

## **EDGMOND PARISH COUNCIL**

### **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**TUESDAY 11 APRIL 2017**

#### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

It is of concern to me that many people still regard the Parish Council as a group which meets behind closed doors making clandestine decisions about the Parish of Edgmond and its residents

Of course, nothing could be further from the truth.

The Parish Council is bound by a legal code called The Transparency Code. This means that all discussions, decisions, agendas and minutes of meetings must be freely available to members of the public. Residents can obtain information about Parish Council meetings, decisions, minutes of meetings and future meetings either by contacting the Clerk, viewing the village website or looking on the Parish noticeboards.

The Clerk is the spokesperson for the Parish Council and is the appropriate person to contact if you require information about what the Parish Council is doing or if you have suggestions or concerns about issues within the Parish which your Parish Council may be able to assist with. The Clerk always has her finger on the pulse and can give answers about particular concerns quickly and decisively. If she can't do so, she knows who to contact in order to find any required information. The position of Clerk is a paid one and so she is an employee of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council is unanimous in thanking Katrina for the work she does for Edgmond. She works way in excess of her contracted hours and this means that Edgmond has a successfully functioning Parish Council.

The other way to have contact with the Parish Council is to attend one of our meetings which take place in the Village Hall. Every meeting begins with a public session, which enables residents to bring concerns and issues to the attention of the Parish Council. Members of the public are then welcome to stay for the whole of the meeting if they wish though they will, usually, not be able to participate further. The schedule of meetings is available on the website.

The important thing to remember is that the Parish Council represents you, as residents of Edgmond, and we cannot deal with your suggestions or issues unless you contact us to make us aware of them.

The Parish website has been completely revamped and is very easy to access. All of the information concerning the Parish Council is available and it is well worth registering to receive updates. Thanks must go to Councillor Doherty and the Clerk for this upgrade and for ensuring that it contains all relevant information.

As has been stated many times in the past, Edgmond Parish Councillors do not claim expenses, even though they are entitled to do so. Several of our members attend related meetings elsewhere in the Borough and surrounding villages and do not claim travelling expenses for their attendance.

Although money is in short supply, the Parish Council is always pleased to consider applications for grant funding from local organisations. The organisations must, I stress, be local. Such organisations must complete an application form and this is available from the Clerk. The Parish Council will, in due course, expect recipients to report back on how the grant has been spent.

The Parish Council has a committee structure which meet in rotation to discuss particular issues. These committees then report back at full council meetings.

The committees are:

1. Planning and Development
2. Environment & Rights of Way
3. Highways, Transport, Road Safety & Street Lighting
4. Communication
5. Complaints & Appeals

The terms of reference, agendas and minutes of our Committees can be found on the Parish website.

The Complaints and Appeals committee is only triggered if there is a complaint against any aspect of the work of the Parish Council or against the conduct of the Clerk or a Parish Councillor that cannot be dealt with by the Clerk or Council. I am pleased to say that we have never had to convene this committee.

The other committees have been busy this year.

## **1. Planning & Development**

This committee sometimes meets before Full Council meetings to discuss current planning applications. The Parish Council does discuss and comment on all planning applications and passes local views on to Telford & Wrekin Council. However, the final decision rests with the Planning Authority although they do take our comments into consideration.

If there is a contentious planning application, as has happened several times in recent years, the Parish Council may call a special village meeting and may request that the application be considered at a Full Planning Committee meeting of T&W Council, rather than have a decision made by a delegated officer. These are public meetings and you are welcome to attend and listen to the debate.

The Parish Council can register to speak. Other speakers can include applicants, residents and developers. Each speaker is allowed a maximum of three minutes to make their case and then has to stop speaking. No further participation is allowed in the meeting.

There have been a lot of planning applications made this year most of which have been successful. Planning applications are available for viewing on the T&W Council website.

Currently there are seven building developments on the go in Edmond. Planning permission for these has either been granted this year or several years in the past. All of these developments are on infill plots within the village.

You will all be aware of the planning applications that have been made for the sites by Provosts House, Manor House Field and Egremont 'Meadow'. All of these applications were eventually refused by T&W Council with the considerable help, it must be added, of the Parish Council, Ward Members, individual residents and PHE.

You will all be aware of the planning application from Gladman Developments to build 85 houses on land off the B5062. T&W Council refused this application but Gladman has lodged an appeal. We have no information, at present, when this appeal will be heard. We hope that the T&W Local Plan and subsequently the Edmond Neighbourhood Plan will be passed before this appeal takes place so that we, as a community, can oppose it even more vigorously.

