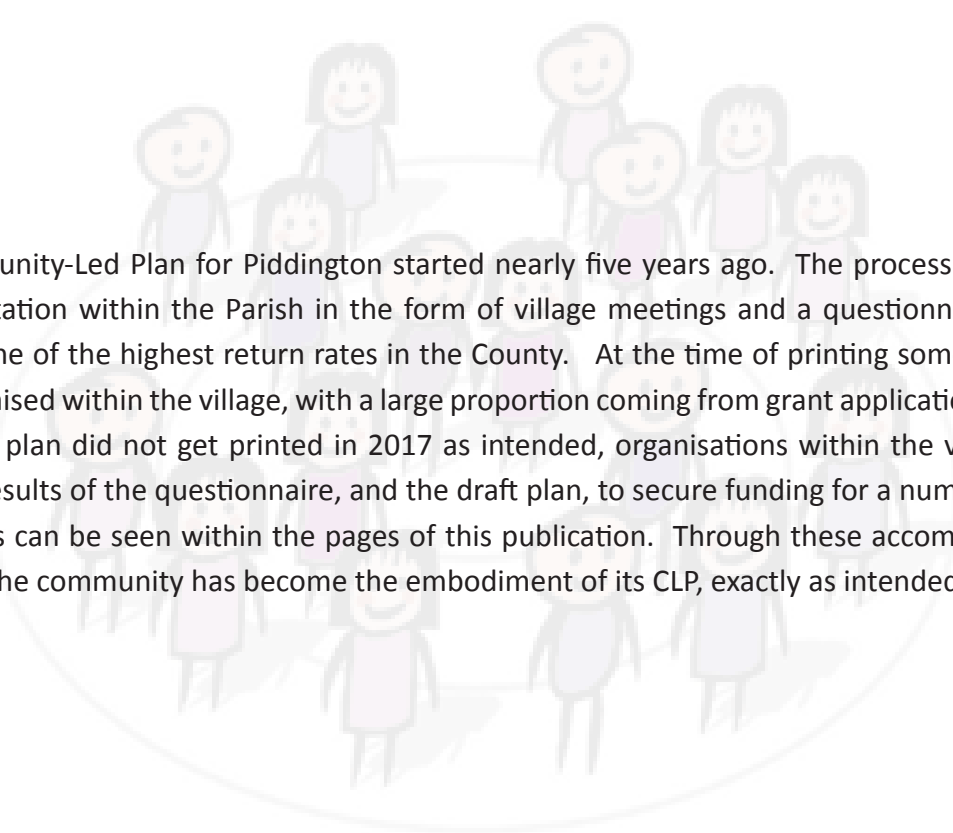
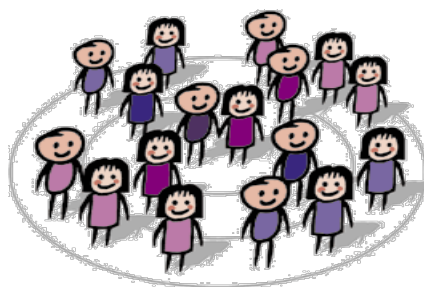


A Community-Led Plan for Piddington (Including 2019 Review)



The Community-Led Plan for Piddington started nearly five years ago. The process included a full consultation within the Parish in the form of village meetings and a questionnaire, which received one of the highest return rates in the County. At the time of printing some £150,000 has been raised within the village, with a large proportion coming from grant applications. Whilst the official plan did not get printed in 2017 as intended, organisations within the village have used the results of the questionnaire, and the draft plan, to secure funding for a number of vital projects, as can be seen within the pages of this publication. Through these accomplishments the community has become the embodiment of its CLP, exactly as intended.



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COMMUNITY FIRST OXFORDSHIRE

Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) is the lead Community Led Planning (CLP) service provider working with parish, district and county councils to support communities across Oxfordshire in doing CLP's. Community First Oxfordshire has been supporting community plans for many years. Our experienced team has worked with over 100 communities across Oxfordshire and were there at the beginning of Piddington's journey, addressing residents at the very first CLP village meeting.

The aim of a Community Led Plan is to set out a vision of how your community wants to develop, identifying the action needed to achieve it. Whilst CLP's have no statutory status they are nonetheless supported by Parish, District and County Councils and related agencies. District Councils will refer to information in CLP's to influence and inform policy makers and planners in relation to sustainable community strategy, district councils' corporate plans, local development frameworks, planning and grant applications.



The word cloud above illustrates the range of issues addressed by eleven Oxfordshire communities, who completed CLP's that set out over 245 community actions covering a wide range of issues.

In developing a Community Led Plan for your area, Piddington has followed in the footsteps of over 4,000 other communities nationwide that have produced similar plans since the late 1970s. The step-by-step process undertaken by your CLP team empowered your community to identify and address a range of different social, economic, environmental and cultural issues. It is a process that can be used time and again to ensure the relevance of your plan. The 2019 review provides a benchmark of how your plan has progressed and highlights those issues that still need to be addressed. It is an invaluable tool of significant social value to your community.

Congratulations Piddington on the publication of your CLP plan and review!!

Community First Oxfordshire

(For more information: <https://www.communityfirstoxon.org/>)

A COMMUNITY-LED PLAN FOR PIDDINGTON

(Originally written 2017)

‘Volunteers are not paid – not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.’

The CLP consultation began in March 2015 with a launch event at the village hall supported by Community First Oxfordshire (then ORCC) and Piddington Parish Council. A steering group of 16 villagers was subsequently formed who have worked over the last three years to put together this profile of contemporary village life alongside the community’s aspirations for the future. Fundamental to this was a village questionnaire which was sent out to every household in the village and allowed everyone the opportunity of having a say on a number of diverse issues. 106 households completed the questionnaire and 190 villagers participated.

The results have been studied by the Parish Council (PPC), Village Hall (PVHMC) and Church (PCC) committees. Each have held further discussions before submitting their conclusions, which now form the backbone of our village plan. This report has been divided into key sections mirroring the questionnaire content and within each a section a number of action points have been identified using data arising from the results and through the consultation process. Alongside a description of the issue will be its status, who is responsible for dealing with it, how it will be executed and within what framework of time. A number of ‘open questions’ were also included in the questionnaire that allowed residents to be more specific on certain topics, a selection of these are referred to in the plan.

The plan reflects the consensus of community opinion and its aim is to provide a blueprint for the future development of the village. Not all the decisions can be actioned internally and will require village organisations to work with other bodies for support and to find necessary funding. Most importantly, delivery of many initiatives will depend on the enthusiasm of volunteers to invest the necessary time and effort. This plan is only the beginning. Whilst the steering group has disbanded, it is crucial that the CLP continues to be exposed to reviews of progress by the management teams of existing village organisations. To this end an annual review should be considered action point 1!

Action 1: Report progress on actions at annual meetings of village organisations

STATUS	New initiative
WHO	Village organisations (PPC, PVHMC, PCC)
HOW	Annual meetings of all village organisations
WHEN	Annually

2019 REVIEW

Unfortunately, the CLP was not published in 2017 due to work required G/T site planning applications. However, in 2019, with the conclusion of the Planning Appeal, it was decided that the main village entities – Parish Council, Village Hall Committee and Church – would undertake a review of the CLP questionnaire results and the plan as written in 2017. These updates can be found at the end of each section. With regards action point 1 the Annual General Meetings of both PPC and PVHMC are now widely publicised along with summaries. The intention being to communicate as much information to the Parish as possible on projects that have been undertaken, progress made and aspirations going forwards. The Church sends out regular bulletins and attends the Parish Council AGM.

INTRODUCTION

A Brief History

The village's place name has been attributed to the Old English '*Pyda's tun*' meaning a farm or settlement connected with Pyda. Prior to the Norman conquest (1066), the village, was included as part of the property of a Norseman called Hakun, who held 35 'lands' of which three were in Oxfordshire. Piddington (Petintone) was also mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086) as 'lands' in Oxfordshire that were held by the Countess Judith, niece of William the Conqueror.

The ownership of Piddington passed through many hands during the medieval period before being retained by St Frideswide's Priory in 1359 until 1525, when Cardinal Wolsey suppressed the Priory to found his Cardinal's College. In 1530 Henry VIII deposed Wolsey and in 1532 Piddington passed to Christ Church, Oxford. In 1553 the parish was granted to Thomas Dynham, lord of the manors of Brill and Boarstall in Buckinghamshire and remained as part of the baronetcy until 1856 when the title became extinct.

By the 18th century the village comprised 56 houses (1758) which remained constant until 1821, when the population was 359. In 1841 the population had risen to 427, declining again to 281 in 1881, and to 212 in 1901. During the interwar years it was 196 (1931) and in 1951 rose again to 311.

