



## OUR COMMUNITY LIBRARY – SAVED FROM CLOSURE BUT MORE LOCAL SUPPORT NEEDED

Two years ago, as part of a cost cutting exercise, Bucks County Council [BCC] proposed the possible closure, or at best a reduction, of the Gerrards Cross Library. The Parish Council led a campaign to keep it open and a Working Party was formed to assume that task instead of the Parish Council.

For over a year the Working Party, chaired actively and vigorously by William Skerret, worked successfully towards forming the Community Library. Other members of the Working Party are: Charlie Lister and Patti Peck, responsible for the training and scheduling of the 85 or so volunteers working in the library; John Glasson, who developed the library website; Peter Fountain in charge of raising and controlling finances and Christine Bayliss, supervising children's and other activities.

The Parish Council wishes to record both its appreciation and admiration for the hundreds of hours of voluntary work put in by this Committee, to BCC for bearing much of the basic costs and to our army of Volunteers doing the librarian work. Without them all we would probably not have a Library, and certainly not one in its present flourishing form.

A library charitable trust was formed and its first AGM was held on 22 April at the offices of BP Collins, who have given generous support to the Library. William Skerret summarised the main achievements and future plans as follows:

**A priority of the Management Committee this year is to increase the number of Friends, only 59 out of a population of around 9000 in Gerrards Cross and Fulmer. Every Library user is urged to become a Friend - £15 p.a. or £25 p.a. for a Family. Forms are in the Library and the Treasurer, Peter Fountain would be pleased to provide them [telephone 01753 888385 or email [janet@ardlair.me.uk](mailto:janet@ardlair.me.uk)**



*Supporters at the first Library AGM*

### –Main Achievements during 2012/2013:

- Developed the partnership model and Business Plan with Bucks County Council -
- Recruited and trained over 85 volunteers to run the library and who work without any remuneration or benefits
- Recruited a new Manager and reduced staff numbers in line with the Business Plan
- Developed the Library Web site
- Upgraded and increased the book selection
- Upgraded the internal lighting and layout to make the library more user friendly
- Changed the signage to convey the move to a Community Library
- Developed and extended the range of children's activities available in the library

### Plans For The Next 12 Months

- To extend the library opening hours
- To conduct a survey of existing members' needs and suggested changes in the library service
- To detail the library present and future services and advertise such services to the local community
- To recruit and train more volunteers

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### PARISH PRECEPT REDUCED

The Parish Council is funded by you, the residents, paying a 'precept' which is included in your Council Tax bill. For the current year the Council has reduced this from £198,738 to £197,268 to reflect the current economic climate. It is a small amount but, sadly, not one you will see reflected in your Council Tax bill. This is due to the way the precept is calculated. The number of households as a ratio to Band D [the Tax Base] has slightly decreased. Therefore when the precept is divided by the number of households it shows a higher amount per household.

### EMPTY SHOPS AND OFFICES

Residents may be pleased to see that after some two years, the vacant site of Martins the Newsagents in Packhorse Road has now been rented to Pizza Express. Perhaps another food outlet might not have been everyone's first choice but it certainly should be an improvement on empty windows. Next door, Winsor London has opened. Selling ladies fashions, it is a 'pop-up' shop, opening for an initial 2 months to test local demand.

Station Road has been blighted by several empty office blocks. Now two of the blocks have applied for change of use. Nos 45 - 49 has applied for a part change to residential use so as to allow for ten flats with underground parking. For No 5, a change of use of the rear ground floor section from retail to residential to allow for two studio flats has been requested.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING CONTINUED.....

### HOWARD HOUSE NURSING HOME

The Perserverance Trust, owners of this long established nursing home in Vicarage Way, have announced it is to close on 31 July. It is home to 28 elderly ladies, many in their 90's and 1 of 101, and it is not hard to imagine their distress at losing their home. Less comprehensible is why six new residents have been accepted since 1 January this year, when the Trustees may have already decided, or at least, been seriously considering, closing the home.

