

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Piddington Parish Council held on Tuesday 24th
April 2018 in the Village Hall, Piddington**

Present: Cllr. F Darby – Chairman of Piddington Parish Council
Cllr. P. Feltbower
Cllr. K. Howard
Cllr M Nixon
Cllr L Galloway
Cllr M Terzino
Mrs. Anne Davies – Parish Clerk
12 Parish residents

David Hughes (CDC)
Dan Sames (OCC)
Kev Jessop (MOD)

1. Welcome and Introduction

Councillor Darby welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked them for attending.

2. Apologies for Absence

Those present noted apologies from Cllr A Coleman, Mrs H Coleman, and Mr A Hopkins

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd May 2017 having been circulated were taken as read and it was **RESOLVED** to confirm the minutes as a true record .

4. Matters Arising

No comments were made on last year's minutes.

5. Report from Chairman Piddington Parish Council

The Chairman thanked both District and County Councillors for their support to the Parish during the year. She then thanked Hazel Colman, the Parish's web site and social media guru and Village cheer leader, the resident who cuts Pocket Park for the Parish, and the resident who acts as the Village Footpath Warden, and earlier in the year, presented the Parish

Council with a comprehensive report on the state of the footpaths – on which the Parish had seen some action by OCC. She commented on the fact that the village had a great group of volunteers which made the village such an active community and a very supportive group of Parish Councillors, all of whom brought different talents to the Council.

She felt 2017/18 had been a positive year, with the Village playing an active part in many Oxfordshire groups – Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, the Oxfordshire Playing Field Association, and Community First Oxfordshire.

There had been a delay publishing the Community Led Plan, as other matters had taken precedence, but the results of the questionnaire were invaluable, and were already being used by other village organisations in their fund raising efforts.

One of the Parish Council's priorities has been to ensure that assets owned by the Village are well maintained. Grass cutting is the village's single highest item of expenditure, and this activity has been expanded to include the verges around the Sports Field. As a result of better maintenance there has been a significant increase in people using the playing field – and not just dog walkers, but by families, young mothers and, more recently, the Ramblers. The Parish Council will shortly be putting in new wire fencing, adjacent to the pond to ensure the safety of children and dogs, and a pedestrian gate to facilitate entry to the field by baby buggies and wheelchairs. The Parish Council will also be looking at ways to make the area a more attractive place for children. The CLP had supported proposals for a tennis court and a MUGA but as these were very expensive projects, the Council would be looking at starting with something smaller such as a green gym.

Ragwort on the field is a nightmare – there is too much to pull up by hand, but the dilemma now is whether to leave the ragwort or spray the whole field – which would also kill all the (currently very beautiful) wild flowers. The area surrounding the meadow is also rife with ragwort so that even a total spray would only hold it at bay. She finished by encouraging residents to go up there and enjoy the facilities.

Allotments

The Parish Council proposes to increase the allotment rent this year to £15 per annum, to cover membership of the National Allotment Association. The balance of the allotment rents will be made available to the Allotment Committee for expenditure on the allotments. It has also been agreed that the Allotment Committee will be holding regular Committee meetings at the monthly “pop up pub”.

Community Asset Orders (CAO)

The Parish Council has recently re applied for a Community Asset order to be registered on the Seven Stars Public House. The asset order if approved would continue to bind the pub to the community and make any change of use application difficult to approve. She

confirmed that, if the property was put up for sale, the Parish Council would hold a public meeting to discuss funding options with a view to buying the property for the Community.

Village Communication:

Communication from the parish council has improved and there is an increasing amount of village information on the web site. The CLP has a list of residents email addresses, but once the CLP group is wound up, the Parish Council will be looking at options to transfer appropriately the email contacts to another village body.

The Parish Council has also been instrumental in the formation of an Otmoor Parishes Group – where a number of the Parishes across Otmoor meet quarterly to discuss matters of joint interest. The next meeting will be in June in Piddington – everyone is welcome.

Emergency Planning:

Cllrs Nixon and Terzino are currently working with representatives of the Village Hall Committee and the Church on an Emergency Plan. The first purchase using the SSE grant money has been a set of walkie talkie radios, as recent power outages meant that communication was difficult as the lack of power meant that mobile phones did not work.

The Parish Council is looking for about 4 volunteers to co-ordinate emergency action. It is also looking at buying a generator and a towable gritter, so volunteers with 4x4 cars and a tow bar are also needed.

The Parish Council has encouraged residents to sign up to the SEE Priority service, if they had any concerns about how they would manage without power.

Crime and Safety:

There is now a Bicester Rural Resilience Forum chaired by Cllr Ken Howard. TVPA look into 3 items each meeting that will enhance support for rural communities. The next meeting is 13th June at Ardley, and the September meeting will be held in Piddington Village Hall. If residents have concerns they should raise them with Cllr Howard.

The Parish Council has noted the interest shown in the CLP questionnaire for the reinstatement of a Neighbourhood Watch group. This is an initiative the Council would support, but it does need volunteers to co-ordinate the group. If anyone is interested in forming a group she asked them to contact the Clerk directly.

Road Safety

The Parish Council had received details of the costs of putting white gates at the entry points to the village. It was now looking for grant funding to enable it to purchase and install them.

The Parish Council had also investigated the cost of a Mobile vehicle Activated Speed (VAS) sign – which can be purchased for about £1800. To operate it, it would need a group of volunteers who would plan its locations and analyse the data produced. If there is a group of people interested in pursuing this, the Parish Council will arrange funding.

