

HITCHAM AND TAPLOW SOCIETY

Minutes of the 61st Annual General Meeting

Held on-line using Zoom

Friday 4th December 2020 at 8pm

1. Welcome by Eva Lipman

Thank you all for joining us on this our 61st AGM. Never did I think last year that I would be talking to you all on Zoom this year. Technology can be wonderful. Welcome to the new 'Normal'. Our old 'Normal' feels like a distant memory,. It is all quite extraordinary. Hope your year has not been too traumatic and you have had the time to appreciate our beautiful Taplow and feel fortunate to live in our friendly helpful community. It is wonderful how everyone seems to have pulled together at this difficult time.

2. Apologies for absence

Apology received from Joy Marshall.

3. Approval of the minutes of the 2019 AGM

I hope everyone has had a chance to read the minutes of our last AGM. We have not received any requests for changes to the minutes as requested in the email to members convening this meeting so I will declare them accepted unless there is a comment from the floor? Thankyou.

4. President's address (Eva Lipman)

Sadly I have to report that Richard Nutt died recently aged 96. He served on your committee from 1975-1993. I well remember that many years ago he and Budge Francis approached me at a party given by Eileen Law in Ye Meads asking if I would come on the committee saying it would do me good to be involved with the village affairs, and so it has proved to be. He was our secretary for 15 years and our 'not the editor' for 2. He was a great source for good in our community.

It is a great pity that we were unable to have our Easter Egg Hunt and our Village Green Party due to THE VIRUS. Let's hope for better things in 2021.

We have had a number of big changes take place during this past year and I fear that the results might have an adverse effect on our community in the future. Many of these have been well documented in our excellent Newsletter. I will leave Roger to tell you about these. He has in fact not only been your hard working secretary but also your acting Chairman. I will now hand over to Roger who will give you the chairman's report.

5. Chairman's report (Roger Worthington)

2020 began well for us with our highest ever membership of over 230. Following approval at the AGM we raised the money for the addition of World War II names of the fallen to the Village War Memorial. Thanks to our generous members and a large donation from the Parish Council for achieving this quickly. Application to the Diocese of Oxford for formal approval then took longer than expected. When approval was finally granted we had further delay as our excellent stone mason had to take time out for an operation and recuperation. As you can imagine, having to effectively lie on the ground to do the carving is not for the faint-hearted. We are pleased he making an excellent

recovery and we expect the work to complete in the spring. As Covid interfered with the Remembrance Day services this year the delay has had less impact than it might have had in normal times.

Sadly our Easter Egg Hunt and the Village Green Party then fell victim to the virus, in common with so many other activities, including the loss of the litter picking day "Tidy up Taplow". Taplow in general responded well with help across the difficult times and the latest Newsletter highlights some of the efforts made, including the Marianne Boden phone support network and the SGI Taplow Court 100 hot meals a day service through Foodshare. It reminds us that Taplow is a close knit community and our sympathies are with the Oak and Saw and the Royal Standard, with their enforced absences affecting many of us.

Following our move from Taplow House Hotel, Eva Lipman kindly hosted your committee meetings until Covid restrictions forced their cancellation. We have however stayed active via email and phone in pursuit of Taplow matters.

In the spring we were very occupied (as part of the Taplow Neighbourhood Plan Working Group) with preparation of submissions to the Inspectors assessing the SBDC/CDC draft Local Plan. Initially delayed by Covid, the plan then ran into trouble with the Inspectors, who claimed it did not comply with a "Duty to Cooperate" with neighbouring authorities. We became mere bystanders as a range of other planning matter swept across the political scene, leading finally to the complete withdrawal of the Plan by the new Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority. This leaves Taplow still being guided by the old Local Plan / Core Strategy of 2011, with a result that some local areas due to be removed from the Green Belt will be reprieved until some new plan is in place.

We responded to two major government consultations on Housing Numbers and Planning for the Future. They lay out plans for greatly increasing house building rates and sweeping changes to the whole planning processes of England and Wales. They would have significant impact at our local level if implemented. Much of this is chronicled in the latest Newsletter. An underlying government intention to limit public (and Local Authority) involvement in planning matters runs clearly through both consultations, together with the removal of many safeguards. Strong reactions from the public and MPs may yet soften the proposals.

We additionally responded to a more local consultation over Burnham Beeches. There is a 5.6km circle around the Beeches (includes Taplow) within which various strictures are imposed to protect this valuable site. Our concern was that a requirement to offset any development with the creation of new green space was dependent on the draft Local Plan which was subsequently withdrawn.

The delay in elections for both parish and the new Bucks Unitary until next year was unfortunate but unavoidable. Several matters give us immediate concern though.

Under the SBDC planning regime, if at least ten individual objections were made to an application then it would automatically go to the Planning Committee rather than being decided by officers. This right has been removed. The only way to get a hearing by the Planning Committee is for a Bucks Councillor to request it. This is a worrying loss.

Bucks County have introduced 16 Community Boards to act as interfaces for a range of local matters. These boards are presently positioned as the only available link between local areas and the County. Although anyone can attend meetings, only the local area Bucks Councillors can take any decisions. Other channels by which parishes etc. could communicate more formally with the county have all been removed.

Much of the above may not be seen as greatly affecting our daily lives but there have also been a variety of many local matters we have been active with.

The Old Boat House site application for nine dwellings on Mill Lane has finally been approved. Delays centred on the view of the Conservation officer that the Old Boathouse itself must be preserved. Even we, a Society whose earlier name included the word "preservation" felt that it was beyond realistic conversion. The approval requires the raising the Boathouse above the EAs latest flood guidelines. Not even sure if this is possible.

