

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2008

The Annual Parish Meeting was held on Monday 10 March, at Wembdon St George's School, commencing at 7.00pm.

Present was Beat Officer PC Tony Freeman, County Cllr John Edney & the following Parish Councillors, Mr Webb, Chairman, Mrs Lumber, Mrs Riddle & Messrs Perry, Solomon, Western, Brown, Harris & Bagg

Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed those present on what was a very stormy night, which had obviously affected the attendance.

Apologies for Absence

These were received in respect of Cllr A Bown.

Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 16 April 2007 were formally approved & signed.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the 2007 minutes.

Chairman's Annual Report

The Chairman read out the following

In last year's Annual Report, I was able to confirm exciting news that the Parish Council had completed the raising of some £36,000 for the refurbishment of the playing field. In mid-2007, work began on this major scheme & the project was finished in quick time. The splendid overseeing of the playing field enhancement was an appropriate swansong for Ray Harris in his role on the Playing Field Committee. Wembdon now has a playing field of which it can be proud.

The playing field and the Common form the main focal points for outdoor sports and events, & the Parish Council & Wembdon Community Association have a joint interest in maintaining these areas in a pristine condition. I have constantly stressed the need for the PC & WCA to work closely together, & in harmony, & the hope is that the current year the relationship may strengthen further.

An encouraging improvement in anti-social behaviour in the park has been acknowledged by nearby residents. PC Tony Freeman & PCSO Nick Mizon have continued their sterling work, & have been strong influences in keeping Wembdon relatively trouble-free. However, the Church was unable to escape a series of attacks on its stained-glass windows, & the Council contributed towards the cost of installing new grilles. Another factor that regularly involves the police is the question of excessive vehicle speeds & how they can be controlled. The police are doing their best in this regard but it is a very difficult area to deal with.

Rodney Western will be assuming the primary role in ensuring the Council's main assets, the playing field & the Common, are maintained in first-class condition, & we are confident that he will successfully follow his predecessor's footsteps.

The Council's activities cover a wide field in the course of the year, often involving requests to, & discussions with, Somerset & Sedgemoor District Councils. We are able to achieve an additional thrust in our dealings, with the help, when appropriate, of Councillors John Edney & Ann Bown.

Matters worthy of mention are

Colin Brown continues to walk the footpaths of Wembdon & ensures that they are well maintained.

The allotments continue to be well-used & the Council is working towards securing their long-term future.

Ken Perry has continued his effective role as the Council's representative on local Cluster Groups. He attracted a high vote in his re-election to Sedgemoor's Standards Committee.

Meetings are taking place regarding the status of the play areas adjoining the NDR.

A large number of planning applications were passed to the Council for comment. Final decisions are, of course, made by Sedgemoor District Council.

The future of the Mitchell Trust, formed in 1623 for the benefit of the poor of Wembdon, was discussed by the Council. It was decided that the trust should continue & Ken Perry undertook to act as Secretary.

Kevin Thorpe continued his intelligent & constructive approach to the job of Clerk, & plays a key role in ensuring that Wembdon runs a tidy ship.

As always, finance plays an important part in the Council's consideration of matters. The Council decided to make a small increase in the annual precept for 2008/2009 to £14,000. Various expenses, such as insurances, dog bins & administrative expenses continue to rise & have to be catered for. The precept remains one of the lowest in Sedgemoor, & it should be noted that no remuneration or expenses were paid to any Councillors during the year. Their services were completely voluntary & unpaid.

Somerset County Council (through John Edney) made a grant of £750 to Wembdon. This will be used for a new notice board when a suitable location can be found. Mike Solomon continues to assiduously apply his fund-raising endeavours. The current target being pursued is a wider bridge at the end of the playing field leading to the NDR. A grant of £2750 has been made to the Council for the production of a Parish Plan. Steve Bagg & his team have reached an advanced stage on this work, & it is hoped that many ideas will flow from the Plan, which will point to the preferred future direction of the village.

The battle between Somerset County Council & the District Councils over Unitary status was won by the District Councils. This means that Wembdon will not suffer any dislocation & can carry on without any changes in its running. Wembdon has grown dramatically in the last few years & the challenge for the Parish Council is to make newcomers feel part of the village, & to safeguard those elements that existing residents value so highly & make them happy to live in Wembdon.

Questions from Parishioners

The view was aired that the Bridgwater NDR formed a natural boundary between Bridgwater & Wembdon & that consideration should be given to seeking a re-drawing of the Wembdon boundary. It was RESOLVED that the current boundary should be established & it would then be considered further at the April Parish Council meeting.

On behalf of the Parish Councillors present Mr Harris thanked Mr Webb for his excellent Chairmanship of the Parish Council.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 7.18pm