

Annual Report of Walford Parish Council 2008-2009 For The Annual Meeting 13 May 2009

The Parish Council

In May 2008 Eric Drummond was elected as Chairman but stood down through pressure of business in September. In October Frank Myers, the previous vice-chairman, was elected as chairman with Philip Heath as Vice-Chairman.

The other councillors were: Sandra Cole, Simeon Cole, Michael Downey, Heather Evans, Luke Freeman, Philip Heath, George Jones, Geoffrey Symonds, Marc Thomas, Bridget Vine, Alan Whitlock.

Council Meetings

Cllr SW Cole put forward a proposal in July that monthly meetings should be held except in August and December. This was agreed. An exception would be made for a meeting to be held in August 2008 to finish business from the July meeting. There were 9 scheduled council meetings during the year, with the April meeting being the Annual Parish meeting given over to the consideration of possible sites within the parish for affordable housing where Ward Cllr John Jarvis was the speaker. The meeting decided that the 9 unsold houses at Willow Close (behind Fowbridge Gardens) should be taken over as affordable housing if feasible, before any more houses were built.

Representatives of the West Mercia Constabulary attended most of the meetings and so did Ward Cllr Jarvis if at all possible.

There was an additional meeting in November to consider the planning application for an accommodation site for seasonal agricultural workers at Coleraine Farm, Coughton, held to hear the views of members of the public. As a result, the WPC observation, having no power over the number of caravans, voiced concern over disturbance to neighbours from emission of light and noise, difficulties with the access road that needed widening in places, the necessity of planting many trees to reduce visual harm to the area and the setting of stricter standards of behaviour from workers over litter and their behaviour in Ross at weekends.

Speakers at meetings during the year had been: Alison Fletcher, Age Concern; Mr G Hughes, HC Director of Regeneration and Planning; Hayley Crane, H C Housing Enabling Officer; Cllrs Vine and Heath attended an AONB training study day; the Clerk attended some local PACT meetings (Partners and Communities Together); Cllr Cole attended a seminar on affordable housing; Cllr Vine and the Clerk attended the HALC Conference and AGM; most councillors attended an intensive training session from the CEO of Hfd Association of Local Councils; Cllr Vine attended HALC Southern Area Meetings; a number of Cllrs attended a site visit by HC planners looking at sites for new housing. Some of the sites were inadmissible because they were not adjacent to the Coughton settlement boundaries in the Unitary Development Plan. It was hoped that the Local Development Forum now being written (supersedes the UDP) would be more flexible

Summary of Parish Council Business conducted during the year

(A) National and County Business

1. Freedom of Information Act – new Model Scheme was agreed and completed; displayed at meetings and on web-site
2. Consultation on Core Strategy-Developing Options: questionnaire completed and returned to HC
3. Ward Cllr Jarvis explained the new waste collection scheme coming into operation in autumn 2009
4. Dog Control Orders – questionnaire completed and returned to HC
5. Scrutiny Review of Planning Services completed and returned to HC
6. Forward Planning Services- the five preferred facilities for settlements were agreed and returned

(B) Parish Council Internal Business

1. *Minor Road Maintenance Scheme (Lengthsman)*

The scheme was managed by Cllr Luke Freeman. Mr Gerald Green of Hope Mansell carries out the work. Regular maintenance was carried out on bus shelters, road signs, footways, gutters and gullies on the B4234.

2. *Other Highway Matters*

The drains at Howle Hill Cross were repaired. It is still hoped that the surface of Howle Hill will be dealt with in the coming year as it carries so much traffic. Speed indicator devices were installed in

Walford. A new scheme for reporting road faults was instigated by HC whereby each report is given a reference number to aid tracing of progress. Cllr Symonds met with HC highway representative and the Ward Councillor to try and push forward repair and improvements to the footway besides the B4234 between the church and the school that was impeding passage for prams and wheelchairs through its unevenness and narrowness.

3. Parish Paths Partnership Maintenance Scheme

The scheme was managed by Cllr Michael Downey. Mr Roger Peates oversaw the maintenance of footpaths and repaired/ erected gates. The full grant (bar £10.00) was spent during the year on the 45 km of paths in the parish with set-aside funds from the previous year being used to provide a better surface for the path behind Bishopswood Village Hall. This was in the cause of road-safety for school children accessing buses at Kerne Bridge and for walkers, since the B4234 was deemed dangerous at this point. The electronic parish map is available to footpath officers and contractors. There had been some dispute over the licence from Ordnance Survey over whether this could be put on our web-site. The map has been removed during the prolonged discussions which it is hoped will achieve a satisfactory solution.

4. **Parish Plan Projects** from the parish plan for (a) speed restriction signs outside the school and between Walford Timber Ltd and Walford Church have been implemented; (b) the feasibility study for a linked cycle way from Kerne Bridge to Walford has been completed and is now waiting for the appointment of a RoW officer from HC to help progress the next stage; (c) the search for a suitable site for a recreation area is being pursued by a committee of residents and councillors with Mrs Cheryl Carpenter as chairman who was working on the papers for winning a competition for funding; (d) the complete adoption by HC of a revised Walford Parish Plan in order to give the findings more planning 'weight' is being pursued.

5. Parish Communications

Mr David Wadge continued to run the official parish web-site, www.walford-pc.org.uk, posting up news as it became available together with the minutes of meetings and reports on planning applications. Brief records of Parish Council affairs were sent to The Village News (Kerne Bridge parishes) and the Walford Flier (local parish) and actual notices were posted on the eight parish notice-boards. Mr John Daniels of Bishopswood (a previous WPC chairman) made and erected an elegant new notice-board outside Bishopswood Stores. WPC bought a new computer system as the privately-owned previous one was showing worrying signs of age. A letter was received from some of those living in Bishopswood to say that they felt unrepresented at WPC. It was resolved to make more efforts for their inclusion. The post-offices in Bishopswood and Tudorville were supported by letters and presence at meetings to Post Office Services. Unfortunately, Bishopswood P O closed, although the shop continues to flourish and Tudorville PO was down-graded to an outreach status. Mr John Corbett continued to urge for a footway from Whittings Lane to Green Colley Grove at a very narrow stretch of the B4234 which is preventing safe foot-access to village facilities by residents.

6. **Herefordshire Calor Village of the Year 2007** Bishopswood Village meeting persuaded the WPC Chairman to commemorate the winning of this coveted award by the making and erection of two road signs for which he was much thanked

7. **Forest Green** Cllr Jones led a group that started clearing land at Forest Green. It was decided to take steps to try to register it as a green in perpetuity. Many letters of support were received recalling memories from as long ago as 1919

8. **Red Cross Village Warden Scheme** Unfortunately, Walford was not chosen as one of the pilot parishes, although there is input being offered by Age Concern's Alison Fletcher

9. Planning Applications

During the year the Parish Council returned observations to Hereford Council on 37 separate planning applications for development, again fewer than the previous year.

J M Perry, Clerk. May 2009

