

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 23rd MAY 2024
AT 8.00PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL, WEST WYCOMBE**

PRESENT:

Cllrs Mr. S Cope (Chairman), Mr. N. Harris, Mrs. V. Smith BEM, Mrs. K. Cheshire, Mrs. E. Copley, Mr. J Carstensen, Angie Wright, Buckinghamshire County Cllrs Mr. and Mrs. Hayday, Mrs. S. Henson, Clerk & RFO, David Surtees Dawson – The National Trust, Alison Rimmer – West Wycombe PCC, Sir Edward Dashwood - West Wycombe Estate
Approximately 40 members of the public

APOLOGIES: Cllr Ms Chantal Rowland, Christine Barry – West Wycombe Library and West Wycombe Cricket Club; PC Danny O'Driscoll – Thames Valley Police, Jo Brookfield- West Wycombe PreSchool, Alf Dobozy -Acorn Landscapes, Roger Seymour, Mary Hilder, Lorna Caldwell and Sarah Sampson

Cllr Mr S Cope, West Wycombe Parish Council Chairman's Report for 2023/24

Cllr Cope welcomed everyone and thanked them for making the time to come and hear about the different community groups and organisations within West Wycombe Parish. Our Annual Parish Meeting once again provides me with this opportunity to reflect and report on the last 12 months and what we as a Parish Council have done to try and improve the lives of our fellow residents. As ever, I should start by paying tribute to my fellow Parish Councillors, all of whom are volunteers, whose hard work, dedication and support throughout the year has delivered so much for our community - and of course our Parish Clerk Sharon Henson - of whom more later - as without her all of the following would have been impossible to achieve. It was around this time last year that Buckinghamshire Council appointed new road maintenance contractors, and we were finding out what the impact of this would be both on our project to try and address the issue of pedestrian safety and footway incursion on West Wycombe High Street, and the ongoing list of repairs that we had raised with the Highways Department. We were delighted when, through the offices of two of our Buckinghamshire Councillors, Darren & Orshi Hayday, both Church Lane and the road surfaces around the Pedestal Roundabout saw resurfacing work take place - and credit where it's due, the new contractors did make a good job of both areas. The High Street safety project, on the other hand, was further delayed by the handover to the new contractors and the consequent reprioritisation and rescheduling that was then required. At time of writing this has finally moved to the next stage, which is a consultation by Buckinghamshire Council on the proposed measures, the results of which we await with interest. After much persistence, at the start of this year our Parish Clerk Sharon did manage to have a face-to-face meeting with the local Highways Manager, and was able to talk her through the list of outstanding works, much of which has now been undertaken as a result. Again, to give credit where it is due, the new contractors do appear to be getting down to the jobs a lot faster than the previous ones, even if they do always seem to leave behind them a collection of sandbags, portaloos and diversion signs! The perennial issue of speeding traffic continues to vex us all, particularly those of us who live on or near the A40 and A4010. Our Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign, which used to flash at cars speeding into the western end of the village is unfortunately still with the manufacturers as they attempt to find a means to prevent it being vandalised again; we hope to recover this soon and get it back into operation, as it certainly provides a useful reminder to drivers, even if a minority still choose to disregard it. The other measure we would like to take is to set up a Community Speedwatch group like those that operate in other parts of the county; however, whilst social media comments indicate that speeding traffic is a bugbear for many residents, we have unhappily had little response to our repeated appeals for volunteers to come forward and undertake the necessary training that will allow us to get the group up and running. We will continue to try and make this work. Last summer the Community Orchard, situated behind St Paul's church and the parish

