

**MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 12TH MAY 2009
IN THE VILLAGE HALL, ASTON AT 8.00 PM**

1. Present: Parish Councillors:
John Little (Chairman)
Bob Jones
Gill Long
John Ordish
Fanny Sedman
Jane West
Roy Williams

Helen Sandhu (Clerk)
Keith Hutchence and Geoff Bell, Environment Agency
Squadron Leader Des Derrick, RAF Brize Norton
Brenda Smith – District Councillor
Hilary Fenton – District Councillor
Charles Mathew – County Councillor
35 members of the public

2. Apologies: None

3. Welcome

John Little, Chairman of the Parish Council, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the members of the Parish Council and the Clerk.

4. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting on 13th May 2008

Were signed by the Chairman.

**5. Consultation for the Oxford Flood Risk Management Strategy
– Geoff Bell, Environment Agency**

A display on the proposed strategy had been put up in the hall by the Environment Agency during the afternoon to which residents were invited and where they were given the opportunity to pose questions to Geoff Bell and Keith Hutchence.

Geoff Bell explained that the proposed strategy is based on a 100 year timeframe. Over 100 homes in Oxford have flooded on four occasions since 2000 because of the River Thames bursting its banks. The Environment Agency has been tasked to find a scheme to protect Oxford which will be technically and economically viable. Many different ideas have been considered and the conclusion has been drawn that utilising the river system to the west of the City is the way forward. Existing rivers will be enlarged and new sections of river built to improve flood flows through the floodplain to the west of Oxford. This plan is straightforward in technical terms and it is expected that for every £1 spent in delivering it £7 in public benefit will be received back.

At the same time as considering how to protect Oxford from the flooding levels regularly experienced in recent years the Environment Agency has to consider what extra measures could be used should climate change happen. The answer to this problem seems to be to

make better use of the floodplain upstream – to hold back the water on this floodplain, letting it flood more, provided it does not flood homes or businesses or destroy the infrastructure. Five floodplain sites were considered in a desk-top study exercise – four of them were eliminated because a scheme could not be designed that wouldn't flood some houses, businesses or major roads. The only remaining feasible site covers Aston, Cote and Shifford. The Environment Agency has designed a scheme that they think could be built and which would not make the flooding locally any worse – the extra land that would be flooded due to the scheme would only be farmland. Landowners whose land would be damaged due to the scheme would be compensated for their losses. Under the proposed scheme it is predicted that an extra 10 million m³ of water would be stored on the floodplains around Aston, Cote and Shifford once every 7-8 years. This would evidently only happen when the floodplains were already in flood anyway. The timeframe for the scheme looks far into the future – possibly 20-30 years from now. The scheme will only be looked at in detail in 20 years time and only if the Oxford scheme has been built and is running well. The Environment Agency does not think that these plans to make greater use of the floodplains around Aston, Cote and Shifford should blight properties. If further studies indicate that properties would be at risk they would build bunds to protect them. If studies indicate that roads would flood they could be raised. Mr Bell expressed his regret that this scheme will be sited here but advised the meeting that the Environment Agency is obliged to look at the whole of the Thames area and come up with schemes such as this which will mitigate against future flooding. Central Government policy is to make greater use of the Thames floodplains in order to protect London ultimately, and these floodplains are located in Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.

Q: The Environment Agency has been told that their flood maps do not take into account the full extent of the flooding in 2007 – will the maps be updated?

A: Andrew Gardiner from Chimney has met with the surveyors and demonstrated the extent and depth of the 2007 flood – the maps will be updated.

Q Will the changes to the maps affect the model for the flood mitigation strategy?

A: They probably will, but the current model is only an initial design and a much more detailed study and design will be carried out if the plan is to proceed. A further study would be prepared using up to date local information, including information from local residents – that study itself would probably take 2-3 years. It is too early for any detailed study, but the scheme has to be put into the Strategic Environmental Assessment now.

Q: Where would the dam on the river Thames be put?

A: +/- 200 metres upstream from the Windrush confluence, in the vicinity of the 3Ts gravel pit.

Q: 100 houses in Oxford flooded in 2007– how does that compare to the number of houses flooded in the local area?

A: The 100 houses in Oxford have flooded four times since 2000 and we know that they will keep flooding.