Most of the villagers, like their predecessors, were employed on the land. Trade and local handicrafts occupied 6 out of 55 families in 1822, and the census of 1851 recorded 13 craftsmen and tradesmen, among them were 2 shoemakers, 3 bricklayers and 2 carriers. By 1953 some of the villagers were working at the neighboring army establishment at Arncott

A Sunday School was founded in 1818 which subsequently became a village school attended by boys and girls. There was also a bakery, a village post office, shop and smithy and several public houses. In the years following WW2 money was raised to build a village hall which was completed in 1953.



The Seven Stars Public House (left) has had a chequered history. It closed in 2014. The Old Post Office now Gwith Cottage (right).

The Parish Council bought land on Widnell Lane from the MOD for use as a recreational area for the community.

St. Nicholas' Church, originally the personal chapel of the lord of the manor and his staff, became a parish church with its own graveyard and full parochial rights in 1428.



View of St. Nicholas' Church prior to the development of Vicarage Lane (left) and Piddington National School and schoolhouse, early 20th century (right). Built in 1863, it continued as a school until 1967

In 1910 the Great Western Railway built a new main line linking Ashendon Junction and King's Sutton to complete a new high-speed route between London Paddington and Birmingham Snow Hill. The line passed within a few hundred metres of Piddington. The GWR opened a railway station called Brill and Ludgershall) which was closed by British Railways in 1953.

A notable visitor to Piddington, John Drinkwater (1882–1937), who became one of the Dymock poets and a playwright working with the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, is buried in St. Nicholas' churchyard.

Piddington Today

Piddington is a rural village and civil parish of Cherwell about 4.5 miles (7 km) southeast of Bicester in Oxfordshire, England. The parish is approximately 9.53 km² (3.68 sq miles) comprising predominantly agricultural and woodland but also two significant areas owned by the MOD. At its longest point the parish crosses the A41 to the north and borders with Buckinghamshire to the south. Its western edge crosses the B4011 until Blackthorn village and to the east is adjacent to the Bucks parish of Ludgershall.

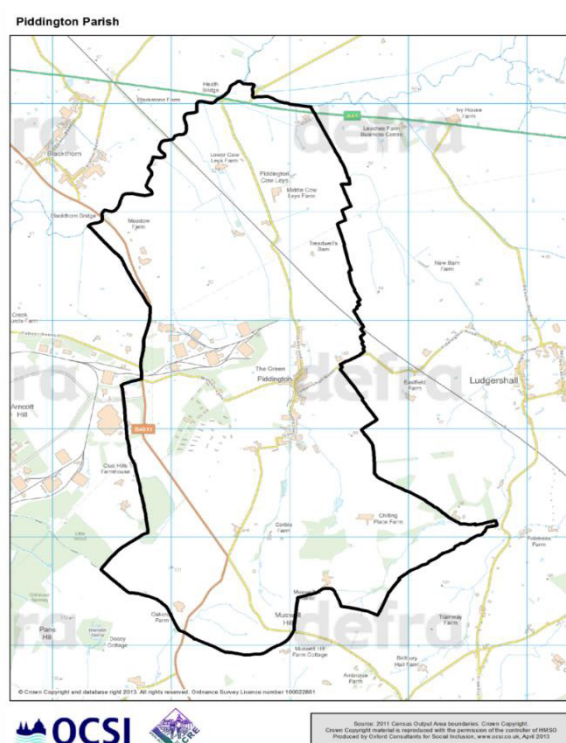
Population Profile, Employment and Housing

The population profile of the village using the 2011 census included 160 households containing 370 adults and 60 children under the age of 16. Of the adult population 225 were working, with a higher than average proportion working from home. 17.4% of the population aged 16-74 were self-employed. The principal sectors of employment included retail, education and manufacturing with over 50% being in managerial or professional occupations. The village contained a higher than average population aged 65+ (6.1% above the national average).

The majority of properties in the village are detached dwellings (62.4%) with 85.4% being owner-occupied. 14 properties are currently Grade 2 listed by Historic England with the oldest property dated late 16th century. Unsurprisingly, two-thirds of households owned two or more cars.

The MOD and Bullingdon Community Prison are the village's closest neighbours. The MOD land in the Parish comprises the Piddington Training Ground on Widnell Lane and 'A' site at the junction of B4011 and Widnell Lane. Both sites are maintained by the Defense Infrastructure Organisation and come under the jurisdiction of The Bicester Garrison at St. George's Barracks and are in active use.

Bullington Prison operates as an adult male Cat. C training prison with a Cat B local function and was opened in 1992, with additions made in 1998 and 2008. Its operational capacity is 1114 as of December 2008.¹



Source: Rural community profile for Piddington Parish (Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) Rural Evidence Project November 2013)

Services and Amenities

The public bus service ceased to run in autumn 2016 and amenities within the village are now non-existent with residents needing to travel above the national average distances to access key services.² The public house 'The Seven Stars' closed in 2012. In spite of this, the village still has a positive community feeling with the village hall and St. Nicholas' Church now becoming key social hubs.

Broadband arrived in the village in 2014 when the Parish Council approached 'Village Networks', superfast connections were installed in 2016 by Gigaclear and BT Open Reach. 3G and 4G coverage within the village is still limited for all providers.³ The village is not connected to mains gas and relies heavily on domestic oil and bottled gas. Electricity is fed through the

¹ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/contacts/prison-finder/bullington>

² Commission for Rural Communities 2010 sustainability indicators: 19km road distance from job centre (4.6km national average), 9.3km from secondary school (2.1km), 4.9km from GP (1.2km), 3.1km from public house (0.7km), 4.2km from post office (1.0km).

³ Which? Piddington 3G and 4G coverage map updated 27th July 2017. <http://www.which.co.uk/reviews/mobile-phone-providers/article/mobile-phone-coverage-map>

village via overhead cables. Village water is supplied by Thames Water (West Aylesbury South West region) and is considered hard with calcium carbonate levels at 288 ppm.⁴

Piddington children of primary school age are in the catchment area for Five Acres school in Ambrosden. Children of secondary school age are within the catchment area of The Bicester School (formerly known as Bicester Community College) which has recently become an Academy. For more information see the OCC website (www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/schools). Our nearest medical practices are in Bicester and Brill, and a reduced service is offered in Ambrosden, otherwise all other amenities and principal retail outlets are located in Bicester.

ACTIVITIES, AMENITIES AND SERVICES

Social Activities

**'Time and commitments' 'Limited things of interest' 'Did not know of any'
'Not mobile enough' 'Get together for kids' 'None that appeal'
'Lack of free time' 'Busy socially elsewhere'
'Activities seem well advertised and good spread of different types'
'More volunteers needed to run them, don't rely on same people'**

When asked, over half of those responding to the questionnaire were not involved in either a regular club or village activity. The open responses were not surprising with lack of free time featuring high on the list. Piddington has a number of very active clubs and societies including the bell ringers, 'Piddington Patchers', an allotment society, book group and indoor bowls club. However, the village demographic profile, as seen in the introduction, means that unsurprisingly many of these societies and clubs have a common target demographic which is geared to adult residents, usually retirees. It is also important to note that these clubs were started by residents themselves.



The short mat bowlers play at the village hall on Monday mornings (left) and have done for a number of years whilst exercise classes for mature movers have been a great success (right)

The CLP survey shows that only 13% of residents believe that there are adequate activities in the village for children aged 0-4years and just 6% for children aged 5 to 10 years. When the children in the age range 11 to 15 are considered this satisfaction rating drops to 2%. Young adults fair little better with the percentage of the residents who think activities are sufficient for the 16–24year age rate to be just 3%. The sufficiency rating improves dramatically in the age range of 25–64 years to 48% and 41% for the over-65s.

⁴ Tested by Thames Water 2015. Defra consider hard water between 201-300 ppm https://secure.thameswater.co.uk/dynamic/cps/rde/xchg/corp/hs.xsl/899_5787.htm

‘Provision at sports field for children and youth.’ ‘A club run by the parents’ ‘After school club’ ‘Sports for children and adults’ ‘Swings and play group’ ‘Updated facilities at the village hall’ ‘Regular club for refreshment and chat’ ‘Multi surface sports area’ ‘Film club’ ‘Youth club’ ‘Craft club’ ‘Sports club’

From the responses, it is evident that the provision of activities for the younger demographic in the village is inadequate and needs addressing. The responses contained a significant level of don’t knows, particularly for the younger age groups, but this can be explained with older households not needing to access amenities for young families (unless they have grandchildren) and therefore having little experience or knowledge of the activities available for these age groups.

The percentage who felt the provision of activities for 25 to 64 and the over 65s was insufficient was 23% and 16% respectively, showing that although a majority expressed satisfaction a significant minority, around 20%, were not satisfied. Clubs by their nature involve specific interests and more knowledge of this would be helpful for any future steering group. There was also positive reaction to the question of the revival of the village fete (87%) which has previously been held at the playing fields and other locations. However, this raises the question of who organises the event and whether it is part of general fundraising for the village. Please see the ‘sport and play’ section for more information.

