

Tewin Parish Council

Clerk: Mrs Caroline McFarlane, 2 Badgers Walk, Tewin Wood, Welwyn, Herts AL6 0HP

Tel: 01438 798969 E-mail: caroline.mcfarlane@virgin.net

21.5.08

Dear Parishioners,

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

At the Annual Parish Council meeting on 12th May 2008 Cllr K.Lawson was unanimously elected as Chairman and Cllr K St Pier was unanimously elected as Vice Chairman for a further year.

TEWIN PARISH COUNCIL YEAR END ACCOUNTS

In accordance with the Council's Financial Regulation the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2008 will be available for inspection from 2nd June until 27th June by appointment with the Clerk.

PARISH PLAN & ACTION PLAN

The Parish Council has agreed to adopt the Tewin Parish Plan including the Action Plan and circulate the Action Plan to the entire Parish along with this newsletter. Full copies of the final Parish plan will be available in due course but not be distributed to every household.

- Chairman's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting, 7 April 2008

- Councillors

All eight Councillors agreed to stand for election on 3rd May 2007 and were elected unopposed. Councillors Evans, Hill, St Pier and Stott have represented the North Ward whilst Cllrs Howe, Howson, Lawson and Lloyd have held the seats in Tewin South. At the beginning of 2008, Cllr Howe tendered his resignation, no election was called, and the vacancy will now be filled by co-option. We remember former councillor, Claude Owen, whose death was reported recently.

- Communication

The Council's activities have continued to be reported in the Parish News and on the Tewin Village Website. The Minutes of each meeting are displayed on notice boards once approved. The June 2007 newsletter was based on the Chairman's report to the Annual Parish Meeting.

Parish meetings have been held to address current issues that affect, namely: the Village Shop, the proposed 'Seven Acres' planning development and the planning application itself, and progress of Parish Plan.

Guidelines for local organizations, to avoid flyposting when advertising events, were circulated in June.

- Planning

During the year the Parish Council has received and commented on a very large number of planning applications: 46 compared with 31 the year before. EHC granted 25 of these and refused nine; four were withdrawn and decisions on a further four are awaited. The result of one appeal is awaited. A significant number of residents have come forward to discuss specific applications at the Parish Council Meetings. The Parish Council also has some involvement in monitoring the progress of developments, which are subject to planning permission and liaising with EHC on enforcement issues.

- Changes to the Local Plan and the extension of the 'village boundary', determined by the Inspector, enabled the 'Seven Acres' development to be proposed. Preliminary plans were displayed in the Memorial Hall and a public meeting was held on 16th July. A representative from EHC attended the meeting in November to speak on 'affordable housing' issues. A second public meeting was held on 14th January, to consider the actual planning application. The Parish Council provided detailed comments after each meeting, in line with parishioners' views, and on the specific point that 'affordable housing' would not necessarily be allocated to local residents.

Other planning applications for which there was considerable public interest were at the rear of 1-4 Tewin Hill and at the Tewin Garage site. The Council continues to monitor developments for the proposed water abstraction borehole in Hertford Road and Benington Wind Farm.

Designated 'Environmental Zones' such as the Tewin Wood area have been deleted from the Local Plan, on the decision of the Inspector. The Parish Council has been informed that other development control policies will continue to be applied.

We have continued to keep an eye on local and regional planning issues, including attending a Local Development Framework meeting and making a detailed response to the recent Housing Capacity Assessment and Edge of Settlements Assessment.

Maintenance

As usual, the Council has continued maintenance of the public footpaths and bridle paths within the Parish, together with grass cutting, tree pruning and repairs to Council property such as the Pavilion. It has been decided to replace the two seats on Lower Green rather than repeatedly repair the old ones.

Budget

The Parish Council has budgeted for a precept of £16,700 for the financial year 2008-09, compared with £15,700 the previous year – a rise of 7%. Specific items included in the forthcoming budget include provision for the refurbishment of the pavilion, completion of the Parish Plan, replacement of the two benches and an increase in the Clerk's salary and a gratuity fund in lieu of Clerk's pension.

A new contract has been prepared for the Clerk, following a review, to take account of legal obligation, changes in the gratuity provision and an increase in hours (from 11 to 12 per week).

The Council adopted the revised 'model code of conduct' for local councillors, at the September meeting, including a clause which allows Councillors with a 'prejudicial interest' in an item to speak at the start of a meeting, but not vote or otherwise influence the decision. Councillors signed copies of the new code and a new register of interests was completed. Local seminars on the new Code of Conduct were attended by the Clerk and Chairman. New requirements for monitoring of the internal audit will require a financial risk assessment to be undertaken. The Financial Regulations and Standing Orders were revised in November to reflect all these obligations.

Roads and road safety

Monitoring highways maintenance work and liaising with the County Council, is an ongoing process. A table of works in progress is reported in the Minutes of each Council Meeting. Further work has been done to prevent flooding in School Lane, which appears to have been successful.

