

**Minutes of the Fringford Annual Parish Meeting  
Monday 18 May 2015 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

**21 Fringford Residents**

**Apologies:** None

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

John Fargin welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting of Fringford and thanked them for coming. No apologies had been received.

**2. Minutes**

The Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 9 June 2014, 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 14 times between April last year and March 2015 which included one additional planning meeting regarding the Roesmary development on Main Street and an additional meeting to discuss the Village Hall project. 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 and was pleased to co-opt and welcome Jan Macijewski following the elections last year.

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

- The ongoing development of the village hall renovation project, working closely with the Village Hall Committee and including the several successful applications for grants for a total of over £200,000
- The 'repair' to the road across the Green
- Encouraging school visitors to avoid parking on the Green
- The Fringford Village Plan (CLP)
- The installation of fibre broadband
- Maintenance of the play area including the provision of yet more bark
- Applying for and winning the £6,400 towards the repair of the War Memorial
- Monitoring the development proposals for HS2
- Repairing the Village Pump housing
- Monitoring the Rosemary Development planning applications and inspections, taking input from parishioners and responding where necessary

- Adoption of new Financial Regulations and Standing Orders to comply with the new Localism Act and the Local Audit and Accountability Act

Nine planning applications were received, two of which were for Rosemary and two of which were for the Warden's dwelling at Glebe Leisure. The others have been for smaller projects.

The contract for the renovation work for the War Memorial has now been placed and it is planned that this will be undertaken over the next few months. Many villagers have become involved in the discussion about its location and a very large majority were in favour of it remaining in the churchyard. The Parish Council would like to acknowledge the enthusiasm and hard work of Kevin Tobin in working with the Parish Council to bring the project towards a successful conclusion. Thanks also go to the parishioners who have made donations towards the costs of renovation and to the Church, Cherwell District Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund who have made grants.

The Fringford Village Plan, the village's Community Led Plan, has progressed as the Parish Council originally envisaged and the Chairman thanked those villagers, particularly to the Chairman of the group – Tim Mustill – who have stepped forward to make this happen in general and for those involved in the key initiatives such as the Village Voice, The Spring Fayre and the extensive and professionally administered village questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire have already begun to influence the working of the Parish Council, which also looks forward to hearing more from the final analysis of the data.

The Chairman thanked Loraine Harwood for organising the annual village litter pick on 18th April along with her band of eight volunteers.

One of the key assets the village has is the Village Hall. However, this does not run itself and the Chairman wished to express the Parish's gratitude to Christina McCullagh and her Village Hall Committee members for both running the hall and, in the last year expending a huge amount of effort in fundraising to secure the hall's sustainability through the soon to start renovation project.

It has also been good to recognise an increased level of interest in village affairs and increased public attendance at Parish Council and Fringford Village Plan meetings this year.

The Chairman thanked all of the Parish Councillors who have given up not just their time to attend some very lengthy meetings this year but also for their time in reviewing numerous documents and planning proposals. Particular thanks go to Vice Chairman, David McCullagh, for his input and support on many topics. It is also worth recording and acknowledging John Reader who has been on the Parish Council for exactly five years and has not missed a single meeting.

The Chairman wished to have it recorded that all of the Parish Councillors are volunteers and make no claims for expenses on travel or other costs.

Thanks also go to Jane Olds, the Parish Clerk, for her commitment and efficiency throughout the year and for keeping the Parish up to date with legislation and best practice.

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 generally in

the Chinnery Room of the Village Hall on the third Monday of every month at 7.45pm, but while the Village Hall project is under way, meetings will be held in School. Any villagers who would like to receive the agenda and minutes by email should contact the Clerk.

## 5. Financial Report

The Clerk presented the Statement of Accounts to the Meeting.

The Parish Council Books are currently in the process of being 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, support to the Village Hall project, the repair to the road across the Green and on 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 £2,000 for the repair of the village pump housing, £6,600 to assist further with the fees for the Village Hall project, £800 for some maintenance work on the playground equipment and for more new bark, and a further £500 to help towards the War Memorial restoration project.

