

Chairman's Report May 2008

WRHA site in Green Lane

The most important event of the year has been the completion of the ten attractive eco-friendly Wiltshire Rural Housing Association houses built on Church Acre that have provided lifetime homes for local people. This is a real success story, the project took seven years from the initial approach from the Parish Council to the completion in December last year. Without the generosity of Maurice Cole in providing land at a financial loss this would never have happened, thanks to him we have secured ten properties that can only be let to people with connections to Codford or the surrounding parish's in perpetuity.

TV Programme

Codford has been seen as a pioneer community by taking the initiative in addressing a national problem with lack of local housing at grass roots level. BBC TV from Bristol has recently been filming two half hour documentary's looking at the lack of affordable houses in the country and they chose the Church Acre development to illustrate possible solutions. They filmed all over the village and in the Woolstore during the children's rehearsals for 'Oliver' on 1st May. The filmmakers were very impressed by our attractive surroundings and vibrant community and delighted with the local contributors.

Cherry Orchard PFI sites

The Private Finance Initiative will eventually provide 9 more local homes in Cherry Orchard. The Parish Council is aware of the lack of three-bedroom family homes for rent that gives priority to local [village rather than district] people and will continue to illustrate the need to redress the housing balance. It is expected before the houses are built there will be another housing needs survey.

Unitary Authority

Despite overwhelming opposition to Wiltshire being turned into a Unitary Authority and the Government pledge this could only happen with widespread support from next April there will be a major change in local politics. We are told that the new all singing, all dancing super Authority will be less expensive and more efficient and can only hope for the best while fearing the worst. Bigger usually doesn't translate to better only further removed from the grass roots.

For us we will regretfully be sure to lose one, if not both of our excellent and very hard working councillors. At present WWDC is the only one of the Wiltshire councils that insists that if a Parish Council oppose an application it automatically has to be heard by a planning committee- the loss of this democratic way of dealing with planning would be a blow. Some of the councils still operate a weekly bin collection- if this was adopted by the Authority it would be a real step forward.

The Barn in Chitterne Rd

The building was constructed late March/early April 2003 without planning permission. Retrospective planning permission has been refused 3 times, in January & November 2004 and February 2006. A Planning Appeal was dismissed in July 2005 – the Inspector agreeing with the PC and the WWDC Planning Officers that the development, by virtue of its size and siting was contrary to Policy. A Planning Contravention Notice was served in March 2006 and an Enforcement Notice on 22nd January 2007. On 14th March this year an Appeal was lodged against Enforcement. The Parish Council submitted a second Appeal document for the Inspectors consideration, this Appeal was also dismissed last summer. The barn is still with us as the applicants have threatened to go to the High Court- we won't know until October whether this will become a reality. This perfectly illustrates the frustrating complexity of the planning process-however this should be the final delaying tactic after which enforcement can be taken.

Village Policy Limits

The PC was unhappy at the ambiguity of the WWDC policy regarding VPL's and asked for clarification in 2006. The process was delayed first due to the pending WRHA planning application, then the planning committee decision and finally the completion of the Church Acre site. The situation has changed for properties bordering WRHA site, as they are no longer extending into open countryside. A recent application for a garden extension has been refused and is now subject to an Appeal so the situation cannot be clarified until the Planning Inspectorate decision, not expected before October 2008.

The Past Year

Our 6.30am Anzac Day Service last month was a great success with at least 50 people turning up. The Parish Council paid for a bugler and a piper and Caroline at the Social Club provided an amazing breakfast. We had even more Australians than in previous years turn up for the event; some are becoming regulars to Codford on 25th April.

Chris Brayne is setting up a Codford Parish Council designated website where we will be able to keep everyone up to date on issues and events. Our thanks to Robin White for including our minutes on his Codford website for the past year or so.

Unsurprisingly the complaints have been about parking, dog mess and overflowing recycling bins. The Parish Council put leaflets round where the parking issues were most contentious and villagers seem to have taken note- so thanks to them. While the majority of dog owners are responsible, picking up after their pets and using the bins, there are a small minority who continue to allow their pets to foul pavements and grassy areas within the village. If villagers see this happening and know who the culprits are we will approach them individually to ask for their co-operation.

Thanks

Special thanks to Brian Marshall for uncomplainingly and often at short notice putting together planning documents that are a work of art. To John Gaines whose contribution to ensuring problems in Cherry Orchard are dealt with speedily is recognised by us all and to young Frank West who continues to work so hard to keep the village clear of litter.

Thanks too to all those within the village who contribute in so many ways to making Codford such a special place to live. We are so fortunate to have such a diverse and active community with so many people giving unstintingly of their time and talents.

I would like to thank all the Councillors for their contributions to the village and their support, between us we have attended a range of meetings, some more stimulating than others, allowing the Council to keep abreast of a changing political climate. The amount of paperwork that has to be read, digested, answered, remembered and thrown away is staggering.

We all owe a special vote of thanks to Louis, who is a brilliant Parish Clerk, dealing with paperwork, complaints, regulations, members of the public, officials and councillors with cheerful common sense.