

**Minutes of the Fringford Annual Parish Meeting
Monday 15 May 2017 at 7.45pm
The Chinnery Room, Fringford Village Hall**

Present: **Chairman:** David McCullagh
 Clerk: Jane Olds
 Cherwell District Council: Cllrs Barry Wood and Ian Corkin
 Oxfordshire County Council: Ian Corkin
 8 Fringford Residents

Apologies: Mick Cowland, Jan Maciejewski, Tim Mustill,

1. Welcome and Apologies

David McCullagh 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 16 May 2016, 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

David McCullagh reported that the Parish Council had met 13 times between April last year and March 2017. A wide variety of topics were discussed, as reflected in the Minutes which were displayed on the Parish Noticeboard and the Village Website. The Council has had a stable year, with no resignations.

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

Receipt of seven planning applications.

The contract for the War Memorial was finally concluded.

The Fringford Village Plan, the village's Community Led Plan, had continued to progress under the Chairman of the group – Tim Mustill .

The *Village Voice* under the editorship of Helen Fargin and Linda Mustill had continued to flourish and served as an excellent communication conduit on village matters.

The Village Hall continued to progress under the active guidance of the committee.

The Council had responded to the Local Plan Part 1, and to Oxford's unmet housing need by representing the best interests of parishioners. It had also identified the fact that it needs to be made aware of any expressions of interest under the "call for sites option".

The Council engaged in the debate on Parliamentary Boundary Changes, expressing the view that local needs would not be satisfactorily met if the Parish were to be incorporated into a constituency based in Henley on Thames.

During the year new bollards were installed to mark the raised concrete sections on the grasscrete parking areas of the green.

The Parish continues to safeguard the boundaries of the Village Green by trying to find alternative solutions in conjunction with positive assistance from the school to manage the parking issues.

In April the Parish took on the mowing responsibilities in the village from Oxfordshire County Council and at the same time extended the area to include the outskirts of the village.

The Village Playground has reached the end of its natural life and plans are in hand to form a working party of parents to organise its renewal.

An application was made for a Community bus to assist with the problem of the lack of local public transport. Sadly, we have recently learnt that this bid was unsuccessful.

Mr MrCullagh added his thanks to all the Parish Councillors who have given up their time to attend meetings and to record that all of them are volunteers and make no claims for expenses. 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 held in the Village Hall on the 3rd Monday of each month at 7.45pm

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 keeping the village clean and tidy, the War Memorial Restoration project 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 £11,683 which was excluding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme grant of £617.07 and this now costs a Band D property in the village £44.93 for the year – an increase of £1.27 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, saving for the replacement of the thatch on the pump and a general fund. Also included in the Reserves was the donation money raised, but not spent, on the War Memorial Restoration, £500 set aside as a contingency to pay for two issues of the *Village Voice* if it was not possible to continue with the current, generous, arrangement with WebMart, the Community Action Fund and holding the grant the Fringford Friends obtained to help with setup costs and support.

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 had recently taken on the mowing contract for the whole village from Oxfordshire County Council. Prior to that, there was a rigorous process of quotations to get the best value for money for the grass cutting. Sadly, this meant saying goodbye to the previous contractors Green Scythe, but welcoming Iverde.

The Council also pays for a number of other things including the emptying the dog bins, maintaining the playground and arranging for it to be inspected, the hosting and domain name for the village website, the insurance and the clearing of snow when necessary.

Last year, a full review of the insurance needs was undertaken and quotations from three suppliers obtained. The best value quotation, which was for a three year term, saved the Parish a further annual £200 on the previous year. This saving would be set aside to cover any excess should a claim need to be made.

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 sent a report.

We are fast approaching our second anniversary of the new build and are coming to the end of our long list of renovations. We have a very healthy calendar of events with new regular hirers coming on board and an increased number of weekend events. We are in a good place financially with hirers income more than covering maintenance and costs. RHI payments for the air source heat pumps and Feed-in tariff for the PV panels is bringing in an estimated £1,000 annually. We have formulated a reserves policy with an awareness that the roof and the flooring of the main hall will eventually need replacing. We have not changed hire costs as there has been no need but will review this next year. In addition to the regular bingo and cinema nights, we have had a couple of fundraising events: a storytelling event and a 60s party. Both were well attended and enjoyed. As ever we have a presence at the Spring Fayre and Beer Festival.

