**Minutes of the Fringford Annual Parish Meeting**

**Monday 20th May 2019 at 7.45pm**

**The Chinnery Room, Fringford Village Hall**

**Present: Chairman:** Adrian Thwaites

**Parish Councillors** :- John Reader, Jan Maciejewski, John Fargin, Michael Cowland and Leslie Harris.

**Cherwell District Council:** Cllrs Barry Wood and Ian Corkin

**7 Fringford Residents**

**Apologies:**

**Apologies:** **Welcome and Apologies**

Adrian Thwaites welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting of Fringford and thanked them for coming.

1. **Chairman’s report**

Firstly he thanked all his fellow parish councillors for their support and input over the last year to ensure the smooth running of village matters for which they have voluntarily provided their time, free of charge, for all of this to happen.

During the current year the Parish Council met 11 times between April last year and March 2018 with a wide variety of topics discussed as reflected in the Minutes, which are displayed on the Parish Noticeboard and the Village Website for everyone’s perusal. The Council has had a stable year this year, with the one resignation of David McCullagh, due to other commitments outside of the village in early 2019. David will be missed and the Parish Council would like to thank him for his inputs and efforts during his time as a councillor.

The summer of 2018 was very dry and hot which helped to preserve the village green throughout this period. The green itself has many impositions placed upon it including parking for specific village events, Lendrums annual fair, private requests and the on going school parking issue. There is a delicate balance in providing all of these opportunities whilst maintaining the integrity of the green, which the parish council frequently reviews. Discussions were held with Oxford Highways at the end of 2018 and early 2019 with some suggestions provided on how this can be alleviated in regards to the “road across the green”. To date no further action has been taken due to funding. We are always open to ideas and looking at funding options from both local and national organizations to address this is matter.

The cutting of the village green and surrounds has continued with Green Scythe; this has been further extended with GP and MP Allen cutting the grass verges around the village to maintain an overall neat appearance which remains on going. A tree that was overhanging one of the roads by the green was sympathetically reduced so as to stop larger vehicles having to drive over the green to avoid this obstruction.

A small part of the dry stone wall on the edge of the Village Hall Car Park was deteriorating and posed a safety concern, so a stone mason was engaged to remove the section of wall and render the exposed end safe.

The matter of the village potholes was addressed in late 2018 with certain ones marked up by a representative from OCC highways and repairs carried out. However this is an on going concern with new ones appearing which need to be reported to OCC highways. They have strict criteria for what constitutes an official pothole and will act once these have been met.

In September 2018 the play park was officially opened and it is now widely liked and used both by the village and school children. He thanked the many people who were involved in arranging for this amenity and the delight that it has brought to the younger members of the village and the schoolchildren.

During 2018 the Parish council applied and received a substantial resilience fund grant for equipment to support the Parish should a power cut or other eventuality such as adverse weather when the village will carry on as normal. Part of this grant has been utilized to buy a snow plough/ gritter, bought to clear the roads so that traffic can move freely during such periods.

In regards to planning there has been a steady throughput of planning requests for both renewals and extensions to properties within the village, so as to maintain the overall quality of the housing stock, most of which has been approved. There was one large planning application for a number of houses that would have adversely affected the character of the village. It is pleasing to note that the village as a whole rose to the occasion along with the Parish Council in supporting the CDC Planning Department in rejecting this application, so retaining the tranquil nature of the village.

With the turmoil of Brexit the 3 major local infrastructure projects of HS2, the E-W rail link and the Expressway are still rumbling along but during this year there has been little news/ updates or perceived progress in any of these matters. It appears that Fringford will remain largely unscathed by any of these projects (to date at least) but there may well be some traffic disruption during the construction process. Discussions have been held to look at minimising disruption by carrying out any joint works across the projects simultaneously. As and when these projects come to the fore again then the PC will be communicating with the relevant parties to ensure that any disruption is kept to a minimum.

The Comet Bus service bus was introduced running on Thursdays into Bicester and has had a wonderful reception and is used by a regular number of people from Fringford and the surrounding villages. This was arranged by our local councillor Ian Corkin in conjunction with OCC whose efforts are greatly appreciated.

The thatch ridge on the village pump was recently deteriorating and a thatcher engaged to replace this which has been successfully carried out in a timely manner to ensure that the rest of the thatch will remain in good condition for the foreseeable future.

The parish council is responsible for the external maintenance for the village hall and regularly makes a visual inspection to ensure that the overall condition of the hall remains in good health. It has been noticed that there has been some movement in the gable end most likely due to the hot summer of 2018. This will be monitored and if any remedial action is deemed necessary this will be carried out when required.

I hope that you feel that the Parish Council has worked hard to serve the best interests of the Parishioners and continue to make Fringford a great place to live. In closing I would like to remind all villagers that they are entitled to attend Parish Council meetings and either speak at the beginning if there is something they wish to raise and observe the whole meeting should they chose to do so. Meetings are generally in Village Hall on the 3rd Monday of each month at 7.45pm.