burial ground, really started to show the result of the planting that had been done by West Wycombe School's Year 5 children in 2022, with many wildflowers in bloom around the developing trees. September's wildflower survey carried out in partnership with Chiltern Rangers identified a total of 42 species, seven more than the previous year's, along with a healthy list of butterflies, moths and other insects. I would urge anyone who has yet to visit the Community Orchard to do so, particularly during spring and into summer when it is at its best - it really is a haven of tranquillity and a space for the whole community to enjoy. Thanks must go to Ian Wright for his hard work in keeping it accessible to all by maintaining the mown pathways through the orchard. Keeping our streets clean is a Sisyphean task, but not one that we shy away from - our regular Community Clean-up litter picking mornings in October and last month were both well attended, productive - if that's the right word to describe the piling up of a mountain of discarded waste retrieved from local highways and byways - and exceedingly well catered; if the thought of collecting used vapes, car parts and junk food cartons seems unappealing, I can assure you it's well worth the effort when you are rewarded with a tasty slab of malt loaf or a chocolate brownie or two! Huge thanks should also go out to those local residents who do much of the unpleasant but vital work of litter picking week in, week out, purely out of their commitment to their community. The festive season in West Wycombe always gets properly underway on the day of the Festive Fayre, and this year (or should that be last year?) didn't disappoint - the village looked wonderful with the Christmas trees and lights, and bustled with activity right along the length of the High Street - credit once more to the sterling efforts of the Events Team along with our many local businesses and others who contributed to make it a very special evening. The beginning of this year brought with it such persistent rainfall that the stretch of road from the Pedestal roundabout towards the High Street, which has long been a problem area in terms of poor drainage, became completely flooded for some weeks. Our Parish Clerk Sharon badgered the Highways Department continually, but of course they were faced with even greater demands from right across the county with many homes flooded, so it was only after a hard frost had resulted in the road surface icing up which led to a vehicle leaving the road and taking out a streetlight that we were deemed a priority for safety reasons. When the workforce did finally arrive, it has to be said they made a thorough job of it - jetting crews were on site for two days, pumping out over 6,000 litres of mud and carrying away 12 tankers of groundwater - and this was then backed up by the joint efforts of the National Trust and West Wycombe Estate who dug out a ditch within the grounds of the Park to allow the water to drain away more quickly towards the existing water courses. The floods slowly subsided as a consequence, and at time of writing the ducks that had raised a brood of chicks on the 'lake' that had formed in Carter's Field are having to think about relocating. The last twelve months have, like every year, seen much change both nationally and locally, and one change that we as a Parish Council have had to face is the need to find a successor to our Parish Clerk, Sharon Henson, who is retiring at the end of May. Happily we have managed to recruit someone to the post, Steven Marshall, who joins us in June and has many years experience as a Parish Clerk for a similar-sized community in Hampshire - Steven, who has had a couple of months of handover time with Sharon and attended our recent meetings, is becoming acquainted with the parish and the way in which we operate as a Parish Council, and we are looking forward to working with him and drawing on his experience. You will note that I used the term successor rather than replacement when talking of who will come after Sharon. I won't say too much at this juncture about Sharon as we will be marking the occasion of her retirement once this meeting closes, but I will take this opportunity to offer her my personal thanks for all that she has done for West Wycombe Parish Council over almost thirty years of service as our Clerk, and for the help, guidance and support that she has given me during my time as Chairman. The reason I have insisted on using that term successor is because - with all due respect to Steven - Sharon is simply irreplaceable.

Sharon Henson, Responsible Financial officer, Presentation of the Financial Statement

Financial report for 2022/23

The accounts can be viewed on our website www.westwycombeparishcouncil.gov.uk

We started the year with a slightly lower balance to carry forward but it was agreed that we would not increase our Precept, the amount of money that we ask Buckinghamshire Council for each year in order to carry out the everyday functions of the parish and which residents contribute towards through the Council Tax.

Our Precept was £42,500 and we also received some Community Infrastructure money, £6,370 – this was a result of the new flats being built on the corner of Copperfields and is something the developer has to pay to the council. We have 5 years to use this money.

The figure for highways is the amount of money Buck Council allocates to us and we use for cutting the 30mph grass verges, writing to home owners whose hedges and trees are overhanging pavements and in some cases where there is no home owner we do the cutting back, for example the trees on one side of the pelican crossing.

As a local government employee there is a controlled salary structure and pension scheme and part of the administration budget covers this, but also the website, the phone, internet, electricity, postage, insurance, Chairman's Allowance, stationery, internal and external audit, hire of the meeting room, training, subscriptions, software, miscellaneous expenditure e.g. the Jubilee mugs for all the preschool and school children, stationery and occasional grants.

