

Dear Editor

Many of your readers will have recently experienced the dreaded moment when they open their letter informing them of the Council Tax for 2006/7. I have, and of course any bill is always regarded as unwelcome.

A few readers may have spluttered in their cornflakes, when they saw that the increase for Marcham Parish Council was 14.6%! I must admit that I did a double take. So, as Chairman, I thought I should offer some explanation, lest villagers thought that their Parish Council was going on a spending spree.

Firstly it is important to appreciate that the cost of the services that the Parish Council will provide is £32,000. For that sum, amongst the things the Parish Council does is to arrange grass cutting throughout the village; it has developed and manages the play area on the Anson field; it owns and manages the allotments at Cow Lane and on Parkside; it manages and lets the pony paddocks at Cow Lane and at Constable's Ham; it organises the maintenance of the churchyard (with assistance from the Parochial Church Council and the Marcham Society); it manages the arboretum; it provides grants and support to worthy village organisations and activities (including the MAD News); it paid for and maintains the Bus Shelter in Howard Cornish road as well as several seats around the village. It also owns and administers the Burial Ground in conjunction with Frilford Parish through the Marcham and Frilford Joint Burial Board. Added to that is the vast amount of administration which has to be undertaken including the Council's dealings with the Vale of White Horse DC, Oxfordshire County Council, the Government Office for the South East and many other bodies and individuals. Remember the Parish Council's charge only represents some 3% of the total council tax you pay.

Secondly it is only fair to point out that Marcham's precept had remained at £28,000 for the three years previously and has been increased by £4,000 this year. Over the four-year period, therefore, the annual increase has averaged 3.4% and in that light I believe has been good value for money.

I hope my letter may dispel any misgivings, but if villagers are not satisfied, then do come along to the Parish meeting planned for 24 May 2006 and make your feelings known. Or better still, stand for election to the Parish Council and show that you can do better!

COLIN BOUGH

Chairman, Marcham Parish Council

ED VAIZEY WRITES...

March has already proved to be a busy month for me.

I held my first ever adjournment debate in the House of Commons. An adjournment debate happens at the end of the parliamentary day, and lasts for about half an hour. It is used by backbench MPs to flag up a local or national issue.

I chose to do mine on child psychiatric services. This has become an important issue in our part of the world because of the threats to the Park hospital in Oxford (by the time you read this it may indeed have been closed). This is a fantastic facility that treats children between the ages of 5 and 11 with severe mental health problems and supports their families as they cope with the pressures an ill child brings. There are only a handful of these units in the country and closure would have a devastating affect on these families that, quite frankly, already have enough to contend with. I used the debate to highlight the general problem of funding a service such as this through a local NHS trust, when it is in fact a national, if not a world service. You can read the full debate by following the link from www.vaizey.com.

The other campaign I have been running this month is to try and save early morning and evening train services from Didcot to London. Last week I met commuters as they waited for the 0545 service at Didcot Parkway station to hear how service cuts would affect them. So far First Great Western is blaming the government and the Department for Transport are blaming First Great Western. As usual service users are stuck in the middle. Please be assured will continue to lobby hard on this issue and would like to hear from anyone affected by the proposed cuts.

ED VAIZEY

MP Wantage (Con)

MP'S SURGERY WITH ED VAIZEY
5.30-7.00pm, unless stated otherwise

April	
7	Didcot , King Alfred Drive Community Centre
20	Didcot Station
28	Wallingford , Town Hall
Contact Ed Vaizey by	
Post	The House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
E-mail	vaizeye@parliament.uk
Web	www.vaizey.com
Tel	0207 219 3000

MARCHAM EX-SERVICEMEN'S CLUB

Please note that this year's AGM

will be held on

Tues 25 April at 8.0pm

all members are requested to attend

FREE TO GOOD HOME

A relaxing armchair for your **reclining** years!
Tel: 01865 391811

VISIT TO HIDCOTE MANOR GARDENS

with Sunningwell Garden Club on Sat 17 June.

Coach fare depends on numbers. Entrance fee £4.65 if not NT member.

Val Reynolds 01235 530100

Jill Ovendon 01235 555971

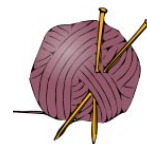
Mention MADNews when booking

Come and join the Annual Good Friday walk and Treasure Hunt from Dry Sandford Scout & Guide HQ (Map Ref SP467012).

Friday 14th April starting at 0930.

- Refreshments • Raffle •
- Home-made Hot Cross Buns •

Alison Lawrie is currently running a project in the village to knit jumpers for AIDS orphans in South Africa. They will be taken out to Limpopo Province in May, after which time the project will knit for children in Moldova until December. If you are not able to knit a jumper, but would still like to help, 6" squares for blankets and/or oddments of wool are sorely needed! (Or maybe you could even mention the project to friends...)



For more information (and a pattern), please phone Alison on 01865 391540.

ABINGDON FAYRE AIR & COUNTRY

Dalton Barracks Sunday 30th April, 10am Proceeds to the Helen and Douglas House Respite Centres in Oxford.

Up to 80 visiting aircraft, plus 2½ hour Air Display at 2 p.m. Varied selection of ground attractions inc. steam machinery, vintage/classic motor-bikes and vehicles, marching band, arena events and a Craft marquee. Refreshments available and Children's Amusement area.

Adult £7, OAP £5,

Child (10+) £3 (>10) free.

We would like to remind local residents to be aware of and expect Air Display rehearsals during the afternoons of Friday 28th & Saturday 29th April.

www.abingdonfayre.com

To get your letter included please write to the editor by 20th month latest