Efforts have continued to find a permanent solution to the flooding at the junction of Churchfield Road and Margery Lane. This has involved discussions with Highways and the land owner about draining water away from the road and a ditch has been created for this purpose.

The Parish Council has started to investigate how to extend the footway from Godfries Close up to Tewin Garage.

Obligatory 'Beware Children' road signs have been installed on the roadside at Upper Green, near the playground. Most recently the Council has been considering the option of installing a flashing speed sign.

Village Greens, Common Land, grass verges

The Parish Council is responsible for the repair and protection of the grassed areas, to enhance Tewin's rural character, including Village Greens, Common Land and roadside verges, which are often damaged by vehicles. Parking on pavements is a hazard to pedestrians that is now a concern to the local police. Dog owners are reminded that it is an offence to foul these grassed areas, public footpaths and pavements: the waste can be placed in litter bins or taken home.

Parish Plan

The report of the Parish Plan survey was received by the Parish Council in September, following analysis of the results by the University of Hertfordshire. The Council requested that an action plan should also be included as part of the Plan. This had reached an advanced stage by spring 2008.

In preparation for the adoption of the Plan by the Parish Council, a public meeting was held 4th February. Further meetings have been held to discuss the action plan with the Parish Plan Steering Group and meet with the volunteers. Once the Plan is adopted by the Parish Council copies will be printed and available at the shop.

Bus Service

The 388 bus service has not experienced any further changes during the past 12 months. Total passenger numbers appear to be buoyant, helped by those travelling from Hertford to WGC and vice versa. Return fares to the local stations remain very competitive with daily parking rates, for individual travellers. Over 60s are reminded that a Hertfordshire bus pass entitles them to travel free on most bus services throughout England, with reductions on some local train services.

Village Shop

A year ago, the future of both the village shop and Post Office appeared very uncertain and parishioners began to ask what could be done. The Parish Council arranged a parish meeting, with a speaker, on 25th June to establish whether there would be sufficient support for a community shop run by volunteers. The Parish Council made a financial contribution to the venture, a committee was formed - which is now operating independently as the Tewin Stores Association - and the shop opened on 21st February.

Representatives on local bodies

The Parish Council's official nominated representatives on Tewin Charities Trustees continue to be Cllr David Howson and Roger Temple. The Parish Council also has informal representatives for the Memorial Hall, Parish Paths Partnership, for Transport issues, the Pavilion, Tewin Society, Tewin website committee, the Parish Plan and Locality Policing as well as liaison with neighbouring Parish Councils.

Policing

Regular contact has been maintained with the local police and we were informed last year that more effort was being put into Neighbourhood Watch. Major issues in the previous year were fly-tipping and off road motorcycles and these continue to be monitored. Occasional thefts from property have been reported. Parishioners are advised to be vigilant and report anything suspicious. It should be remembered that crime is still very low in this area. The Mobile Police Station is at Lower Green in the first Wednesday of every month from 13.30hrs until 14.15hrs.

Aircraft noise

The Parish Council also liaised with Panshanger Aerodrome with regard to helicopter noise, in response to Parishioners' complaints. Cllr Lloyd attended the Rural Parish Conference at which policing was a major topic.

Parish events

With the increased cost and difficulty of obtaining public liability insurance, the Parish Council agreed to take over legal responsibility for the organization of events on the village greens, specifically the family day and Christmas Tree / Carols on the Green. Members of Friends of Tewin continue to run these events on behalf of the Parish Council.

An electricity box has now been sited on Lower Green to enable local events, such as the Fête and Carol Singing, to have access to a dedicated electricity supply and without cables crossing the road. Planning permission was required for the box, which was designed to complement the Tewin sign.

Recycling

Brown bins have finally been delivered for the collection of garden waste by EHC. It would be helpful to all concerned if householders could find a discreet place to store their bins and boxes and remove them from the roadside as soon as possible after the collection.

Allotments

The Parish Council rents land adjacent to the Tewin Cowper School for use as allotments and the land is leased to the Allotment Association. The Parish Council has recently received confirmation that further land could be made available if there is increased demand.

-
Sport and recreation

The Parish Council has continued to support sport and recreation in Tewin. The major event of the year was the opening of the children's playground, by the Lord Laming of Tewin, on Upper Green on Sunday 16th July, during the family day organised by Friends of Tewin. Weekly risk inspections have taken place. A small number of difficulties have been experienced, but these have been quickly resolved. The final cost was just over £20,000, of which £17,000 was grant funded. The Parish Council spent about £3,200.

The football pitch has been used by Datchworth Veterans during the winter, for a small charge. The football posts are being retained all year round, in suitable positions, to permit their use by local young people.

A plan for the refurbishment of the Pavilion, involving input from the local sports clubs, continues to be pursued.

- Youth club facilities at Datchworth and Welwyn, run by the local churches, have been advertised in the Parish News.

-

- At the end of yet another very busy year, I would like to thank not only the Clerk and Councillors but also all those who have contributed to this year's activities, for their hard work, help, and support.

Kristina Lawson
April 2008