

TRANSPORT/TRAFFIC etc. NEWS IN BRIEF

1. Oxfordshire County Council is currently consulting all interested parties on the merits of the Octabus Dial-A-Ride service which is designed to provide door-to-door transport for disabled and mobility impaired people. Views about the level of awareness of the service and any shortcomings should be sent to Peter Anderson, Town Clerk at the Town Hall by mid-September.
2. At its June Meeting, the Town Council agreed to fund the provision of a speed reactive sign on the northbound carriageway of the A44 Oxford Street hill at a cost of £2,000. Research will be conducted by Oxfordshire County Council to determine the viability of providing further speed reactive signs at other points in the town on the A44.
3. The Town Council is concerned at instances of potentially dangerous parking at the locations mentioned below:
 - a. Brook Hill at the bottom of Union Street
 - b. Hensington Road at the junction with Bear Close
 - c. The southbound carriageway of Oxford Street hill

Discussions about possible remedial measures are being pursued with OCC and the police are being consulted.

4. A £150,000 study by Network Rail into possible redoubling of the Cotswold Railway Line has come out in favour of partial redoubling, the proposal being for redoubling between Finstock and Ascott-under-Wychwood and between Moreton-in-Marsh and Evesham. Another platform at Charlbury with a footbridge would form part of the proposal. The Office of Rail Regulation has approved the scheme in principle but the final go-ahead is waited from the Secretary of State for Transport. Meanwhile a £170,000 scheme to improve the parking, lighting and pedestrian access arrangements at Charlbury has now been implemented, funded mainly by Oxfordshire County Council. A 40% increase in the number of car parking spaces has been achieved.
5. WHAT SORT OF A COMMUNITY CENTRE WOULD WE LIKE TO SEE AND WHAT CAN WE AFFORD ?
These are the key questions at the heart of a review currently being undertaken by the Town Council's Property Working Group for this important community facility. Decisions will need to be taken by the Town Council which can be reflected in the budget plan for the next 5 years, to be determined in the Autumn – so watch this space.
6. Because of pressure on the capacity of the Town Council Noticeboard to take all information required to be displayed it has proved necessary to provide an 'overflow' noticeboard immediately opposite at the back of the Town Hall - another space to watch!!

Brian Yoxall

TOWN COUNCIL SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2008

HOUSING

1. At an Extraordinary Town Council Meeting held on 27th June, Woodstock Town Council decided to register its objection to the proposed eco-town at Weston Otmoor. – four and a half miles as the crow flies from Woodstock. The objection is based on planning grounds – it does not take account of years of work which has gone into the South-East Regional Plan – environmental grounds, and transportation grounds.

The Royal Society of Wildlife Trust, BBOWT, RSPB, CPRE, SEERA, the County Council and Cherwell District Council are among others raising serious objections to the proposals.

2. At an Extraordinary Town Council Meeting on 17th July, Woodstock Town Council voiced its objections to the planning application by Berkeley Homes to build a total of 30 dwellings on the Youngs' Garage site. An integral part of the application is a proposal to relocate the Woodstock surgery on the site with public access via New Road. As well as having reservations about this means of access, the Town Council is extremely concerned at the restricted parking proposed for the surgery, the complete absence of any affordable housing and the proposed demolition of the former G.W.R. station building. In the hope of preventing the latter possibility the Town Council is pursuing an application for 'listing'.

Comments had to be submitted to the District Council by 1st August but a Town Meeting is to be held on 16th September at the Community Centre about this and other possible major housing developments in the town. All Woodstock residents are invited to attend.

CO-OPTION OF TOWN COUNCILLORS

The Town Council needs to recruit three new Town Councillors to fill the vacancies left after the election process earlier this year. Please see the formal notice enclosed with this newsletter. If you are interested please call the Town Clerk on 01993 811216 for an informal chat.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS

If you wish to speak at a Town Council Meeting on an item on the Agenda, we just need to know before the meeting commences. Each person can speak for up to three minutes. If you want to speak on an item not on the Agenda, you need to advise the Town Clerk by 10a.m. on the Tuesday of the week before the meeting.