Action 2: Set up a parent group to review amenities for under-16s

STATUS	New
WHO	Parents/Grandparents/Children
HOW	Meeting and consultation. Parent email list.
WHEN	Ongoing

Action 3: Revival of the Village Fete

STATUS	New
WHO	Village volunteers/PPC/VHC/Church
HOW	Village group to be set up to decide viability.
WHEN	Summer 2019/Ongoing

2019 REVIEW

The Parish Council has concluded that any clubs for under-16s need to be driven by parents and the children themselves if they are to be successful. However, they are keen to help any parent-led organisation with fundraising. Sadly, there was no uptake from within the community for a village football club when raised in 2018. However, PPC did purchase moveable goals for the playing fields in 2018 which have been used. Instead the council intends to focus working with action groups on funding opportunities for the provision of facilities for children in the village.

Community First Oxfordshire has launched a program ‘Together We Can...’ which is aimed at helping different groups in society to not only find their voice but become active and confident contributors. The intention is to organise a number of events for younger residents in 2020, including workshops to be held in the village which will empower those attending to put together an achievable action plan (of their own making) that can be shared with the community.



'Pidnic in the Park' September 2018

The revival of the village fete whilst a good idea requires a group of like-minded volunteers to make it happen. PPC agreed that whilst it would be happy to help with financial support and fundraising it was not the remit of the Council to organise the event. A rounders match and dog competition were organised in September 2018 where PPC provided funding for the provision of a portable toilet. It was sadly not repeated in 2019.

The Village Hall

'Improvements should be realistic in scale and ability to execute' '...it is now scruffy and outdated compared with most others in Oxon and needs replacing completely' 'Only place we can all meet up' '...updated and modernised and then used as a social facility/club for the village like Brill sports and social club' 'Needs more help to run it' 'It's an excellent village amenity' 'Wonderful hub' '...not a 21st century building'



The village hall is located on Ludgershall Road. The first village meeting to form a social club was held in the autumn of 1944 at the school until a village hall was built in 1953 by a village subscription and fundraising. The original structure was blown down and the new structure was rebuilt based on a 'French Barn' design which forms the body of the building we see today.

The village hall is also a registered charity. Unlike halls in many other villages it is financially independent from the Parish Council and consequently relies on fundraising events, donations and grants to cover its maintenance and running costs. The 'Piddington Village Hall Management Committee' (PVHMC) is a group of volunteers dedicated to keeping the hall in a condition suitable for its purpose. The committee includes a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer

and trustees. The Charity Governance means that the hall is *‘to be used as a non-sectarian and non-political place of recreation and social intercourse, for the advantage and benefit of the inhabitants of Piddington...’*

It is important that the PVHMC runs with a full contingent, spreading the workload, and has a form of succession management to introduce new ideas. PVHMC also wants to actively encourage a ‘Friends of Piddington Village Hall’ programme for those residents who cannot commit to a committee role but want to help. The management committee holds an annual meeting (usually in May) where villagers are encouraged to attend and discuss issues pertaining to the hall’s running.

Action 4: Recruitment of new committee members and trustees

STATUS	Ongoing
WHO	PVHMC
HOW	Advertising
WHEN	Ongoing

Action 5: Development of a ‘Friends of Piddington Village Hall’ email list

STATUS	Ongoing
WHO	PVHMC
HOW	Advertising. Discuss incentives.
WHEN	Ongoing

Whilst the building is owned by the village the land it sits on is owned by Cherwell District Council who lease it at a peppercorn rent. The lease runs out in 2073. Initial discussions were held with Cherwell DC in 2013 regarding the possibility of the village acquiring the land. The village hall is one of the few remaining assets left in the village. It is well used by many village clubs and organisations such as the bowls group, keep fit classes, sewing group and dance practice. The hall is also the venue for a number of village events including The Pantry, Apple Day and the Pop-Up Pub which is held on the last Friday of every month. The CLP questionnaire results showed that 25% of those responding have hired the hall for their own events in the last five years, a figure that PVHMC would like to see increased.

Action 6: To re-engage with Cherwell DC regarding the acquisition of the village hall site.

STATUS	Ongoing
WHO	PVHMC
HOW	Contact Cherwell DC
WHEN	Ongoing

A refurbishment programme has been discussed by various committees over the last five years. 45% of the people polled in the CLP survey showed a desire for minor refurbishments, and the current committee has identified four key areas requiring improvement:

1. Complete refit of the kitchen
2. More storage area
3. Improve insulation and heating
4. General improvement to the appearance of the building and grounds

However, to implement these plans the management committee needs assistance with specifications, obtaining quotes, project management, general building works and obtaining grants; this could be on a voluntary or paid basis.

Action 7: To complete the refit of a new kitchen area.

STATUS	New
WHO	PVHMC
HOW	Agree new design and apply for funding
WHEN	Summer 2018

Finally, whilst village hall events are advertised in Parish Matters it is recognised that the committee makes use of the village email list and social media to communicate with the village.

2019 REVIEW

Recent Hall Improvements

In October 2018 the priority for the village hall set out in the CLP report was achieved when the new kitchen was installed. This was funded with the assistance of a £10k grant from the WREN Landfill Communities Fund and £3k from the local Pantry group towards the total cost of £17k.

The second objective was to provide a storage extension to the rear of the hall to accommodate chairs, tables and equipment kept in the hall. The project started in April 2019 and was completed the following month. This in turn would release the small storage cupboard in the hall for other uses. Funding towards the £22k cost was obtained from Cherwell DC £9K with a further £9k from the Viridor Landfill Communities Fund and £500 from the local Pantry group.



The village hall extension was completed at the end of summer 2019 alongside the new kitchen are major achievements for the village hall committee and make the hall more 'user friendly'

Survivor Reception Centre

Oxfordshire County Council together with Scottish and Southern Electric (SSE) have designated the hall as a 'Survivor Reception Centre (SRC)'. The hall will be used in any major power outage for the villagers to gather where facilities of light/warmth/food will be provided. There may be other reasons, flood or snow, when the village needs to use the hall.

The Parish Council obtained funding from SSE for equipment generators to provide power that can also be used outside the confines of the hall. The hall's electricity supply has been upgraded for this equipment. As an SRC the hall can be used for any major incident in the local area.

Future Objectives

The next objective shown in the CLP survey is to improve the insulation and heating. The committee have obtained £10k from the National Lottery, £2k from Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment together with £1k from the Pantry to install more environmentally friendly heating that would benefit the hall financially and provide a more comfortable experience for users. The project cost is £16k and work will start in November 2019.

The committee are tackling other areas of improvement to the facilities in the hall and have so far had new fire doors installed and other more minor remedial work.

A second set of interior doors were installed earlier this year with the assistance of a £1k grant from the Doris Field Trust to form a lobby to help keep out drafts when the front doors are opened. A repaint of the exterior was completed in 2019 with the interior to be painted early in January 2020 once the heating project is completed.

In 2018 the children's play area was dismantled as it was deteriorating and needed remedial work. The committee decided that it would be better seek a new more up to date play area. In October 2019 the play area group were successful in obtaining substantial grants from both Viridor and Cherwell DC, coupled with money raised within the village totalled £50k. Work starts on the construction of the play area in November 2019.

Other future plans include fitting a 6-speaker sound system covering the whole hall and the installation of CCTV around the outside of the hall.

Shopping and Visiting Services

Newspapers please' 'Have managed without a shop for many years' 'Would love somewhere to buy weekend papers' '...logistics of buying, managing and security would be out of proportion to demand in a village the size of Piddington' '...newspaper service/collection point' 'essentials would be good for non-drivers' '...don't think we have the footfall or enough new volunteers to make a regular shop viable'

A steering group was set up in 2011 to investigate the viability of a village shop which could have been located at the pub (it was still open) or the village hall. After consultation with the community, it was concluded that whilst it would be a welcomed service the village was not big enough to sustain a shop on a full-time basis. Unsurprisingly the CLP questionnaire backed this with 89% of respondents indicating that they might use a shop for convenience or occasional purchases only. Similarly, 60% of replies would not make use of a vending machine which could have been used as an alternative as in other villages. However, the open response question suggested that some kind of newspaper service would be welcome, and this should be investigated further.

During the earlier consultation process the steering group agreed to trial a community market. The original aim of The Pantry Market and Coffee Shop was to promote local produce and craft people and in so doing raise money towards funding suitable causes in the village. The Pantry has a strong volunteer base with 9% of respondents helping in some way. 68% of respondents had visited as a customer whilst 21% had never been. Celebrating its 5th birthday

in December 2017, the market has made over £10,000 and has recently agreed to contribute £3000 towards the kitchen refurbishment of the village hall and the installation of a kitchen in the church. A donation has recently been made towards the Apple Day ploughman's lunch and the group will continue to look at ways of helping other causes. However, attendances have lessened over the last year (other than Christmas) which has led the steering group to revert to three markets a year. The Pantry is considered a huge community success but requires the continued support of volunteers and village to make it viable.