It must be remembered that all Neighbourhood Plans must comply with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This means that statements in the Plan which say 'we don't want

this' or you can't build there' will not be acceptable. Statements must be positive. Consequently, we are working hard with our advisers to develop an Edgmond Neighbourhood Plan that, while remaining positive (to comply with the NPPF), will also comply with the wishes of the residents of Edgmond.

Currently the Edgmond Neighbourhood Plan is undergoing revisions, following the Regulation 14 consultation, to accommodate the suggestions we received from residents and the statutory consultees that responded. Once the modified Plan has again gone out for scrutiny it is hoped that the Independent Examiner will find it satisfactory so that we can go to the Public Referendum as soon as possible. The result of the Referendum will, of course, depend on you, the residents of Edgmond Parish.

### Methodist Church

As you will know, the Methodist Church has been closed for some time. The Parish Council has contacted the church bodies concerned to enquire if they have any plans for the building. To date we have not had a reply.

### Village Hall

The new extension to the Village Hall is nearing completion and is due for its grand opening to the public on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May.

The Parish Council wishes to pass its congratulations on to the Village Hall Committee for all of the hard work that has been put into this project. Thanks must go in particular to Jeremy Bowman who has spearheaded this project supported by the Committee.

## **2. Environment & Rights of Way**

Following a successful anti-dog fouling campaign in Newport your Parish Council joined the 'I'm Watching You' scheme, which was run in conjunction with Telford & Wrekin Council. The scheme targeted High Street and Robin Lane, though it was recognised that these were not the only areas of the village that were affected. The scheme involved clearing all of the dog fouling from the areas involved. Then, for the next two weeks they were checked one or two times per day for fouling and 'deposits' were circled with yellow spray paint. It has to be reported that the scheme was not particularly successful. In Robin Lane, especially, grass verges are still being used as dog toilets. The top of Robin Lane near to Bayley Hills is particularly disgusting, as some dog walkers do not clear up their dog fouling. It seems that the threat of a £1000.00 fine is having little effect.

The Parish Council issues a reminder that fly posting on telegraph and street lighting poles is actually against the law. The Parish Council has been tolerating this method of communicating events to residents as it is well intentioned. We do ask, however, that those who put them up, just as quickly remove them after their event. This does also include the dangerous staples and drawing pins that are often left on the poles and fences.

There are still some "Say No to Development in Edgmond" signs around the village many of which are becoming covered with lichen and other green deposits. Your Parish Council is asking if they have served their purpose, in creating a village spirit against over development, and that it might be appropriate to remove them now. It does look as though householders have forgotten they are there and they are giving a poor image to the village.

### Rights of Way

Edgmond has more public rights of way than any of the surrounding villages.

Councillor Doherty is continuing to work tirelessly on the task of linking up our network of Public Rights of Way. All of this work does seem to be taking an inordinate amount of time but it has to

be borne in mind that T&W Council only has one Rights of Way Officer for the whole of the Borough. He is doing his best as he has limited resources available.

Councillor Doherty has also been working with members of the public (mainly Bill Barton) to clear debris from other Rights of Way so that they will, eventually, be walkable.

Thanks also go to members of the public who have adopted certain Rights of Way and are keeping them clear. There are too many to list all of you, but you know who you are and that your help is very much appreciated.

You may have noticed that the overgrowth around the War Memorial has been cut back and it looks a lot better. Thanks to Councillor Doherty and Keith Arbuthnot for this.

### Veolia Grant

The Parish Council was successful in its application for a grant from Veolia which was to be used for enhancing areas of the village. We were awarded £1000,00

It was decided, initially, to concentrate on making the area around the car park and playing field more attractive. The many bulbs that were planted are showing through the grass banks on either side of the car park. Some spare bulbs were planted in the grass at the top of Robin Lane.

Very recently some members of the Parish Council planted shrubs and Rowan trees on part of the playing field. Thanks go to Councillors Jones, Edwards, Doherty, Barton and Higginson along with the Clerk, Katrina Baker and Bill Barton for giving up their time to do the planting.

A bench has also been purchased and put into place on the playing field.

### Tree Project

Councillor Edwards is still guiding the tree project and you may have seen more trees appearing in hedgerows around the village. A major disappointment is that the Ash trees are suffering from Ash Dieback and cannot be planted. Councillor Edwards reported that they will have to be burned.

