

HITCHAM & TAPLOW SOCIETY

Minutes of the 54th Annual General Meeting Held at the Village Centre on Friday 29 November 2013 at 8.00 p.m.

1. ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

President Eva Lipman welcomed 36 members to the meeting. Apologies were received from Ken and Maud Johnson, Brenda Burns, Fred Russell, Alistair Forsyth, Pamela Viollet and Jane Nutt.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2012 AGM

The minutes of the 53nd AGM were approved with the addition of Nigel Smales to the list of apologies and the correction of Gill Nutt to Jane Nutt.

3. PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Eva Lipman made the following opening remarks.

“Taplow is very fortunate that we have such a lovely meeting room with Sheila’s delightful murals all around. It makes it even more of a pleasure for me to welcome you all once again to this unique setting and to thank you for coming to this our 54th AGM. It is great to see so many of you here, both familiar and new faces.

I will leave the day to day reporting of the last year to your very efficient and capable Chairman Karl who in spite of his ill health has done a tremendous job. We are fortunate in that he is not only very knowledgeable but articulate and hardworking and I would very much like to thank him on our behalf. Thank you so much Karl.

Now I come to a sad for us bit. Jeremy Vanstone, has been on the Committee since 1999 and was our Secretary, and a great help to me in particular when I was Chairman. He will be moving to the Cotswolds and is therefore leaving not only the Committee but Taplow itself. I would like to present him with a small token which I hope will bring back pleasant memories of his time with us and to wish him well in his new life. We shall miss him.

We are losing another valued member of our Committee, but this time he is not resigning because he is leaving the village but because of pressure of work. He has been our valued Secretary for six years and his common sense and reliability has been invaluable. Not only that he instituted our very successful Easter Egg Hunt which has now become an annual fixture. We would like him to accept this as a small token of our thanks.

(Jeremy and Neil were both presented with bottles of “Monkeys Shoulder” whiskey and framed certificates of appreciation made by Fred Russell, who was thanked for this).

I hope that you have all signed the attendance sheet. We would be grateful if you could give not only your address and telephone number but, and only if you are willing for us to contact you that way, your email address. If you do give it to us we will assume that you are willing for us to use it”.

4. **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

On behalf of the Society, I begin by expressing our continuing very special thank you to our indefatigable President for the major contributions she makes to all of the activities of the Society ... our social events ... our responses to planning applications ... our participation in both Local and National Government public consultations ... the production of our newsletter ... and in particular our membership in other organisations ... the Association of North Thames Amenity Societies (ANTAS), The Chiltern Society, and Civic Voice, the association of Civic Societies . Eva ... thank you.

Our signature events ... the Easter Egg Hunt and the Village Green Party are highlights of the Taplow year ... this year there was a record attendance at each event.

Easter Egg Hunt:

On the First of April, Society members for more than 40 years, Barrie and Sheila Peroni, hosted the Easter Egg Hunt in their spacious attractive gardens. The dull sky did not dim the spirits or restrain the excitement of the children competing in the hunt ... and the parents and friends cheering the action were content to enjoy the generous supply of coffee and refreshment ... and the odd glass of red. Thank you to Neil and Gill Blundell, Charlotte and Toby Greeves and Justine Peroni and our hosts, the family Peroni, for a truly enjoyable morning.

The date for your next year diary is April 21st.

Village Green Party:

The weather, kinder all through the day and evening this year, brought an all-time record crowd of young and old to the Village Green Party and to the Old Priory Garden restoration fund a handsome amount from the raffle.

For the 28th successive year Mike Sanderson and his band with the incomparable caller Tom Brown brought young and old to their dancing feet for a final celebration circle at dusk.

Thank you to all who contributed to such a memorable party ... to Euan Felton for the complex arranging before and the hands-on supervising on the day ... to the too-numerous- to-name, 28 strong team, comprising the fire minders, spit turners, roast carvers, barbecue cooks, setters up on Saturday, takers down

on Sunday ... to the ticket sellers ... and to SGI at Taplow Court for supplying the logs and the barbecues.

The date for your next year diary is 21st June.

Planning Matters:

For our prime mission, the scrutiny of planning policy and applications, 2013 was again a difficult year.

Bishop Centre

"Death of an Unique Shopping Village" the article in our 2012 Autumn Newsletter told the sad story of the demise of the Bishop Centre.

Early this year, Land Securities made an application to increase the size of the restaurant and to change the use of one of the units to a fast food takeaway. Against the strong objections of the Society, the application was successful.

