

1. Report by the Clerk about the year 2018-2019

The Parish Council usually meets on the first Wednesday of every month, although this pattern was varied in January 2019 when the first Wednesday was 2nd January. Discussion in those meetings is condensed in the Minutes which are always displayed on the noticeboard and on the Parish Website.

The major event of 2018 was, of course, the Food Beer and Music Festival in June when it seemed to me that the whole Parish was involved, the weather gods were kind to us and the event cleared £16,000 meaning that the Parish Council not only made donations to a number of local causes, but also retained £5000 to form the basis of a Village Improvement Fund – of which there will be more from your Chairman later. There were other successful events organised by the Chairman of the CLP Anthony Flack such as the Last night of the Proms and a number of Christmas events organised in conjunction with the church, with whom there are regular liaison meetings.

I take this opportunity to remind you all that the PC funds the maintenance of its verges on behalf of OCC – with great work from Mike Gore who continues to cut the grass, and Richard Howson who sprays the weeds to keep them under control – we are very grateful to both of them.

The parish council has just renewed its Emergency Plan – do have a look at the updated version which is on the Parish website and a copy is also on the board next to the defibrillator in the porch.

Last year there was a Parish Council election and as a result of successfully lobbying to increase our numbers from 5 to 7, John Edwards joined the existing Parish Councillors, and, as there was one vacancy Kathryn Walker was co-opted onto the Council. However I am very sad to say that Stewart Hopkins resigned as a Councillor at the March meeting. Stewart has been a stalwart of the Parish Council since 2015. Not only attending Parish Council meetings, he has also volunteered to lead first aid training courses, he has worked tirelessly to clear ponds and paths, and was the first to volunteer when jobs needed to be done. Stewart, I understand you are going to stay involved with some projects and that is great news. Being a councillor can be challenging but also rewarding in feeling you are giving something back to the community. So there is a vacancy and please let the Chairman know if you are interested. Additionally if you are able to in volunteer to help with Village projects or village events.

Can I remind you all that anyone wanting to comment on a planning application is encouraged to attend the next available Parish Council meeting to explain any concerns or matters of special interest to the Parish Council or if unable to do so, to email or write a letter to the Parish Council outlining their issues, as well as raising them directly with Cherwell District Council via their Planning portal.

During the year the Parish Council has taken a close interest in the restoration of Elm farm Quarry – you will have heard from Bicester Heritage this evening of the current plans for the whole Bicester Heritage site.

The exciting news towards the end of the year was the successful application to the MHCLG for a grant to develop the pound area into a Pocket Park – more from the Chairman on this I am sure. However the successful result was very largely down to a tremendous amount of work by him over effectively a few days after Christmas as the time scale was very short.

Also under consideration has been the Conservation Area review which we have heard about tonight and for which the District have a statutory obligation to carry out every now and then.

During the year the Council received 11 Full Planning Applications and 10 applications to agree or change planning conditions. It also received 2 applications 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.

The Parish Council ended the year with a total balance of £23,160.84 and the full accounts for the year ending 31st March 2019 will shortly be on the web site and will also be available for inspection – please let me know if you wish to inspect them, or if, having read them on the web site you have any questions on them. Again this year the majority of the expenditure has been spent on keeping the village clean and tidy and on general administration.

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. The agenda is always published before the meeting on the web site and notice boards, and the minutes are put there as soon as possible after the meeting.

Perhaps I can finish by thanking Cllr Corkin for all his help behind the scenes in matters that are important to the village.