Following this planning, the Councillors agreed to apply to CDC for a Precept of £11,014 which is excluding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme grant of £617.07 and this now costs a Band D property in the village £43.09 for the year – an increase of £1.79 per Band D household.

The Reserves Policy was updated to meet various obligations which include holding three months' running costs, the possibility of having to pay for an election (at £1,600), £1,000 from the Crosslands S106 contribution, 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 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 would be available for inspection shortly.

## 6. Village Hall Committee Report

Christina McCullagh reported that the Village Hall Committee have had a stable and focused year in which they have been able to put much in order at the same time as making preparations for the launch of the renovation project.

Having reviewed hire charges and conditions of hire, they created job descriptions for all roles including caretaker, cleaner and bookings secretary. A monthly bookings overview is circulated to committee members and regular monitoring meetings are held between the chair and the caretaker.

They have, at long last, with Christine Underwood's patience and persistence, understood the requirements for the sale of alcohol and are now the proud owners of a premises licence with the committee acting as licensee.

The bidding process for the renovation project has aligned the Village Hall with the Parish Council. The Village Hall Committee has had to update and clarify the lease from the Parish Council and this has caused them to review their constitution which is still a work in progress.

The Committee has effectively put the house in order before pulling it down!

Monty Smith continues to monitor the finances. Last year they had reached a stage where the hirers were covering the cost of maintaining the hall. Fundraising over the last few years has allowed them to put a commendable £20,000 into the renovation.

The regular fundraiser, the cinema nights, are becoming established and attracting steady and larger audiences, with the occasional full house. Thanks must go to Pete Silver and Chris Underwood for their great commitment to and management of this. Anthony and Joe Parker continue to run bingo and they have also had some success through Easyfundraising.

Bonfire Night last year was a true bonanza thanks to the trusted team and the countless volunteers from the village. They had record numbers, the best display - thanks again to John Mayo and his team - very satisfied diners and made an amazing profit. The evening was marred only by parking issues. This has renewed fears around access to The Green in case of an incident and led the Committee to consider the establishment of a one way traffic system for the night. This alone would prove so costly that the event would not pay for itself and is anyway, not a failsafe solution. Bonfire Night has become the victim of its own success so that, after much soul-searching, the Village Hall Committee and Parish Council will be discussing cancelling cancel this year's event and plan something smaller in 2016.

And finally to the house which is due to be pulled down w/b 8th June and will soon rise again. The village owes a debt of gratitude to Helen and John Fargin without whom this would not be happening. The Village Hall Committee has achieved something amazing for Fringford in raising some £240,000. It is now over to the builders, but work continues in managing them, administering payment and communicating with the village.

A huge debt of thanks is owed to the small but select 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**

Tim Mustill, the Chairman of Fringford Village Community Led Plan Group reported that it was hoped that everyone in the village had been touched by the activities and aims and objectives of the group.

He had envisaged that the project would take a year, but he realises now that this was ambitious and that more time was needed.

There were a number of tangible successes which had already been produced from the group: The Village Voice goes from strength to strength and the Spring Fayre was fantastic.

The Group has attended a number of activities around the village over the last year to gather views including attending the Beer Festival; they have also walked around the village to see what areas could do with improvement or assistance.

The Village Survey, which was very professionally presented, was a major task and included everyone in the Parish, not just the village. Every questionnaire was delivered and collected by hand and all residents had the opportunity to complete it. The response was an amazing 76%. This also could not have been done without the army of volunteers.

The quantitative analysis had been completed and the qualitative analysis was currently being completed.

The preliminary results were presented at a Feedback Meeting in March which was very well attended.

The next step is to produce a draft report which it is hoped will be published by September and to prioritise the next steps which may include creating working parties to oversee individual projects and to monitor progress.

John Fargin thanked Tim Mustill for all his hard work in leading the group and all the team who have helped.

