

## Ewelme Parish Council – 2007 report

This is the time to reflect on what your Councillors have tried to achieve for residents of Ewelme over the past 4 years. The old village appraisal in 1998 really gave us a clear view of what people wanted, or were concerned about, and we worked hard to deal with the 15 or so top matters. Things arose along the way, but generally we really did accomplish what you all said you wanted.

The next step is to create the 2007 Village Plan, for which we have a generous grant. How do we want Ewelme to evolve? You'll hear a lot more about this very soon.

But back to the achievements: the recreation facilities, the pavilion, the website, the Ewelme News, the road verges and potholes, footpaths, the management of the Common and odd job work keeping the place tidy. Speeding has been a serious matter, and we have taken strong measures to discourage it – but it's a continuing challenge particularly on Green Lane.

The notice board there is well used, and we are still of a mind to recommend to the next councillors an information board for the Common at the car park. The Kings Pool management plan was a quiet but important initiative, and the common management plan likewise.

We've tidied up our records and secured arrears of wayleave fees from BT for their unrecorded phone poles.

We are still pursuing a low-cost housing scheme for some four dwellings, making haste slowly.

Lack of access to broadband services for the village has become an increasingly serious problem which we tackled head-on last year. We facilitated an extra 50 new lines for our broadband orphans, nearly all of which are now in use, and there are reportedly another 50 waiting for roadworks to get them over Wallingford Bridge. We expect SODC and OCC to pursue that little hitch vigorously for us to make sure the remaining orphans get the service they deserve.

The Parish's finances are in very good order, thanks to good forecasting and sensible spending. We have improved our processes to meet good practices - (we do have "Standing Orders", "Risk Assessments" and the like) - to satisfy both common sense and our masters. We believe in light bureaucracy, not jobsworth behaviour! We worry about the volume of paper mailed to us by higher authority to satisfy their "consultation" job tick boxes. It's an ever increasing challenge! Is the nation growing enough trees to cope?

We are delighted that we have good community contacts with RAF Benson. Although families come and go, they are still part of our community for the duration of their postings here, and we thoroughly respect them for what they do. The evening we set up to meet and socialise was very successful, and dispelled many misconceptions.

We have been working with the Chiltern Society to improve the management of the Watercress Beds and that seems on a constructive track.

We see some hopeful signs in reducing witless vandalism and criminal damage in the village. Our relations with the Police are becoming more effective as we take ownership of our task to keep them in the picture about specific problems.

I do want to thank my fellow Councillors and Clerk for their hard work, insights, teamwork, humour and endless goodwill. They have made my 12 years on the Parish Council seem very worthwhile, and pass very quickly.

I hope I've left the shop tidy and wish our successors, whom you will be voting for soon, every satisfaction in keeping this village in good heart for the next era.

Finally, I do hope we will hold onto our unique style of council meeting. Other villages don't know how we get the job done with our unstuffy, open but firm meeting style where those who turn up are always encouraged to have their say. But it works and I think others secretly envy our informality.

Neil Blake – Chairman – April 2007

