

DRAFT Minutes of the Fringford Annual Parish Meeting
Monday 9 June 2014 at 7.45pm
The Chinnery Room, Fringford Village Hall

Present:

Chairman: John Fargin

Clerk: Jane Olds

Cherwell District Council: Cllr Barry Wood

Oxfordshire County Council: Cllr Mrs Catherine Fulljames

Police: WPC Caroline Brown

Ten Fringford Residents

Apologies: Mrs Christina McCullagh

1. Welcome and Apologies

John Fargin welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting of Fringford and thanked them for coming. The apologies for absence were noted.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 20 May 2013, copies of which had been circulated and were on the Parish Website, were signed by the Chair as a true record of proceedings.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Chairman's Report

The Parish Council met 16 times between April last year and March 2014 which included four special planning meetings. A wide variety of topics were discussed as reflected in the Minutes which are displayed on the Parish Noticeboard and Village Website.

The Council has had a stable year this year, with no resignations or co-options but the elections in May left the Council with one vacancy which is open for co-option. The Parish Council will be discussing this at the next regular meeting.

Key issues and activities covered in last year's minutes include:

- Agreeing a formal policy procedure for the handling and communications of Planning Applications
- The Planning Application(s), Appeal and Inquiry regarding the Rosemary Cottages development
- Two Parish Councillors attending a Planning training course
- Damage to the verges on the Green and the road across the Green
- Encouraging school visitors to avoid parking on the Green
- Attempts to replace a field stile in Bancroft field
- The review of options of a Neighbourhood Plan or Community Led Plan (CLP)
- The organisation of a village meeting and the subsequent development and funding of the Fringford Village Plan
- Consideration of commercial options for Broadband and monitoring of the BT proposals
- Maintenance of the play area including the replacement of the swing seats and new bark

- Dealing with complaints regarding the pony on the Green
- Developing options for the repair of the War Memorial
- Provision of a new dedicated Parish Council noticeboard
- Arranging to have the chestnut tree leaves cleared
- Monitoring the development proposals for HS2
- Agreeing an increase in the Precept to cover exceptional costs such as the Village Hall renovation project and repairs to the road across the Green
- Arranging emergency repairs to the Village Pump
- Parish Council elections and
- Ensuring the safety of the Odd Fellows' Banner

Ten planning applications have been received, the majority of which have been for small uncontroversial projects, but also the application for the Village Hall renovation. However, responding to and progressing the numerous objections from villagers regarding the development at Rosemary Cottages has taken up a significant amount of Parish Council time. At the year end, Cherwell District Council is still to finalise this application.

The Chairman thanked all of the Parish Councillors who had given up, not just their time to attend some very lengthy meetings this year, but also for their time in reviewing documents and planning proposals and attending planning enquiries. The Chairman also thanked Jane Olds, the Parish Clerk, for her commitment and efficiency throughout the year.

All villagers are entitled to attend Parish Council meetings and either speak at the beginning if there is something they wish to raise, or observe the whole meeting. Meetings are in the Chinnery Room of the Village Hall on the third Monday of every month at 7.45pm. Any villagers who would like to receive the agenda and minutes by email should contact the Clerk know.

5. Financial Report

The Clerk presented the Statement of Accounts to the Meeting.

The Parish Council Books have been audited and the Statement of Accounts has been published which explain the Parish Finances.

The majority of the Council's expenditure has been spent on keeping the village clean and tidy, the purchase of the new noticeboard and general administration.

The Clerk reported that she had produced a full budget prior to the Councillors agreeing the Precept and Budget for the current year. There were a number of areas of high expenditure which needed budgeting for including £3,000 towards the repair to the road across the Green (to go with the £5,000 already put aside), £5,000 to assist with the fees for the Village Hall restoration project, £1,000 to help the Community Led Plan project and £5000 to help towards cleaning and repainting the names of the fallen on the War Memorial.

Following this planning, the Councillors agreed to apply to CDC for a Precept of £10,490 which is excluding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme grant of £617.09 and this now costs a Band D property in the village £41.30 for the year – an increase of £3.87 (32p per month).

The Councillors had also agreed to a Reserves Policy to meet various obligations which include holding three months' running costs, the possibility of having to pay for an election, a

contingency for the village hall, the play area and a general fund. The Clerk stressed the importance of having the Reserves policy as it is not possible for Parish Councils to borrow money unless it is agreed under a lengthy process with the *Public Works and Loans Board*.