Peter Anderson, Town Clerk

TOWN COUNCIL FINANCES – THE FIVE YEAR PICTURE

| | 2004/5 Actual | 2005/6 Actual | 2006/7 Actual | 2007/8 Actual | 2008/9 Budget | 5 year variance |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| INCOME | | | | | | |
| Council Tax | £45k | £45k | £50k | £55k | £60k | +33% |
| Town Hall - Letting | £32k | £37k | £29k | £35k | 31k | -3% |
| Community Centre - Rent/Letting | £15k | £13k | £16k | £16k | £15k | - |
| Corporate Property | £63k | £63k | £66k | £70k | £67k | +6% |
| Environment (Grants) | £ 7k | £ 9k | £ 8k | £6k | £4k | -43% |
| Other – Interest etc | £ 7k | £ 9k | £ 7k | £ 11k | £ 7k | - |
| TOTAL INCOME | £169k | £176k | £176k | £192k | £185k | +9% |
| | | | | | | |
| EXPENDITURE | | | | | | |
| Town Hall | £23k | £26k | £24k | £31k | 29k | +26% |
| Community Centre | £12k | £17k | £17k | £24k | £21k | +73% |
| Corporate property | £ 4k | £ 3k | £ 6k | £ 8k | £ 4k | - |
| Environment | £19k | £29k | £22k | £29k | £48k | +137% |
| General / Admin | £65k | £54k | £61k | £56k | £67k | +3% |
| Grants/Donations | £ 9k | £28k | £ 9k | £ 5k | £ 4k | -56% |
| Capital Expenditure | £43k | £10k | £32k | £40k | £29k | -33% |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | £175k | £167k | £170k | £193k | £200k | +14% |

Although it is correct to say that there has been an increase in the level of Precept (Council Tax) of 20% over the two years from 2006/7 to date, there had been no change in the four years from 2002/3 until 2006/7. It now represents c30% of the total income of the Council which has increased by 9%.

Expenditure for 2008/9 is forecast at £200k an increase of 14% over the five year term. At the time of the Budget preparation when the Precept for 2008/9 was sought, it was before the actual figures for 2007/8 were known and the forecast took into account foreseeable circumstances over the coming five year period based upon trends then known. With the benefit of the increased Precept in 2006/7 Income totalled £176k and Expenditure £170k and in 2007/8 Income totalled £192k and Expenditure £193k.

Additionally over the five year term provisions of £10k p.a. have been made for Park Street roof repairs, properties which currently generate an income to the Council of c£43k p.a.

Over the last two years essential repairs have been made to the fabric of the Town Hall totalling £45k.

Environment expenditure include essential works at Hensington Road Cemetery (£10k) and the Watermeadows/Millstream repairs (£26k over 2 years) and Playground Improvements 2007/8 (£10k).

Members continue to critically review all aspects of income and expenditure both at the time of the Budget preparation and on an ongoing basis. Alternatives to the increased levels of Precept reluctantly sought would include either reductions in the levels of fulfilment of community services, failure to meet its legal responsibilities in respect of environment, playgrounds and corporate or civic properties or further reductions in the levels of working reserves, which excluding funds earmarked for specific projects such as the Park Street roof is forecast at the end of the year to reduce to c£68k, equivalent to 18 weeks expenditure.

Michael Upham, Responsible Financial Officer

GRANTS AND DONATIONS

Recognising the importance of the benefits to the local community to be harnessed from the works of voluntary bodies in the town, the Council has established a scheme for the payment of Grants and Donations to such organisations. Whilst the Council has been able to help a large number of projects over the years, the amount of funding available is limited and applications are considered upon the merit of the proposal and on the basis that the Council is not being asked for 100% support.

During the budget setting period later in the year the Council will consider such requests that have been made for payment in the financial year 2009/10. The Town Council now invites applications for Grants and Donations from local organisations such as clubs, societies, groups etc. Guidance notes and Application Forms are available from the Town Hall (Tel.811216) and the closing date for receipt of such is 15th October, 2008.

Michael Upham – Responsible Financial Officer

CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS

The watermeadows were given to the Town by Henry V1 on 24th May 1453. They are cherished by most of us as indicated in the Town Appraisal of 1998. There are currently three separate voluntary groups working on the meadows:

- * The Green Gym that works under the umbrella of BTCV (formerly British Trust for Conservation Volunteers)
 - * BTCV is also providing 130 man days of residential weekend and day training Courses.
 - * Also the Wychwood Young volunteers (16-25 yrs) in their distinctive Blue. Their collective works programme is extensive – bridge restoration, gating and fencing, clearance of Himalayan Balsam, digging out ditches, clearing fallen timber and pathways, permanent and temporary riverbank defences and restoration (including spiling – a traditional form of woven bank using willow), and sandbagging, boardwalk construction, and creation of wildlife habitat (bird boxes and woodpiles). Thankfully the watermeadows remain a wildlife habitat full of magic. My own recent experiences are of a roe deer following me through the meadows and standing and watching me as I cut up a fallen tree before running off, and I watched a fox use the Dexter cattle as cover in its attempt to snare a pheasant. The Green Gym also works on the OWL nature reserve and our cemeteries, the memorial garden, and other habitats. It warmly welcomes new members. Contact details: Green Gym/BTCV is 01296-330033 or Nina on 07740 899729 Wychwood Young Volunteers is 01993-814131 (Jane Bowley) Or www.wychwoodproject.org
- Grateful thanks to all three organisations who have taken time out to help

Philip Redpath