The Pantry has supported a number of village projects over the years

Visiting services formed a small part of the questionnaire but together with the open responses reflect an enthusiasm for a parcel point (96 responses) and prescription collection point (62 responses). Other services scored much lower with respondents being content that they were provided elsewhere.

Action 8: Investigate viability of using the village hall as a hub for services such as parcel pickup and collection and prescriptions and for newspaper deliveries.

STATUS	New
WHO	PVHMC/village volunteer
HOW	Investigate logistics and whether the village hall is a suitable hub
WHEN	Ongoing

2019 REVIEW

The viability of using the village hall as a general parcel collection point without it being manned meant that the hall had to be discounted as being able to offer this service to the village. Similarly, delivery of prescriptions by pharmacy groups has meant that this is no longer a challenge to those needing this service.

In October 2019 the group running The Pantry Market announced that the Christmas market would be its last. In the seven years it has run it will have raised some £13k of which nearly £9k has either already been donated to village causes or has been earmarked for such, the two main beneficiaries being the village hall and St. Nicholas' Church. However, money was also donated to the Fitness Trail and children's play area.

The balance of remaining funds left after the Christmas market will be held in trust by the group to be used for new ventures and projects within the village.

Sport and Play

‘I do not see a demand for substantial sports facilities in a small village’ ‘More sports for the youth of the village would be good’ ‘More information needed/advertised as had no idea about the playing field’ ‘Skate facility’ ‘Not enough children in village to benefit’ ‘Really important to encourage’ ‘...community get fit events in spring’ ‘Organise sports coaches if facilities provided’

Whilst the village does not have a village green or open space within its boundaries the community has access to a playing field at Widnell Park which was purchased by the Parish Council in the early 1980s. Although it is 1km outside the village boundary 93% of respondents were aware of its existence and 75% of those responses considered it a village asset. The Parish Council is responsible for its upkeep and has a maintenance programme in place from April to October (66% of replies were in favour of regular cutting).

When asked what sports facilities the village would like to see at this location the highest ranked 5 responses were a tennis court (58), multi-use games area (MUGA) (53), fun trail for children (51), bike park (48) and green gym (43). PPC has already investigated the type and cost of equipment to install a green gym and has obtained several quotes. Community packages contain a mix of units suitable for ages 14+ and have become popular and affordable installations for many towns and villages.

Action 9: To improve facilities at the playing field.

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC
HOW	Decide on facilities. Review quotations. Apply for relevant funding.
WHEN	Summer 2018

Action 10: To investigate location and viability of a MUGA for the village

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC
HOW	Identify location. Village consultation.
WHEN	Ongoing to report developments by APM 2019

A multi-use games area would combine a number of sports in one location, including a tennis court, which would cater to a wider demographic, whilst a bike park was mentioned as an activity specifically aimed at younger residents. For more information on a fun trail for children please see the section on Widnell Park in ‘Countryside and Environment’. Funding for these larger projects is considerably higher and it was encouraging to see that 59% of respondents indicated that they would be prepared to help with fundraising to provide these amenities. However, further consultation into the location’s feasibility will need to be made before this. Similarly, more investigations need to be made as to whether a sports pavilion would also be a viable proposition.

66% of replies were receptive to having sports facilities nearer to the centre of the village. PPC identified a suitable piece of land earlier this year which backs on to the village allotments. The site is not part of an estate or farm and has road access from Thame Road and Ludgershall Road. An investigation was made as to whether the Parish Council could list it as a community asset giving the village the opportunity to raise funds to buy it if it came up

for sale. At present, agricultural land is not judged suitable for consideration. However, the Parish Council will continue to explore this aspect and keep in contact with the owner. It should also consider any other suitable sites.

For more information on 'The Community Right to Bid' please see the Locality website (<http://locality.org.uk/resources/introduction-community-bid-presentation/>).

The play area at the rear of the village hall has been the responsibility of a volunteer group who over the years have raised funds for its upkeep and is the only area in the village specifically set aside for young children to play in. It was not the responsibility of the village hall although they have taken it on as the fundraising group has now disbanded and new volunteers are now required. These have usually been parents who make use of the play area.

It is agreed that the play area will need to be refurbished and that if funds cannot be found for this, and its annual maintenance costs and general upkeep, it may have to close. 32% of respondents indicated that they made use of the area which is surprisingly high if you consider it is aimed at children under 6. It is imperative that a new generation of volunteers come forward if they want the area protected.

Action 11: Village volunteers to set up a fundraising group for the children's play area

STATUS	New
WHO	PVHMC
HOW	Advertise for new volunteers. Fundraising group to be set up to review annual budgets and work required so that it passes next inspection and improves thereafter.
WHEN	2018

The allotments come under the responsibility of the Parish Council, through the Allotment Committee, as they are sited on land owned by the Parish Council. There are currently 15 plots which was deemed about the right number by respondents (83%). However, only 12% of villagers thought they might want to make use of one over the next five years. This begs the question as to whether the Parish Council is making best use of the land for the community at large and whether the allotments could be relocated elsewhere, possibly with better facilities. The Parish Council has investigated the provision of mains water to the site but the quotation from Thames Water was deemed too high. Allotment holders have therefore been encouraged to put up small sheds using water butts to provide a water supply.

In the meantime, the Allotment Committee will become a member of the National Allotment Association to make use of the benefits it provides. The Parish Council has also agreed that the rental in 2018-19 will increase to £15 to include this subscription and that any money raised from rental will be used by the Allotment Committee for the betterment of the area where the maintenance of the internal parts including hedges and paths is down to the allotment holders whilst the Parish Council will see to the cutting of the outer hedge. The Allotment Committee is responsible for advising the Parish Council of any issues pertaining to the site.

2019 REVIEW

The maintenance of Widnell Park and playing field continues to be a priority for the Parish Council with grass cutting twice a month through the growing season and the undergrowth controlled in the woodland area. The meadow area has paths cut through it regularly and has a major cut in the summer. The last couple of years have seen funds raised to purchase benches and picnic tables for the playing field and meadow. The boundary between the pond and playing field has been cleared and new wire fencing installed whilst a pedestrian gate has been added to the Widnell Park entrance allowing easy access for wheelchairs and buggies or for those using bikes. Portable football goals were also purchased in 2018.

At the end of 2018 the Parish Council was advised that its application for funding from Viridor was successful for the purchase of a Fitness Trail, which was installed in April 2019. The equipment is suitable for parishioners from 14 years to use. An opening event was held in June and it is good to see villagers and those from elsewhere making use of these facilities.



Opening of the Fitness Park at the Playing Fields (April 2019)

Looking forwards to 2020 the intention is to tidy the carpark area in Widnell Park and clear away undergrowth between the park and playing field, subject to further funding. The 'opening up' of the park whilst maintaining fencing will make it another viable space to use. With the success of funding for the children's play area at the village the Parish Council, with help from CFO through its 'Together We Can...' programme, will begin to investigate other facilities for the playing fields which will specifically target older children and adults with the aim of continuing to encourage both fitness and fun.

It is hoped that the area will continue to be considered a village asset, used by the whole community.

The allotments are another asset owned by the village. The Allotment Committee now runs regular meetings at the Pop-Up Pub and is a member of the National Allotment Association. PPC agreed that any money received in rental should be left with the committee to use as allotment holders saw fit.

The committee is self-governing and updates the Parish Council at its monthly meeting. Any major capital expenditure needs to be included in the budgets that are settled at the beginning of the year otherwise funding must be found through grants. The Parish Council has been approached with a sponsorship deal for the installation of water to the site. The Allotment Committee is looking into the logistics. Once resolved it is hoped that allotment holders will have access to water in 2019/2020.



There are 15 plots available at the Piddington allotments (above).

In 2018 the children's play area was dismantled as it was deteriorating and needed remedial work. The committee decided that it would be better seek a new, more contemporary play area. A group, including village parents and members of PVHMC, briefed play area suppliers to come up with a suitable design and costings. The majority of money has been raised by grant application. The group have held a number of events in the village, which together with substantial grants from Viridor and Cherwell DC have raised over £50,000. Work starts on the playground construction in November 2019.



The children's play area artist impression (Top) and plan design (Bottom) is due to be installed in November 2019. Over £50k was raised from village fundraising and successful grant applications

St. Nicholas' Church

'To look at, spiritual quiet' 'More heating' 'Historical interest, admiring the flowers' 'Alone to enjoy quiet time/reflection' 'Night lights' '.. An important asset' 'a building of historic interest' 'Basic amenities needed if we are going to use for other events' 'Beautiful' '...could be used more' 'Beautiful building and lovely to have in the village' 'Multi faith centre'



St. Nicholas' Church (left) became a parish church in 1428. Decorated for harvest festival (right). The church has also been used for a number of fundraising events over the years including concerts and recitals

St. Nicholas' Church was built at the beginning of the 14th century, becoming a parish church with its own graveyard and parochial rights in 1428. Major restoration work was undertaken in 1855 and again in 1898.