Street lighting is self explanatory – we own 53 street lights and the two feeder pillars which supply electricity to the Christmas trees.

We have to carry out regular maintenance on areas of the allotments which are not tenanted e.g. the boundary hedges and pay for water. We currently have 26 allotment plots.

Pedestal Playing field covers the rent to West Wycombe Estate and repairs and maintenance to the equipment, fences, car park and boundary hedge and occasionally cutting the grass.

Burial Ground costs relate to the day to day maintenance of the area as well as any repairs which might be needed as well as maintenance of some of the burial plots.

Highways covers all the grass cutting we undertake, emptying of dog bins, employing contractors to instal the Christmas tree lights, digging out grips, undertaking work on the field/verge boundary near the Pedestal Monument and in 2023 we contributed £5000 towards the HS2 Road Safety Scheme for which we benefitted from work along the Bradenham Road to the value of £140,954.

We are allowed to claim back all the VAT pay and we do not charge VAT on anything we have to charge for.

Sir Edward Dashwood, West Wycombe Estate

The Estate are working with BBONT and the National Trust and concentrating on biodiversity especially as the government are paying them to do this to the detriment of food production. However with the appalling weather it has been extremely difficult to grow the crops as seed has rotted in the fields and the land has been too wet for cultivation.

They have plans to put smaller, low grazing cattle on Butlers Hanging to improve the growing conditions for orchids and they have planted 150 acres of wild flower corridor from West Wycombe towards Lane End to encourage more butterflies, moths, hare, rabbit and deer with plans for more wild flower meadow up Cookshall Lane. 60% of the varieties of butterflies found in the UK have been found on Butlers Hanging.

A great deal of work has had to take place in the woodland as there is still a lot of ash die back occurring. Where trees have been felled in the past the woodland now has

more light and air which has encouraged more woodland floor plants to grow. Trees they thought would survive and were not felled several years ago have now succumbed. The timing for felling is very important - leave the trees too long and they could fall on people. They will be working on Downley Bank to fell more ash and they have a programme of replanting. To date they have felled 25,000 tons of tree and the wood, which is unsuitable for furniture, is being used for biomass fuel and firewood.

David Surtees- Dawson, National Trust Let Estate – West Wycombe Village , Senior Estate Manager – Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire

David reported that after more than 12 months of working with Buckinghamshire Council to be allowed a Traffic Regulation Order, this has now been granted, however, there was no choice on the date and from July until mid September there will be traffic lights in the High Street to enable houses 11-16/17 to benefit from external decoration – it is the only safe way for the decorators to undertake their work. They will be using a new type of breathable paint. In the past they have always used limewash which was traditional, however being on the A40 with all the wash and salt spray this does not have any lasting ability and it is hoped that new technology and products will provide a better lasting decorative finish. They are currently working in Crown Court with scaffolding going up and repairs to gutterings, chimneys and roof being undertaken. There is also an ongoing schedule to have all the lime mortar pointing and bricks looked at and restored – once again it is the heavy use of the A40 which has caused the damage. If you see sections of wall with temporary covering over them – it will be removed – but it is there to allow the lime mortar to gradually dry out under the right conditions.

The Trust have just completed a project to repair and restore all 32 of the garages and outbuildings which had been sadly neglected in previous maintenance projects. David wanted to thank all the tenants for their patience.

There are currently several empty properties which will have repairs and decoration undertaken before they are let.

The National Trust now have a 24/7 helpline and email should any emergencies occur.

Cllr Neil Harris, Head Ranger National Trust

National Trust Report- Countryside.

Neil started by thanking David for having the roof of the Events Store in Blackboy Yard, repaired – they now have a waterproof building where all the decorations for the different events they organise can be securely stored and kept dry.

This past year has seen the completion of the new run of steps using our own timber. Not only saving about £10,000 but also earning good low carbon miles! The wood came from Aston Wood, only a few miles up the road! Milled at our Smalldean Estate Yard along with timber for gateposts, rails and waymark posts.

