

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF TAPLOW PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 13th MAY 2025 IN THE PERKINS ROOM, TAPLOW VILLAGE HALL, HIGH STREET, TAPLOW, SL6 0EX.

Present

Cllr. Karen Walsh (Chairman)

Ms. Ruth Senior (Clerk) and 12 members of the public including 6 councillors and 2 County councillors.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 8pm.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Nigel Smales, Steve Warren, Jane Creswell, Cllr. Val Pridmore and Cllr. Jen Thomson.

2 Reports from the Parish Council

2.1 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2024 – Cllr. Karen Walsh

It is with great pleasure that I present this year's Chairman Report, summarising the work and achievements of Taplow Parish Council over the past 12 months. This has been a year marked by steady progress, community engagement and the continuation of our long-term efforts to enhance the quality of life for the residents of Taplow.

The Parish Council has met regularly throughout the year maintaining full compliance with governance protocols and continuing to ensure transparency and accountability in all council matters.

Early May saw the local elections take place and Taplow Parish was uncontested.

We currently have nine Councillors and will be looking to fill the remaining two vacancies in the very near future.

I would like to extend my thanks to all Councillors and in particular our clerk Ruth for their dedication and professionalism in the administration of parish affairs.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This year saw a continued focus on community events including.

- . Successful organisation of the Taplow Summer Fete
- . Another well organised Christmas carol event
- . A newly organised 'Cinema on the Green evening'
- . A well supported Remembrance Day Service at the church and war memorial, where residents gathered to honour those who served

All these events proved extremely popular, and I would like to thank all the volunteers who helped make these community events very successful. In addition to this we also had 'the tidy up Taplow' litter pick which took place in March, and I would like to express our gratitude to all the volunteers who engaged in this campaign.

The Village Hall is now almost fully refurbished and continues to thrive. We are grateful to all our regular hirers including the play group, scouts, and Maidenhead Operatic Society, to name but a few, for their continuous support.

INVESTMENT

We have invested in a new on-line booking system to manage hall bookings in a more efficient way and to encourage new customers to use our facilities. We have also successfully migrated to an online accounting system. We have increased the precept by 10% and had a slight increase on hall hire charges to enable us to maintain a stable financial position. We have also invested £3000 into resolving the issues on Approach Road.

ON GOING ISSUES

We are continuing to monitor and react to the usual issues that arise in Taplow including Speeding, Parking, Footpath issues, and potholes. The Car boot sale along the Bath Road continues to create traffic

problems and we are continuously looking for a solution to this. The field belonging to Cliveden Stud on Huntswood lane has been the cause of many complaints from local residents and Roger will update on this in his report.

Taplow Station Parking-The Elizabeth Line, albeit a successful and welcome addition to the station, has created many traffic issues for our small village. It has attracted commuters from Beaconsfield and other areas further afield and free parking is one of the main attractions. We are pleased to announce that after several years of disruption we are now making headway with the horrendous parking situation at Taplow train station and surrounding areas. Our first course of action was to conduct a survey and hold consultations with residents from within the affected areas. The feedback was very positive, and supportive that action needed to be taken. We have been advised that a long-term solution to this situation could take between 18 months and 2 years. In order to alleviate the problem quickly we applied for a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order at a cost of £3000 to the Parish Council and were successful at achieving intermittent yellow lines along Approach Road to ease the congestion, these were finally put in place on the 17 TH of February and are proving to be a success. The TTRO runs for 18 months only so we are hoping that will be enough time for the permanent solution to come into action. This will involve Permanent Intermittent yellow lines along Approach and Station Road with parking restrictions along Marsh Lane and Boundary Road. In order to gain a permanent solution, we had to agree to pay by phone parking on Approach Road and Station Road to make this project viable for Bucks County Council to go ahead. I would like to thank John Pateman from Buckinghamshire Highways and his team for their outstanding work on this project and for speeding up the process. I would also like to thank Our Clerk Ruth for making initial contact and Roger Worthington who has played a major part, including the organisation of the survey and consultations to get the ball rolling. We are now awaiting confirmation of when the permanent order will come into force and are hoping this will be imminent now the elections are over.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Parish Council has reviewed and commented on numerous planning applications over the course of the year, working to ensure that development remains in keeping with the character of our village and the needs of the community. One big threat that is at the forefront of resident's minds, is the suggestion that Taplow could be considered as one of 'the new towns' to be developed by the Government. It should be clearly stated that this is only a suggestion and NOT a proposal at this moment in time. There have been around 100 locations from across the country that have been put forward as potential 'New Towns' and Labour have committed to starting construction on up to 12 such projects before the next election. The New Towns Taskforce will review the site proposals before publishing its recommendations this summer. The Parish Council have joined forces with Burnham and Dorney Parish Council's to form a working party, bringing together a team that has strong planning expertise and excellent local knowledge to help in our fight to show Taplow is an unviable option for recommendation. The Working Party has now completed a formal letter that has been sent to Sir Michael Lyons who is Chairman of the Governments New Towns Task Force. This is an outstanding letter, and it clearly demonstrates that every part of the Governments own criteria for New Towns has been torn apart with meticulous research and factual based evidence to prove that Taplow is not a realistic or viable proposal. A development of this type and size threatens to erase the character, heritage and green spaces that define Taplow. It is not progress it is destruction disguised as growth!