### SUMMER ON WEST COMMON

Ayres Fair returns 31 May – 2 June and again from 27 – 29 September.

### GERRARDS CROSS TRADERS SUMMER FAYRE

The Traders, in conjunction with local Rotary Clubs, are organizing a Summer Fayre on 19 June from 5 to 9 pm. It is hoped all the shops and businesses will join in with special offers, gifts and competitions. There will be entertainment, food and drink and street stalls.

### SCANNAPPEAL OPEN GARDENS 2013

To raise funds for life saving equipment at our local hospitals, fourteen gardens in Buckinghamshire, including some in Penn, Chesham, Jordans and Little Chalfont, will be open from April to September. To request details telephone 01494 734161, email info.scannappeal@buckshealthcare.nhs.uk or visit [www.scannappeal.org.uk](http://www.scannappeal.org.uk)

## Meeting with the Managing Director of Chiltern Railways



Some 40 residents attended this meeting on 14 February at the Memorial Centre arranged by the Parish Council and chaired by Mike Lawson, chairman of the Council's Highways Committee. As well as the questions referred to below, residents unable to be present submitted a further 37 questions by email, all of which Mr. Brighouse, Managing Director of Chiltern Railways, said would receive replies if they did not duplicate questions asked at the meeting.

Rob Brighouse opened the meeting with a short presentation about developments since Chiltern Railways took on the franchise in 1996. Since then the business had grown 140%. but the line was still loss making. The service would be extended to Oxford by 2015 Nigel McAlister, South Bucks and Chiltern Access Group, said that Chiltern Railways, although not perfect, tried hard to assist disabled passengers. He then raised several areas of concern to such passengers –  
-When an assisted passage is pre-booked, it can cause great anxiety when approaching the destination station, as the passenger is often unsure if the arranged assistance will be available, potentially trapping the passenger on the train as it continues on the journey. He had been forced to pull the emergency handle in this situation.

- At stations, such as Gerrards Cross, where it is necessary for disabled passengers to use a lift to exit the station, there is concern whether the lift will be available. Information on the Chiltern Railways website relating to times that lifts are available is not always accurate and the helpline is closed after 8pm. Unexpected difficulties can also arise when the information given on the helpline does not match the situation on the ground.

- It is difficult for wheelchair users to access safely the station car park from the front entrance of the station, as there is no pavement between the two. The car park access from the London bound platform is easier, but it is not possible for wheelchair

users to use this route when returning from London.

Mr Brighouse stated that he was anxious to find solutions to problems concerning disabled access and agreed to meet with Mr McAlister to discuss all these issues in more depth.

In view of the level of interest expressed by residents, the Council is organising a meeting with Network Rail to cover infrastructure matters, which are not the responsibility of Chiltern Railways. Check our website for the date of this meeting and also to suggest topics.

The following questions and comments were made:

- 1** Why are platform tickets no longer available? It is sometimes helpful to be able to assist a friend or relative to board a train or meet them on arrival. *Answer: Station staff were expected to accommodate such requests.*
- 2** It would be very helpful to have the times that the lift is available on display.
- 3** Drop off parking is no longer permitted. 20 minutes is allowed at other Chiltern Stations; why not at Gerrards Cross?
- 4** There is a problem with flooding at the station entrance and at the bottom of the steps on the London bound platform. *Answer: This will be looked into.*
- 5** The state of the garden around the navy statue when arriving by train is very poor. The two spotlights which used to illuminate the statue are broken. *Answer: Both problems are being addressed and Chiltern Railways has arranged for a local garden centre to carry out the work. However approval from Network Rail is necessary before the work can start.*
- 6** When passengers return to GX from Birmingham, they have to change at High Wycombe and there is very limited time to change platforms. Can the fence between

platforms 1 & 2 be removed to make getting to the GX train easier? Also the train is often parked a long way from the buffers which means passengers have to walk further. Improved signage would help passengers find the platform more easily.