Hay was taken from the hill and used for organic compost at a nearby farm, as we cut the hay when the flowers and grasses have seeded, it is of limited value to farmers as animal fodder. So finding a home can be tricky, its great to be able to support a local farm with some valuable compost.

We have started a programme of juniper regeneration at various of our sites within the Chilterns. West Wycombe has one elderly female juniper and about 20 clones. This year we have collected seed from the parent plant and the seed has been sorted by Kew and will be set for germination this year. Germination rates are very low, but we are hoping for some success. Growing from seed ensures genetic variation, essential for the continued growth of this unique tree. We will also be putting in some scrapes to allow the seed from the existing trees a better chance of germination.

The regular litter checks, patrols and tree surveys continue as normal, with the increasing numbers of NoS bottles a cause for concern. The Trust has been quoted £25

each to dispose of these! We have over 300 in the yard awaiting disposal! Needless to say I have found another way!

New signs were erected this year to remind some dog walkers to please bag and bin their dogs waste, sadly some people still refuse to follow the guidance, leaving some major paths strewn with dog waste. The main path is unfortunately known as Poo Alley. I hope for this next year, more people would bag and bin and either take it home or use some of the many bins that the Parish Council and Buckinghamshire Council pay for throughout the village.

Over at Smalldean, the Barn Owls have once again successfully hatched 4 young from a clutch of six eggs. The parent birds have been in the nest box all winter and we were thrilled to see the first egg appear on the 17th March, almost a month earlier than last year. A further five eggs ere laid, with the first one hatching on the 18th April. This chick is the largest one in the picture, already eating whole voles!



In a few weeks, when they are bigger, they will be ringed by licenced staff from the Bucks and Oxon Raptor Group (BORG). Last years three are pictured below.



We have continued our breeding bird survey and butterfly census on the hill, an early morning walk is always rewarded with some fabulous birds! Blackcap, whitethroat, goldcrest and linnet as well as the amazing song of the Song Thrush and wren!

Report submitted by Denise Hurst, West Wycombe Community Library read by Sharon Henson

The Library is now open every weekday from 10am – 12noon due to us having recruited 3 new volunteers for which we are very grateful.

We continue to send out substantial amounts of books to other Libraries which are ordered on-line. We are often told by other Libraries that we have a great selection of current titles that other Libraries don't have. Where we used to send out, maybe, half a crate of books, we are now sending out 3 crates a week. This total about 80 books per week.

Due to one of the worst storms we have had, the Library was flooded, along with most of West Wycombe, when the water table rose to dangerous levels. We would like to thank Vicki Smith and Sharon Henson for their help with the Council in quickly sorting out pumps and dryers. Very much appreciated.

Our lovely craft groups are still coming in on Monday and Tuesday mornings and are still making the clothes and blankets for the prem baby unit at the hospital and the bereaved charity.

Some of them have been making soldiers, tanks and poppies for the upcoming D Day commemorations which will be displayed in the Post Office window. We also have some beautiful knee and shoulder blankets for sale in the Library Very handy for keeping the chill off knees and necks.

As you know due to the Church Rooms being sold, we now host the Parish Council who have the monthly meetings in the Library. We are very pleased the Library is being used for this community purpose and grateful for the support of the Parish Council.

The Library is also available for hire for meetings, studying, meeting friends etc for a very reasonable fee £10- £30 depending on the length of time needed. Refreshments are also available on request.

Report submitted by Christine Barry, West Wycombe Cricket Club read by Simon Cope

2023 started with the discovery that a pipe had burst in the pavilion during the Winter. Everything was a mess. We thought we were insured through a policy we had for years with the National Trust but they have decided that we are not insured, so, we are having to make good at our own expense.

On the field we had a good season. We played 21 games, won 10, lost 7, drew 1 and 3 were abandoned due to rain.

The Junior section run by Chris Rowle continues to grow and this year the Under 10's and Under 11's are playing matches against other clubs.

This season has not started too well due to the rain. So far, no home games have been played but a gaggle of Canada Geese has taken up residence on the outfield!

Mrs. Vicki Smith, BEM, Chairman, West Wycombe Community Association

West Wycombe Community Association are the Trustees of West Wycombe Village Hall. In the 1950's the residents of West Wycombe raised the money to build the Village Hall and with the help of St Francis Dashwood it opened in 1960.

