

VERTON PARISH COUNCIL
Parish Meeting
Held at 7.45 pm on 25 May 2005 at St Mary's Hall

Present: 38 members of the public.

Mrs M Atkins, Cllr P Baker, Mr P Baker, Mr J Bennett (Chairman), Mr B Langer, Cllr I Tilbury, Mrs L Harley (Clerk). Chris Penney (St Luke's Hall Management Committee), Bob Gibbs (HART), Sergeant C Swallow, PC R Baldwin (Whitchurch Police Station), Mrs A McNair Scott (Hampshire County Councillor), Amanda Manaton and Julie Williams (Accredited Safety Wardens).

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mr C Atkins, Dr S Johnson, Ms S Mills, Mrs P Taylor and Sir George Young.

2. Approve the minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes for the Annual Parish Meeting held on 28 April 2004 had been approved at the parish council meeting on 12 May 2004.

3. Report by the Chairman on parish matters

John Bennett, the chairman of the parish council, introduced himself and pointed out the fire exits and toilet.

Mr Bennett firstly introduced Anna McNair Scott, the new county councillor for the Candovers Division, who could not stay at the meeting due to family commitments. Mrs McNair Scott stated that she was pleased to represent Overton and intended to help deal with any future issues or problems. Mr Bennett also gave apologies for Sir George Young who had a prior engagement. He thanked the borough councillors, Ian Tilbury and Paula Baker for attending and wished Paula well for her forthcoming year as Mayor. Mr Bennett also introduced Sergeant Swallow and PC Baldwin from Whitchurch Police Station.

Mr Bennett drew people's attention to the Overton Society Meeting on 14 June, where it was intended to have speakers from Hampshire County Council and Croudace (although this was now in doubt).

Mr Bennett thanked people for returning the parking survey – there had been a huge response – and reminded people that the closing date for returns was 17 June.

2004 had seen the launch of the Overton website (overtonvillage.com) which had been possible with grants from Croudace, The Co-op, De La Rue, the Overton Business Association and the parish council. News and Views continued to be circulated as a free publication and Mr Bennett thanked the News and Views Editor for her hard work together with all the people who distributed it on a voluntary basis.

The work had now started on St Mary's Hall to improve the toilets, kitchen and access to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2004.

Mr Bennett stated that the parish council were still seeking a new councillor and asked attendees to talk to friends and relatives within the village to encourage someone to stand.

The Overton Handbook had been produced and distributed in 2004 – and a copy was also on the website. Mr Bennett asked that clubs and societies kept the document up to date by informing either the parish council or the website of any changes.

The parish council was pleased to have appointed Stuart Pike to help pick litter around the village, especially at Sapley Lane Playing Field, Edward Kersley Playing Field and in the village centre – this was making a huge difference.

The Overton Biodiversity Society had ceased to be a sub-committee of the parish council, but was continuing to carry out work at Little Meadow funded by the Heritage Lottery.

The allotments were all let and the site was tidy. It was hoped to install new gates and fencing in the coming year.

Mr Bennett stated that the phasing of the traffic lights had changed to four-way, and asked for comments on the changes.

4. Short presentations from

4.1 Sergeant Swallow and PC Baldwin from Whitchurch Police Station

Sergeant Swallow had been the Overton Beat Officer for a year, and had now been promoted to Sergeant at Whitchurch. He thanked the councillors and Clerk for their support and stated how much he had enjoyed working in Overton as it was a nice village. He was sad to leave, but was pleased to still be involved with Overton via his work at Whitchurch.

PC Baldwin introduced himself as the new Beat Officer for Overton. He stated that Overton was not struck with crime, but that as the village grew, there were likely to be more problems, particularly with traffic. He asked to be contacted at the police station or on his mobile phone, and would soon be on duty, walking and cycling around the village.

4.2 Amanda Manaton and Julie Williams – Accredited Community Safety Wardens

Amanda and Julie were employed by Hampshire County Council to deal with low level crime such as social misbehaviour. Part of their job was to engage with youth and they would work with the school, youth club and with PC Baldwin. They covered the areas of Hatch Warren, Brighton Hill, Whitchurch and Overton and visited each on a daily basis with evenings being rotated. It was stated that people's perception of crime was a key issue and that Overton was just as important as the other areas.

4.3 Bob Gibbs - HART

Mr Gibbs opened his talk with some facts and figures. Over the last 10 years, HART had rescued 8000 creatures of which over 50% had survived. Over 150 students had received work experience at HART and many of those would become veterinary nurses and vets. There were now 3 members of staff and 50 volunteers involved in fund raising, rearing and cleaning etc. A quarterly newsletter was produced and there was also a website.

It was now make or break time for HART as planning permission had been given for an animal hospital in Kingsclere Road on land rented from De La Rue. He wanted to thank Sir George Young, Ian Tilbury and Paula Baker for their help with the plans and for their continuing support. He was also very pleased that Paula, in her role as Mayor, had chosen HART as her charity for the year.