## **8. Police Report**

The Police were unable to attend.

## **9. County Councillor's Report**

Cllr Fulljames reported that the County Council had set the annual budget in February and despite the fact that they had managed to achieve savings of £204m, further savings were still needed to be made. Savings had also been made in the staff area by reducing the number of directors by 50%, middle managers by 40% and other staff by 30%; however, they still felt it was important to pay the lowest paid members of staff the Living Wage. It was decided to increase the Council Tax by 1.99% (or 46p per week for a Band D property). A huge, and increasing, amount of the budget is spent on adult social care.

OCC has been working with BT on the project to roll out broadband to 90% of the County and Cllr Fulljames was pleased to hear that the village was already connected.

The prospect of HS2 is of concern and Cllr Fulljames is working with OCC and CDC to help mitigate the issues for the residents. She is very concerned about the amount of congestion which is likely to be caused by the construction traffic, particularly the amount of aggregate which will be needed, from Junction 8 to 11 on the M40 and at the Barley Mow and Baynards Green roundabouts.

Cllr Fulljames was pleased to say that one of her first grants through the Big Society fund was to the Cinema project a few years ago, and that one of the last (as the fund is being closed) will be to go towards the upgrading of the electricity for the Village Hall.

Cllr Fulljames appreciated receiving the Village Voice and thanked the Parish Council for all their work.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Fulljames.

#### **10. District Councillor's Report**

Cllr Wood was pleased to announce that CDC had not put up the Council Tax for the last six years. The substantial savings have predominately been achieved through the joint working with South Northamptonshire, a model which has been subsequently emulated by different Councils and is now common practise. However, there is still more to do and CDC will not be complacent.

The Local Plan was submitted to the Planning Inspector last year, but due to an additional report (the SHMA) published after the submission, the Planning Inspector postponed the hearing and asked for further work to be completed before the Hearing. This Hearing was held in December and the announcement was due in April, but because of the General Election it was postponed until mid May. It should be received by CDC very shortly.

Cllr Wood welcomed the news that Tesco was going to go ahead with the building of the new store on the opposite side of the road from the current store. This is one of only two projects Tesco is continuing following their financial problems. Bicester Village will take over the old Tesco site and as part of this plan have put in a traffic management system around the 'Esso' roundabout to turn it into a 'hamburger-style' roundabout. A new road to the east is also planned from the Vendee Drive roundabout towards Graven Hill. Behind the new Tesco will be a business park. It is hoped that the new Tesco will be completed in about 18 months.

Also at the Vendee Drive roundabout, the new Park and Ride car park is starting to be constructed, to be finished in the autumn. It will be able to accommodate 750 cars and will be for commuters to Oxford during the week and used by Bicester village as an overflow at weekends and bank holidays.

Another transport initiative will be the reconstructed train line between Oxford Parkway (Kidlington) via the newly named Bicester Village Station (formerly Bicester Town), which is due to open in October, and Marylebone.

These projects should go a long way to solving the current traffic problems and, it is hoped, take traffic off the A34.

CDC too, has concerns about the HS2 Construction traffic and is looking to mitigate the impact on the area.

Another issue which is of great importance is health and particularly the provision of doctors' surgeries. CDC is aware that a number of GPs in the Bicester area are considering early retirement and recognises that this is an issue which will require monitoring and assistance.

Cllr Wood was asked about the new Howes Lane road through the Eco town and how CDC intends to improve the infrastructure. Cllr Wood responded that a number of traffic impact studies had been undertaken and that whilst it is proposed that the new road will be an urban one with a 30mph limit, there will be the additional road from Vendee Drive round to the east which will reduce the traffic coming west. Part of the proposal for the Howes Lane road will be to remove the dog leg at 'ten ton bridge' on the Bucknell Road and tunnel under the railway at an alternative site which will be paid for by 'planning gain' or S106 funds.

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 8.45pm.

Signed ..... Dated .....