There are 9 of us on The Village Hall Committee. We are all volunteers, and each person brings knowledge and experience to help us to make decisions about our finances, health and safety issues, the fabric of the building and the car park which we own too. All need careful planning.

The Village Hall is completely independent and is funded by the money made from hiring the Hall out for many different activities. Clubs, quizzes, parties, wedding receptions, keep fit classes, mother and baby classes, plays and pantomimes. Last Saturday a very popular cactus day was held here which attracted people from far and wide.

Unfortunately, we have lost a couple of regular hirers this year, they could not keep their classes going due to the lack of numbers.

As reported at this meeting last year our main worry has been the huge increase in the price of electricity. Everything in the Hall is run on electricity. We have taken advice from experts to see if there is cheaper way of heating the Village Hall and as last Winter was quite mild we turned off the main heater and the storage heaters until the weather turned very cold and only used the timed infra-red heaters when necessary. Our bills are still eye watering high but slightly less than last year.

We have been trying to get quotes to make the double fire doors in the main hall draught proof but getting quotes is not as easy as one would hope and as a Charity, everything financial has to be transparent.

Mrs Emma Copley our Letting Sec does a fantastic job looking after our regular hirers, potential hirers and liaising with our cleaner on the times she can get in the Hall to clean. We are immensely grateful for Emma's patience and good humour.... Dealing with the general public is not always easy.

Emma has just taken a very important booking for July 4th 2024... a General Election has just been announced.

One of the biggest problems of living in West Wycombe Village is parking and we try to be good neighbours by letting residents and businesses have limited parking permits for our car park. We cannot accommodate everyone because we must keep some space for the people who hire the Hall. Needless to say, there are always people who take liberties but we have two eagle eyed committee members who miss nothing and will soon let the 'culprits' know they cannot park here for days on end or have their car valeted in the car park, which happened recently.

The Village Hall Committee do their very best to keep West Wycombe Village Hall a safe, clean and viable place for people to hire for all occasions.

Alison Rimmer, Church Warden, West Wycombe PCC

It has been another busy year, both inside and outside the church! We are very thankful to have a steady and faithful congregation and strong community support, and value it all enormously.

One of the benefits from the prolonged vacancy of nearly five years has been the growth of the Benefice. We work closely with the parishes of Bradenham, Bledlow Ridge and Radnage and get on well as a team. The vacancy has been challenging but we now feel in a strong position as we wait to welcome our next priest in July. Revd. Penny Nash joins us from Wycombe Abbey School, she and her family know the area well and we're all looking forward to this new chapter with a Rector to lead the Benefice again bringing her vision and energy.

We are immensely grateful to our dedicated Ministry Team who have held the fort for so long. Reverends Veronica Beaumont and Anne Cooper have worked tirelessly to ensure that our worship and pastoral care continue, well supported by local clergy and Parish Administrator Helen Chadley.

The PCC members and local volunteers always give generously of their time and energy to build and maintain our church family life. This has been vital during the vacancy and they have made a world of difference. As Churchwarden I've been very grateful to them all.

Our major task last year was to build the Benefice profile to accompany the advertisement for our next Rector. Huge thanks to Susie Chester who created an excellent Profile, much admired by other local churches too, as she gifted her time and materials.

The future of our church buildings has been uncertain for several years and vital to resolve. After much discussion, planning and persistence, it is such a relief to know that all three buildings now have a brighter and certain outlook.

St Lawrence is an iconic church, and loved by the congregation and community. There is much family history within the churchyard, while the building itself attracts many visitors; its location and perfect acoustics offer many opportunities for the future. The Archdeacon of Buckingham has initiated a committee of interested volunteers who could become trustees of a Charitable organization. Developing the future will be a slow process but a sound start sees the church building now open to the public at certain times, organized largely by the Bellringers and West Wycombe Chamber Choir. The Tower is closed to visitors until critical repair work has been done but the bells can be rung again and it is wonderful to hear them.