We would like to assure the residents of Taplow that we will not stand by while our village is swallowed up by over development and lost forever to future generations. We will remain united and resolute, and we will fight this every step of the way! I would like to thank everyone involved on the Working Party for their time and input on this project, special thanks must go to Roger Worthington and Bill Dax who have been the main contributors and who have worked tirelessly to get to the final draft. We are confident that this letter should take us out of the selection process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all our Parish Councillors for their dedication time and service over the past year. Each of you brings an individual expertise and quality that plays a vital role in the successful running of the Council. I must particularly acknowledge Roger whose outstanding efforts have gone above and beyond what could reasonably be expected. his outstanding work on Planning and many

other key issues have strengthened our position immeasurably and have made a real difference to this Parish. Thank you Roger, you are greatly appreciated. A special and sincere thank you goes to Ruth, our Parish Clerk, who's tireless behind the scenes work keeps the wheels of the Council turning smoothly. Your professionalism, attention to detail and unwavering support are appreciated more than words can say. You are greatly valued and respected by us all.

I would also like to thank all the residents of Taplow for your ongoing contribution towards keeping our community vibrant, welcoming and resilient. Your involvement, big or small strengthens the spirit of togetherness which makes our village such a special place to live.

And finally, we must not forget to thank our County Councillor George Sandy, who has now decided to hang up his political shield. George has been a long serving Councillor in both county and Parish Council and is a deeply valued member of this community. His wisdom, support and commitment have helped guide us through many years and I hope he will continue to offer us his support and expertise. George, you will be sorely missed, and we wish you all the very best in your well-earned retirement.

It is only fitting that I mention that one of our long-term Residents Terry Stevens has sadly passed away recently at the age of 86. Terry, who has lived at the farm on Berry Hill since 1953 was a real stalwart of the village and he will be greatly missed. I would like to extend my condolences to all Terrys family, including his wife Jane and children Morgan, Karla and Greg.

As we look ahead to the coming year, it is likely that we may face some daunting times. In particular, the prospect of a Taplow New town is hovering above us like a dark cloud. As we face these challenges, we must remember that our greatest strength lies in our unity. By working together, we build not just a council but a community that can withstand any pressure.

In the immortal words of Sir Winston Churchill "the pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity, the optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty" let us remain optimistic and find in each challenge an opportunity to demonstrate the resilience and character of our beloved parish

2.2 FINANCE REPORT 2025 – Cllr. Jen Thomson

2024/25 Income:

- Income for the financial year was just over £84k, this was higher than anticipated (£68k) due to increased interest earned on the reserve fund, insurance payouts and additional Village Hall Hire revenue in May - July

2024/25 Expenses:

- Regular recurring expenses for 2025 were over £61k

2024/25 Ad hoc, capital projects:

These projects amounted to over £23k and included the following:

- Hall heating system, internal repainting & hall repairs (£21k)
- Tree survey and actioning the recommendations (£2k)

Note the difference in income & expenditure (-£1k) came out of the Cash Reserves which had an opening balance of £110k as at 1 April 2024

Budget for 2025 / 2026 starting 1 April 2025

2025/26 Income:

The Taplow Parish Council is expected to generate income from the following sources:

- Precept which is collected as part of council tax which should amount to £52k (it was increased 10% this year due to lowering cash reserves and ongoing hall maintenance)
- The hiring of the Village Hall which is expected to amount to £25k
- The interest on the cash reserves which is forecast to be £2.8k
- Other - any community infrastructure projects where the developers contribute towards our funds or donations - this is ad hoc and not forecast in the budget but is usually set aside in the reserves