*Answer: The fence is required for safety reasons but the signage and information for the GX bound train could be improved. The position of the train at the buffers will be looked at to see if this could be improved.*

**7** The car park at GX Station does not have enough spaces and is too expensive causing commuters to park all day in surrounding streets. Are Chiltern Railways going to enlarge the car park by adding another storey or reduce charges? *Answer: Chiltern Railways have engaged someone to look at car parking issues on the entire route but as they are currently losing money, they would not consider reducing charges.*

**8** The footbridge over the line from Layters Way is in very poor condition. *Answer: The bridge is maintained by Network Rail not Chiltern Railway*

**9** Residents of Layters Way who have gardens backing onto the railway line are concerned about the noise generated by idling trains in the sidings near their homes. *Answer: Chiltern Railways is aware of this issue and is looking into it. The trains are kept running to ensure that the drivers are able to keep warm while waiting and there are also sometimes issues with trains failing to start when required if the engines are switched off.*

**10** Comment: Tony, the porter at GX Station, is always very helpful.

Questions submitted by email and not covered above related mainly to overcrowding at peak times and alterations to the morning timetable.

# Highways news

## THE CONTINUING SAGA OF THE TESCO LIGHTS

Following the village-wide survey in which nearly two thousand people [out of a population of eight thousand] took part, with around 90% expressing their dissatisfaction with the delays to traffic and pedestrians caused by the lights, Bucks County Council [BCC] commissioned an external company to recommend options for resolving our frustrations.. On 19 and 23 February BCC held two half-day exhibitions at the Memorial Centre, where four options were presented. Fifty percent of the display space went to the existing set up, which the villagers had overwhelmingly criticised. The other three options were:

- removal of the signal controlled junction at Packhorse Road
- removal of all traffic signals: with priority controlled junction
- Shared space
- The final option, which was discounted by the consultants, was a roundabout or combination thereof.

To read the company's report go to [http://bucksconsultation.buckscc.gov.uk/bucksccp/kms/dmart.aspx?LoggingIn=tempVar&nolP=1&filter\\_Status=1](http://bucksconsultation.buckscc.gov.uk/bucksccp/kms/dmart.aspx?LoggingIn=tempVar&nolP=1&filter_Status=1)

The BCC consultation closed on 8 April. BCC have agreed to meet with the Parish Council to review the findings but despite requests for a date, none has yet been forthcoming. The Council will keep you updated via our website.y.

## ILLEGAL PARKING

This has been significantly reduced thanks to NSL, the County Council's appointed parking services contractor, which started the On-Street parking enforcement service in South Bucks on 1 December 2012. Parking on the pavement in Packhorse Road [particularly outside M&S] has been reduced thanks to the installation of bollards on the west side. Despite having the money, approval and apparently no implementation issues, BCC have not yet chosen a contractor to install bollards on the east side opposite M&S.

## INSTALLATION OF LED LIGHTS

The Council has agreed that we will follow the example of other Parish Councils and replace the ordinary bulbs in our lampposts with light emitting diode [LED] bulbs in the main walking areas around the village centre and replace bulbs in other lamps as they fail. Although the initial replacement cost is approximately 50% higher because of some modifications to the lamp-post fittings, the ongoing maintenance and running costs will lead to long term savings.



Residents at the Tesco Lights meeting

## PARKING AT MORELAND DRIVE SCHOOL

In conjunction with Waitrose, the Council planted trees on the grass verges of Moreland Drive to try to prevent cars parking there while children are dropped off or picked up from the school. This seems to have had some success.

## THE VILLAGE CENTRE

With monies provided by Tesco, the Council funded the Traders Association to instal planters with trees in Packhorse Road. These have attracted many favourable comments as a positive step in making the village more attractive. The Council and the Traders are currently looking at increasing the number of planters. Hopefully, this year we will see flowers and flags decorating our village, similar to neighbouring villages, once BCC have carried out a structural survey of the lamp-posts on which to fix them.