Local landowners contested the Environment Agency's belief that building bunds will hold flooding back. It was stated that as the local substructure is gravel water will come back up through the gravel, making the bunds ineffective. A local landowner also stated that he does not accept that the area needs flooding – if the local structure is maintained and operated correctly flood levels could be lowered at a far greater rate, reducing the need for the flooding suggested.

Q: The 1846 Drainage Act that the local Drainage Board is obliged to follow makes this scheme illegal – the Drainage Board is obliged to drain the land, not flood it.

If the river was cleaned out regularly this would help it to drain better – it is very silted up as there is no maintenance.

A: The issue of the 1846 Act will be referred to the Environment Agency lawyers for them to ascertain the continued effectiveness of the Act. If it is still extant it will be a challenge for the Environment Agency to deal with.

Geoff Bell picked up on the discussions about greater/improved use of the Thames locks and the issue of river dredging: if attempts are made to hold back water using the locks the water simply goes over and around them. If the rivers are dredged hard 10-15% more water could possibly be pushed through the channels, but the rivers would quickly return to their current state. Dredging is very expensive and does not give much flood risk reduction. Sensible maintenance of the rivers is the way forward for minor flooding events but could never deal with major flooding events.

6. RAF Brize Norton Present and Future – Squadron Leader Des Derrick

Squadron Leader Derrick gave his presentation with the assistance of Powerpoint slides. He has been based at RAF Brize Norton for the past 9 months, working in operations – managing the flying programme and the airfield.

RAF Brize Norton is currently supporting operations in Iraq which are being run down and in Afghanistan which are ongoing. Brize Norton will become the single air transport (AT)/air to air refueling (AAR) hub when Lyneham closes down and their aircraft are relocated to Brize.

There are currently three squadrons based at RAF Brize Norton:

101 Squadron flying 15 VC10s; 216 Squadron flying 9 TriStars; and 99 Squadron flying 6 C17 aircraft. The VC10s date from the 1960s and the TriStars from the 1970s whilst the C17 is one of the most modern aircraft flying today. The TriStars are used to carry troops whilst the C17 is the main freight carrier. RAF Brize Norton also operates Aeromed missions – getting injured troops back to the UK within 24 hours of their injury. The VC10s do air to air refueling. VC10 detachments are currently deployed in Al Udeid, Oman and the Falkland Islands.

Squadron Leader Derrick went on to talk about the ongoing developments at RAF Brize Norton – part of the overall project now called “Future Brize”. ASP project – work is ongoing to build 18 new aircraft bays – this should be finished by the end of November 2009.

Replacement aircraft – the VC10s will be replaced with the Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft.

The first delivery of these new aircraft will be in 2011, with a further 12 to be delivered in December 2015. There will ultimately be 14 of these aircraft based at RAF Brize Norton, with 9 available to the MOD for day-to-day use. The project to build the new A400M aircraft has been beset with problems. Delivery has been delayed to March 2014, with 13 expected to be delivered in 2015 and total numbers to be based at RAF Brize Norton eventually rising to 25 aircraft.

The numbers and types of aircraft based at Brize will therefore change to:

<u>Now</u>	<u>Future</u>
15 VC10	9 A370
9 TriStar	24 C130
6 C17	25 A400M
	6+ C17
Total: 30+ charter	Total: 64 + charter

Squadron Leader Derrick told the meeting that the noise footprint produced by RAF Brize Norton will reduce substantially due to the aircraft changes. The newer aircraft are

substantially quieter and there are better simulators which means that more training can be done in them. The VC10s, which generate the majority of noise complaints, will be out of service by the end of 2012.

New single and married quarters accommodation will be built. Work on new passenger and freight facilities should begin in Summer/Autumn 2010.

When all the work is completed RAF Brize Norton should be an air base fit to serve for the next 25+ years.

Q: How many extra personnel (civilian and military) will there be by 2020?

A: 2000 are due to come across from Lyneham – some will choose to commute so it is not yet clear how many will actually move to live here.

Q: What is being done about the water run-off that will come from the additional aircraft parking bays?

A: The hard standing being built is not all new – some old hard standing has been dug up. Water storage tanks have been put in enabling water to be stored and released at the historic rate. Water release shouldn't be any different to what happens at present – indeed it may be better as the new tanks should work better than the existing ones.