In close touch with the responsible Council Officer, Briony Cliffe, the Society has monitored the progress of the actions being taken by Land Securities to meet the stringent conditions set by the District Council to be met before development could begin. All the conditions have now been properly and satisfactorily met and construction proper is about to begin..

Land Securities have now paid the amounts – a total of £800,000 – that it offered to pay if its planning application was approved. This total includes the £100,000 paid to the Taplow Parish Council and the £50,000 paid to the Thames Valley Adventure Playground.

The Society is now monitoring the further conditions to be met before any part of the development may be occupied.

The specific item which I have raised on behalf of the Society is the intensive degree of overhead lighting which Land Securities are proposing to install in the car park area. An expert consultant on lighting installations considers the proposal will constitute an excessive intrusion to the life of neighbouring residents and to the local wild life. There has been no response yet from either the District Council or Land Securities.

Other applications:

Numerous other applications have been scrutinised by your Committee during the course of the year.

Over the objections of the Society and others, the proposal to build a very large equestrian training barn within the Green Belt alongside Hill Farm Road was approved. The Society objected to a later proposal to install a full equipped equestrian exercise yard on the site adjacent to Hitcham Grange ... that application was refused.

The Society submitted a strong and comprehensive objection to the application for an industrial scale poultry egg production, packaging, and distribution enterprise at Marshwood Farm on Marsh Lane ... that application was refused.

Alongside our Parish Council, the Society is supporting the effort to persuade the District Council to accelerate the carrying out of the enforcement order to end the various activities on that site for which there is no planning permission.

In an instance of an application contrary to the provisions for a Conservation Area, the Society has objected to an application to extend Marta Villa on Ellington Road to provide two separate dwellings. A decision is still pending.

Mill Lane:

In my report to the AGM last year I gave a comprehensive account of the position of the Society regarding the Mill Lane site.

My account covered the significant contribution of the Society to the content of the Development Brief, the many features of the Brief which the Society welcomed, and the disquiet of the Society regarding two particular features of the Brief – the new access road and the number of households.

The Development Brief was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document ... SPD ... by the District Council by a decision of its Cabinet at a meeting on the 16th of July. The Society supported our District Councillor in challenging the decision on the grounds that it should have been made by a meeting of the Full Council.

However the Council Legal Officer advised the Council that it was within the remit of the Cabinet to make the decision and further that the Council would be at risk of legal challenge if it now referred the decision to the Full Council.

The Supplementary Planning Document having been adopted is now a legal binding document. It sets the rules by which the District Council must decide to approve or refuse any planning application to develop all or part of the Mill Lane site. It is set in concrete and it cannot be changed.

The Maidenhead Civic Society announced that a District Council Officer would be speaking about the proposals for the Mill Lane site at its meeting in October.

After receiving that announcement, your Committee decided to ask the Parish Council to invite the responsible Council Officers to attend a Public Meeting of the Taplow electorate to explain the reasons underlying the provisions of the Supplementary Planning Document.

The Committee considered that the Mill Lane site was the most important planning matter ever for Taplow and its residents and that the invitation should come from the Parish Council representing all residents not from a particular group even though that group speaks for a very large number of Taplow residents

The Public Meeting was held on Thursday, 21st November attended by about 70 residents. A copy of the minutes of the meeting has been widely circulated by email and a copy has been placed on each chair this evening.

Please ask if you would like to have a copy of the Supplementary Planning Document. It would be in the form of an email attachment. At 96 pages a photocopy would be expensive.

Although Barratts Homes had a major role in the compilation of the Supplementary Planning Document ... it commissioned and paid for all of the various supporting papers ... it has withdrawn from its option to buy the Mill Lane site.

The administrator, BDO, acting for the creditors of Watchword, who bought the site for £30 million in 2006, has instructed real estate agents CBRE to invite unconditional sealed tenders to buy the Mill Lane site.

The closing date for tenders is today.

Society website and member communications:

Our website www.taplowsociety.org.uk continues to attract significant numbers of visits and enquiries. Delivering comprehensive information to members via our website is easier and faster than other methods and we urge all members who have access to the internet to make regular visits.

Email is much the most reliable and certainly the quickest method of communicating to all of our members at the same time. If you have an email address and you have not yet given it to the Society, please give it to our Membership Secretary, Myra Drinkwater. She will add it to our HTS Members email group,

Your address is fully protected from public gaze, it is known only to the Membership Secretary, and only the Chairman is allowed to sanction the sending of an email to the group.

