



**Minutes of the
Stratton Audley Parish Annual Parish Meeting
Tuesday 12 May 2015 at 7pm
St Mary & St Edburga Church, Stratton Audley, Oxfordshire**

Present:

Chairman: Mr John Honsinger
Clerk: Mrs Jane Olds
Cherwell District Council: Cllr Barry Wood
Oxfordshire County Council: Cllr Mrs Catherine Fulljames
ORCC / CDC: Mrs Sue Marchant
Police: PC Shaun Sullivan
23 Stratton Audley Residents

1. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced himself as the new Chairman of the Parish Council following an election at the Parish Council meeting the previous week.

The Chairman reported on the personnel of the Parish Council. Two resignations had been received from Councillors Helen Smithers and Nigel Ferguson the previous week and the Clerk had also tendered her resignation for personal reasons. However the work of the Parish Council will continue with the Chairman, Anthony Flack and Lesley Korsak and vacancy notices have been posted for the two additional councillors.

The Chairman's aim is that the Council has better communication and is more open and transparent.

2. Apologies

No further apologies had been received.

3. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of the previous year's Annual Parish Meeting held on 3 June 2014, copies of which had been circulated, were agreed as a true record of proceedings.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Report by the Clerk about the year 2014 – 15

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council met 12 times between April last year and March 2015 with a wide variety of discussion taking place, as can be seen from the Minutes which are always displayed on the noticeboard and on the Parish Website.

Actions from the minutes included a great deal of governance and organisation; particularly regarding the Government's Localism Act which has had an impact on Parish Councils, creating the need to update both Financial Regulations and Standing Orders.

The austerity measures introduced by the previous Government have had an effect on the Parish because of the reduction in grants from County. The Parish was informed that the Grass Cutting Grant, which last year was almost £1,300 was to be reduced to just £640 as they believed that two cuts a year was adequate. The Parish Council wanted to maintain the previous levels, but this has meant that it has been necessary to find the balance to continue having the village looking so good. Many thanks are due to Mike Gore for all his work in maintaining the verges.

Dog fouling has not been such an issue this year. Thanks go to Jonathan Ormerod for keeping the boxes by the dog bins topped up with bags and for alerting the Clerk when the bins have not been emptied. The meeting was reminded that the Parish pays for the emptying of the dog bins.

Other things which the Parish Council has helped with include paying for the new gravel around the trough on Mill Road (with thanks due to Jeremy Adams for keeping the area looking so well) and enabling the request for a new sign post at the top of Mill Road.

The Clerk apologised for the length of time it has taken to come up with a plan for the playground. The Parish Council had received a number of different quotations and designs, but none were really suitable – or inspiring – for the village. On the recommendation of the Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association, the Parish received a bespoke design from a local playground builder (at a smaller cost than the previous designs) which would be created using natural materials. It is hoped that it will engage a wide age range of children from the very tiny to the age of 12. It is intended to keep the current grass but with strengthening under the landing points. The next issue is the access which is shared with BT and which needs alteration.

Once all the access arrangements for the playground have been finalised, the Parish will be in a position to apply for a grant from WREN (the landfill operator at Calvert). The Parish has also managed to save a significant amount of money from the New Homes Bonus which has come from Cherwell District Council, but more will be needed.

Planning: the Council has received 19 Planning Applications this year, 18 for buildings, and one for tree work.

Finance: the majority of the expenditure this year has, again, been spent on keeping the village clean and tidy and on general administration.

The books have been presented for internal audit and the forms for the external audit were due to be despatched shortly. The Clerk informed the meeting that Accounts were available for inspection and produced a Summary of Accounts.

The Clerk reiterated that all villagers are entitled to come to Parish Council meetings and speak at the beginning of the meeting or observe the whole meeting. The meetings generally take place in the Hunt Room of the Red Lion on the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm. Anyone wishing to receive the agenda and minutes by email, should let the Clerk know.

The Clerk wished the village every success for the future.

6. PC Shaun Sullivan

PC Sullivan informed the meeting that there had been very few crimes reported from the village. Since May 2014, there had been a theft from a motor vehicle and two cycles, although there was insufficient evidence to charge.

The theft of heating oil is becoming more prevalent and he urged vigilance, particularly in the autumn when it is more likely the tanks are full.

There are two police officers and two PCSOs for 38 villages so they are limited to what they can do, however, they do try to attend events.

7. Councillor Barry Wood

Cllr Wood offered his personal thanks to the Clerk for all her work and to all those who have served the Parish Council.

There were a number of local issues which Cllr Wood wished to raise.

The District Council has agreed that improvement to the transport and social infrastructure is vitally important. The first phase of the railway line joining Oxford Parkway (at Water Eaton) to London via Bicester will be completed shortly with the Bicester Town station changing its name to Bicester Village. However, when the line towards Bedford is opened there will be issues with the London Road crossing in Bicester which could be closed for as much as 40 minutes per hour, so changes in traffic flow and road layout will need to be made.