1. **Cherwell District Council Report by Cllr Barry Wood**

Cllr Wood explained that there was now a lot of change at CDC.

He explained the CDC had had a very effective working partnership with South Northants District Council, but this could be about to end, as the financial difficulties at Northamptonshire County Council meant that the County and Districts were going to be split into 2 unitary authorities, with debts passported into these authorities. He was sad that this successful arrangement was ending, but CDC would be looking to form a similar strategic partnership with OCC to replace it.

The District Council needs to be vigilant with regard to planning applications that affect its small villages.

One of the CDC aims is that at least 50% of its school children will remain in the District – this has meant that housing in Banbury/Bicester and Heyford park is needed to cope with the additional numbers. The District also has some novel solutions – such as Graven hill – of which 2000 houses are self build.

Q Will the review of its Local Plan in another Oxfordshire District affect growth in Oxfordshire/

A If Local Plans are withdrawn this could unravel the growth bid, of which some payments have already been made and therefore may need to be paid back. There will need to be a grown up conversation.

1. Report from OCC and CDC – Cllr Ian Corkin

Cllr Corkin reported that it had been a busy and productive year with regard to both District and County Council affairs within the village.  He is very conscious of the impact growth within Heyford Park & Bicester has on the villages that surround it.  The increasing levels of traffic it brings can blight satellite villages, who often see no upside from the development and do not benefit from funding to mitigate its impacts.  It is a constant campaign for him and one that he promotes at every opportunity, including as a member of Cherwell District Councils planning committee.

The District continues to focus on delivering good value for money.  Expect to see housing (in appropriate locations) remain a priority, especially schemes that allow more people to access the benefits of having their own home with schemes such as Graven Hill and the innovative Build! Project.  Regeneration of our town centres will remain a priority and expect to see a more focused approach to climate change.  The separation from SNDC continues as expected and CDC are making good progress with developing the partnership with OCC.   At County, transformation remains front and centre as does partnership working.  Once again, initiatives around climate change will have increasing prominence and the council has recently committed to being carbon neutral by 2030.

More specifically for Fringford:

* He was able to help the preschool group achieve their ambition of an all-weather play area from his Councillors Priority Fund.  This is in addition to the vehicle activated sign that was part funded previously.  Generally, there are some good funding opportunities at the moment and you will find a list of them on his website.

* The Comet Community Bus continues to serve the village well and remains free to users thanks to the co-funding from his CPF and the PC

* The PC submitted suggestions to the longer term highways maintenance scheme register.

* He has spoken against warehouse development in a number of applications around junction 10.  Members may be aware of the recently refused application at Baynards Green referred to the Inspectorate.  As ever, Tusmore Estate, Stoke Lyne and Ardley with Fewcott PC are important stakeholders in any strategic planning applications and he would urge ongoing co-operation where your interests align.

Q What is happening at the planning application for the Butcher’s Arms/

A I have nothing to report on this.

1. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 21st May 2018, copies of which had been circulated and were on the Parish Website, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a true record of proceedings.

1. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

.

1. **Financial Report**

The Clerk had sent the Statement of Accounts to the Meeting.

The Parish Council Books will shortly be inspected by its Internal Auditor, and then the Statement of Accounts, with the Bank reconciliation and income and expenditure accounts (which gives details of the Parish Finances) will all be displayed on the Parish Council website.

The Council’s expenditure in the last financial year was spent mainly on keeping the village clean and tidy, and on general administration However there was the major project of the installation of the new playground in time for the school summer holidays.

After producing a detailed budget with a number of options the Parish Council set their precept in January 2019 (for the year 2019/20).

The Parish Council added some money into its Reserves in the year 2018/19 to fund work on the Village Hall roof.

1. **Village Hall Committee Report**

Helen Fargin reported that over the last 12 months, the Village Hall Management Team have been very busy, making substantial improvements to the way they run the hall. At the last AGM, they were joined by Karen Davies and she hoped further villagers would join the team in June to ensure they can continue to represent a wide range of villagers and share the workload involved in successfully running the Village Hall.

**Improvements**

Their first improvement task was to understand and comply with GDPR requirements, which resulted in a full review of their paperwork and processes. The Village Hall Secretary carried out the lion’s share of this work which entailed compiling a Data Policy, Privacy Statement and ensuring compliance by all members of the VH team.

Secondly, they looked at the security of the building. Following some incidents in the previous year, they decided to install CCTV to provide better protection for users of the hall and for the premises. This was installed in January and they are pleased to report there have been no issues since. We are very grateful to the villager who generously donated the CCTV equipment.

