

1. Report by the Clerk about the year 2016 – 17

The Parish Council met monthly between April last year and March 2017, and the discussions is contained in the Minutes which are always displayed on the noticeboard and on the Parish Website.

I think the event that stays in my mind as the highlight of the last year was the Food Music and Beer Festival on 4th June which was such a successful day for both residents of the Parish and visitors, and which led to the PC being able to make a substantial donation to the fund to carry out work in the Church. Cllrs Honsinger and Flack and the Community group have plans for this year – the first being on 10th and 11th June - the Open Garden event combined with Scarecrow competition.

As I am sure you are all aware Oxfordshire County Council's elections were held on 4th May and Cllr Ian Corkin is now the County representative for Ploughley Division. We know him and look forward to working with him. Catherine Fulljames represented this area for many years and I think we should express our thanks to her for 27 years service. Once the General election is over I suspect that Oxfordshire County Council will be pursuing its proposal to join with the Districts to form one council covering all Oxfordshire, and we will all need to keep a close eye on these proposals. The PC still carries out grass cutting on its verges on behalf of OCC but is unlikely to take over many other responsibilities from the County, although it has recently been looking at options to reduce speeding traffic through the village, including a Vehicle Activated Sign and a other means to reduce speeds. Mike Gore continues to cut the grass, and Richard Howson sprays the weeds to keep them under control – we are very grateful to both of them.

Another highlight of the year was the opening of the new playground in September 2016. While persuading the contractor to start on site was hard work, once it was started it progressed well and I believe everyone considers it to be a great improvement on the former playground, and, I hear, much enjoyed by the younger residents.

The Chairman has led a project to make considerable improvements to the Village web site, and I do hope that everyone will agree with me that it now contains relevant items of village news, and is the repository of a significant amount of information about the village, and its organisations. It is regularly updated but sadly still not regularly accessed by enough residents.

During the course of 2016/17 the Parish Council has been looking at how it can best support all its residents in the event of an emergency – which could be a long spell of bad weather, a long lasting power outage, or some other catastrophic event. Cllr Hopkins has been working on the Village Emergency Plan, which the Parish Council have now agreed, and the Parish has been actively encouraging residents with priority needs – which could simply be that there are babies and young children in the house, to register with the power company to ensure that, in the event of a problem in the village, they are properly looked after. The defibrillator has now been installed in the Church porch – for which grateful thanks to the Church authorities, as this was not an entirely straightforward process, and a new substantial generator is available for use by the

Church in the event of a power cut. Both have been funded by a grant obtained by the parish council.

Twice a year the district council clean the streets in the village and their effectiveness has been greatly improved since the parish council instigated a co-ordinated approach 2 years ago, to get residents to co-operate by moving their cars off the streets, so much so that it has encouraged the district to send a road team to support the sweeper lorry.

The Parish Council has long been concerned about the amount of litter in the entrance to the quarry site off the Bicester Road. After many attempts contact has been made with the Agent for the land owner, who has agreed to move the concrete blocks to make parking in the entrance less convenient. The Parish Council hopes that this will reduce, or even resolve the problem.

This year the Christmas tree, with its lights, was much envied by other villages – the Clerk had a telephone call from the Chairman of a neighbouring Parish Council asking for details of the tree and the supplier of the lights. Yet again many thanks to Jeremy Adams and Richard Howson for putting the tree up and Mr Papenfus for supplying the electricity for the lights.

I cannot end a review of the year without making reference to the major success achieved by Cllr Nicholson in persuading Langston and Tasker to run one bus a day through the Village, after Oxfordshire County Council stopped its rural bus subsidies and the local busses stopped running. The service has now been running successfully for about 6 months, and has the Parish Council's whole hearted support as it does permit residents without other forms of transport, to travel in and out of Bicester. The only minor issue is that the bus uses Church Street and keeping the street accessible is vital. Hence the PC has placed traffic cones which have been most effective. However the ones opposite the church entrance have been removed several times recently which is not helpful!

Cllr Cassie Lloyd remains responsible for being the first point of contact for managing the planning matters, so far as the PC is concerned. She is the first to receive the planning application and co-ordinates circulating the documentation around all the Parish Councillors

Anyone wishing to object to an application is encouraged to raise their concerns with her – and they will be advised to contact CDC direct by email, phone or visiting the planning portal. Objectors to planning applications are also encouraged to attend the next available Parish Council meeting to explain their concerns to the Parish Council or if unable to email or write a letter to the Parish Council outlining their issues.

During the year the Council received 12 Planning Applications for buildings, and 6 for tree work. Perhaps I could take this opportunity to remind everyone that works to trees located within the Conservation area all need consent from Cherwell District Council - this includes lopping and removal altogether of any tree with a base diameter of more than 3 inches. It has been reported that several trees may have been cut down without

the necessary consent and I have been asked to point out that failure to do this means that the person carrying out the work can be prosecuted by the local authority.

Finance: you will see included in your packs the balance sheet and the income and expenditure accounts for the Parish Council. The full accounts for the year ending 31st March 2017 will shortly be on the web site and will also be available for inspection – please let me know if you wish to inspect them. Again this year the majority of the expenditure has been spent on keeping the village clean and tidy and on general administration.

The books will shortly be reviewed by our Internal auditor, and will be sent to the external auditor in July. Anyone who has questions about the accounts please raise them with me my contact details are on the web site.

Finally can I remind you that all residents 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 Wednesday of the month at 7pm. Anyone wishing to receive the agenda and minutes by email, should let the me know.