Since this time last year, we have had acoustic panels fitted throughout the building which have been well received. In the main hall, we have had new blinds installed and thanks to the very generous support of Gary White from Green Farm, some of the old Fringford pictures have been recreated to complement the new décor. We are waiting for Julie Barrett's prints to return similarly revived. We have invested in new chairs and installed Broadband. Roger Williams very kindly donated new ladders and Jane Burn a new wheelchair. Outside we have repaired the fencing and fitted gates to the sides of the hall. We hope you agree that the hall is now fit for purpose for the 21st century.

Less obvious, but equally important, we have worked on various bits of our paperwork. Hirer's Guides were distributed to all hirers and hard copies are available in the kitchen and Chinnery Room.

On our 'to do' list is a summer working party to freshen up the decoration of the hall, raising our online profile and establishing a better recycling system.

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

Mr Heritage requested that a vote of thanks be given to the Committee for all their hard work.

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 CLP committee, with the endorsement of the Parish Council has convened another village update meeting on July 1 ('coffee and croissants' style with other important local bodies involved).

Prior to this we will be having discussions with the leads of each sub-group to assess what is going well and how things can be improved. In particular, we need to introduce some new blood to the stalled groups (or simply cancel those ideas if the demand or appetite to drive them is not there). Sports and business group in fall into the 'stalled' category.

History Group

The History Group is now well established and very active. Having created the display in the Chinnery Room, they will be supporting forthcoming Shelswell History Festival weekend (7 – 9 July) and a Flora Thompson exhibition at Buckingham Gaol with a new mobile display and new information which has been discovered about the Addington Family. Other initiatives include the creation of the History Trail brochure which would be available at events.

The next project would be to detail the progressive development of the village.

Social committee

The Social Committee recently organised another successful Spring Fayre. They were also looking at options for a 10-pin bowling night in Bicester and consideration for bringing back a newcomers evening. Other ideas will be presented, and interest to attend, assessed at the upcoming CLP update meeting on 1 July.

Fringford Freewheelers - Cycling and Transport Group

The transport side of the group has become somewhat sidelined after the community mini bus and various other options have failed to materialise after much input from various members.

On the cycling front during 2016, the group undertook six rides with numbers varying from 4 to 12 with ride reports and photos submitted into the village voice for everyone to read. These rides started from the Village Hall in the morning and ran on Saturdays. The rides are of a

maximum distance of 18 miles with a refreshment stop planned approximately half way round and then end up at the Butchers Arms for more liquid top ups. To speed up communication and keep all interested parties updated a Fringford Freewheelers closed Facebook group is up and running, currently having 43 members with some from Hethe. On the last ride we met a couple from Stoke Lyne who also expressed interest in joining the group. The group caters for all ages and categories of cyclist going at the pace of the slowest rider and has a number of regular participants who ride E-bikes.

A number of members mentioned during 2016 that a Saturday morning was difficult for them to attend due to other commitments so for 2017 the rides have been alternated between Saturdays and Sundays, occurring on the second weekend of each month starting from the village hall at 10.30am running as for 2016 in duration and refreshment stops. So far two rides have taken place in 2017 and like last year the September one has been timed to coincide with the church ride and stride so that participants can fund raise on the day as well. Last year the group in challenging weather conditions managed to visit 10 churches during an 18 mile ride.

New members are always welcome and anyone can suggest a suitable route as well as take on the role of ride leader.

Fringford Friends - Neighbourly support

The support infrastructure has been put in place and the volunteers are helping out when and where needed. Demand has been quite low in the early stages of this initiative, despite active promotion and publicity.