Gypsy/Traveller Planning Application:

The Parish Council had been shocked to note that the CDC Planning Officer had recommended that the recent application (for 6 pitches) should be approved. She considered it a huge success that the village were able to persuade the committee to overturn the planning officer's recommendation and refuse the application. Everyone had worked very hard and produced well written and well researched comments, and she felt that the outcome showed how successful the village can be when everyone works together. She particularly paid tribute to Cllr Andrew Coleman, whose detailed research and editorial skills had ensured that the Parish Council's objection was such an excellent document.

The Parish Council is now waiting to see if the application is appealed.

Future Challenges

The Parish Council will always be looking at ways to ensure that the village is well maintained, at the best cost, and may consider in the future, whether it is appropriate to buy a ride on mower to keep the village grass cut. However again this would need volunteers to run it, and there is concern that too much reliance on volunteer help could result in 'volunteer fatigue' in the village.

The Parish Council is monitoring the growth and development of Bicester, which while not likely to affecting Piddington directly it will put strain on its roads and infrastructure including doctors and schools.

She was asked if the Parish Council would cut the hedge at the front of the allotments, as this was now badly overgrown and a potential danger to pedestrians. The gate into the allotments is also a danger.

She agreed that the Parish Council, now it had received a request, would look at doing this work, but it would be dependent on it being the right time for works to be carried out.

She finished with emphasising the importance of volunteers to the successful running of the village and reflecting on how to get more people involved.

6. David Hughes (CDC)

David Hughes confirmed that, so far as he was aware, Aylesbury Vale District Council had supported the proposal for an Oxford to Cambridge expressway and had put forward a suggested route.

He confirmed that, should a route over Otmoor be proposed, the villages would need to come together to present a coherent opposition.

7. Dan Sames (OCC)

Cllr Sames explained that, having been elected to OCC in 2017 the year had been a steep learning curve. He had been frustrated that he had not been able to help the village with its “Ragwort problem”, he had taken as his main concern the current state of the roads, and he now made contacts who could resolve some of his road problems. He was happy to pass on concerns if residents do not feel they are making progress with OCC. He had been particularly concerned to count at least 75 potholes on the road to Horton Cum Studley.

He had made a submission to CDC on the proposed traveller site, which had been included in the document pack for the Planning Committee.

He updated the meeting on the Oxford/Cambridge Expressway. Currently there are 3 proposed routes;-

1. South of Oxford
2. Across Otmoor
3. Around Oxford to join with the A4421 to Finmere.

Currently his understanding is that the route south of Oxford has fewest ecological and heritage constraints.

He confirmed that he will shortly be meeting with the Chief Executive of Friends of the Earth to discuss these options.

Finally he confirmed that he has been allocated a £15000 Community budget to make small grants towards Community projects.

He was asked about the road to Horton Cum Studley and explained that it criss - crossed the Oxfordshire/Buckinghamshire border, although, in his opinion, the Buckinghamshire road was in a considerably worse state than the Oxfordshire portion. He has had discussions with Angela MacPherson – his BCC counterpart, and understands that the road will be fixed, but it is not a priority for Bucks.

Q Is Fix my street still working?

A So far as he understands, yes.

Q Is it correct that Highway authorities can escape liability for claims if the repair of a road is included in a planned road scheme?

A I am not sure, I will check.

Q Timescale for the Oxford /Cambridge Expressway?

The preferred route is likely to be announced in July 2018.

8. MOD/Garrison (Kev Jessop)

Kevin Jessop explained that he is the Adjutant for the Bicester Garrison and the main contact for parish issues. He advised the meeting that he believes another regiment may move into St David's Barracks when the present unit leaves. Furthermore, he speculates that, with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation looking at ensuring that the best use of MOD land is made, the MOD may be looking at creating an arc of engineering excellence between Bicester and Kineton, with a consequent increase in MOD activity in the area.

He believed that there was good liaison between the MOD and the village with regard to the recent planning application, when the MOD eventually appreciated that the advent of caravan-based residents adjacent to A site could have a significant effect on how the site could develop in the future.

He confirmed that the current Commanding Officer is very keen about Community engagement, and, if residents have queries they are welcome to raise them with him via the Parish Council. However, he felt that parish liaison was working well, and he would ensure that the Parish was advised of any MOD exercises in advance so that residents could be prepared.

Q. Could the water that passes through the application site in Widnell Lane be turned off?

A. The MOD are currently looking at all options but are aware of the pipework on the land that also supplies the nearby farm.

9. Report from Parish Clerk/RFO Anne Davies

A copy of the balance sheet and the income and expenditure of the Parish Council was circulated to all attendees and the Clerk explained that for the year 2017/18 income and expenditure had stayed broadly the same as it had been in 2016/17 apart from the grants received in 2016/17 which had supported improvement works to the Sports Field and the Jubilee reserve.

10. Church Fundraising Committee

Margaret Hutchence spoke about the significant maintenance and renovation work that has been carried out to the church at a cost of about £50,000, mostly funded by grants and fund-raising activities. The work was completed, and the building is now water tight, although it still has a residual problem with wild bees.

The Church is Grade II * listed with rich archaeological details and is open daily. There are regular church services, and also other events, such as concerts and exhibitions.

The fundraising group are grateful for the grant support, and are now planning further works to improve the toilet facilities and the servery. While the application for grant funding will be made, the fund raising group will also be arranging a programme of other events.

Finally the group thanked everyone who had helped with raising funds or who maintained the building on a daily basis.

11. Residents questions

A resident asked if the installation of a VAS could help achieve a 20mph speed limit through the village. The Clerk responded that the installation would provide evidence of usage and current speeds. The Parish Council had received advice about a 20mph speed limit, and had been told that the OCC process would be expensive and the outcome could not be guaranteed.

Cllr Hughes suggested that the Parish Council could consider approaching Islip to see if it could occasionally hire their VAS rather than purchase a device.

Accepted by: _____ **Chairman** _____ **Date**