Q: As the number of aircraft based at Brize is expected to double does this mean that the number of air movements will double?

A: Not necessarily – some of the additional aircraft will be deployed elsewhere – currently only around 53% of the aircraft based here are present at any one time. There will be fewer training circuits as there will be greater use of the newer simulators. People will however see more aircraft properly leaving and arriving.

Q: Is the new concrete porous to let the water drain through?

A: Can't confirm that, but can confirm that the issue of water drainage has been addressed – primarily through the use of storage tanks. There was close consultation with the Environment Agency.

Q: We occasionally see large Russian built aircraft using the base.

A: Yes – the RAF uses Russian built A124 Antonov transport aircraft on charter. This will continue as the A124 gives a much larger freight outload than the C17s. The A124s are particularly useful for moving large tanks, etc.

7. Oxfordshire County Councillor – Charles Mathew

Councillor Mathew told the meeting that he was elected as the area's County Councillor in May 2006 and he has worked to ensure that local matters such as Highways, speeding, gravel, schools, flooding and sewerage are looked after. He works with the West Oxfordshire District Councillors for matters within the District Council's remit such as planning. He requested that local residents continue to pass any concerns onto him by email or telephone.

8. Parish Council Review – Roy Williams, Vice Chairman

Mr Williams explained that the Parish Council acts on behalf of the area on a whole range of matters. Income is received via the precept which is collected by the District Council with people's Council Tax. The Parish Council's share of the Council Tax was reduced by around 5% for 2009/10. The Parish Council also receives money from Oxfordshire County Council towards the cost of cutting the grass in the parish.

The Parish Council monitors the local infrastructure – lights, signs and potholes and tries to get things done when problems arise. Some local services are provided by the Parish

Council – the grass cutting, bus shelters, installation of new litter and dog bins. Funds are given to the local churches for cutting the grass in the graveyards. There has been some dispute with Historic Chapels Trust who now own Cote Chapel over the maintenance of the graveyard – the Parish Council has now taken over the cutting of the grass. The Parish Council supports other village organisations such as the Community Trust and Voices. It has also historically employed/contracted with a Lengthsman – this position is currently vacant. Since the flooding in July 2007 the Parish Council has been actively involved with other organisations including the District Council, County Council and Environment Agency to get the necessary maintenance carried out on the parish's ditches, rivers and roads to reduce future flooding risk. Members of the Parish Council attend flood meetings organised by Bampton Parish Council with the aim of putting pressure on the Environment Agency and other organisations to take action. At the moment efforts are being made to attempt to get work done on the Great Brook.

There are concerns about the weight limits on local bridges (Newbridge and Tadpole bridge) and roads. There is a danger that in the future lorries will end up coming through Aston more as they try to get round the weight limits. The Parish Council is trying to put pressure on Highways to get a weight limit put on the B4449.

Other local concerns that the Parish Council is involved with on an ongoing basis include planning matters, which are dealt with regularly; speeding – the Parish Council is trying to get action on residents' concerns and installed the two VAS in Aston; dog fouling – if people see someone letting their animal foul they should let the Parish Council know so that it can be reported; the Playgroup – the Parish Council is supporting the Playgroup's plans for a new building as far as it can; and the website – this has come on greatly over the last year.

In conclusion Mr Williams reminded the meeting that the Parish Council is here to serve the parish – Councillors' names and contact numbers are on the website for people to use if they have any concerns to raise.

9. Aston & Cote CE Primary School

Marjorie Ottley, Head Teacher spoke on behalf of Aston & Cote Primary School.

The school has had a very successful year. There are currently 135 children on roll which is a bit low for 6 classes. In September 14 children will be leaving Y6 and 22 children will be starting in the Foundation Stage which will be full. The number of children has a direct effect on the school budget – the funding received is based on the number of children.

A lot of work has been carried out in the area of internet safety over the year. The school has a new ICT suite thanks to the £10,000 which was raised by FACS. The children are learning how to use the internet and email safely. An evening meeting was held for parents to learn how to keep their children safe online at home.

The school has close links with St James' church. Reverend David Lloyd comes in to school to do collective worship. The children have gone to do collective worship in the church more often this year and this has been very successful.