Thirdly, they have installed a key box in the porch. At this stage, it is used by regular hirers only and they have received lots of feedback that it is a great improvement and saves a lot of time. Occasional hirers continue to collect the key from the Caretaker, as they don’t want the code to spread around strangers.

The fourth area of improvement is invoicing. Electronic invoices are now emailed to regular hirers and most hirers, both regular and occasional, pay by BACS. Our Treasurer has invested substantial time in setting up the process which now saves time for everyone involved.

And finally, they have invested in a programme of repairs and maintenance to ensure our equipment and facilities are in good working order and have replaced several items where needed.

**Bookings**

Thanks to Ant Parker for managing the bookings diary which continues to be very busy with core regular hirers and plenty of weekend parties and events.

**Fundraising**

The VH team continue to run fund raising events with surpluses going into our reserve to help cover costs of future repairs and renewals such as the roof and floor.

Additionally, they were pleased to work alongside the Parish Council and History Group for the Battles Over commemoration raising **£1,350** for 6 military charities. Also, Christmas Bingo raised **£471** for Help for Heroes.

**Finances**

The accounts for March 2018 to February 2019 are with the auditor. Hirings are covering operating costs. They are receiving pay-backs from both Feed-in-Tariff and Renewable Heat Incentive. A small number of villagers continue to make purchases via Easyfundraising which since they started has generated donations of over £1,160. A full financial report will be provided at the VH AGM on 24th June.

**Next Steps**

They will continue to look at marketing material, hire rates and the booking process in order to increase hirings and improve efficiency.

In summary, it’s been a hectic year of reviewing and improving various areas of our operation. Thank you to everyone in the team for their hard work in getting us to this healthy position.

1. **Cricket Club**

The Cricket Club reported that, prior to 2018 the Village had a cricket team, but due to lack of players they had to withdraw from the league – now the club needs new/younger players.

There are 3 trustees of the ground – with Royston Blake about to join them. The Club is well off financially, and tries to remain involved with local events – e.g. it will be providing the Barbeque for the forthcoming Beer festival.

Cllr Jan Maciejewski asked if there was any way that a legal document could be drawn up to secure the cricket ground for the future use of the Fringford residents in such a way that the ground could not be  sold to any one in the future.    The Cricket Club representative confirmed that he would investigate this possibility further by speaking taking legal advice.  He also stated that he would try to obtain further information and attend the next Parish Council Meeting.  The Chairman of the Cricket Club, also said that there may be costs  involved.  Cllr Maciejewski replied that if it was in connection with acquiring this deed/ or trust guaranteeing the ground for the use of Fringford residents for the future, the Parish Council would certainly consider if it could help with the costs.

Current plans are that the club remains a cricket ground. The purchase from the Chinnery family included a covenant giving 50% of any purchase price to the family if the ground were to be sold, and, on sale £35,000 would need to be repaid to the ECB.

The Chairman of the Club agreed to investigate the situation further and, if possible, put any information up onto the Village web site.

1. **Fringford Friends.**

Fringford Friends has 8 members on their team all with current CRB police checked and hold OCTA parking badges for the local hospitals. All households in the village have now been given “A Medical Message in a Bottle’.

1. **History Group**

The History group is still working with the Parish Council to review Parish documents from 19th Century. Strange minutes include;

Buying a village pig, having a byelaw preventing “strange horses” on the Village Green and contributing towards the first fire engine. The Parish Council has also been called in at times to deal with disputes between neighbours.

Once completed the original documents will be stored at the Oxford Records Office, but matters of interest will be scanned and published on the Village website, as the group has recently purchased an A3 printer and a photo scanner.

It produced a “Battles over” event in November 2018 and will be involved with the Shelswell History festival later this year.

1. **Village Voice**

Village Voice has now celebrated 5 years of operation, and looking back, one of its most popular themes is “sheep”.

There are frequent ad hoc contributors, and sometimes the Magazine expands from 12 – 16 pages (although it may contract again)

A third editor is needed to help Helen Fargin, and a volunteer distributer. The Magazine is printed by Webmart, to whom many thanks.

1. **Fringford Sewcial**

The group thanked the Parish Council for funding the rent of the Chinnery room for their meetings. They usually have between 6 and 8 attendees and they are advertising their meetings with the WI and other local organisations.

The run workshops, to increase participation and are looking to provide friendship and additional skills.

1. **Darby and Joan Club**

This group was started in 1958 and has a regular programme of meetings. They hold well attended coffee mornings in Fringford and other local village Halls, and make outings to places of interest.

Following these presentations Cllr Fargin, on behalf of the Parish Council, thanked all the people who organise and run these groups.

1. **Police Report**

The Police were unable to attend.

1. **Any Other Business**

Short notice of the meeting meant that the cricket Club was not able to prepare adequately.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and the meeting concluded at 9.12 pm..

Signed ……………………………………… Dated …………………………….