

## **Woolhampton Parish Plan**

### **Background**

In November 2000 the then Government published a White Paper entitled 'Our Countryside – The Future'. The Paper initiated the concept of a Parish Plan the threefold purpose of which was: -

- 1.) To identify key facilities and services;
- 2.) To identify problems that needed to be tackled; and
- 3.) To demonstrate how the distinctive character and features of a parish could be maintained and preserved.

Parish Plans were therefore seen as a mechanism (by way of a survey) for identifying community needs and aspirations which could be taken forward via an Action Plan. The Government hoped that this agenda would encourage parishioners to play a greater part in the management of their Parish.

Parish Plans were required to be community led, supported by the local Parish Council, not least in order to obtain grant funding. West Berkshire District Council established a Parish Plan Grant Fund from which Woolhampton Parish would eventually obtain grants.

### **Parish Plan 2006**

A Steering Group was established which, although chaired by a Parish Councillor, had a majority of non-councillor members thus demonstrating that it was community led. A number of Parish Plan events were held, many of which were facilitated by the CCB, culminating in a Village Survey from which the 'Woolhampton Parish Action Plan' was produced.

The Plan contained some aspirational actions which were clearly not within the Parish Council's gift to enact. Furthermore, at the time of their inclusion in the Plan, prior support of those in whose gift they were, was unknown. Also, the resources required in terms of both 'labour' and finance to take them forward had yet to be realised.

Since the Village Survey was undertaken the village has grown, new residents have arrived and sadly many are no longer with us. In common with a number of Parish Plans it did not commit to or provide for a long-term vision but rather was concerned with actions for the 'here and now'.

### **Delivery of the Action Plan 2006**

Doubts have been expressed at a number of Parish Council meetings about the delivery and efficacy of the 2006 Woolhampton Parish Plan's Action Plan. It is noted that four of the Council's current members were neither councillors at the time nor active in the Steering Group. Therefore they may not be fully aware of the plan itself and/or the substantial benefits, direct and indirect, that resulted from its adoption by West Berkshire Council.

Given that Members are to be asked to consider the options available for community involvement in the future planning of the parish. It is therefore important that the allegation that the majority of proposed actions are either incomplete or unsatisfactory should finally be put to rest.

Should it be allowed to persist unchallenged then public confidence or participation in any future plan could be undermined.

Members are advised that all actions that depended on Parish Council involvement or were the sole responsibility of the Parish Council have been completed. The following is a summary of the Action Plan and its status.

## Action Plan – The Face of the Village

1. *Protect trees within the parish that have been identified as important.* The horse chestnuts adjacent to the fountain had TPOs applied. No other action outside the planning process.
2. *Raise awareness of our historic buildings.* No action outside the planning process.
3. *Take ownership and responsibility for the land adjacent to the Fountain.* The land is owned by West Berkshire Council which agreed to the Parish Council keeping it clear, together with land around the bus shelter.
4. *Restore the Jubilee Fountain.* Undertaken in 2008 at a cost of £6425 partially funded from the West Berkshire Parish Plan Grant Fund with a grant of £3548.
5. *Approach Highways to repair kerbstones and improve pavements.* Kerb trip hazards were removed from Station Road which was the main concern.
6. *Parking.* Parking on the footpath south of the Bath Road represented a serious danger to pedestrians. The current road scheme through the village eliminated that danger by installing kerbside bollards and additional resident laybys. This was funded by the Douai School development s106.
7. *Provide more litterbins, dog fouling bins and benches.* A litterbin and dog waste bin were installed at the Recreation Ground entrance, a litterbin on the Village Hall site and benches on the children's play area and adjacent to the tennis courts in Upper Woolhampton. These were partially funded by a grant from the Parish Plan Fund (see below).
8. *Implement a verge and foliage cutting scheme along the A4.* Not possible as this must rely on Highways and landowners. However, the verges adjacent to Parish Council land are maintained.
9. *Continue and expand the litter clearing programme.* Totally reliant on volunteers.
10. *Recycling.* All households now serviced.
11. *Pedestrian Crossing.* Funded by Douai School development s106.

## Action Plan – Communications

12. *Revise the Woolhampton Guide.* Not pursued due to lack of funding and interest.
13. *Improve Neighbourhood Watch Network.* Not possible due to lack of volunteers.
14. *Website.* Completed.
15. *Notice Boards.* Additional notice boards installed at Sunhill, adjacent to the tennis courts and in the village hall. Partially funded by Parish Plan Fund (see below).
16. *Communication.* Improved communication achieved by website, notices and occasional inserts in the Church Magazine.

17. *Walking*. 2000 illustrative parish walks for visitors printed. Partially funded by Parish Plan Fund (see below).

18. *Woolhampton Newsletter*. Published by the Parish Council until the end of 2009 but discontinued due to lack of contributors.

## Action Plan – The Village Community

19. *Village Hall*. Complete the building, landscape and provide play area. The village hall (cost £510,000) was funded by the sale of land and from a £20,000 low interest loan obtained by the Parish Council. The play area cost £20800 and was partially funded by a £9000 WREN grant and £9100 Douai Development s106 contribution.

20. *Leisure*. Meetings were held with an education provider – no outcome. New clubs/activities established.

21. *Mobile Library*. Continued service.

22. *Recreation Area*. Old cricket ground leased from Wasing Estate and reseeded. Goal posts installed.

23. *Village Shop and Post Office*. The continued existence of either was not possible to guarantee.

24. *Parish Plan and Village Design Statement*. Committee disbanded due to lack of interest.

## Parish Plan Fund Grants

Item 4 cost £6425 partially offset by separate grants of £3000 and £348

Items 7, 15 and 17 together cost £4740 partially offset by a grant of £4040.

Tony Renouf    December 2016