Mr Gibbs stated that he had now stood down as chairman of HART. Roger Clay was going to be the Campaign Director and the new chairman would be Dave ?. It was hoped to enhance the education training and research side of HART's work.

4.4 Paula Baker – Community Centre

Mrs Baker stated that the Community Centre was planning to carry out improvements driven by the Disability Discrimination Act and be able to offer a clean, fresh facility equipped for all.

Mrs Baker thanked Hampshire County Council for providing some funding which would enable work to start later this year. The OCA was hoping to provide new opportunities for both young and old and would be advertising at the school fete on 8 June. The 'Silver Surfers' would also be coming to the Community Centre on 8 June. Mrs Baker stated that she felt that there was a lack of computer facilities within the village, and that the community centre now had two. She asked that people complete a questionnaire at the end of the meeting.

4.5 Chris Penney – St Luke's Hall

Mr Penney stated that every single resident of Overton owned St Luke's Hall, which had been run by the current set of Trustees since 2003. The Trustees had reassessed the needs of the village with regard to the use of St Luke's Hall – and had installed a central heating time clock, updated the kitchen, maintained the garden and had reviewed hiring charges, hiring agreements and other paperwork.

The Trustees had managed to increase the use of the hall, and in 2004 had made a surplus in excess of £3,000.00; user satisfaction had also increased.

The Trustees felt that there was the potential to build a new hall on the existing site and during 2004 had drawn up plans incorporating features requested by user groups. The resulting planning application had been withdrawn following concerns from the borough council regarding the increase height and position of the proposed new build. Mark III plans were now on the drawing board and would be ready for the AGM, which would be held in St Luke's Hall at 7.45pm on 29 June.

4.6 Laura Harley – St Mary's Hall

Mrs Harley stated that the refurbishment of the hall was now well underway, with a new kitchen, storage area and toilets being built to the west side of the building and a new access way to the rear of the hall which would be suitable for all users. The refurbishment had been funded from the parish precept and would be used to repay a loan of £148,000.00 which had been borrowed from the PWLB. The parish council had a commitment to upgrade the hall to meet the criteria laid down by the Disability Discrimination Act. The sub-committee that ran the hall felt positive about the hall's future and was committed to increase the usage and widen the range of activities.

To ensure that the loan was used to the fullest extent, the parish council had been investigating whether the VAT of £21,000.00 could be reclaimed, and this could be done if the parish council leased the hall to the management committee. This would allow alterations to be carried out to the front of the building. The committee had also applied for a grant of £25,000.00 from the borough council and this would be considered in July. If the grant application was successful, the money would be used to refurbish the back stage area to make a more usable committee room and dressing room. Some of the work such as painting and restaining the floor could be carried out by volunteers.

The management committee was committed to providing a fuller programme of activities for the hall including a regular monthly table top sale, plays and talks. The committee is investigating the idea of a cinema club and has booked acts from the Hog the Limelight programme.

4.7 Peter Baker – St Mary's Hall Garden Project

It was proposed to refurbish the St Mary's Hall garden to provide a place of peace and tranquillity for the more mature members of the village. The design had been drawn up by a member of the Garden Society and fund raising had started with the sale of a calendar and left over Sheepfair goods. A number of people had volunteered to help with building the garden and Mr Baker was asking for more volunteers in order that the garden was finished by mid September to coincide with the WWII Commemoration weekend.

6. Open Forum

Nicholas Crace asked for all attending parish councillors to stand up and make themselves known.

Peter Baker publicly thanked Mary Reid for carrying out voluntary litter picking around the village.

Teresa Reynolds stated that the new phasing of the traffic lights was a great improvement to motorists. There was still concern about pedestrians crossing at this location.

Brian Langer asked for a statement from the Accredited Safety Wardens and the police to give a detailed statement of who did what.

A number of attendees were concerned about the hedge that had been removed on Overton Hill in preparation for the building works on the Croudace site. Jane MacKenzie had tried to contact a number of agents – but had not managed to find anyone with a complete overview of the situation. The Overton Biodiversity Society were now concerned with minimising the amount of bank that was to be removed, and were keen to ensure that no further trees were removed to the east of the site. Mrs MacKenzie urged people to write to the borough council to object about planning matters to ensure that comments were registered. (It was noted that the seat on Overton Hill needed to be removed.)

A parishioner complained about the state of the pavement at the top Overton Hill. He was also concerned about the Berrydown Crossroads and suggested that double white lines were required at this location. Mrs Baker stated that the county council were not prepared to look at this area of the B3400 in isolation – and were currently looking at the whole of this road.

Mr Bennett closed the meeting by thanking the parish councillors and Clerk for their hard work throughout the year.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.