Total anticipated income for 2025 is £80k

2025/26 Expenses:

The Taplow Parish Council has regular recurring expenses, for 2025 these are expected to include:

- Village Hall running costs and maintenance which is forecast to be £14k (excluding one off capital projects)
- Village grounds maintenance, street lighting, tree maintenance, signage, Christmas trees etc. which is forecast to be £19k
- Taplow Parish Council administration costs which is forecast to be £32k

Total anticipated recurring expenses for 2025 is £65k

2025/26 Ad hoc, capital projects:

These projects are done on an ad hoc basis and for 2025 we are planning on doing the following:

- Roofer to inspect & repair the tiles on the village hall £3k
- Implementation of the outcomes from the tree survey £2.5k
- Implementation of a new online booking and accounting system £0.5k
- Provision for the TPC elections £3.5k (this was not required in the end)

Total anticipated capital projects for 2025 is £9.5k

We are forecasting a profit of £6k, this will go towards the cash reserves which are considered adequate for this year but will need to be re-evaluated and possibly bolstered in the next financial year. The Cash Reserves had an opening balance of £108k as at 1 April 2025.

2.3 PLANNING REPORT 2025 – Cllr. Roger Worthington

What has changed from last year?

I reported on the abuse by Cliveden Stud of some of the fields they own with unauthorised car wrecking activities. This has grown worse in the last year. The steps taken by Bucks Council to remove them have proved ineffective so far. Every Enforcement notice is ignored or appealed and the council appears to be unable speed things up. There are five application appeals and three appeals against Enforcement notices. No date in sight for actual expulsion and remediation. An encouraging action though is that the police have realised that illegal activities are taking place and have started arresting some of the participants. The Mill Lane parking concerns may now have been alleviated as Berkeley Homes have finally updated their notices to make it clear that their site can be used for parking outside office hours. Further up the road though the application concerning the river mooring facilities is still unresolved since 2022. Karen has covered our activities over the Approach Road parking – the only comment I would make is that the detailed positioning of the temporary yellow lines will need adjusting for the final layout as there turns out to be a blind spot still.

There is continued failure by Bucks to deal with the moorings issue on the River Road Thames bank. It is clear that nobody is prepared to take responsibility. Presently there is some discussion with the Rowing Club as to whether they might be able to act as agents.

Karen has covered the approach we have taken on the “Taplow New Town” affair. The Working Party detailed response highlighted the infrastructure and geology problems that would be faced as well as the Green Belt and Heritage issues. Principally these are the flood plain areas south of the A4, the total division in two of a new town by the A4 and the railway and the inadequacy of the A4 itself. All these items show that a new town here would fail to meet almost all of the new town success criteria defined by the government Task Force. It would also fall foul of the Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation. It would be very costly and slow to implement and end up as two townlets. You can see the full submission on our web site. We are fairly confident that we will not make the Task Force short list when it is published in the summer. It should be noted that these houses would be in addition to the ~90,000 units that the government has already allocated to Buckinghamshire. So even if we have repulsed the new town we may yet see the county changing some of our Green Belt to Grey Belt and then developing it.

More routine planning developments include the approval for 16 homes at the Amerden Lane kennels site and commencement of work to convert The Hermitage to apartments and one new house. Footpath 13 from the A4 to Ellington Road has been made almost impassable by encroachment of the adjacent properties. The Bucks Rights of Way team have taken this up with the landowners concerned but so far are waiting on responses.

3 County Council

Report from County Councillor Paul Kelly

We are a week or so on from vigorously contested local elections here in Buckinghamshire, where the outcomes were determined at election counts on 2 and 3 May.

97 councillors representing 49 towns and villages, known as wards, have been elected to Buckinghamshire Council – our unitary authority that serves the whole of Buckinghamshire and that is responsible for most local services such as bin collections, transport, social care, education, leisure centres - and much more.

