

**Minutes of the Fringford Annual Parish Meeting
Monday 16 May 2016 at 7.45pm
The Chinnery Room, Fringford Village Hall**

Present: **Chairman:** John Fargin
 Clerk: Jane Olds
 Cherwell District Council: Cllrs Barry Wood and Ian Corkin
 Oxfordshire County Council: Cllr Catherine Fulljames
 8 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 18 May 2015, 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 two 'extra' Planning Meetings. As always a wide variety of topics were discussed as reflected in the Minutes.

In terms of people the Council had a stable year, with no resignations. Attendance at meetings had generally been very high.

Five very significant topics had featured in the activities of the Parish Council this year.

The development of a response to Cherwell District Council's Local Plan Part 2; the renovation of the Village Hall; the conclusion of the Community Led Plan project; the ongoing redevelopment and enhancement of Parish Council operating procedures and the redevelopment of the Village website

Response to CDC Local Plan Part 2

The Parish Council provided an extensive and robust response to CDC's Local Plan Part 2. This Plan is the first step in the definition of where housing will be built in future, including in rural villages. The PC was fortunate to have significant input from the views of villagers as expressed in the CLP questionnaire. This feedback enabled the development of a Parish Council housing policy which can be found on the village website. Further discussion with CDC was awaited.

The renovation of the Village Hall

The Parish Council played a very active role in the fundraising and project management of this £250,000 budget renovation. Challenges with aspects of the architectural planning required a good deal of input and close supervision of the works.

Working closely together, the Village Hall Management Team and the Parish Council also managed complex funding, cash flow, VAT and contractor payment processes.

Initial feedback on the layout, functionality, design and décor from both villagers and hirers has been very positive.

The PC would like to express its thanks to all those involved in the development and implementation of this project which we hope has delivered a village hall fit for the future.

The conclusion of the Community Led Plan project

The PC initiated Community Led Plan project has come to its conclusion and it has achieved its primary objectives. The small group who have worked hard on this project has done a great job and the PC would like to thank them for their time and effort.

The CLP questionnaire and its analysis has provided the PC with some useful, broad insights into what Parishioners like and don't like and what they want and don't want! This process has resulted in the Fringford Village Plan.

The CLP group have now concluded their work and have handed over responsibility for ongoing development to a number of new groups which have already started to meet to identify and develop potential projects. These include a Social Group, Neighbourly Support Group, Nature Group, Village History Group, Transport and Cycling Group, Business Group and a sports group.

It is good to see so many villagers participating in these groups and influencing the improvement of village life; our thanks go to all of them.

The ongoing redevelopment and enhancement of Parish Council operating procedures

Over the last few years and particularly in this last year, the PC has been reviewing and updating its basic operating approach and procedures. The key objectives of these changes has been to ensure that the work and decision making of the PC is open, transparent and accessible. Many changes have been made, most noticeably in the area of planning where now all discussions and decisions on planning applications are made within public meetings, where the procedures for informing and gaining feedback from neighbours have been improved and where applications are now shown on the village website.

All the changes to standing orders and procedures have been based on guidance from NALC (National Association of Local Councils) and SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks).

The redevelopment of the Village website

The PC has taken on, with the support of a small group of villagers the maintenance of the www.fringford.info website. This has enabled the PC to comply with the Localism Act requiring PC agendas, minutes, policies etc. to be available on the Internet.

Many other topics have been dealt with as reflected in the minutes including the ongoing issue of damage to the village green by careless driving and parking, the renovation of the War Memorial, Speeding, footpaths, playground, bus service cuts, noise from shooting.

Eleven planning applications have been received. Most have been for small, mostly extension projects.

We now have a splendid Village Hall which is up to date and fit for the future. Its ongoing maintenance, management and fundraising are undertaken by The Village Hall Management Team. This is a significant, time consuming and sometimes challenging task and the PC is very grateful to the Team and its leadership for their efforts on behalf of the village.

On behalf of the Parish Council I would like to thank Loraine Harwood and her group of volunteers for continuing to undertake the village litter picks.

The Parish Councillors all give up their time to attend meetings, read a seriously large number of documents, to carry out planning consultations and often to undertake many other tasks. All of the Parish Councillors are volunteers and make no claims for expenses on travel or other costs.

On a personal note, as I hand over the Chairmanship after about three years I would particularly like to thank David McCullagh as the Vice Chair and Jan Maciejewski for his invaluable help on all things practical. Thanks also go to Jane Olds, the Parish Clerk for her commitment and efficiency and for keeping us 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. We generally meet here in the Chinnery Room of the Village Hall, usually, on the third Monday of every month at 7.45pm, but while the Village Hall project is under way, we will be re-locating to school. If you would like to receive the agenda and minutes by email, please do let Jane, the Clerk, know.

5. Financial Report

The Clerk presented the Statement of Accounts to the Meeting.