## POTHoles

Potholes in and around Gerrards Cross continue to cause damage to cars The Council marks where they need to be repaired and encourages everyone to report them to BCC at [http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/transport/ea\\_report\\_problem.page](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/transport/ea_report_problem.page). There was some road resurfacing carried out by BCC last year and the first tranche of this year's programme has just been announced. This includes re-surfacing the remainder of Windsor Road from Hedgerley Lane down to the traffic lights at Stoke Common. In view of the poor legacy from the effects of snow and ice on our roads, it is hoped more re-surfacing, and not just repairs, will follow.

Illegal parking outside M&S



A LED bulb

# EAST AND WEST COMMONS

Residents have expressed concern at the recent clearing of areas of woodland on the Commons, which is planned to continue over the next few weeks. This is recommended in a woodland management plan, financed by a Forestry Commission grant. The plan requires the cutting down and removal of a substantial amount of holly. The removal of the holly and the general thinning out of a few carefully selected areas of the Commons will result in the creation of several new woodland glades, which will greatly improve the biodiversity of the woodland and allow for the growth and development of more desirable species of flora.

The funding from the Forestry Commission will also pay for ongoing safety inspections and consultations, as well as pay for the treatment of any regrowth of holly which might occur. We expect to receive approximately £4,000 per annum to offset the cost of this work over the next 5 years. The Council will also carry out essential maintenance on both Latchmoor and New Pond on West Common during the summer. This starts with the treatment (spraying) of



Cleared area of woodland opposite the Memorial Centre

both ponds to kill off the *Crassula Helmsli*, a prolific growing and problem weed. At the New Pond, the reeds have grown so tall and thick that residents can no longer view the pond from the Oxford Road. These reeds are going to be removed over the next few weeks.

Also, on Latchmoor Pond there are several tree stumps that are still producing fresh shoots and leaves each year. These leaves are falling into the pond and building up sedimentary layers on the pond floor.

During the coming months, we will dig out the roots to kill off any remaining growth. This will help to keep the pond clean and healthy.

The new footpath on West Common from the Wildwood to the Bull Hotel has been a great success. Although it was built with users of wheel chairs in mind, the path is now heavily used by many of our able bodied residents who enjoy the dry, level walk all the way from the A40 to the Packhorse Road.

## PLANNING

The trend continues in recent planning applications for the demolition of single older houses to be replaced with one large new property, or with two new properties, often very close together and with small gardens. However, architects do seem to be producing better designs, more sympathetic to their surroundings. Extensions, conservatories, garages, 'change of use' and boundary railings and gates still form a fair proportion of planning applications.

**We'd love to hear from you, it's your community, your views.**



**Please contact us on 01753 888018**

**or email us at**

**[clerk@gerrardscross.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@gerrardscross.gov.uk)**

## COMMUNICATION - MAKE YOUR VIEWS KNOWN

A new Council Committee, the Communications Committee, has been formed to improve communications with residents. We have this newsletter and, since 2004, a website and the Committee remit is to investigate new ways in which the Council could disseminate information more quickly and reach a wider audience. So, for a trial period of three months, a local firm managed the website and created new accounts on twitter and facebook. During this comparatively short period we gained 211 followers on twitter and 34 facebook likes with more joining every day. The Council has therefore decided to extend the trial for a further 3 months.

With residents' permission, we are collecting email addresses to send electronic copies of this newsletter, which will speed up the process and reduce costs. Please let us have your email address if you are happy to allow us to keep you updated in this way. And please tell us what you want and don't want so we can improve our services.



**Find us on  
Twitter and  
Facebook**

 @GXparishCouncil

 /GXParishCouncil

 [www.gerrardscross.gov.uk](http://www.gerrardscross.gov.uk)