

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2007

The Annual Parish Meeting was held on Monday 16 April, at the Parish Centre, commencing at 7.05pm.

1) Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Mr Brian Webb, welcomed County Cllr John Edney, PC Tony Freeman, 6 members of the public & the following Parish Councillors, Cllr Ann Bown, Mrs Coombes, Mrs Riddle, Mrs Lumber & Messrs Perry, Harris, Brown & Bagg to the Annual Parish Meeting.

2) Apologies

These were received in respect of Mr Solomon.

3) Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 10 April 2006

The Clerk read out the minutes & the meeting formally adopted them.

4) Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the 2006 minutes.

5) Chairman's Annual Report

The Chairman read out the following report

The past year ended in fine style with news that the Parish Council had been awarded a very substantial grant by Viridor Credits Environmental to add to the considerable funds already accumulated by the Council for its playing field project. It has been apparent for some time that pressure was growing for some urgent action to be taken on the playing field. With the increase in Wembdon's population, demands on the playing field have been increasing at a period when the equipment in the field was ageing alarmingly and a major refurbishment was the only answer. However, the Council has been severely inhibited in its efforts to deal with the problem because of lack of funds. The Council therefore decided to embark on a major fund-raising drive to secure whatever funds were available and to enable the badly needed regeneration of the playing field to begin. The campaign has been spearheaded by Mike Solomon with fine support from Ray Harris. Our Clerk, Kevin Thorpe, provided excellent administrative back-up.

The results of these efforts has been dramatic. The Council has now secured grants and donations (including £2000 from Wembdon Community Association), plus its own contribution of £6000, to reach a grand total of £36,000. This will enable work on the playing field restoration to begin in the near future and planning has already begun. This is a great achievement, and tremendous credit is due to those who have played a part in it. History has been created by and for the Council.

On the general front, the Council modestly increased its Council Tax precept for the year, but only in line with the increased number of houses in the parish. The Parish Council has a good reputation for sound financial management, and it is interesting to note that of the 55 Town and Parish Councils in Sedgemoor, only 5 levied a lower precept per Band D property than Wembdon.

Apart from the excitement of the playing field project, the Council has continued to deal, as efficiently as possible, with all the matters it handles. The well-being of the village depends on many factors, including a high level of proficient and visible policing. We have been fortunate in this regard, in that the very capable PC Tony

Freeman has now been allocated assistance in the form of a Community Support Officer, Nick Mizon. We wish them both well in their never-ending battle.

Although sometimes overshadowed by the continuing spotlight on the playing field, several Councillors make unique contributions in other areas:

Ken Perry continues to be a robust voice in representing the Council on Cluster Group Meetings, providing a very useful feedback.

Colin Brown assiduously traverses the footpaths of Wembdon, and ensures that they are maintained to a high standard.

Ann Bown, as a District Councillor, and a long-standing local resident, is able to provide insight and practical help in many problem areas.

Stephen Bagg has undertaken the daunting task of preparing the initial drafts on the Village Plan/Design Statement.

In addition to the work of Councillors, Kevin Thorpe maintains a very tidy ship on our finances and administration.

The Parish Council has carefully monitored many planning applications in the past year, and offered constructive observations where appropriate, to Sedgemoor District Council. There have been no major or seriously contentious applications, but the Parish Council will not relax its guard on planning issues. In this respect, we were advised that enquiries have been made regarding the possibility of grazing horses in the field (owned by S. Notaro) next to the playing field. The Council is very wary of such enquiries, and has advised Mr Notaro and Sedgemoor District Council accordingly. We certainly do not want a North Curry situation on our hands.

Finally, the Parish Council is awaiting with great interest the outcome of the battle between Somerset County Council and the District Councils revolving around Unitary Authority status. Once this struggle has been settled, we can plan accordingly. We shall certainly do our best to ensure that the interests of the residents of Wembdon are well looked after.

6) Questions from Parishioners

A number of parishioners present were concerned about proposals for a field off Blakes Road between footpaths BW 34/11 & BW 34/16. In particular there was concern about a section of land at the entrance to the field, which the owners of the field now wished to place a hard standing on. There was also concern about a possible infringement of the Public Right of Way.

The parishioners were also concerned about proposals for the construction of a gateway in to the field. The residents believed that it would be a new gateway whereas the landowners were claiming that they would only be re-opening an existing one. They also believed that the new entrance could cause Highways problems

Parish Councillor Mr Brown advised that the Rights of Way Officer had checked the footpaths & they were totally legal. Cllr Ann Bown advised that the field in question had been brought to the attention of Sedgemoor District Council Enforcement Office & action was being taken. The latest concern regarding the gateway would also be brought to their attention. County Cllr Edney agreed to raise the highways concerns with County Highways.

The Chairman stated that ownership of the land leading to the field was a private matter & therefore something the Parish Council could not get involved with.

Concern was also raised in respect of the vandalised car park on land off Church Road. Mr Bagg advised that he had previously spoken to the owner of the land regarding this vehicle & had been informed that legal action was pending. On completion of that the owner of the land intending removing the vehicle & tidying up the area. As this had been sometime ago Mr Bagg agreed to speak to the landowner once more.

There being no other business the meeting was drawn to a close at 7.40pm.