

**PARISH COUNCIL REPORT**

The Parish Council comprises 10 councillors who are elected for a three-year term. They are ably served by the Parish Clerk (Linda Martin) who is a paid officer. The Parish Council meets 11 times per year to transact business, (plus ad hoc meetings, sub committees, and numerous meetings attended by individual councillors). An opportunity for public participation at meetings is a standing item on the agenda. Your Parish Council sets the precept [a local rate] (which we have kept at the same level for the third consecutive year), and this funds activities within the Parish. There is a very large amount of formal business particularly consultation from all levels of government Central County and District and an associated large volume of paperwork.

The Parish Council is responsible for:

- grass cutting throughout the village
- the play area on the Anson field
- the allotments at Cow Lane and on Parkside
- the pony paddocks at Cow Lane and Constable's Ham
- the churchyard (with assistance from the Parochial Church Council and the Marcham Society)
- the arboretum
- grants and support to worthy village organisations and activities
- the bus shelter in Howard Cornish Rd
- several seats around the village
- the burial ground in conjunction with Frilford Parish through the Marcham and Frilford Joint Burial Board.

The council also considers all planning applications within Marcham, the Vale of White Horse takes particular notice of comments. Thanks to Marion Pointer; Jenny Allen and Ian Charles for their work as the planning working group

The Parish Council also organises the Garden Competition and the Villager of the Year Award. *The 2005 Garden Competition will be judged towards the end of June/ beginning of July.*

During the past year the Parish Council has been involved in a range of activities and responsible for a number of actions:

**Low Cost Housing** we have progressed to the stage where an outline scheme has been formulated, following a survey undertaken on our behalf by the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council. A third stage at Longfields is foreseen with 4x1 bed; 6x2 bed; 1x3bed and 1x4 bed houses. The Council is however concerned to ensure that the allocation mechanism is sufficient to ensure the village's wishes are met and we will not proceed until we are satisfied on this point.

**The Anson Trust** the Council sends two

members to the Anson Field Management Committee and, in response to a request from the Anson Trust has nominated two people to be directors of the company being established to run Anson Trust matters – they are Malcolm Denton and myself.

**Play area** The Parish Council, with the support of the Anson Trust, is seeking a grant from WREN which should enable a major improvement in the equipment.

Among other projects, the Council has also funded a new commercial dishwasher for the Village Café, made a substantial contribution to the Pre-School for fencing, arranged for the refurbishing of the youth shelter and put in hand repairs to the stonewall in New Road.

Marion Pointer resigned from the Council in April and we are currently filling the vacancy. I would like to thank Marion publicly for her contribution to Marcham Parish Council and on behalf of all villagers I would like to congratulate Will Cumber for achieving 25 years service on the Council and thank him for his efforts. Finally I must thank all of the Parish Councillors for giving their time, their attention and their commitment and Linda Martin for her excellent support.

**COLIN BOUGH, CHAIRMAN**

**DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT**

*Jane was not able to attend the meeting as she had to attend the monthly meeting of the District Council.*

My report begins with highlighting that the Vale has the 10th lowest Council Tax in the country. Although this is popular with the electorate it has been the key factor in what has been a very difficult budget year. Once central government legislative duties on the council are factored in, there is little room for manoeuvre in relation to local needs. Casualties of this were the bus tokens scheme, tourist Information centres and Abingdon open-air pool. Not surprisingly at the vote on the budget, although the Conservatives voted against the budget, no alternative proposition was put to the vote. An attempt by the Vale to avoid the cuts was prevented because the government minister wrote to the council earlier this year informing the Vale that it would suffer financial penalties if it increased the District Council Tax to up to the rate charged by South Oxfordshire District Council.

Schemes are in place to mitigate the effects of these cuts. There has been a high take-up of half price bus passes and hospital trips are still covered. Dial-a-ride is available to the most needy with mobility problems and provides two free trips and as many trips low cost trips as people need. Obviously in a rural area where privatisation of bus services has left a significant number

stranded we urgently need to improve public transport but that is beyond the powers of the Vale.

Over the year, I have been involved with a significant amount of casework relating to matters such as housing, planning and dog-bins. Initial teething problems with the new contractor for waste disposal appear to have been ironed out and I have not any complaints about dog bins since January. The Vale has made early and repeated offers of support should the owner make an application for change of use for the empty shop at Haines Court and has written this month to the owner regarding obligations in the lease to keep the property in good repair. I am very aware of concerns about the future of the Institute and not only met with the Ex-Service Men but facilitated a meeting between the Anson Trust and the Ex-Service Men prior to legal proceeding being instituted. The future depends now on the resolution of this legal dispute.

I have continued to keep a close eye on local health services attending most Primary Care Trust meetings and asking questions. The future of Abingdon Hospital was secured following a Parliamentary Debate secured by Evan Harris MP. The March meeting of the PCT revealed however that the PCT is in crisis talks about the future funding of the local health services so the need for effective scrutiny by local councillors has not decreased but remains as great as ever.

**JANE HANNA, DISTRICT COUNCILLOR**

**PARISHIONER OF THE YEAR**

Marcham Parish Council wishes to recognise and honour the achievements and contribution to the life and well being of Marcham made by

**Jack Spicer**

His enormous contribution to All Saints Church and especially its music through his role as Choirmaster and organist for more than twenty years has brought pleasure and joy to members of the congregation and to many families on special occasions such as weddings. His participation in the Senior Citizens' Club and his contribution through organising programmes, events and outings has been a source of enjoyment to many.

With his wife Elsa his wisdom, kindness and charitable nature have contributed to many village events and organisations and been of benefit to many individuals within Marcham.

As a token of its appreciation and on behalf of the civil parish of Marcham, the Parish Council has presented this certificate to Jack Spicer on the eighteenth day of May two thousand and five.

Colin Bough

Chairman Marcham Parish Council

*See cover for picture*