The Parish Council Books had been inspected by the Internal Auditor and the Statement of Accounts had been published which explained the Parish Finances.

The Council's expenditure in the last financial year was spent on supporting the Village Hall project, keeping the village clean and tidy, the War Memorial Restoration project, the repair to the pump structure, 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.

Following this planning, the Councillors agreed to apply to CDC for a Precept of £11,454 which was excluding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme grant of £617.07 and this now costs a Band D property in the village £43.67 for the year – an increase of 58p 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), a contingency for the play area, starting to save for the replacement of the thatch on the pump 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 major project was the village hall refurbishment project. Grants of £79,335 were applied for and received from two funders – WREN (the Calvert landfill operator) and Opes/Grantscape (the Finmere Quarry landfill operator) – and these had to be managed and administered in stages, together with the payments to the contractors. Five VAT reclaims for the project were made which amounted to a total of £18,409 (the other £2,314 was for general Parish Council expenditure).

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

Christina McCullagh sent a report.

At this time last year, we were about to start the job of clearing out the extension and putting furniture into storage at Waterloo Farm, courtesy of David and Philippa Taylor, before demolition commenced in June. The house did indeed fall but has risen again more splendid than we could ever have imagined. I hope you agree and have had a chance to see Peter Silver's account of the project on You tube. We are indebted to you for the support and extra monies you were able to provide when we were faced with extra expenses that could not have been foreseen: deeper foundations, new water pipes, fire alarm, insulation and decoration of the main hall.

Nobody will appreciate the amount of time spent on planning, liaising, negotiating, reminding, checking and perfecting that the team spent on this project. Special thanks need to go to John Fargin who oversaw the site, spoke daily with the builders and dealt with many potential disasters together with Helen Fargin who supported John whilst keeping records and administering payments superbly with the aid of Jane Olds.

We were able to manoeuvre hirers in and out of the main hall until the end of July and classes could recommence at the beginning of September with the help of the school and understanding hirers. We now have a healthy set of regular users and have seen an increase in occasional weekend hirings. Regular fundraising continues in the guise of cinema nights and bingo. This all means that we are still solvent and are looking forward to receiving our first

RHI and feed-in payments. We have also been able to find an alternative insurer who charges half the premium we were paying, for like for like cover.

Work has continued since September with interior and exterior design work and we have just submitted a new application for funding to help with the purchase of acoustic panels, curtains and chairs. We have just had to have the roof of the main hall repaired following storm damage, courtesy of the previous insurers, and are looking to install gates at the sides of the hall and repair the fencing in front. We have also been successful in our bid to the BHF for a defibrillator which has been installed and for which training has begun.

The new Chinnery Room is now looking resplendent thanks to the work of the newly formed history group and extremely generous support from Gary White, Green Farm, who has produced and donated the new display materials.

In addition to formalising our lease with the Parish Council until 2094, we are about to update our constitution. We have renewed our Terms and Conditions and Booking form and will review hire costs next year.

We owe thanks to the small management team: Paul Applegate, Helen Fargin, Peter Silver, Monty Smith, Christine Underwood and Joe and Anthony Parker who take care of bookings and the building.

7. Village Groups Reports

A number of village groups had been formed as a result of the Village Plan including the business Club, the Cycling Group, the History Group, the Nature Group, the Neighbour Support Group, the Social Group, the Sports Group.

The Cycling Group reported that they intended to hold monthly Sunday cycle rides which would be advertised around the village.

The History Group reported that the group had grown in the last few weeks and they had opened their first exhibition. The first viewings were in support of two key village events.

Firstly, on 7 May, the exhibition was open in the Chinnery Room for the launch of Martin Greenwood's new book *The Real Candleford Green, The Story of a Lark Rise Village*. The second event was the public opening of the exhibition during the Fringford Spring Fayre on 14 May. The exhibition was in three parts, a permanent display centred around Julie Barrett's map of Fringford using pictures and text to show the key features and buildings around the village; *The Real Candleford Green, Fringford as Flora Knew It* which included material from Martin Greenwood's new book and Kevin Tobin's *Fringford men who served in the First and Second World Wars*. The Group thanked the following people for their contributions, Martin Greenwood, Kevin Tobin, Gary and Julie White, Peter Silver, Julie Barrett, John and Helen Fargin, Debbie Vernon, Carole Thomson and John Galuszka.

The Group welcomed new members.

The Neighbourly Support Group had been formed to support neighbours hoped to be able to help villagers.

8. Police Report

The Police were unable to attend.

9. County Councillor's Report

Mrs Fulljames reported on the County areas of concern.

10. District Councillor's Report

Cllrs Wood and Corkin who had been recently elected to the Fringford and the Heyfords Ward attended the meeting.

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.

Cllr Wood further reported on District areas of concern.

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 9.00pm.

Signed Dated