The Council also pays for a number of other things including the maintenance, mowing and leaf clearing of the Green, emptying the dog bins, maintaining the playground and arranging for it to be inspected, the insurance and the clearing of snow when necessary.

The Clerk was pleased to report that a saving of more than £300 was made when a review of the insurance was undertaken.

The only grant made this year was to the Royal British Legion for the poppy wreath for Remembrance Day. As last year, the Statement also has the S137 expenditure allowance. This allowance is published by Government and gives Parish Councils the power to 'to incur expenditure for certain purposes not otherwise authorised'. It gives Parish Councils the power to spend some of the Precept/ Council money on things such as grants (ie for the poppy wreath) which wouldn't otherwise be possible.

The Clerk informed the meeting that the books were available for inspection.

6. Village Hall Committee Report

The Chairman of the Village Hall Committee was unable to attend but sent a report.

The Village Hall continues to be well used on a regular basis, as well as catering for a range of occasional bookings. There has not been any damage or repairs to deal with so the Committee has been able to focus on bigger things.

This time last year the Chairman had asked the meeting to 'watch this space' regarding the demolition and rebuild of the extension and the committee's eyes have not been off the job since! They started by surveying all hall users whose comments were very helpful in putting together a wish list. They have worked hand in hand with the Parish Council, which owns the hall, and have benefited tremendously from their support. Helen Fargin has done a fantastic job leading on this project. Together, the Committee engaged an architect, actioned all the necessary audits and surveys, finalised the plans and came up with a job specification which was put out to tender to three builders. In the meantime a plan for funding applications was put together and an exhaustive list of necessary supporting documentation was compiled. It was therefore very disappointing to discover that it would not be possible to proceed this year as planned. On the other hand the Committee is looking on the bright side and relish the opportunity to give the project more time which will undoubtedly lead to a better job next year.

Once again the main fundraising event was Bonfire Night. The fact that this fell on a Monday did not seem to deter the visitors. It was another phenomenal turnout and the Committee was able to supply all visitors with delicious food and drink so that they could enjoy another fabulous display in total comfort. Thanks go especially to John Mayo and his team for the fireworks display and to all the many volunteer helpers who ensure the safety and well-being of the guests.

The monthly Fringford Cinema has continued to grow from strength to strength. Attendance fluctuates a little but, because villagers are now expecting a regular showing, a good audience

can be relied on. Peter Silver is to be applauded for his professional screening and many thanks also to Christine Underwood for ensuring that refreshments are always available. The cost of the premises licence in addition to an event licence for each showing made the cost of supplying alcohol for sale prohibitive. This led the Committee to the decision not to re-licence the premises for the time being. Guests may bring their own alcohol to consume if they so wish.

The Chairman thanked the committee for their tireless work behind the scenes in ensuring that this village asset is maintained: Paul Applegate, Helen Fargin, Carol Reader, Pete Silver, Monty Smith and Christine Underwood.

7. Community Led Plan Chairman's Report

The Chairman of Fringford Village Community Led Plan Group, Tim Mustill, gave a report.

The initial meeting initiated by the Parish Council, to which over 70 villagers came, was held in late August 2013 and, with the help of ORCC (Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council) was a success. A number of volunteers came forward to help and a Committee was formed in September. The Group has had small exhibition stands at Bonfire Night and the Spring Fayre to gather villagers' opinions on the things that they like, the things they don't like and the things which they would like improved.

A number of ideas have already been put into action including better communication with the publication of the *Village Voice* newsletter (which has been generously sponsored by Simon Biltcliff, Webmart) and the bringing together of a wide variety of the groups in the village for the Spring Fayre - which was a huge success despite the weather forecast.

The Group has managed to obtain a grant of £750 from ORCC to help with the project and with the funding the Parish Council has awarded, there will be enough to produce a report.

The next step is to communicate with more groups such as the Youth Club.

The Group will have a stand at the Beer Festival to gather more opinions and then the final step will be to build a questionnaire, with ORCC's help, to be sent round to all villagers. It is hoped that this and the writing up of the plan will take place in the autumn.

The Chairman thanked the committee of John Fargin, Les Fagg, Pete Silver, Karen Davies, Phil Moon, Terry O'Sullivan for all their work.

The Parish Council also offered their thanks to the Steering Group members and also those involved in developing the *Village Voice* newsletter and those who organised the Spring Fayre.

