistant grants officer and was bewildered by her apparent lack of knowledge of the Council’s application. Cllr Mrs Tomline said that the SODC Chief Executive should be contacted direct if the matter is resolved soon.

Cllr Tomline said that CAB is about to start holding regular ‘surgeries’ in Wheatley.

8 Finance

Bank Balances:

Barclays Current Account at 30th November £14,252.27

Bank of Ireland at 6th November £122,688.88 (interest £455.44)

The following cheques were approved for payment:

BDO Stoy Hayward LLP £293.75

Total Pest Control £47.50

Biffa Waste Services Limited £96.39

C A Grace (Hedge and Verge Cutting) £199.75

G Russell (Clerk’s salary) £315.90

G Russell (Admin) £82.40

E. Tipping - honorarium £1,000.00

T Woodington – honorarium £100.00

The Clerk confirmed that the Bank of Ireland mandate is now up to date. This follows a personal visit to the Reading branch by the Clerk, confirmed in post by SODC.

Audit Report for 2005/6 Return and Accounts

The Notice of Conclusion of Audit has been displayed. The external auditors report recommends that a financial risk assessment is carried out annually, that there should be an asset register and that the Council should review ‘regularly’ that its actual receipts and payments are in line with budgeted receipts and payment.

The Council noted that the Audit of the Annual Return for year ended 31st March 2006 has been completed. The points raised by the auditor will be discussed..

9 Planning

a. Applications:

P06/W1170; Alterations and extension to Garsington Sports Club

One letter of support has been received and noted.

The Council unanimously agreed to recommend that this application be approved and that it should write emphasising that the proposed extension if for use by the whole community – not for the Sports Club.

P06/W1166 29, Oxford Road; Ground floor rear extension including dormer to first floor landing.

By a majority vote the Council unanimously agreed to recommend that this application be approved.

b. The following decisions were noted.

P03/W0753; Garsington Opera; variation of condition8 relating to acoustic screens. Application has been withdrawn

P06/W0949; 69 Southend; Demolition of existing dwelling and garage, construction of new dwelling

Planning permission granted 7th November

P06/W0979/RET The Plough; retention of decking

Application refused 8th November – decking considered harmful to the health and viability of the pear tree, which is a significant landscape feature that makes an important contribution to the local scene

10 Correspondence to Chairman and Clerk

a. The SODC electronic edition of the November 2006 Town and Parish Digest had been distributed to all councillors. The publication had been well-received.

b. Wheatley Park School has requested financial assistance to the Residential week next May for students with special needs. It was agreed to donate £50.

c. The Council noted the correspondence between the Chairman and Diana Pickett (Assistant Rights of Way Officer) concerning the Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way and Footpath 223/23. Although the Parslers of Scholarswell Farm have made a strong case for the path to be removed from the Statement, the Council has been informed that extinguishing orders are rarely given and that the process is likely to take ten years.

11 Transport Needs Survey

Alix Michaelis says that approximately 190 replies have been received and this is very satisfactory. She will analyse these and send her report for discussion at the 8th Jan. meeting of the Parish Council.

She will confirm to John Wood of OCC that the survey has been done and that the PC’s comments will be sent in, albeit a couple of days ‘late’. Alix sees no problem about this short delay.

12 Village Maintenance

Cllr Mrs Tomline will ask the District Council about the removal of graffiti from the Oxford Road bus shelter.

The idea of being able to plant a hedge to screen the electricity sub-station is being followed up by the Clerk.

The Clerk described some digital mapping software which he felt would have many uses in recording land ownership, council assets, maintenance tasks and many other aspects of the Parish management. This software can be used for more than one parish and he will ask Dorchester on Thames Parish Council if they would be interested in sharing the costs. This would reduce the expense to around £400 in the first year and £100 per year in subsequent years.

13 Playground repairs

Quotations from both Wicksteed and Playdale have been received covering equipment repairs and replacement. It was agreed that savings would be achieved by using local painting contractors.

Wicksteed’s quotation for repairing the base beneath the aerial runway with ‘safety grass’ amounted to £5,292. Rubber granules would be slightly less expensive. The replacement for the rocking horse would cost around £6,000. Cllr Shuker will make recommendations for a programme of playground improvements to be carried out over the next few years.

It was suggested that the views of the school children should be obtained and Cllr Mrs Eastwood will help with this research. It was agreed that a safety notice should be displayed stating that under the manufacturer’s recommendation the equipment should not be used by children older than 14 years.

14 Village Flooding problems

The heavy rain has brought water and filth into homes and gardens and also the Judith Ann Hair salon, where the District Council had asked for payment in return for supplying sand bags on the grounds that these are business premises. The Council has been informed that, despite the District Council’s actions in recent time, water run off is still causing problems in Larch End, Hazel End and Poplar Close.

It was suggested that the Council needs the advice of an independent consultant and Cllr Hieatt said that he would enquire of David Mather if he could recommend one.

15 Green Belt Threat

The Chairman has been asked to chair a public meeting on 12th December at which representatives from Horspath and the Baldons have been invited.

It was agreed that future Parish Councils agenda will provide for regular reporting from the three Council sub-committees: Green Belt; affordable housing; and the community hall project.

16 Precept 2007/8

The Council will have to agree the Precept for next year at its January meeting.

The Meeting closed at 10.12 pm