Election outcome

You will have seen on TV, or heard on the radio, that the election results have resulted in a lot of change in most of England. That is far less true in Buckinghamshire. The Conservatives in Buckinghamshire, with 48 seats, won by far the greatest number of councillors. All other parties, including Labour, the Liberal Democrats, Greens, and a wide variety of Independents have 46 seats and, in addition, the new Reform Party only won three seats here in Buckinghamshire despite their successes elsewhere. The Conservatives are only one short of an overall majority. It means Buckinghamshire Council is now in 'No Overall Control' as no one political party won the 49 seats needed for an overall majority. The new administration, including all decision-making committees, will be selected at the council's Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Wednesday 21 May, including the council Leader, who will announce their Cabinet. You will be able to see details of that meeting and watch it online via the council's website.

Council leadership

After 14 years as leader Mart Tett has stood down to spend more time with his family and its his former Deputy Leader, Steven Broadbent, who has been unanimously voted as the new Leader of Buckinghamshire Conservatives. Steven will be the Conservative candidate for council Leader. Martin will remain Leader of Buckinghamshire Council until the AGM on 21 May. Some highlights of Martin's time as leader include; leading the cross party fight against HS2, the success and the money saved in establishing the new Unitary Council, helping residents and businesses through the global Covid crisis, supporting residents during the cost of living crisis with our Helping Hand programme, welcoming the brave people from Ukraine to Buckinghamshire after Putin's unprovoked invasion and in recent years, managing the pressures of the relentlessly increasing needs for our social care services and the enormous demands on our budgets. With social care alone being 71% of the budget.

Looking ahead, the next four years will present us with many challenges. Our biggest concern is the enormous housing numbers being imposed on Buckinghamshire by this national Government. Finding land for some 95,000 new houses without completely losing the rural beauty of Buckinghamshire and merging towns and villages will be very difficult. On top of this we anticipate at least another 10,000 or even 20,000 extra houses being imposed by the Government's 'New Towns Commission'. The Government is similarly demanding land for large solar farms and data centres.

We also have the Government's reorganisation of local government across the country with the creation of a new 'Regional tier', run by a Mayor, with new powers to charge an additional Council Tax. The Mayor's powers and responsibilities will predominantly be removed from Buckinghamshire Council. Lastly, and of critical importance, is the threat to remove money from areas such as Buckinghamshire and direct it instead to towns and cities in the Midlands and the north. No one doubts that all of local government is under terrific financial strain but this ignores the requirements of our own local children and adults with additional or special needs or disabilities.

These are not easy times in local government but I have absolutely no doubt that whoever leads the new authority from 21 May, your local representatives are up to the challenge and as ever, the priority will be to continue to deliver the local front line services that Buckinghamshire residents need and deserve.

4 Community Updates

Thames Valley Neighbourhood Police's Report - PCSO Ange O'Connell

There were 3 burglaries reported in Taplow from Jan-Mar, 4 males have been arrested and one is under investigation.

Please join the free message service at thamesvalleyallert.co.uk for crime updates.

The road safety vans have been out across the parishes on speed watch and over 1000 tickets were issued from these and fixed cameras Jan-Mar, if you are interested in joining the Community Speedwatch programme please contact lee.turnham@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

Shoplifting has been an issue at the retail park in Taplow and the police have been successful in obtaining a Behaviour Order against a prolific shoplifter. Other organised crime groups have been identified and are being investigated, this has so far resulted in 4 imprisonments.

E-scooters are now being seized immediately by the police and continue to be a problem.

With the warmer weather approaching, water safety is a major concern.

Robert Harrap – SGI-UK and Taplow Court

Taplow Court Open days – 8th June, 13th July, 10th August, 14th September for more info – sgi-uk.org

Taplow Court has a performance space with stage, seating capacity of 500 which has recently been used by Maidenhead Rotary clubs to host 'Maidenhead's Got Talent'.

There is an event on 25th-26th June with Burnham Beeches on ancient trees and biodiversity.

School visits continue where children learn history of Taplow Court and Bhuddism.

Members are now almost back up to pre-pandemic levels.

Robert Miles, General Manager, Cliveden National Trust

Cliveden continues to be the largest National Trust site in London and the South East with over 520k visitors last year.

Parking continues to be a challenge but permanent solutions are being considered.

Events leading up to Christmas increased and were very popular.

There is a new café in the woodland area which is popular with dog walkers and a new pizza trailer at the riverside for summer.

A new path has been laid in the long garden and work to repair the falling wall on the perimeter is ongoing. Cliveden has a new 10-year strategy focusing on 4 areas: To restore nature, to end unequal access to nature and natural beauty, to inspire more people to care and take action and renewing working ways in a changing world.

5 Any Other Business

None

The meeting ended at 8.50pm.