Every five years a 'Quinquennial' inspection is carried out on the church by a diocesan architect. The inspection in 2014 categorised repairs by degree of urgency, including some on-going maintenance work. As a result of this report Charles Masheder, then Vicar, called for volunteers to form a Parish Funding Group (PFG). The group included church members and other villagers who developed a 5-year plan.

Phase 1 included dealing with the urgent repairs to windows and lintels and was financed with Church reserves and funding from Viridor. Phase 2 was identified as repairs to exterior walls, drainage, inside flooring, the tower, lintels, porch roof and security of the railings. Each phase of work requires necessary faculties (legal permissions) from the Diocese. Work was halted when Charles left for another position but has subsequently resumed under the guidance of the new rector, Steve Hayes. Further repairs were subsequently identified and funding was raised from Viridor Credits, Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust, Churches Trust and our own church funds, including personal donations. To date refurbishment costs are estimated at £41k. Work on phase 2 which began in June 2017 was completed in September 2017. A defibrillator has been provided for the church porch and will be fitted once necessary approvals are received.

Work for phase 3 has been identified with the help of the CLP questionnaire to include the installation of a toilet, a kitchen area and a fixed ramp entry. The Pantry Market has recently agreed to donate £3000 towards this project from their funds (see Shopping section). Other suggestions, including improved heating and exterior lighting, will be carefully considered by the PFG in due course. These developments have the support of the new rector and it is hoped that the new facilities will allow for the hosting of more social and fundraising activities, cementing the church's position as a village hub. The church has this year alone held a number of tabletop and craft sales, concerts and exhibitions that have been well attended by the village. Interestingly the questionnaire results identified that although the church is recognised as a village asset almost 13% of those who responded had never visited it!!

To maintain and repair the church inevitably costs a significant amount of money. The PFG meets each quarter to plan events and oversee the process, ensuring that Church authorities and village members are regularly consulted and involved in the process. Whilst the maintenance of the closed churchyard around the church is currently paid for through parish precepts (see Parish Council section) the graveyard opposite is managed by the Church. It is important that communication between the PFG and village is extended to updates in Parish Matters and making use of the village email to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of the work being undertaken and the funds needed to secure this.

Action 12: Phase 3 funding requirements

STATUS	New
WHO	PFG
HOW	Obtain quotes and required legal permissions. Apply for grants and village fundraise using widespread publicity.
WHEN	Ongoing

Bell ringing has been a feature of the church and village since 1553 when there were just three bells including a Sanctus and a handbell. There are currently 5 bells in the tower (a Treble, Second, Third, Fourth and Tenor) and opportunities will shortly be available for people within the village to learn and practise this skill, subject to the appointment of a new teacher.

For more information please see the village website.

Action 13: Appointment of new bell ringing teacher to offer the opportunity of village workshops and recruitment of more members.

STATUS	New
WHO	Bell-ringing group
HOW	Word of mouth and advertising once teacher appointed.
WHEN	Ongoing

2019 REVIEW

Maintenance

An annual insurance subscription is paid to safeguard the church building. This covers the church building in case of severe damage.

A large proportion of church maintenance is carried out by volunteers, including weekly cleaning and small maintenance jobs. Our cleaning group comprises those who regularly attend church as well as others who wish to help maintain the church. More volunteers are always welcome.

The railings around the church and graveyard have been repainted by volunteers. This was very much a joint village effort with the Parish Council paying for material. The carpet was replaced last year at a cost of £800.

St. Nicholas Church made the national news in 2019 when some 50,000 bees were removed from the church roof after honey from a huge honeycomb started to seep down the walls and was in danger of collapsing the roof. The cost of bringing in specialists was £5000, made possible through fundraising. It was thought the hive had been in the rafters for some 20 years.

Proposed WC and Servery Project

The architect is currently working on a detailed plan which will be submitted to the diocese for their approval. Once approved quotes can be obtained, and we will be in a position to seek funding grants. The building is Grade 2 listed and as such we must follow regulations stipulated by the diocese. We also have to be in a financial position to be able to contribute to such a project. Currently the architect is estimating that the building costs will be in the region of £30,000.*

Church and Fundraising Group

The parish church is governed by the Parochial Church Council which is led by the rector Rev. Steve Hayes. The PCC meets four times a year and it is its duty to run the church in accordance with guidance from the Oxford diocese. It is the PCC's duty to maintain the church building and organise services and events as necessary. It is also the PCC's duty to maintain the church electoral roll for the parish.

The fundraising group was set up in 2013 and comprises members of the church along with others from the village who have an interest in maintaining and supporting the church as a village asset. The group's aim is to organise fundraising events throughout the year in order to help with the cost of maintaining the church and funding projects. It also assists with seeking grant funding for projects as necessary. Last year a total of £2,237.46 was raised through events including: Pantry stalls, Arts & Crafts Exhibition, Table-top sales, Coffee mornings, Ukulele evening, Apple day and Carol singing. Some of these events shared profits with the village hall. It is always our aim to integrate and share with other groups in the village. It would be beneficial to this group to have more volunteers.

Bell ringers

The bell ringers have been unable to find a new teacher and need volunteers to ring. They currently practice about once a month and aim to ring the bells for various festivals, weddings and christenings.

The vision of St. Nicholas church is to be a place of welcome and acceptance to all, both within our community and from the much wider community around us.

COUNTRYSIDE AND ENVIRONMENT

'Install another bench somewhere on Piddington Circular Walk' 'Dog owners pick up after their dogs' 'Reduce speed on routes in and out of village' 'Leave it alone' 'Local farmers doing a good job' 'Better access on many footpaths' 'Bridle paths' 'The village could be a lot tidier than it is' 'More attention to area around Pocket Park' 'Maintenance of the Brook'

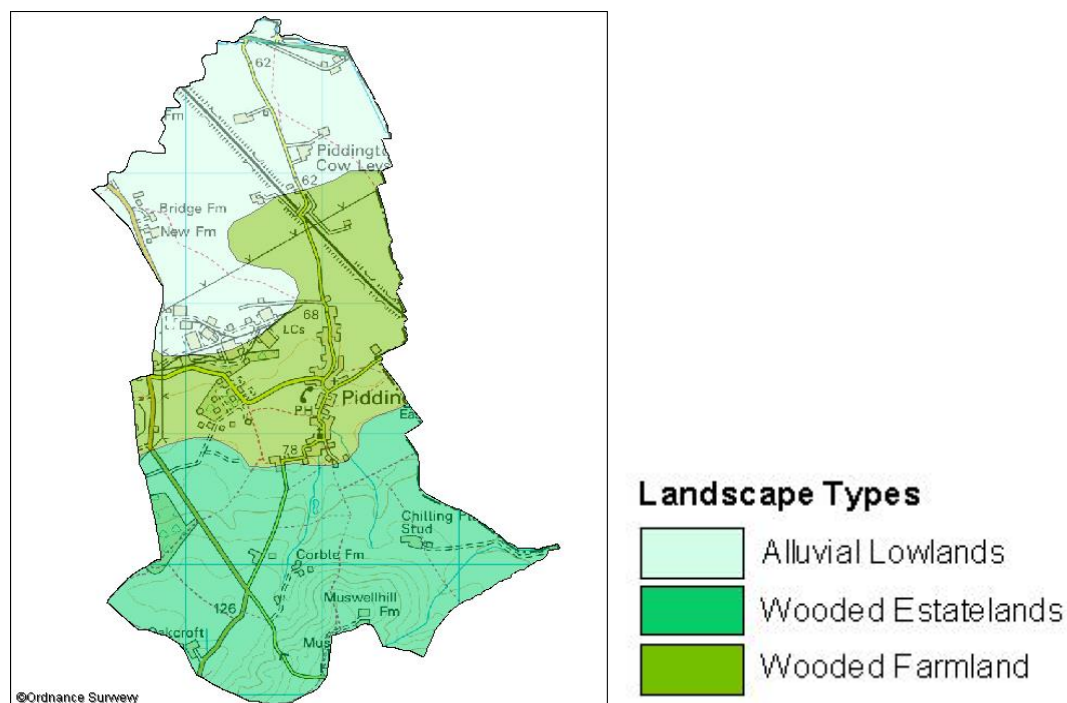


Despite being only 8 km from Bicester the countryside surrounding Piddington is for the most part unspoilt

The landscape within the parish is made up of predominantly wooded estate lands and farmlands to the south and alluvial lowlands to the north. There are currently 12 working farms in the parish whose principal practices are pastoral (sheep, cattle and alpaca) and equine, with hay silage for winter feed. Generally, the land in Piddington is not under drained, and as it is grade 3 clay soil not suitable for growing arable crops.

