

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 14th MAY, 2008

Since our annual parish meeting here in Turville last May we have had five parish council meetings – three at Northend and two in Turville.

The council has commented on about 20 planning applications during the year, three of which have given us cause for concern.

An application was made for an additional access at Mill House, Turville. This was opposed by the parish council and, indeed, Wycombe District Council refused permission.

There was some disquiet about the wall and gates that had been built at Pennlands, Northend, now once again known as Egypt Cottage. A retrospective application was refused, but after discussions and alterations there was a satisfactory outcome for the parish and the householder.

Plans submitted for Summerheath Cottage at Turville Heath were felt to be very out of keeping and were refused by Wycombe District Council. Revised plans, with alterations in mass and style, were eventually permitted, though work has yet to begin.

Michael Wicks and I had a helpful meeting at Wycombe District Council offices with David Gibbon, chief planning officer, to discuss some of the perceived anomalies in the council's responses to applications in our parish, and will continue to ask for such meetings when necessary.

Other matters that exercised the councillors during the year were:

Gardening work on the registered common in front of Heath Wood House, Summer Heath – after lengthy discussions with the owner, the majority of the disputed works have been repaired, and it is hoped that the common will return to something approaching its natural state.

It came to the notice of the parish council that Turville Court was on the market. In view of this change in circumstances a special meeting of councillors decided to refuse the application for the lane to the Court to be taken over by Mr. Haigh. This is one of the only definite powers that a parish council has. However, we do not expect we have heard the last of this.

Watery Lane continues to be mentioned at our meetings. Parishioners will have noticed that the ugly metal gate at the Turville end has been replaced by wooden posts. Unfortunately we understand that the signage prohibiting motor vehicles has to remain. Hambleden parish decided they had no objection to keeping the metal gate at the Skirmett end.

Parishioners will also have noticed that we now have 30mph signs in Turville village. These were more or less imposed on us with minimal consultation, it being a county-wide initiative. It remains to be seen whether they make any difference to the problem of excessive speed through the village. The parish council is generally opposed to the proliferation of signs in the parish.

The highways department seems to have found some money from somewhere and more attention is being paid to the roads in the parish. Michael Wicks and I had a useful meeting with Ian Sharp, our new area technician, and he explained the work that was to be carried out. Drovers Lane is, at last, to be given some major attention starting this week. Potholes and other problems should, as ever, be reported to Highways On Call as and when they arise.

Thanks must go to James McConville for masterminding the 'roll-out' of Neighbourhood Watch throughout the parish. All the villages now have neighbourhood watch signs. Anyone wishing to receive neighbourhood watch updates by email should contact James.

By now I am sure you will all have met our police community support officer Jon Bateman. It is reassuring to at last have a regular police presence in the valley. A neighbourhood action group for the Hambleden Valley parishes has been set up and meetings are held every four or five weeks at which the problems most concerning residents are addressed. Any parishioners who would like to be involved in these meetings should talk to Michael Wicks. Jon can be contacted through the Thames Valley Police number 0845 8 505 505.

Film companies are not quite as attracted to Turville as they have been, perhaps because at the moment one of the cottages is clothed in a plastic mac after a disastrous fire a few months ago. However, I'm sure they will return and hope that Garrick Steventon will continue his good work as liaison officer.

With regard to affordable housing, the parish council is still concerned about empty and apparently unmaintained properties in the parish which could be brought into use, and to that end we are in contact with Mr. Harry Quarrell at Wycombe District Council who has responsibility for Empty Dwelling Management Orders.

After the success of 'Northend Nuggets' produced by Steve Blake, the parish council decided that a bi-monthly newsletter should be produced to keep parishioners up to date with the doings of the council and other matters of interest. The first of these publications has yet to appear, but it is hoped that it will soon become a regular feature.

The parish council now has a website – www.turvilleparishcouncil.org.uk, on which agendas and minutes of meetings and other items of interest are available, including contact details for councillors and links to Wycombe District Council and the village hall at Northend. Thank you to Cally Oldershaw for setting up and maintaining this and to Sally Swift for the photograph on the home page.

The parish council once again extends thanks to David Cairns who very kindly carries out the internal audit; and I must also thank Michael Wicks whose untiring work as parish clerk keeps us all, and especially me, on the right path.

Finally, thanks to you all for coming to our meetings and taking an interest in the parish.