

Wembdon Annual Parish Meeting

Held at the Parish Centre Wembdon on the 8th April 2013

At 7pm

Present at the meeting 9 members of the Parish Council and 4 other local residents.

Opening Remarks by the Chairman:

Welcome and approval of the minutes from the last **APM April 10th 2012** they were proposed and accepted by the meeting as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting

Chairman's Report

Thank you all very much for coming along to this year's Annual Parish Meeting. My name is Mike Solomon and I am Chairman of the Parish Council.

Let me open my report by thanking the Parish Councillors and paying tribute to all of the work that they do to make Wembdon a great place to live. This year they have worked with many others in the community on projects such as the Jubilee Celebrations, the Allotments, clearing rhynes and footpaths and the new Village Hall plans and I think that it is a good indication that we are doing the right thing when people from across our community come along to help.

Through the year we have tackled a number of projects and being the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Year I am pleased to report that despite windy weather the Village turned out in abundance to help us celebrate a Jubilee Weekend with a party in the Park, events for the children, a pig roast and a massive beacon lighting in the evening.

Our Council has also initiated a Give a Day volunteering opportunity for our community to get involved and work together to clean up our open spaces. The first was a major clear up of the allotments area, which included a new access track, cutting back the weeds and clearing long neglected areas. The second day focused on clearing the footpaths.

I mentioned allotments and these have been a significant investment for the Council. We now have a responsibility to bring this whole area, now in Council ownership for the first time, up to a decent standard such that it can be accessed and enjoyed by many more in the community as a place to walk, exercise a dog or just enjoy the views. This is an ongoing project and

I have received many compliments from people in the Village on our work so far.

The Village Hall has been the other big project in the village this year. Now that the Planning debate has been concluded and the project approved, we as a Council are able to give our support to the Trust as they move from planning to implementation. This project will provide the Parish with a magnificent village green, play areas and a village hall, and with the inclusion of the meadows land on long lease as well as the land being provided by Persimmon, we have the opportunity to provide a splendid recreational area that will be used and enjoyed by everyone in the Parish for generations to come.

The Council has also been regularly engaged this past year on planning matters, two of which have a significant impact on our village: the development of a new power station at Hinkley Point and the proposed development of a housing estate on Cokerhurst Farm. The power station has been approved and we are and will continue to work hard to try to mitigate any negative impacts of this on everyday life in Wembdon, whilst at the same time enjoying the positive impacts that such a major development will bring. The Cokerhurst Farm housing development was rejected, now for a second time, but it will surely be brought forward again in the not too distant future. Other planning activities go largely unseen unless you are directly affected and the Council's Planning Committee has continued to evaluate and support or not those applications as it determines.

The Council's Finance Committee have also been working with our Clerk, who has a legal responsibility for our financial position, to provide a better understanding of our expenditures, both current and planned, and to ensure that we have adequate financial resilience and the resources to implement our objectives. As a Council Wembdon's finances have long been managed year to year, with little or no reserve to face any adverse circumstances and as a consequence we barely managed to maintain solvency when we acquired the allotment land despite a significant loan from the Public Works Board. We are now committed to following the Local Council Guidelines and slowly building up a reserve of around one year's expenditure over the period of this Council. We are on track and despite significant percentile increases in the precept this year and last, we are still one of the lowest costs/household Council in the district

I mentioned the re-introduction of the Parish Paper in my address last year and I am delighted to report that it has gone from strength to strength. Now in colour and growing with every issue I am regularly congratulated on its content and presentation. The Council are also in the process of revamping our website and hopefully it too will become the communication vehicle for a significant section of our community as well as providing a library for village documents.

Another group of perhaps unsung heroes, who do an important task in making our village roads safer are our Speed watch team. Let me also thank them publicly for the work that they do and assure them that we will do all that we can to encourage others to join them. They have shown that many motorists speed along our roads already and their data will provide us with the information that we may need to add traffic calming measures once the Hinkley Point development starts in earnest.

This coming year we will continue to focus on improving our amenity areas and access to the many Rights of Way in the Parish. To achieve this we are expanding the scope of our grass cutting and maintenance contract and we have now included many more of the lanes around the village.

So at the end of one year and the beginning of the next I am grateful for all of the work done by this Council and I look forward to another year of working with this excellent, enthusiastic and representative team. I know that every Councillor has a real desire to do his or her bit to keep Wembdon a great place to live and bring up a family. My thanks to them all.

Questions from the attendees

No questions were raised at this meeting

The meeting Closed at 7.50pm