Whilst the parish is not officially in the green belt nor considered an AONB, Cherwell DC recognises that the open and agricultural setting of the outlying villages surrounding Banbury and Bicester have '*locally distinctive historic cores*' and that the River Ray floodplains have considerable landscape value, vital in establishing the character of the region.⁵

Piddington Wood is situated to the west of the parish near to Upper Arncott and is a broad-leaved woodland covering 18.4 hectares. Over half of the site consists of semi-natural ancient woodland originally part of the Bernwood Hunting forest. Among the species found at the site is the black hairstreak, one of Britain's rarest butterflies.



Source: Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (Oxfordshire County Council)

The Jubilee Reserve, also known as the Jubilee Meadow, was set up in 2012 and is situated at the far end of the playing fields. The initiative was supported by the Woodland Trust who supplied a number of saplings for the area, and BBOWT, who aided the production of a report on wildlife species in the area.⁶ It was decided in 2016 not to apply for full Reserve status due to the expected high maintenance costs and need for a strong volunteer base. It is the Parish Council's responsibility to provide a maintenance programme for the site and encourage its regular use. New benches were installed in 2017 from grant money, providing an attractive and serene environment for the community to enjoy.

⁵ Paragraph B252 of the Cherwell Local Plan

⁶ The full profile can be found on the village website.



Villagers planted nearly 100 saplings at the Jubilee reserve including a King Oak (left). Oxfordshire Conservation Volunteers cleared the wooded area in Widnell Park also in 2013 (right)

62% of respondents indicated that they considered the Jubilee Reserve a village asset and 69% have visited it. In the summer of 2017 BBOWT held a community event at its site at Meadow Farm, Piddington where villagers learnt about local wildlife and plant species. The plan is to organise a similar event at the Jubilee Meadows for 2018. The Parish Council has also recently contacted Wild Oxfordshire for their help and advice.⁷

Widnell Park makes up the third section of open land owned by the parish and is situated next to the playing fields. It is an enclosed green space including a woodland area and car park. There was a children's play area in the park, but this was dismantled when Cherwell DC handed responsibility for its upkeep to the Parish Council. At the time, it was felt that the equipment was little used, in poor condition and outdated. However, in the last two years the area has been opened up with the removal of a row of overgrown conifers. The adjacent woodland area is now part of the maintenance programme which has made the area more inviting. Sadly, the gate for the carpark continues to be locked as a consequence of vandalism but this is under continual review by PPC. A pedestrian access gate for buggies and wheelchairs will be installed in May 2018.



The pond and woodland area of Widnell Park have been cleared and opened over the years

In the last year villagers have helped to clear the pond of debris and excess growth. The aim for 2018 is to create footpaths, underplant with indigenous bulbs and dredge the pond. This will require village participation to keep down costs. The area still needs to be opened further so that it stops feeling so isolated. If this can be done the final stage will be to consider the introduction of a children's adventure play area.

The free text section of the CLP indicated that many parents were unhappy with children walking along Arncott Road to the playing fields from the village without supervision. Road

⁷ Wild Oxfordshire is a local conservation charity building partnerships with community groups to improve Oxfordshire's nature. For more details see website <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/>

safety must be a priority if the area is to be used by all sections of the community and will be investigated by the Parish Council.

Action 14: To provide a suitable maintenance plan for the Jubilee Meadow to include agreement on the best treatment of the ragwort. Continue to review the best use of the land.

STATUS	Ongoing
WHO	PPC and village volunteers
HOW	Continued discussion with Cherwell DC, BBOWT and Wild Oxfordshire
WHEN	Ongoing to report APM 2019

Action 15: Development of a plan for Widnell Park and woodland area

STATUS	Ongoing
WHO	PPC and village volunteers.
HOW	Set up a volunteer base. Produce development plan for the area.
WHEN	Ongoing to report APM 2019

Action 16: Investigate road safety issues between the village and playing field to include the viability of a footpath/cycleway.

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC
HOW	Liaise with OCC on road signs for park entrances. Investigate costs for, and viability of, installing a footpath/cycleway along Arncott Road.
WHEN	Ongoing

There are 20 footpaths in the parish, including the Piddington Circular Walk, one of a series of guided trails to be established by Cherwell District Council. There is one bridleway close to Piddington Wood.⁸PPC liaises with Oxfordshire County Council through our footpath warden regarding the condition and maintenance of stiles. A review was undertaken this summer and a report submitted for consideration by the County Footpath Officer. Issues with accessibility or poor repair should be reported to the parish footpath warden, Parish Clerk or any Councillor.⁹A definitive parish footpath map has now been published on the village website and villagers can report any damage to stiles to the Parish Clerk.

It was felt that the village itself was, for the most part, very accessible but that more cautious driving would make walking through it safer for pedestrians. PPC, PVHMC and the Church Committee are currently working on the details of an emergency plan for the village which will deal with issues arriving from the effect of extreme weather or flooding (see Emergency Plan section).

The village was also asked for its thoughts on maintaining a community orchard due to the success of the annual Apple Day.⁶⁸% responded either 'no' or 'don't mind'. Since this action would require the selection of suitable land, a full maintenance programme and an active volunteer base the Parish Council felt that it was not sufficiently backed to warrant further

⁸ Definitive statement of public rights of way for Oxfordshire 21/2/2006

⁹ Details found on the village website

enquiry by PPC at this point although it would not discourage a village group from making further investigations.

Verges, both inside and out of the village boundary, are an issue that respondents felt needed to be addressed. The cutting of verges is the responsibility of Cherwell District Council. Prior to austerity these were cut four times a year outside the village. However, over the last two years this has been taken down to one cut usually in July/August. PPC has begun to cut the verge around Widnell Park and playing field as part of their maintenance programme after residents complained about how dangerous the corner had become. The cutting of more verges outside the village would need to be costed into the annual budget if villagers felt it needed to be addressed.

Action 17: Improve tidiness in parish to include consultation of the cutting of more verges within and outside the village.

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC
HOW	Ask for village input. Investigate areas needing to be cut and cost.
WHEN	Ongoing

The look of the village was most affected by the destruction of verges – the junction of Arncott Road and Thame Road, Ludgershall Road and the corner around St. Nicholas' Church received the most mentions. For more details see 'Roads and Transport'. Other suggestions to be considered to improve the look of the parish include the cleaning of road signs in the village, planting more spring bulbs and adding another Litterpick to the calendar after the verges have been cut.

2019 REVIEW

The maintenance of ragwort has proved challenging with no clear direction from either District or County Council. The Parish Council, having taken advice from BBOWT, did try to spot kill the ragwort plants in 2017 to ensure other wildflowers were not destroyed. The professional engaged started with the most heavily populated areas, but it became clear that the plant had spread through the entire field. Ragwort has also been left to grow in adjacent fields which encourages spread. Having said that, less ragwort has been noted in 2018 and 2019. The Parish Council continues to investigate viable options.

A plan for basic maintenance has been put in place which is paid for from precept money. One-off improvements to the area will require funding from third parties. It is hoped that in time a group of volunteers from the village will be able to work with PPC on future projects. However, it is up to the Parish Council to promote this idea.

The Parish Council has been encouraged to look at providing facilities for older children at the playing fields by major sponsor Viridor, who has indicated it will look favorably on such ventures.

Whilst the cost of a footpath/cycleway has made it unviable, the Parish Council has invested in street signs at both entrances to the park notifying drivers of children and walkers. The verge in front of the park/playing field is also regularly cut.

Those villagers who use local footpaths are encouraged to report any faulty stiles directly to Cherwell District Council or to the Parish Clerk.

The Parish Council considers that verges within the village should be the responsibility of landowners wherever possible. Dangerous overgrowth along verges should be reported either to Cherwell DC directly or to the Parish Clerk.

A second Litterpick has been added to the calendar for the autumn once verges are cut. Litterpick 2017 saw the signs in the village washed.

It was decided on investigation that the right locality was not available for a community orchard (as it required access to water). The allotments could be considered if part of the area was set aside. It would be necessary to have a group of volunteers involved in its upkeep who were not necessarily part of the Allotment Committee.

The biggest threat to the local countryside will become apparent in autumn 2019 with the announcement of the six possible routes for the Oxford–Cambridge Expressway. The preferred route will be confirmed in 2020 for a public consultation. As well as the road, it is proposed that an extra 300,000 houses will be built in Oxfordshire by 2050. This will affect the Local Plans at County level such that even if the road does not come near the parish the likelihood is that we will not escape development – be it residential or commercial. The Parish Council fully support the work being undertaken by the ‘No Expressway Group’ and forward their updates on the village email.

CRIME, SAFETY AND EMERGENCIES



Safety and Neighbourhood Watch

It is pleasing to note that an overwhelming 98% of respondents reported feeling safe in and around Piddington. This result is influenced by a number of factors which would include low rural crime rates, the relative isolation of the village, low traffic density (reducing chance of accidents) and corresponding feeling of increased road safety. The survey also revealed that 17% of respondents had been the victim of crime in or around Piddington in the last 5 years, but despite this only 2% said they do not feel safe in the village.