Changes to traffic flow will also be needed with the addition of the 6,000 houses (over 20 years) at the Eco town and 2,000 at Graven Hill which is now owned by CDC for self-build or custom-build projects.

On finance, whilst the County is finding the budget extremely difficult, particularly due to adult social care, the District is fortunate because of the joint working with South Northamptonshire which has enabled substantial savings. Cherwell has not had to put up Council Tax for six years because of finding these innovative solutions.

There is still a great deal to do within Bicester. The new community building on the Franklyn's Yard car park is now taking shape. This will be for the new library, various other offices and a Premier Inn Hotel. It is hoped that it will increase the footfall at that end of Pioneer Square. The site of the old library will be used for housing for disabled people.

The success of the new 'Sainsbury's development and the relocation of the bus stops has been of great benefit to Bicester – the only down side being that more bicycle racks are needed as they are always full!

The new car park at Vendee Drive to the south of Bicester is commencing shortly and will be for commuters to Oxford during the week and used by Bicester Village as an overflow at weekends and bank holidays.

Bicester Village employs 3,000 locally and is allegedly the largest tourist attraction for the Chinese community in Europe. It remains a success story, however, the traffic management is of paramount concern.

Cllr Wood welcomed the news that Tesco were 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 new projects Tesco is continuing following their financial problems. Bicester Village will take over the old Tesco store 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.

The unemployment rate in Bicester is currently running at 0.1%. However, it is recognised that the town needs to attract a variety of job types to meet aspirations.

Within the Local Plan, whilst the majority of the new house building will be in the urban areas of Bicester and Banbury, and to some extent Kidlington, Cherwell wishes to protect the rural communities as much as possible.

Cllr Wood was questioned about what a Garden Town is likely to involve. He responded that a number of standards were put in place during the Gordon Brown Government for eco towns which would have homes of a high design, be low carbon, have 40% open space, 1 job per house to be local and the whole area would be well designed with sufficient social infrastructure. The new Garden Town initiative has similar standards. The Local Plan which is currently with the Planning Inspector has already allowed for the majority of the new houses which will be needed for the garden town.

CDC is awaiting the ruling of the Planning Inspector on the Local Plan, but remains positive.

Councillor Mrs Catherine Fulljames

Cllr Fulljames reported she had responsibility for 22 parishes in the Ploughley Ward which is a very large rural area from the Northampton and Buckinghamshire borders to south of Bicester.

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 to staff by reducing the number of directors by 50%, middle managers by 40%, but still felt it was important to pay the lowest paid members of staff the living wage. It was decided that a council tax rise of 1.99% (or 46p per week for a Band D property) was needed. A huge (and increasing) amount of the budget is spent on adult social care.

OCC has been working on the project to roll out broadband to 90% of the county. Cllr Fulljames was pleased to hear that the village should be upgraded shortly.

Cllr Fulljames remains watchful over the County section of the quarry which is dormant at present.

Cllr Fulljames reported that she is concerned about the amount of traffic which is likely with the increased housing and is also keeping a watch on the level crossing on London Road.

The prospect of HS2 is also a 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, from Junction 8 to 11 on the M40 and at the Barley Mow and Baynards Green roundabouts.

Cllr Fulljames was asked about the possibility of a cycle path to Bicester. The Clerk reminded the meeting that this was in OCC's current Local Transport Plan, but using a route on the east side of the airfield towards the Launton Road.

Cllr Fulljames thanked the Clerk for all her work.

8. Report by the Community Led Plan Group about the responses to the questionnaire and the next steps

Mr Honsinger explained that the Community Led Plan Group was set up two years ago as a way of getting more people involved with the activities in the community; to find out what villagers liked and disliked, what they aspired to and to develop a written plan which could be taken forward for the future.

Events, including the Village Picnic, the tea party, Easter Egg Hunt and boules evenings had been run over the past two years to gather information to produce the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was sent out to all households in the village and 100 households (55%) responded.

Mr Honsinger presented the initial findings of the questionnaire which would be published on the village website in due course.

A number of working parties and volunteers will be needed to help identify and run the tasks and projects which the plan is likely to highlight.

Once the analysis was completed a plan would be produced which would then be endorsed by the Parish Council.

There are a number of events planned for the forthcoming year including the Village Picnic on 19 July, a food and drink event on 6 September, a Georgian Tea Party on 11 October, a Halloween Party on 30 of 31 October and a children's Christmas party on either 19 or 20 December.

9. Any other business

No further items were raised.

The minutes were taken by Jane Olds, Clerk to the Parish Council.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.

Signed..... Date.....