Old Priory Garden:

As I reported to the last AGM the acquisition of the Old Priory Garden by Taplow Parish Council is complete. The Taplow and Hitcham Recreation Ground Association ... THRGA... will administer the Garden.

The restoration project is progressing at speed with Roger Andrews and Miv Wayland-smith leading a growing team of volunteers. The Society continues to support the fundraising efforts. The Chairman of THRGA reported that the raffle at the Village Green Party this year raised a significant amount.

Land Securities payment:

As reported on the reverse side of the AGM Notice and Agenda, the Chairman of the Parish Council, George Sandy, supported by the Chairman of its Planning Committee, Euan Felton, secured an undertaking from Land Securities that on approval of its application to develop the Bishop Centre it

would pay “a sum of £100,000 ... to Taplow Parish Council to be used towards environmental improvements in Taplow”

The Society considers that Taplow residents will wish to have an opportunity to offer suggestions for projects on which the Council may consider spending part of the money.

Members are asked to send suggestions to the Society Chairman for a list to be compiled to be submitted to Councillors. Suggestions have already been received from Bob Hanbury, Julieta Lechini, Paul Thorne and Alistair Forsyth

Lincoln Lee memorial:

Neal, Nick and Dougal Lee have donated the sum of £1,250 to the Society to contribute to a memorial to the life of their parents Lincoln and Helen Lee.

There is wide spread agreement that the Old Priory Garden will be a highly suitable place to commemorate the major contributions made by Lincoln and Helen to Taplow life and to the activities of the Society.

Taplow resident and internationally renowned bridge architect, Martin Knight, has undertaken to design a bridge across the water course which will be a prominent feature when the restoration of the Old Priory Garden is complete.

AGM:

Last year we heard an exceptionally entertaining talk by Master Wood Carver, Taplow resident Colin Mantripp who brought with him a splendid display of his work.

This year none of the three prospective speakers the Society approached was able to be here so we have settled for drinks, refreshments and an opportunity for social chat.

The date for your AGM next year diary is 28 November.

Newsletter:

Edition 100 ... which is just published ... has been distributed to most Taplow households ... about 800 in all.

Under its several Editors and most especially under its longest serving and now retiring Editor, the Newsletter has become an exceptional, stand-out, informative, illustrated, full colour magazine. Thank you Fred Russell, retiring Editor, and welcome new Editor, Nigel Smales.

Thank you:

In conclusion, thank you to all who have contributed to the activities of the Society this year ... Vice-Presidents ... Secretary ... Treasurer ... Executive Committee ... a special thank you to Euan Felton for his indispensable analysis of planning applications ... the Membership Secretary ... to SGI at Taplow Court for providing and serving tonight's refreshments ... to Taplow House Hotel for providing a meeting room for our monthly Committee

meetings ... and to you all for continuing your support by renewing your annual membership.

5. **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Peter Mole distributed the unaudited profit and loss account for the year ended 30 September 2013.

6. **ELECTIONS**

It was unanimously resolved to re-appoint Eva Lipman as President for the forthcoming year.

(a) Vice Presidents

It was unanimously resolved to re-appoint Tony Hickman, Bernard Trevallion and Fred Russell as Vice Presidents for the forthcoming year.

(b) Chairman

It was unanimously resolved to re-appoint Karl Lawrence as Chairman for the forthcoming year.

(c) Treasurer

It was unanimously resolved to re-appoint Peter Mole as Treasurer for the forthcoming year.

(d) Secretary

It was unanimously resolved to appoint Roger Worthington as Secretary for the forthcoming year.

(e) Executive Committee

It was unanimously resolved to re-appoint the following as Committee members for the forthcoming year: Euan Felton, Heather Fenn, Alastair Hill, Barrie Peroni, Nigel Smales, Louise Symons, Miv Wayland-Smith and Mike Yeadon.

It was unanimously resolved to elect Caroline Gillies and Myra Drinkwater as new members of the Executive Committee, Myra as Membership Secretary. Eva thanked Pamela, who has resigned for family reasons, for making an invaluable contribution and holding the reins steady for the last year after GILL Holloway left for other parts.