Piddington is a tranquil, rural Oxfordshire village with a low crime rate and it is precisely for these reasons that many choose to live here.

The Bicester Police Rural Community Resilience Group was set up in early 2017 and covers 39 villages within the Bicester Police area. It meets 4 times a year and the object of the meetings is to encourage villages to engage with their local police officers on those matters most affecting their communities. Each meeting identifies 3 specific problems on which the police will focus, and report back on. Police visibility continues to be a priority. Piddington is an active

member of this group and the Parish Council encourages residents to advise any concerns they may have.

71% of respondents were also in favour of reinstating the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme within the village. However, to make it successful a number of co-ordinators are required to volunteer.

Action 18: To promote communication regarding police and safety issues

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC and Police Liaison Group
HOW	Promoting dates of meetings by email, website and Parish Matters
WHEN	Ongoing (for as long as the meetings are held)

Action 19: To set up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC to communicate details to the village for volunteers
HOW	Publicise for village volunteers.
WHEN	Ongoing (need for village volunteers)

Just over half of the residents who responded to the survey (53%) feel safe enough not to require the streetlights to be on after midnight, however this is not considered to be a significant enough majority to initiate action at this time.

Emergency Plan

Emergency Plans are actively encouraged at County level and it was gratifying to see that 65% of respondents were in favour of Piddington having one. The Parish Council is in receipt of a small resilience fund from SSE to be spent on emergency equipment. The Parish Council is in discussions with the Village Hall Committee and Church to develop a plan and determine the best and most efficient use of the SSE resilience grant. To date, the village hall has become the designated emergency hub should the need arise, and a set of 2-way radios has been purchased to be held by emergency co-ordinators in the event of a serious power outage. Funds will also be used for the purchase of a generator for the village hall as well as a towable gritter for the clearance of snow on village roads. Emergency co-ordinators will include members of the Parish Council, Village Hall Committee and village volunteers.

Action 20: To publish an Emergency Plan for the village

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC, PVHMC and Church
HOW	Liaison between village organisations with help from district and county initiatives and SSE to draft and plan.
WHEN	2018

2019 REVIEW

Whilst there appears to be little appetite in the village to bring back an active Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, PPC attend meetings of the Police Resilience Group and a member of the Parish Council is currently acting as Chair for the group which includes representatives from other parishes and members of the Bicester constabulary. Villagers are encouraged to attend these meetings, which are held regularly around different villages in the district, or to report any concerns either to the police directly or to the Police Resilience Group. Contact details are listed in Parish Matters and the Information section of the village website.

Members of PPC and PVHMC have been working together to put in place equipment for enabling the village hall to become a 'Survivor Reception Centre'. Grant money provided by SSE has been used to install a new shed at the village hall to house a generator, and a suitable generator should be chosen and purchased before 2020.

Further opportunities for equipment and funding will be investigated.

The village was asked whether people with 4WD vehicles who might be available to be on call in the event of a local event to provide their details to the team. This list is still being compiled.

The Parish Council continue to support the SSE Priority Service for vulnerable people and publish contact details in Parish Matters.

PARISH COUNCIL

'Communication and engagement improved since CLP launch and must continue.' **'PPC does not have resources to do everything itself, efforts to recruit volunteers should be continued'** **'They do a good job'** **'It strikes me as only representative of a particular section of the village and particular area of the village'** **'You have this well covered, thank-you'** **'Email residents information'** **'Better communication'** **'Regular emails/updates'** **'Information good and improving, should formalise an approach to listening'** **'Older people don't read e-mails, a summary of actions delivered with newsletter'**

Parish councils were introduced by an Act of Parliament in 1894 creating civil parishes separated from the Church. They are the first tier of the local authority hierarchy and the level closest to the community. Whilst parish councils have the power to raise money through their precept, their powers are limited in how to spend it, although councils are permitted to contribute small financial sums towards community programmes, which Piddington Parish Council has done in the past. In 2018–2019 the precept raised for Piddington was approximately £8500. This sum is set at a budget meeting in the January to cover the costs for the upkeep and maintenance of village assets and payment of the salary for its Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer.

In many areas, a parish council's main role is to pressurise the responsible bodies to act, which will be seen in certain action points.

However, if a parish council qualifies, it can exercise the General Power of Competence. This power, which came into being in the Localism Act 2012, enables a parish council to do anything that individuals generally may do as long as they do not break other laws. It is intended to be a power of first, not last, resort.

Piddington Parish Council is partially qualified and intends to be fully qualified in 2018, at which point it will seek to exercise this power, provided that at least two-thirds of its Councillors are elected rather than co-opted.

Action 21: For the council to become eligible to qualify for the ‘General Power of Competence’.

STATUS	New initiative
WHO	PPC
HOW	The Clerk to hold appropriate qualifications. PPC to resolve to adopt the GPC, at least 2/3rds of members declared elected rather than co-opted.
WHEN	2018

Councillors are elected every 4 years and PPC has seven. These positions are taken on a voluntary basis and, other than the parish clerk, receive no salary. A quorum is made up from the attendance of 3 Councillors and the Parish Clerk. Parish councils must include a Chair, Vice-chair and Clerk or Responsible Financial Officer. For more information please view the village website. PPC is a member of The Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, Community First Oxfordshire and The Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association.

Residents were asked to respond to questions relating to the Parish Council’s responsibilities, community engagement and attendances at meetings. Whilst a high percentage (84%) answered that they broadly knew what the Parish Council did, 36% either didn’t know or did not think that it served the village well.

It is the Parish Council’s responsibility to organise the maintenance of public lands and property in the parish. These include Widnell Park, the playing field and reserve, Pocket Park and working alongside the church on the upkeep of the closed churchyard. The bus shelter and church railings also come under its remit, along with the provision and emptying of litter bins and dog poo bins in the village.



It is the responsibility of the Parish Council to maintain parish owned assets. These include the playing fields (left) and the church railings which were painted by volunteers in 2016 (right)

For more information and action points see sections ‘Sport and Play’, ‘Countryside and Environment’, ‘Crime and Safety’ and ‘Roads and Transport’. The council also works closely at District and County levels to bring attention to issues pertaining to the community.

Piddington Parish Council meets every month and all meetings are open to the public, with the first half hour specifically set aside for public participation. The dates for these meetings are currently advertised in advance in ‘Parish Matters’ and on the Piddington website and Parish noticeboards. Meetings are generally attended by our District Councillor and occasionally by the County Councillor if pertinent matters are being discussed. All parish

councils hold an Annual Parish Meeting allowing the council and community to review the previous year and discuss plans for the year ahead. PPC hold its APM in May. The questionnaire indicated that only 35% of respondents had ever attended a Parish Council meeting and 37% the APM. This is seen as a serious challenge by the Parish Council which wants to encourage more community engagement and where possible higher attendances, particularly for the APM.

Action 22: To publicise an annual list of PPC meetings

STATUS	New initiative
WHO	PPC
HOW	List dates on noticeboards, website and Parish Matters
WHEN	Immediate

All minutes and agendas are currently publicised on the two village noticeboards and the village website. Agenda items should be prompted as much by residents as by district or county policies. It is of paramount importance that the Parish Council discusses items that matter to the community and encourages the community to engage with them.

Piddington Parish Council has actively used the village email list started by the CLP committee and would wish to continue to do so once the CLP process has concluded. The village email system proved an invaluable tool during the recent gypsy/traveller site planning application. The challenge will be to encourage as many villagers as possible to sign up if they use the internet. In May 2018 new laws will come in to force regarding data protection. The CLP email list will need to comply with these directives.

Action 23: To make the village email list 'GDPR' ready

STATUS	New initiative
WHO	PPC/CLP group
HOW	Professionalise the village email system and set up a 'MailChimp' account.
WHEN	May 2018/DONE

The village website is also full of information. PPC has funded an update in the website's software. The challenge now is to get the community using it (only 17% look at it frequently and 39% have never used it).

It should not be forgotten that there are people in the village who do not have access to the internet or choose not to use it. The Parish Council agrees that Parish Matters is invaluable in conveying issues on a monthly basis and will endeavour to make full use of it going forwards.

2019 REVIEW

Piddington Parish Council continues to be proactive with regard village communications, making good use of the village email and publicising a monthly update in Parish Matters after each PPC meeting. The village email has been upgraded using a 'MailChimp' account which allows villagers to opt in and out as they wish. There are currently 118 active subscribers.