We have not been “rushed off our feet” but steady flow of interest. There are 8 members of the team meeting monthly for updates and progress of members and clients. We have a phone and diary which are manned on a rota basis weekly. When a call arrives, it is dealt with as quickly as possible enabling the client’s needs to be met.

We all have OCTA Badges (from Community First Oxfordshire) for the J.R, Horton and Nuffield hospitals. Also permits for the community and the Warnfield hospitals. This allows for easier, and free parking.

Janie Thwaites has attended “Oxfordshire Good Neighbour Scheme” twice yearly meetings in Oxford City Hall. These meeting enable us to keep in touch with similar groups within Oxfordshire.

The group now has cards and fridge magnets and are in the process in designing a poster offering the services to the local community.

All team members hold current CRB Check, all calls are totally confidential.

Janie is also in regular touch with the Bicester group. This is very busy but always happy to help with advice.

The next meeting is on Monday 19 June.

Village Voice

Over its three-year life, the *Voice* has developed in size and content. The first issue was published in January 2014, with the initial issue containing just 8 pages and no adverts. Issue 2

in March was 12 pages and had adverts on both inside covers. With the continuing generous help of our sponsor Webmart, it has now regularly been 16 pages for nearly two years. We have a mixture of frequent and ad hoc contributions from most of the Village Groups, however unfortunately a couple are very spasmodic in their submissions. We include occasional special articles and recently had a new regular contributor writing about Bees, which is a most welcome addition.

Positive feedback continues from both villagers and further afield. Sue Hunt from Community First Oxfordshire (formerly the ORCC) sent an email:

“Dear Editor, thank you so much for forwarding on your copies of The Fringford Village Voice, which we have all enjoyed receiving and has helped us understand and learn more about the communities that we work with.”

And this is a quote from District Councillor, James Macnamara who looks after Fringford and Heyfords Ward:

“I’m glad, to have seen the printed version as, out of all the villages I have in the past, and now serve, it is the smartest and best produced..... I have unashamedly used it as an exemplar of what can be achieved. I am most grateful for your sending it.

We have been very lucky to have had nine distributors since the beginning. However, one person dropped out at the end of January but were very fortunate that Lara Davies volunteered to deliver this batch for both the March and May issues, as part of her Duke of Edinburgh Award. I’m pleased to say that Debbie Wickens has now volunteered.

Nature Group

It would be worthwhile revisiting the aims and objectives of this group. Other ideas will be presented and interest to help out will be assessed at the upcoming CLP update meeting.

8. Police Report

The Police were unable to attend.

9. County Councillor’s Report

Cllr Ian Corkin had recently been elected as the County Councillor representative, but would also remain a District Councillor.

Cllr Corkin’s priorities were to represent the residents, communities and parishes of his area. He acknowledged that Parish Councils were the backbone of the community and without them, local government would be poorer. He was aware of the loss of the bus services, the grass cutting and the potholes which impacted negatively on the rural communities.

Cllr Corkin reported that the County Council budget was £½ Billion and the current 22% of central Government funding was due to disappear with the Government expectation that the shortfall would be found from savings and an increase in Council Tax. This was of serious concern and one for which a solution had to be found.

10. District Councillor’s Report

Cllr Wood reported that, despite the central Government reduction in grants, the District Council had not had to put up the Council Tax. The District was fortunate that the Tax Base for the area had increased.

There was to be a re-evaluation of business rates and a consideration of other income streams so that the District would not be dependent on the central Government funding.

Cllr Wood was concerned about the County Council proposal for Unitary status, but this had been put on hold following the announcement of the General Election. He believed that a decision would need to be made by October or the District Council elections could not be cancelled next May.

The District's revised Local Plan Part 1 to take account of Oxford's unmet housing need had also been raising issues. It was anticipated that the consultation would start in June.

Concerns were raised with Cllr Wood about the issue of car parking at the Cottage Hospital and the shortage of GPs in the local surgeries.

Cllr Corkin reported that he had been elected to the Board of the Graven Hill Development and that the 'plot shop' was now open.

11. Any Other Business

No further items were raised.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and the meeting concluded at 8.45pm.

Signed Dated