Two Green Belt sites have been the cause of concern.

The meadow at the top of Hill Farm Road "Little Karoo Farm" had to be the subject of enforcement orders to remove buildings erected in contravention of planning regulations. A current application has been approved.

The chicken sheds in Marsh Lane are also the subject of objections. An earlier refusal of permission for a large quail barn is being appealed and there is a parallel application for a house. We have objected to these matters as a creeping subversion of the Green Belt, which the government continues to insist is a high priority, despite much evidence to the contrary.

STOP PRESS!

The leaning wall on Berry Hill at Stockwells as pictured in the Newsletter has finally collapsed (today) as predicted. The problem had been referred to Bucks County some weeks ago but they had failed to act. Fortunately no one was hurt.

In addition to narrow Taplow matters I would draw your attention to major development plans in Maidenhead. An application is now in (PL/20/3923/ADJ) to redevelop the town centre that you might want to look at and comment on.

Sadly we note that the A4 cycleway is not used by the majority of cyclists who prefer the road (most especially after rain!). When Mark Shaw, the councillor responsible for its £2m creation was told of this he said "I am not in charge of Transport now". So that's all right then.

Much of the above work is of a behind the scenes nature reading endless documents rather than marching and demonstrating but it is what is often needed. For me it has been made possible and enjoyable by the companionship and constructive approach of your committee members, the constructive and cooperative attitude of the Parish Council and productive joint work with the Ellington and District Residents Association. Our community is only as good as the effort we all put into making it so.

On that subject may I particularly thank your president Eva. After many, many years of action on the committee she had surely hoped to retire to the eminence of the presidency but has never the less climbed back into a much more active role. I wish to thank her for her unfailing support, making all our work easier. Thank you.

We are always in need of fresh ideas and energy to keep your society relevant. Please give serious thought to contributing. Simple articles for the Newsletter of anything to do with Taplow. How about assistant editor to understudy Nigel to maintain what by any standard has been a magazine of the highest quality over the last more than twenty years?

Don't wait until a developer or the council proposes something that horrifies you. It is a bit late then. You need a society committee that is up to speed and ready for action. We would welcome your help. Or just ideas on other things we might do to best support Taplow.

Roger Worthington (acting chairman).

6. Treasurer's report (Robert Hanbury)

The financial report has been pre-circulated with no queries arising. Principal points during the year include the loss of income from the cancellation of the Easter Egg Hunt and the Village Green party. We hold the moneys subscribed for the awaited inscriptions on the Village War Memorial. We acted as an intermediary between the Parish Council and Zoe Hatch for the funding of pollution research on the A4 but returned the money when the lockdowns rendered measurement this year as being pointless. I am grateful to Jim Rousseau for auditing the report and helping with its presentation.

7. Elections (Roger Worthington)

The process of voting under Zoom is rather clumsy so I will follow the procedure outlined in the notice convening the meeting to simplify this.

The nominations for officers and committee were circulated as part of the agenda. We have received no objections or additional nominations so unless there are any comments from the floor now I propose that the President, treasurer, secretary and committee candidates are confirmed in office en bloc. Do I hear any objection? I declare them all duly elected.

Thankyou.

8. AOB

Nigel Smales commended Roger Worthington's admirable patience, determination and diligence on behalf of the Society in its primary purpose of keeping up with everything from proposed changes in legislation to planning applications and in representing its members by registering perceptive and articulate comments with appropriate authorities.

9. Close (Eva Lipman)

This year I have a great many thank yous. Thank you all for joining us on this our first and hopefully last Zoom AGM.

We are indebted to Robert Harrap and Taplow Court for setting this up for us with input from Andrew and Nigel and Roger. Many thanks for enabling this to happen.

This year your committee had been meeting regularly until the first lockdown and since March we have been active on line. We aim to have representatives from all parts of Taplow on the Committee. Currently we have no-one from north of Taplow Court, or the Marsh Lane area. Any suggestions gratefully received? Jacqueline Turner has been very ably representing our new Mill Lane area. Thank you Jacqui.

Robert Hanbury, your treasurer, has once again done a great job producing the accounts and keeping track of our membership and we thank him for it and we would like to thank

Jim Rousseau for auditing them.

Our excellent newsletter editor Nigel Smales has once again done a great job with Andrew Findlay doing the layout. They have to be congratulated for getting it out before lockdown in difficult circumstances. Please let us know if you have not received your copy. Thank you both.

In the end we had a very limited Memorial Service at our Taplow Memorial Cross and I laid a wreath on your behalf. Unfortunately the addition of the names of our Second World War fallen have not yet been carved onto the Memorial but as Roger has reported we are very hopeful that it will be done next year. All the paperwork and monies are in place largely thanks to Nigel and Roger.

I have left my biggest Thank You till last. Once again we are hugely indebted to Roger who has taken up the batten and run with it whenever needed. Roger has in effect taken on the job of Chair as well as his other duties.

The myriad of Local Authority documents and flurry of Government Directives have required hours and hours of reading and inwardly digesting, the relevance to Taplow assessed and responses required have been more than I can ever remember. He and Nigel have been exemplary in how they have dealt with them with input from your committee. At this point I have to thank Martin Maund of EDRA (Ellington District Residents' Association) for all his work on his patch working in close co-operation with us and indeed our wonderful Parish Council because we are all singing from the same hymn sheet.

Thank you all for logging in and may you all stay safe.

We will now say 'Good Bye' and leave you with a slide show of Taplow Court through the seasons.

Signed.....