7. **UPDATE ON OLD PRIORY GARDENS PROJECT**

Tony Harding had taken and circulated some photos of the bird boxes that had been installed. Although one had a clutch of deserted eggs, others showed clear signs of successful occupation. In further discussions there were some

differences of opinion as to whether it should be fully restored or kept largely in its current state with some improved access. Muriel King said that the well at the back of the garden needed clearing out and that other water sources had not been traced. The newly repaired wall was now showing signs of cracking. This was in the realm of both the District Council and Wellbank.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A number of questions and topics were raised from the floor.

The telephone box had been re-gilded. There was discussion as to whether the kiosk required a lock, which had delayed the painting of the door. This could now go ahead as a lock was not required. George Sandy queried this and would clarify the situation.

There was extensive discussion on what uses might be made of the Land Securities payment to the Parish Council. These included:

Restoration work to the War Memorial at Hitcham by the church. George Sandy advised that this was within Burnham who should be approached and who had also received a much larger sum from Land Securities. (Bob Hanbury).

A tennis court on part of the village green and rubbish bin provision for parts of the Jubilee river (Juliet Lecchini).

Possibility of an architectural competition for the Mill Lane Site. (George Sandy, Tony Meats, Tony Hickman).

The restoration of several areas of Taplow that had been neglected over 40 years, which would be one-off work, not an annual commitment. A paper had been submitted to the Society. (Paul Thorne).

Contribution to the Old Priory gardens restoration project. (Juliet Lecchini).

The poor state of maintenance of the white gates at the approach to Taplow was queried (Tony Read). George Sandy said this was a County matter. He also advised that the money paid by Taplow residents previously for speed reduction actions had not been properly or fully spent by the County. Residents who had contributed might ask for a return of unspent monies. He stated that there were a number of road management actions being worked on now, including 20mph limits and mobile speed indicators.

John Hanford queried the poor state of maintenance of many footpaths. George Sandy advised that this was in fact a County responsibility.

Heather Fenn said that one consequence of the flurry of surveying activity following the withdrawal of Barratts from Mill Lane and the re-marketing by

CBRE was the availability of lots of information on the wildlife and bio-diversity of the site

There was unresolved discussion as to whether the pothole at the bottom of Berry Hill had been properly repaired. (For holes deeper than 10cm the council would be liable for damage caused to vehicles).

9. **CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING**

The meeting concluded at 9 pm.

After the meeting there were drinks and nibbles and extensive further informative and enjoyable conversations.

.....
Karl Lawrence
Chairman

REPORT ON PROGRESS AT OLD PRIORY GARDENS as at December 2013

Taplow & Hitcham Recreation Grounds Association took on the responsibility of maintaining Old Priory Gardens from the Parish Council just over a year ago. Restoration of the Gardens have been masterminded by two of our committee members, Roger Andrews and Miv Wayland-Smith.

All of our efforts so far have concentrated on making the area open but safe and to improve the opportunities for wildlife to thrive. During the course of the last 12 months, our volunteer workforce has carried out a number of projects including:

- Clearing a very large patch of brambles, some of which have been replanted along the border with Wellbank, in order to provide their residents with added security
- Planting a large bed of snowdrops
- Making a path through to the pond with a separate return
- Infilling several potentially dangerous pits
- Continuously spraying the Japanese giant hogweed which has infested part of the Gardens
- Clearing the pond of mud and debris
- Planting a memorial Jubilee oak tree from Great Windsor Park
- Installing bat and bird boxes throughout the Gardens

Installation of the boxes was supervised by Malcolm Tait, a wildlife journalist who lives in Elm View. He has also set up night-sensitive cameras which have recorded several interesting photos of the wildlife in OPG, including deer and foxes.

Our present focus is on improving the access from the footpath on the western boundary by thickening the hedge in order to make a more discrete entrance.

It has been suggested that our ultimate goal is to restore the Italian Garden in all its glory. This has never been an objective. A restoration would be extremely costly to undertake and, once complete, would incur huge complications in terms of maintenance and protection. We want it to remain as a village project with all the work undertaken by local volunteers for the benefit of the community, particularly the children.

Once the pond had been cleared, Roger came up with the idea to ask local bridge architect Martin Knight to design a bridge over the pond, which could be built by local volunteers. His magnificent design is illustrated in the Society's latest newsletter and it is hoped that the project can be started next year.

THRGA is very grateful to HTS for their very generous donation of £500, plus the opportunity to run the raffle at this year's Village Green Party. This and other monies received have not yet been spent but with projects such as the Bridge to fund next year, they will be put to very good use.

Alistair Forsyth
2013
Chairman THRGA

December