The teachers and governors have been working hard on developing the curriculum to make it more meaningful and exciting for the children. Some of this has involved classes going back to a topic based approach with one topic having links across the different curriculum areas. They are continuing to work as a Healthy School, making sure that the children are aware of healthy eating. They are reintroducing cookery into school and growing vegetables in the garden which can be used for the cookery lessons.

The school is continually trying to raise standards – the last Ofsted rating was good and the aim is to achieve an "outstanding" rating at the next assessment. There has been a big drive to improve the children's work in maths, particularly mental maths. A further new initiative this year had been outside learning – the school had a "maths outside" week and there is a "literacy outside" week planned.

The school continues to be a member of the West Oxfordshire School Sports Partnership which gives them opportunities for inter-school competitions and access to specialist coaches. Sport in school has been heavily funded by Central Government, enabling children to take part in sports that they would not normally be given the chance to. Behaviour in school continues to be outstanding. Visitors are always struck by how polite the children are which is a credit to them, their families and the staff. Mrs Ottley expressed her gratitude to FACS (Friends of Aston & Cote School) for the great job they do in raising funds for the school.

Q: Are school dinners being stopped? What is the current situation and is the decision permanent?

A: School dinners will be stopped from September. It currently costs the school £8,000 to buy into the service. A £2,000 grant is received to offset this, leaving a net cost to the school of £6,000. Roughly 25 children a day have a school dinner. The Governors decided to save the £6,000 to use to benefit every child in school rather than just those who have a school dinner.

Q: What about the children who are entitled to free school meals?

A: There are a few of these children – they will be catered for; the school is currently in discussion with their parents.

Q: What about if more children had school dinners?

A: Even if more children had school dinners the school wouldn't get any more money – it would still cost the school £6,000 to run the service.

Q: Has school considered whether they could ask parents for more money for school dinners?

A: The Governors are setting up a meeting for parents in early June for this matter to be discussed in more detail.

Q: Please ensure that the date of the meeting is communicated to the parents at Playgroup.

10. Voices

Richard Haines, joint editor, spoke on behalf of Voices. The 109th edition of Voices is about to be published. It continues its mission to deliver news and information about local events to the parish. Over 500 copies of each edition are distributed. Many people in the parish are involved with the production of Voices. Four years ago an edition was typically 16 pages long; it is now typically 24 pages. Some editions now have colour pages. Mr Haines said that the Voices team was grateful for the continued support and enthusiasm of all concerned. They are always looking for new members on the editorial team and for new writing contributors – there are now several younger writers. Mr Haines offered his thanks to the printers of Voices, the Flying Press, who have kept their printing costs at the same level this year. 50% of Voices income comes from advertising, 25% from fundraising and donations and 25% from a Parish Council grant. The Voices quiz, the main annual fundraiser, is due to take place on Friday 15 May – Mr Haines encouraged people to go along. The AGM is on Thursday 21 May in the Meeting Room at the Village Hall and everyone is welcome to attend.

11. Aston Fete 2009

Andrew Walton gave a presentation on behalf of the Aston Fete 2009 committee. This year's fete is on June 6. The theme is the 65th Anniversary of D Day, with a lot of wartime themed events throughout the day. There will be a military battle re-enactment, military vehicles and equipment on display and a 1940s fashion show. Many of the popular items from last year will be back again. David Cameron MP will be opening the fete again. Some of the problems from last year have been addressed – there has been more communication with Carterton Police to inform them of the timing of the parade through the village and that there will be some loud noises during the battle re-enactment in the afternoon. Whilst there will be no road closures, there will be more effort on traffic calming, including more signs. The District Council will be approached to provide more recycling and litter bins. The main beneficiaries from the fete this year will be St James' church and Playgroup. Andrew Walton expressed his appreciation of the Aston website and the work of Jane Birkby who maintains it – it is a very professional looking website for a small parish. There is information about the fete on the website.

Q: Why is David Cameron opening the fete – that's political.

A: It is not a political choice – David Cameron is the local MP and the fete committee is not interested in which party he represents. Someone different will probably open the fete in 2010.

12. Aston & Cote Playgroup

Vicky Hickman, Chair, gave a presentation on behalf of the Playgroup.

