

**3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010**

**Public Question Time**

1) Mr.Alec Smith showed those present the Parish Pump in its new A4 format and said they were looking for new volunteers to help distribute it.

2) Mr.Les Bowden made the following observations

- The gully under Station Road by the little bridge just before the flood plain still has not been cleaned out; although the bridge itself has been repaired.
- The old raised wooden footbridge across the flood plain is a health & safety hazard – is it insured?  
Mrs.Stallard said that it belongs to the County Council who have said they will not remove it until the new raised walkway is in place.
- Water running off properties on Coombe Hill caused very bad icy patches on the road recently.
- The hedge to the south of the surgery still has not been cut back.
- The road into Eastlands is in an atrocious state of repair.

3) Mr.Lowman said the drain under the little bridge between Eastlands and South View was blocked and has caused flooding. It was reported that this has now been cleared.

4) Mrs. Nicola Hearne had written to the Parish Council with her concerns about the proposed use of the land to the north of the cemetery for allotments. She had also started a petition which was presented to the meeting with 225 names opposed to the allotments on the cemetery extension site.

A lively discussion followed with arguments for and against; although those against were not against the provision of allotments for the parish it was the proposed siting of them on the Parish Council owned land to the north of the cemetery that they were opposed to.

Against

- The proposal had not been advertised very well; not many people knew about it.
- Parking was an issue.
- If access could be gained either side of the cemetery it would be more acceptable; it was the fact that people would have to walk through the cemetery with wheelbarrows etc that people found unacceptable.
- Our cemetery is always kept nice and tidy; people didn't want to see mud etc on the pathway.
- There is no water on site, allotment holders would have to use the tap by the road gate.
- People liked to spend quiet time in the cemetery; this would not be possible with allotment holders walking through.
- Most people present had family buried in the cemetery and didn't think it was acceptable to have people traipsing through it.
- The cemetery is filling up quite quickly; the extension would be needed for burials in 10 – 15 years.
- It was pointed out that the soil in this area is poor, only the top couple of inches is good soil then it's down on solid clay.

- How is the land to be dug up for gardens? How are tractors etc. going to be got on-site?
- It was suggested that there was a scheme where people who couldn't manage their garden let it to someone who did want a garden and in return received some vegetables.  
Mrs.Stallard said this had been suggested but no one had come forward with a garden they didn't want.
- Children could be a nuisance running all over the cemetery.
- A Parishioner asked what the Church's view was on the subject; Mrs.Stallard replied that the Baptist Church did not have any objections but the Parochial Church Council was unanimous in their opposition.
- If there is any damage in the cemetery who would pay?

#### For

- ❖ Just because some of the allotment holders do not have family buried in the cemetery does not mean they will not respect it; some sort of working relationship could be achieved.
- ❖ The allotment holders do not want to have to walk through the cemetery; they are aware it is not an ideal situation.
- ❖ As many as possible would walk to the allotments and not use their cars.
- ❖ The allotment holders were willing to help keep the cemetery tidy if needed.
- ❖ The water would only be an issue if it did not rain.
- ❖ The allotments would be self policed; children would not be allowed to run all over the place.
- ❖ If there was no other access available other than to go through the cemetery it would be respected and agreements would have to be reached e.g. If there was a funeral allotment holders would not go through the cemetery 1 hour before and after the funeral taking place.
- ❖ Allotment holders would like to be given the chance to sit down and have a chat and discuss the situation. Respect is a personal thing; if there are people there mourning allotments holders would not go through.
- ❖ One potential allotment holder was deeply offended that they had been called disrespectful; they were willing to tend graves that were not being looked after.

It was pointed out that there many recreation sites around the parish; as allotments were recreation couldn't one of these sites be used. Mrs.Stallard replied that we have to have a certain amount of open space for games etc. Mrs.Clist said land at Longmead had been considered but it floods.

It was suggested that if the Parish Council owns the hedge/bank to the west of the cemetery this could be removed so that an access could be provided. Mrs.Stallard said she was not sure if we did own the hedge but the planning authorities don't like hedges being taken out.

A parishioner asked if the owner of the track to the east of the cemetery would allow access that way. Mrs.Stallard said the owner would not allow it. The owner, who was

present, said he had not been asked; Mrs.Stallard was adamant that she had asked him last summer and he had refused; the prompt reply was that the answer was still no. Mrs.Stallard said that we have a legal duty to provide allotments; she admitted this was not the ideal solution but at the moment as no other land was offered it was the Parish Council's only option and discussions have been going on now for some 18 months; all of which has been published on the parish notice-board and in the Parish Pump. It was proposed that the interested parties get together and talk it out. A parishioner said we are a democratic society and we should have a vote; another parishioner agreed that would be the fairest way.

Mrs.Stallard said points raised in the discussion would be taken into account in the Parish Council meeting to follow.