

## MINUTES OF IRON ACTON PARISH MEETING

HELD ON FRIDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2008 IN  
IRON ACTON PARISH HALL

The Annual Parish Meeting for Iron Acton was held in The Parish Hall commencing at 8.00pm. Mr. Sheppard presided and 10 Parishioners attended.

Apologies:- Councillors Weldrake, Aplin, and Lomas, Mrs. Bendeaux (Iron Acton Primary School Head Teacher), Mr. Pullen (Chairman of Iron Acton Parish Hall)

The Chairman welcomed all present. The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting had been distributed, read by all and agreed to be correct, and signed. Proposed Councillor Bellis, seconded Councillor Heal.

### Chairman's Report

Planning:- The Parish Council had considered approximately 75 planning applications during the course of the year and passed on their observations to South Gloucestershire Planning Department. However, ultimately the final decision on whether or not to grant planning applications rests with South Gloucestershire Council. Parishioners are encouraged to come along to Parish Council meetings to put across their point of view on specific planning matters.

There had been a site meeting in connection with the planning application PK07/1532/RM, site adjacent to 328 North Road, for the erection of 5 new dwellings. The Parish Council had objected to this application stating that North Road is a linear development and the proposed houses would be at right-angles to North Road, that there was inadequate sewerage facilities and the water table in that area was particularly high. However, South Gloucestershire Council approved the application. Subsequently, the land had then been put up for sale on the open market.

The Parish Council had also been asked for their observations on an application by the National Grid to erect two 50m high telecoms transmitter masts in a field on Frampton End Road, just outside the parish boundaries. The Parish Council had objected to this application most strongly stating that the proposed stationing of the transmitter was in green belt and not brown field as stated on the application; there was great concern over the visual impact of the proposed masts from the close proximity of a conservation area, as well as an area of designated Ancient Woodland. The proposed masts would be located on a ridgeline overlooking the Frome Valley and would cause considerable visual intrusion in an area having attractive views in all directions; concerns were also raised that there would be a problem with access and the impact of construction vehicles along very narrow, winding lanes, whose surface, hedges and walls are already in a poor condition. The road is already marked as "Unsuitable to Heavy Goods Vehicles"; gaining access from Iron Acton would necessitate vehicles crossing an unmanned Railtrack crossing that has been designated by Railtrack themselves as dangerous.

North Road:- Lorries continue to ignore the 7.5t weight restriction on North Road. The Police have been informed of this on a number of occasions. Wessex Water will be upgrading the sewer pump during the forthcoming financial year. The North Road Post Office has not been included on the closure list recently issued by the Royal Mail.

Village Green:- The Parish Council had received numerous complaints about the standard of recent cuts. This has been brought to the attention of the contractor. There continues to be a problem with residents around the village green parking their cars with two wheels on the Green. The Parish Council have looked into the possibility of widening the road around the green, but to do this would be very expensive. The Parish Council therefore felt this was course of action was not viable.

Dog Fouling:- There continues to be a problem with irresponsible dog owners allowing their animals to foul on pavements, on the Village Green and in the Parish Meadows. The South Gloucestershire Council Dog Warden has been in contact with owners who have been seen allowing their dogs to foul and not clear the mess away.

Parish Meadows:- The additional play equipment installed in the Parish Meadows at the end of the summer of 2007 has proved to be a great hit with the parish children. The Parish Council will be considering the installation of a basket ball hoop around the tennis court area.

Vandalism:- Incidents of vandalism around the Parish have cost a considerable amount of money. A 10m stretch of stone wall behind the tennis courts has been pushed over and the stones thrown in the stream. A quote has been requested which is likely to cost over a thousand pounds. The dense hedge behind the tennis courts will be removed in order to open out the area.

Chilwood Woodlands:- Unfortunately raves had occurred in the woodlands over a considerable number of weekends during the course of the spring and summer of 2007. This had caused terrible nuisance to residents. There has also been evidence of drug taking. The culprits had gained access to the woodlands from Frampton End Road, across fields, with total disregard for gates barring their entry. The Police had attended on a number of occasions to break up the rave. A considerable amount of damage was being caused to the woodlands. A meeting had been arranged between the Parish Council, South Gloucestershire Councillors, the Police, the Environment Agency as well as landowners and residents. A course of action had been agreed in that the entrance off Frampton End Road would be fortified to stop access; the gates would be replaced by the Environment Agency and chained; notices would be erected telling the public that the area was designated an Ancient Woodland and a £2,000 fine would be imposed on anyone caught damaging the flora and fauna.

Bus Routes:- First Bus had notified the Parish Council and users of the bus through the village that they were intending to re-route the buses along Station Road, rather than along the High Street. First Bus stated that this was due to inappropriate parking of cars on the High Street, causing the bus to get stuck. The Parish Council asked First Bus to state the occasions when this had happened, but the Parish Council had received no response. The consultation period finishes on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2008 and the Parish Council will be objecting to this re-routing as it will cause considerable inconvenience to residents of Chilwood Close and Algars Drive.

Junk Mail:- There has been a disturbing junk mail scam recently where letters have been received by elderly residents informing them that they have won some money in a foreign lottery. South Gloucestershire Council have advised anyone who receives this type of junk mail, to forward it to South Gloucestershire for them to pass on to Trading Standards.