The Playgroup still has the same four members of staff who do a fantastic job. There are 29 children currently on the roll. 20 of these will be leaving in the summer, 18 to go to Aston & Cote primary school. The Playgroup recently trialled a parents' evening for the children going up to primary school in September – an opportunity for parents to talk to the keyworkers about their children. This was very successful. There will be a new parents' evening on Monday 18 May.

The Playgroup continues to run holiday huts during the half term and Easter holidays to help raise funds. They will be running the bar at the fete and are hoping to raise a good amount of money towards the new building.

Rebecca Daniel gave a presentation about the ongoing project to replace the building. There has been a lot of progress over the past year. A design for the building has been agreed and builders have been chosen. The lease is now in the hands of the County Council's solicitor and appears to be nearly resolved. The total budget for the project is £227,000 – this includes the outdoor area, new indoor equipment, costs associated with the move and temporary accommodation during the work. They have verbal planning permission and are waiting for written confirmation. There is a condition attached to the planning permission concerning bat conservation. There is evidence of bat activity in the roof space of the current building so Playgroup will need to pay for further surveys to see whether it is a maternity roost. If this is the case the building will not be able to be demolished during the summer as planned. They are working on contingencies to deal with the situation.

Playgroup is on the shortlist for an Early Years Capital Grant from Oxfordshire County Council, having requested £150,000. The Parish Council has given a grant of £3,858 with the promise of more funds when work starts. There is £41,000 already in the Playgroup's deposit account of which £25,000 could be used for the building work. This has been raised over the last 6/7 years from the local community. They still need to raise around £35,000 and are planning to make an application for a lottery grant as well as other smaller grants at the same time as continuing to fundraise in the local community. Letters of support from the local community are useful for grant applications and Rebecca Daniel encouraged people to send them into Playgroup.

13. Wednesday Club

Sylvia Brown spoke on behalf of the Wednesday Club. The Club is run for the senior citizens of the village and meets in the village hall on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month. It currently has 28 members. The members receive a hot drink when they arrive and a two course lunch followed by entertainment. There are also some outings during the year. This is all paid for by fundraising from the members.

14. Other matters raised by members of the public

Sylvia Brown told the meeting that Fred Wedlock will be performing at Aston Village Hall on 20 June, with profits to go towards the new kitchen for the Village Hall. Tickets can be obtained from Sylvia.

Q: What is going to be done about the state of the roads?

A: Members of the Parish Council met with a representative from Highways on 30 April to look round the main roads in the parish. The Highways representative promised to look further at four areas – around the Square in Aston, Bull Street, the road near the cottages in Chimney and some parts of North Street. The problem is that Highways only has limited funds. Any work they do will only be patching. The Parish Council did what it could to point out the worst areas.

Q: What about the length of the grass at St James?

A: This is the responsibility of the Church and not the Parish Council.

Q: What has happened about the access up Church Lane? Local residents have always used this as access to the allotments but they are now being told that it is a private lane.

A: This is said to be a private lane, but if it has been used by people for over 20 years it can be designated as a right of way. This would be dealt with by the Footways Officer at Oxfordshire County Council. As these type of matters are not a priority it can take several years for the right of way designation to be put into place.

Q: Why are some of the verges in Cote cut neatly and others not?

A: The Parish Council pays for the main verges within the 30mph limit to be cut. Outside of that the County Council cuts them. Some residents cut the verges near their own properties, making those areas neater.

Q: It is good that the issue of the grass cutting at Cote Chapel has been resolved for this year, but pressure needs to be kept up on Historic Chapels Trust to reopen the building. The Chapel is a facility that local people should be able to use, including for worship.

A: The Parish Council was unhappy with the condition of the graveyard and has got permission from Historic Chapels Trust to undertake the grass cutting, which the Parish Council has decided to do for 2009 only. The position with Historic Chapels Trust will hopefully be resolved by 2010. Andrew Long and John Ordish are trying to achieve a resolution to the problem with David Cameron's assistance but this has currently stalled.

Q: What is happening about the lengthsman?

A: No-one has yet applied for the job.

15. Close of Meeting

John Little thanked everyone for coming, especially those organisations that gave presentations and provided the displays. The meeting closed at 9.47pm.

Signeddated.....