As we are coming into Spring the Parish Council would like to remind residents that hedges and trees will quickly overhang pavements and roads as well as potentially obscuring road signs. Overhanging hedges and trees can be a hazard for car drivers, cyclists and pedestrians especially as many of our roads in the Parish do not have pavements. Also, overhanging trees do obscure our streetlights, which tends to negate their purpose. Please take a look outside of your property and maintain yours for the safety of all concerned.

### **3. Highways, Transport, Road Safety & Street Lights**

The amount of traffic thought to be speeding through the village continues to be of concern. The Police are aware of the speeding issue and the Parish Council have applied to become involved in the 'Community Speed Watch Scheme'. This will enable suitably trained residents to monitor speed through the village, with a radar speed gun. Anyone registered as speeding can be reported to the police and an initial warning letter will be sent before further action is taken.

We are on a long list of applicants and will become involved in due course.

Traffic using Edgmond as a cut through to Telford continues to be a concern. The Parish Council has made T&W Council aware of its concerns and does make appropriate comments when planning applications for large numbers of houses are made.

Obviously we can't prevent vehicles from using roads in the village and a solution is difficult. Traffic calming measures such as speed ramps or 'sleeping policemen' is a major step and we

will have to be careful not to make life difficult for residents when trying to slow traffic down or encourage it to take alternative routes.

### Street Lights.

As the mercury vapour lights continue to fail your Parish Council has an arrangement with EON to replace them with LED lights. These are proving to be longer lasting and much cheaper to run. As a consequence our electricity bills are gradually reducing.

Thanks continue to go to Councillor Maurice Hughes for his nightly trips around the village checking on the lights. We also welcome reports from residents if they see a malfunctioning street light.

### Pavements & Road signs

Some time ago T&W Council asked the Parish Council to report on the condition of pavements and road signs in the Parish. A report, with suggestions, was sent in. We are waiting to see if anything will come from this.

## **4. Communication Committee**

This Committee is tasked with ensuring that the Transparency Code is complied with and it is very conscious of the fact that transparency is a legal requirement. All of the work conducted, on your behalf, by the Parish Council is fully transparent and is communicated via the website, copies of minutes available from the Clerk or on the Parish noticeboards.

A feature of the new website is that you can register for instant messaging to your email account so that you will always be up to date with new issues concerning the work of the Parish Council and the Parish.

### Parish Magazine

The Parish Council continues to acknowledge the value of the Parish magazine to the residents of the Parish and passes its thanks to the editor Sara-Jane Taylor for her continued efforts and attention to detail. In recognition of its value to the community the Parish Council will continue to make a contribution, currently £200.00, towards the costs of publication.

### Harper Adams University

Your Parish Council continues to have regular meetings with staff from Harper Adams University and this enables us to maintain good relationships. The University keeps the Parish Council abreast of future plans.

The University is recognised nationally and internationally as a high achieving academic institution and one of the best in its field. We are proud of its achievements and send our congratulations to everyone involved.

The Student Union is aware of the proximity of the University to the village and especially Edgmond Marsh. To this end it is aware of the effect its social events have on some village residents. The posting of information about an upcoming social event is a great step forward, as is the concern about placement of entertainment venues and sound monitoring so that any excessive noise late at night can be reduced.

### St Peter's School

The Parish Council continues to have contact with the Village school via regular meetings. The Parish Council is pleased that it continues to be a high achieving school and will continue to give support where it can.

### Safer Neighbourhood Team and Warden

Our thanks are extended to members of the Newport SNT and Mr Keeping for their work to keep us informed of local matters and to act on our behalf when necessary. The Parish Council appreciates their roles and looks forward to working with them in the future.

### Nextdoor Edgmond

This Social Networking site has recently been introduced to Edgmond. It seems to be working well and is probably playing a role in bringing residents together. It has already helped residents to inform one another of suspicious events, social events, helping to find trades people and there is even an Edgmond radio. Whilst this site has nothing to do with the Parish Council, it seems to be of benefit to the village so far.

Finally, on behalf of the local communities within the Parish, can I thank everyone who contributes to our lovely village in many different ways; our Ward Members who link us to Telford & Wrekin Council, Pam and Paul at the shop and the many businesses, groups and organisations that meet in the village to offer friendship, support, activities, services and facilities to both residents and visitors.

I know the Parish Council has praised our Clerk, Katrina Baker, on many occasions. However, this year during our complicated and time-consuming writing of the Neighbourhood Plan she has worked tirelessly. Without her extensive knowledge and commitment the Plan would not have reached the stage it is at now.

Councillor Robert Higginson

Chairman Edgmond Parish Council