8. Police Report

WPC Caroline Brown reported that nine crimes had been reported over the year. Two domestic, two theft from vehicles, one drug possession (which was on the main road, but in the Parish), two criminal damages – one to a padlock on an oil tank and one to a horse - a theft of a jockey wheel and tow winch and the theft of cabling sometime between April 2013 and 9 June 2014.

The Police try to support the village events, particularly the Beer Festival, the Spring Fayre and the fireworks (where they suggested villagers sign up for the Community Alert programme). Unfortunately because of the World Cup, the police may not be able to attend this year's Beer Festival.

WPC Brown was asked if nine crimes was 'good' and she agreed that it was and that crime is generally down.

9. County Councillor's Report

Cllr Fulljames reported that the boundary changes which took place last year have now given her responsibility for 22 parishes in the Ploughley Ward and this increase has had a large impact on her as her time is now so thinly spread. She has recently celebrated 25 years as a County Councillor.

Last year's elections have resulted in: 31 Conservatives, 15 Labour members, 11 Liberal Democrats, two Green Party members and four independents, three of whom were working with the Conservatives to enable the Council to function.

Cllr Fulljames regretted that the County Council had decided to increase the Council Tax to 1.99% (an increase of 46p per week for a Band D property), but explained that it had been necessary to maintain the services at their current levels.

The Councillor is keeping a close watch on the Rural Broadband rollout and has reminded the team that it is these rural areas and particularly the farming communities which need the greatest improvement. She encouraged the village to appoint a broadband champion – which had already been done.

Cllr Fulljames has been involved in the roads and infrastructure side of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in her capacity on the Planning and Regulation Committee. She asks that if any villagers see potholes which need repairing to report them directly to fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk.

One of the major issues which has taken up a significant amount of the Councillor's time has been the incinerator at Ardley which is due to start testing in August / September and be commissioned shortly afterwards. This will be taking the un-recyclable rubbish from the whole of Oxfordshire and much more and she has grave concerns about the traffic delivering to the site which will affect the area.

The new train line from Oxford to Bicester and beyond has affected some of the villages in the southern part of the ward and she has been working with Barry Wood and a number of villagers on the HS2 proposals.

The Councillor has been supporting the owners of White Cottage on the A4421 following a car collision into their porch and she is hoping to have more barriers installed on the road by the house.

She is pleased that Fringford is a happy and mostly non-problematic (from her point of view) parish. However, if a villager would like to raise anything with her, they can contact her directly or via the Parish Clerk.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Fulljames for her report.

10. District Councillor’s Report

Cllr Wood reported that the new hospital, the first Community Hospital in Oxfordshire for 40 years, is well under way; among other things it will have outpatients’ clinics from the John Radcliffe and Horton and an X-Ray department.

The Bicester Town station and railway development are also under construction. It has been agreed that the car parks will be used by commuters on week days and at weekends and bank holidays they will be used by Bicester Village, who are also going to put a further multi-storey car park at the end of the site nearest the station.

Planning consent had been given on the site next door to Wyevale for a supermarket and business park, but it is not clear at present whether Tesco, who have recently changed their strategic business case from large supermarkets to ‘metro-style’ shops would be the final developers of the site. Work has been suspended for twelve months.

The development on Franklins Yard car park will shortly be starting which will provide an office for the District Council, restaurants, a new Library and a hotel on the top floor which it is hoped will help with the visitor economy.

The SHMA was published in April four months after the District’s Local Plan was submitted to the Planning Inspector. The Inspection of the Local Plan commenced on 3 June, but because the SHMA predicted that a further 6,000 houses were needed from Cherwell’s initial calculation of 16,000, the inspection has been suspended for six months to enable further work to be completed on the figures. However, the overall strategy to develop in the towns, keeping the villages in their rural settings with minimal building has been agreed by the Planning Inspector.

The District Council has been under examination by the Boundary Commission. The initial conclusions are that the District should be divided into larger, three-Councillor wards. However, Cllr Wood would like to keep the Shelswell Benefice as one Ward and is working on this at present.

Cllr Wood was pleased to report that the District did not put up their portion of the Council Tax this year, but are looking at other ways to generate savings including joining up with an additional district council – Stratford.

The other major issue which Cllr Wood has been involved in has been the appeal regarding the Rosemary development and the handling of the process by the District Council.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Wood for his report.

11. Any Other Business

No further items were raised.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and the meeting concluded at 9.20pm.

Signed Dated