Precept:- It was pointed out to those present that there had been a 25% reduction in the Precept for Iron Acton Parish for the forthcoming financial year.

Finally, the Chairman thanked the Clerk and all of his fellow Councillors for their support and hard work during the year.

Reports:- Mr. Howard Gawler (South Gloucestershire Councillor) addressed the meeting. Councillor Gawler is responsible for the East Ward part of Iron Acton Parish. Councillor Gawler also sits on the South Gloucestershire Council Corporate Select Committee, Audit & Accounts Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well as the Appointments Panel of South Gloucestershire Council.

In connection with the East Ward and as publicised in the news, the Government has suggested that South Gloucestershire needs to provide a further 21,500 new homes (initially the figure was 30,800). One of the possible areas for development of approximately 1,000 new homes would be Brimsham Park and Engine Common. It has been pointed out that this is an old mining area and contains a number of disused mine shafts (one recently suddenly opened up in the Engine Common area and is estimated to be approximately 1,000ft deep).

The Government has been consulting all agencies as well as the public and it is estimated that they will confirm their findings in a couple of months.

Councillors Pat and Dave Hockey provided a report which was read out to the meeting. The sad death of George Keel delayed the sorting out of Committee places etc on South Gloucestershire Council and the establishment of new administration. This year both Councillors Pat and Dave Hockey Chair Select Committee which fulfil the dual role of advising on policies and scrutinising the work of the Executive Members and Council Departments.

The Government is committed to Councils working in partnerships, particularly the Local Strategic Partnership made up of representatives of the business sector, other public bodies and voluntary sector groups. The big task this year was to consider, consult on and finally approve the Sustainable Community Strategy for South Gloucestershire. This identifies the agreed key priorities for services. The Council then prepared and published a Council Plan based on this.

Inadequate Government funding for 2007/8 has meant that there had to be considerable changes made within departments. Several long standing officers have taken or are about to take retirement, whilst those replacing them have somewhat different responsibilities. Despite cutbacks the Council was once again assessed by the Audit Commission as 'good with potential to improve'.

The Council continues to work with Bristol, BANES and North Somerset Councils on Strategic Transport, Waste and Housing. More formal working arrangements are required by the Government as millions will be required to deliver the improvements to the transport system and facilities needed to dispose of the every increasing amounts of waste.

A wide variety of Strategies and Planning documents have been adopted or are in various stages of preparation and consultation. The latest Government requirement is a 'Refreshed Local Area Agreement' between the Local Strategic Partnership, including the Council and Government. This means reaching agreement on 35 'indicators' which will be the agreed priorities for the Council's work, assessed through 'targets'. The good news is there is more Government money than expected for the new financial year, so some of the anticipated cuts have not had to be made.

Mrs. Bendeaux (Head Teacher of Iron Acton Primary School) had supplied a report, which was read out to the meeting. Pupil numbers stand at 80, leaving 6 places within the school. The mezzanine classroom was extended to provide much needed room and extra toilet and changing facilities for the older children. The Governors have written to the local authority to ask them to review the lack of space. The school strives to find way to provide pupils with a rich learning environment such as different types of music. One of the teachers has started an after-school gardening club. The school continues to work with 10 local small schools to provide pupils with additional opportunities in maths, sports, dance and small school parliaments. There is also liaison with Brimsham Green School to provide a variety of sporting events such as basket ball, curling, tag ruby and Boccia.

The school continues to build and maintain strong links with the church. Two Foundation Governors have retired, however three new villagers have come forward in their stead. The school has set up a support group to promote better home school learning. This has been a very valuable initiative and has provided lots of positive ideas for moving the school forward. Over the next few years the school hopes to develop the outdoor wildlife area. The school was delighted to see the improved road marking and traffic calming measures which makes the pupils' journey to school even safer. In conclusion it had been a very positive and exciting year for the school

Audited Accounts 2006/2007:- Copies had been circulated. Councillor Bellis proposed, and Councillor Heal seconded that this accounts be adopted.

Unaudited Accounts 2007/2008:- Copies had been circulated for consideration and discussion. The Chairman mentioned that there had been an increase in allotment income, as all the allotments were now let. A £1,000 grant had been received from Acton Aid in connection with the additional play equipment in the Parish Meadows.

Charities Account:- Copies were circulated for consideration and discussion. The Chairman told the meeting that Mrs. Hazel Dron had stepped down as secretary to the Charities Accounts. There is someone who is interested in taking up this position. The commitment is two hourly meetings per year.

Any Other Business:- Bridget Thompson introduced herself to the meeting as the new Neighbourhood Watch Co-Ordinator. Ms. Thompson told the meeting that there had been two recent burglaries in the village. The Chairman thanked Ms. Thompson for taking on this role.

PSCO Hayley Harrison introduced herself and spoke about the Chilwood Woodland raves. The most recent one had been just three weeks ago. The Police had attended at 10.00pm and told everyone to leave, which they did. However they returned to the Woodlands at two in the morning. PCSO also told the meeting that the raves were being advertised on the Bebo and Face Book internet sites.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 9.15pm.