The PCC, congregation and community were all delighted when the Church Room and Loft were purchased by Colin Mantripp, a master carver and renowned furniture designer and creator. Thank you to Colin for his vision and generosity and to Brian Palmer who checks the clock on a daily basis. The building is definitely in safe and caring hands for the future and it will be fascinating to see its restoration, precious to us all.

At St Paul's, the sharing agreement with the Serbian Orthodox was not renewed in December following discussion with, and advice from, the Oxford Diocese and Wycombe Deanery. Their last service there was in April 2024, and they were offered St Lawrence as an alternative church in the High Wycombe area. Fr Stefan hopes that their Wycombe, Oxford and Reading congregations will one day share a church uniting their congregations, a plan which has their Government support with some funding available. Repair and maintenance work is needed at St Paul's including the re-ordering of the vestry, provision of a disabled access toilet and replacement of the flat roof. Other plans include an improved sound system, installation of internet and card reader and the replacement of the wooden chairs. Many of them have woodworm and comfortable chairs will be a great asset to community events as well as services. There will soon be a bench in the churchyard in memory of former members of the congregation. We have welcomed the Little Strummers guitar groups to the Rectory and St Paul's for weekly lessons, and Remap engineers adapted the organ bench and provided the new notice board at the churchyard entrance. The large notice board will be replaced upon the arrival of Revd. Penny Nash and also with details of the Parish burial ground.

We are always very grateful to the Parish Council for their generous support and maintenance of the peaceful and beautiful burial ground as well as the car park which we can use. We know what a huge difference the hard working and imaginative Parish Council has made to this community over many years and we all have benefited along the way. Thank you!

We have held several fundraising community events at St Paul's, including Coffee Mornings, concerts and the immensely popular Christmas Tree Festival, Thankyou to everyone for organizing those happy events, and the Snowdrop Sunday is always a very popular start to the year.

As with many churches and voluntary organisations, the number of volunteers available to help has dropped and this can present real difficulties in sustaining regular events together with the social habits and financial challenges which have changed. However, although numbers may be lower at the traditional social events they still bring much joy and fellowship in church and community. We are very grateful to those who help us so willingly, we couldn't carry on without them all!

The Contact church and community magazine is still a very popular village feature. Thankyou to all those who contribute to its production and especially to the volunteers who deliver the magazine to every house in the Benefice and at Saunderton, that is well over 1600 houses.

The Wycombe Deanery Rural Forum provides support for rural parishes, strengthening their shared knowledge of processes and funding, as well as providing a database of

recommended tradespeople and craftsmen. These resources give much needed support to Churchwardens and PCCs who often have too many tasks to achieve; the information can also be shared with their congregations.

There have been many times when we've worried about the future of our churches and parish life, and then other times when we've shared joy and celebration. However, our friendship and spirit are stronger than ever and this wonderful village plays a major part in that, thank you all so much! I have just retired as Churchwarden and thank everyone so much for their kindness and good wishes for the future. It has been a real privilege and pleasure to be Churchwarden and we've all been through a lot together! Thank you all for your part in us all working together and I wish you every joy and success in the years ahead.

Cllr Darren Hayday, Buckinghamshire Councillor

Both myself and Orshi would like to pass on our thanks and appreciation for all of the hard work and time in which each and every Councillor, the Chairman and the Clerk offer to the community. It does not go unnoticed.

The volume of rain has caused so many issues for our residents - damaged roads, flooding, blocked gullies and more. It is good to know that your Parish Council has people who know what to do and who to contact. If any resident needs help with an issue or has questions, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or Orshi and we will do our very best to help.

Thames Valley Police

Due to a shortage of officers and being seconded to High Wycombe Police Station, PC Danny O'Driscoll was not able to attend.

Cllr Cope invited everyone to ask questions and stay to take refreshments and then handed over the evening to Cllr Mrs Smith as this would be the last meeting that Sharon Henson would be acting as Clerk as she retires at the end of May after nearly 29 years service to the Community. During the meeting we were joined by more well wishers and her family.

Sir Edward and Lady Lucinda had kindly provided all the wine for the evening and members of the Parish Council had worked hard to create a perfect retirement evening with a gift of Davies Brothers vouchers, cash, gardening gloves, a trowel, a terracotta pot, a vase, a bouquet and fantastic card with photos marking different events, signed by so many members of the community. Sir Edward and Lady Lucinda presented Sharon with a framed print of West Wycombe Park in the 18th Century. As I write up this evening all I can say is 'Thank you, I have enjoyed working for my community for nearly 29 years and see you on my allotment!'

The presentation 'speech':

Sharon, A good neighbour to all in West Wycombe

Sharon took the job of Parish Clerk to West Wycombe Parish Council nearly 29 years ago.

The Clerk's job was very different in those days. No computers were used then, I remember Sharon taking Minutes by hand... .. hard to believe now.

Through the years there have been many, many changes to parish councils. Laws, rules and regulations, procedure, accounts and planning legislation, let alone I T!

Sharon has always embraced the changes that came along by taking training and with confidence helped us become and remain the well-respected parish council we are today.

A good few years ago there was an examination board then known as AQA that did a degree course in Council Administration and Law. Sharon was 'persuaded' to take on this task which would stand us in good stead and give her a qualification. It took a lot of hard work and she passed with flying colours, this enabled us to become a Quality Parish Council. One of only two at the time in Buckinghamshire.

Sharon has been awarded best Parish Clerk in Buckinghamshire by Bucks Association of Local Councils, and WDC Chairman Bill Bendysh Brown gave her an award for her outstanding work as a Parish Council Clerk because as he travelled round Wycombe District calling in at Parish Council meetings he came across Sharon 'Clerking' for Piddington and Wheeler End Parish Council, Hambleden Parish Council and West Wycombe Parish Council, all at the same time on different days of the month! He was very impressed! She also worked for Lane End Parish Council covering for their Clerks maternity leave.

Sharon has on more than one occasion given talks to Buckinghamshire Councillors and other County Councils on how Parish Councils work as obviously most do not know how we work.

As a Parish Council if we decide we want to create a project that will help or enhance the parish Sharon as our Clerk has been the one to check the possibilities, feasibility and of course, cost. A lot of work!

To mention just a few projects Sharon has helped with over the years..... 2 road crossing, the Pedestal Playing Field, the Chorley Road Allotments, and the new lighting scheme throughout the parish.

I am sure you can imagine how much paperwork these projects entailed! Sharon has been dogged, as we were, in her determination in getting these 'jobs' to fruition and that's not to mention the amount of nagging she has done to councils about the jobs they should be doing.

Sharon has almost single-handedly set up the Community Orchard behind our Burial Ground. It is a peaceful place for all to use for years to come.

But possibly one of her outstanding achievements for West Wycombe must be when she gave a presentation to The House of Commons Select Committee in the Houses of Parliament because we were concerned about HS2 traffic coming through our parish. Although Chairman at the time I couldn't be at the original meetings, so Sharon took the lead with me supporting her later.

We formed the HS2, A4010 team, consisting of Wycombe District Council, Bradenham Parish Council, and Princes Risborough Town Council with the help of Jim Stevens a highways expert.

We had many meetings before being given a chance to speak to the HS2 Select Committee. Everyone delivered excellent presentations on behalf of their parishes to The House of Commons Select Committee.

Sharon did an excellent presentation for West Wycombe.

We were rewarded with the HS2 traffic being barred from using the A40 through West Wycombe Village and HS2 having to provide money for repairs and improvements on the A4010. Quite an achievement and to be in the Houses of Parliament, an amazing experience for all concerned.

Yes, Sharon is employed by the Parish Council but from herding cows back into the field off the A40 in the morning rush hour or coming out at all hours to lock a gate, put a up a barrier or a sign if it was needed to avert a difficult situation, Sharon has gone well and truly beyond the call of duty countless times.

Sharon has been an exemplary Parish Clerk and we have been extremely spoiled!

We wish her health and happiness in her retirement and would like her to step forward to receive gifts from all here tonight as a mark of our thanks for all she has done for everyone in West Wycombe.

Please will you raise your glass in thanks to Sharon.

Cllr Mrs Vicki Smith BEM
23-05-2024