The Parish Council has worked tirelessly over the last two years to fight two planning applications for a Gypsy Traveller site on Widnell Lane and subsequent Appeal. This has taken

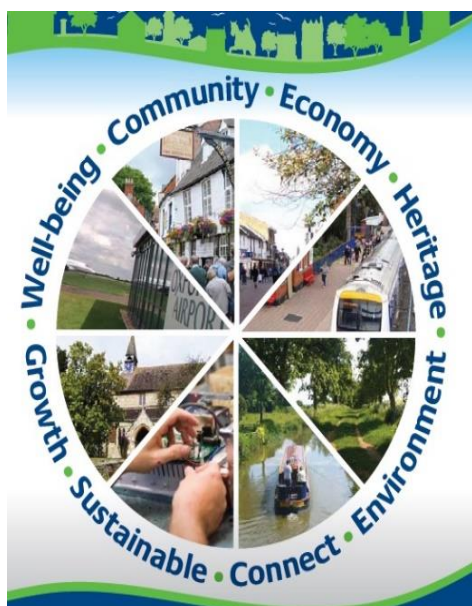
up much of the Parish Council's time and resources as Councillors have worked alongside legal representatives the parish agreed to employ.

Piddington Parish Council continues to be part of the 'Joint Parishes' committee which encourages parishes in Cherwell to liaise and communicate issues with each other. This has been particularly useful regarding planning decisions and the Ox-Cam Expressway.

Development

'Green spaces should be left green' '...some new development is inevitable but would hope that the current size of the village is not disturbed'
'Concentrate on affordable housing' 'It would be great to preserve green/open space in heart of village' 'Things cannot stand still'
'...we worry about increased traffic'
'More houses = more people to involved in village events'

Cherwell DC send all planning applications to the Parish Council for consultation purposes only, although the Parish Council does have the right to object to applications on behalf of the village. It was suggested that residents should be advised of planning applications within the village via email which will be considered by PPC.



Piddington was classified as a Category 'C' village in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011–2031 and deemed suitable for conversions and infilling only (where infilling refers to the development of a small gap in an otherwise continuous built-up frontage).¹⁰ Our closest neighbours have been classified as either Category 'A' villages (Arncott and Ambrosden) or Category 'B' (Blackthorn) and as such take development priority. Consequently, the Parish Council has decided that producing a 'Neighbourhood Plan' at this time would not be a satisfactory use of resources or finances.¹¹ However, monitoring Oxfordshire CC's housing requirements will be important as this influences development locally (as was seen with the recent revision of Cherwell's Local Plan due to the pressure of Oxford City's unmet housing needs on the rest of the county).

Cherwell's Master Plan is available to read on their website

Nevertheless, the questionnaire did highlight that 50% of those questioned felt that a few residential developments over the next 10 years would benefit the village (25% wanting none or moderate). Many of those that commented on this section felt that there was also a need for affordable housing locally. On the other hand, 87% of respondents wanted to see no or little commercial/industrial development in the area. The Parish Council has very little

¹⁰ Cherwell Local Plan p. 247-248

¹¹ Neighbourhood plans are a statutory document the Localism Act 2011 giving communities the right to shape development in their areas. They are developed in conjunction with district development policies. They take usually 2 years to develop and can cost in excess of £10,000 to produce.

authority in this area other than to encourage any landowners of potential sites or properties to discuss schemes with them and react against any potential commercial/industrial development should an application be made in the parish.

It should not be forgotten that the MOD is one of the biggest landowners in the parish and it is important that the village maintains open lines of communication with the military. Concerns about the long-term requirement of 'A' site have abated since the DEMS unit took control of the area for training and storage. PPC will endeavour to keep in contact with the Garrison to ascertain the MOD's intention for this site.

The purchase and subsequent closure of the pub 'The Seven Stars' suggests that the site is being held for its possible development potential. Prior to its sale in 2012 PPC had the pub registered as an 'Asset of Community Value'. This would give the village a 'Right to Bid' on the property in the event it came up for sale (so long as it was not through a bankruptcy). The registration period lasts for 5 years and must be re-applied for. Whilst the pub might have sat empty for 5 years keeping an asset order on its title continues to forge a link between it and the community.

Action 24: Reapply for the pub to be made an 'Asset of Community Value'

STATUS	Immediate
WHO	PPC
HOW	Clerk to re-apply to Cherwell DC
WHEN	April 2018/DONE

2019 REVIEW

The announcement of the final route for the Oxford–Cambridge Expressway in 2020 will have a huge effect on the development of Cherwell and it is anticipated that the current Local Plan will need to be reviewed once this announcement has been made. It is likely that if the route does come east of Bicester Piddington will unlikely remain a Category C village. PPC will need to be prepared. Although a Neighbourhood Plan was deemed unnecessary whilst the village and parish were considered unsustainable in planning terms, this will likely change.

The nature of use of land owned by the MoD is also likely to become a more serious issue as rationalisation of military assets are reviewed. The Parish Council continues to liaise closely with the Bicester Garrison HQ about this. It is expected that 'A' site will be utilised more over the next few years as a logistics centre. Based on discussions already had with the Garrison, PPC anticipates that HS2 contractors will be using the old Home Office site within 'A' site for storage and distribution in 2020.

PPC continues to support the Asset of Community Value programme and were successful in upholding this status on the pub in 2018. Whilst there was some village resistance to this, PPC felt it was necessary not to capitulate to developers, encouraging the owner of the site to liaise with PPC to discuss the future of the building and site. To date there has been no response from the owner.

An attempt was also made to have the field behind the allotments listed as an Asset of Community Value so that if the current owner decided to sell, the village would be given the opportunity to make a bid for its purchase and the time to raise the money. Sadly, this was not successful as land cannot be considered an asset in the same way as a building.

ROADS AND TRANSPORT

Roads and Traffic

Piddington is a linear village, much longer from north to south than from east to west and based on an offset crossroads. There is a 30mph limit in the village itself but the roads in the rest of the parish, all of which are unclassified apart from short stretches of the A41 and the B4011 on the periphery, are governed either by the national speed limit (60mph) or a 50mph limit in the case of the B4011. There are railway bridges to the north and the east, each of which is approached by sharp bends from both sides, making them almost impassable for long vehicles. After leaving the A41 or the B4011, every other road in the parish has a 7½ tonne weight limit.

Within the village itself the condition of the roads is acceptable except for one or two areas where damage has been caused by works by the utilities. However, outside the village, especially to the North, beyond Lower End, towards the A41 and the Ludgershall Road, the unclassified roads are breaking up and the profile of the railway bridge is a hazard to an unwary driver or low-slung vehicle.

Residents are generally philosophical about most of the problems caused by parking. (only 32% said that parking on roads or verges caused them a problem). There is even a strand of opinion that parking on the narrow roads acts as a traffic calming measure. However, cars parked on blind bends are perceived as a danger. There were some very specific parking issues that could be tackled if they were reported, and parking for large events at the village hall and the church is an issue for people living nearby.

Although speeding is frequently complained about, the only measures that had any degree of support were vehicle-activated signs (81 people) and white gates at the entrances to the village (84 people). 66 people supported the idea of a 20mph speed limit, but the Parish Council has already investigated this, and the cost would be prohibitive. Furthermore, if people already ignore the 30mph limit they are unlikely to take notice of 20mph.

More effective enforcement of the 7½ tonne weight limit attracted strong support (80%). There are also issues with the drivers of large vehicles that require access, and are therefore legitimately using village roads, behaving in a way that causes more nuisance and damage than necessary.

Residents dislike the damage to verges and road edges caused by larger vehicles that cannot pass without driving on the verge. Damage is also caused by residents parking on the grass, especially in the wet. More effective enforcement of the weight limit would help, but for farm and other large vehicles, legitimately using the village roads, this is an intractable problem.

Residents recognise that urban-style street furniture and pavements and extensive white and yellow lines conflict with the rural character of the village, there was limited support (38%) for improvements for pedestrians, recognising the cost and impracticality of such measures, but also that extensive pavements and kerbs are not appropriate. The powers of the Parish Council are very limited on highways matters. In the main they are restricted to reporting issues and infringements to OCC, which is the Highways Authority, and putting pressure on them to get things dealt with. This approach would be much more effective with the help of the community in identifying problems and PPC should equip residents with the tools to report the various infringements and problems, either directly or via the Parish Council. Links for 'Fix My Street' have now been added to the village website.

We cannot make the roads wider, so they are safer for parking, and residents who do not have space on their own land have to park somewhere. However, specific parking problems that were raised were damage to the grass verges and special events at the church and village hall and generally near the allotments.

Action 25: Identify a plan for off-the-road parking for large village events

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC/PVHMC/CHURCH WARDEN/LANDOWNER
HOW	Liaise with possible landowner
WHEN	Ongoing

Action 26: Provision of parking spaces within the allotment site

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC and Allotment Committee
HOW	Investigate cost and viability and organise village consultation.
WHEN	2018

Speeding is widely considered to be an issue, but residents are not keen on most traffic calming measures, viewing them as damaging to vehicles or frustrating to drivers and essentially urban in character.

Action 27: White gates for village entrances

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC
HOW	Obtain quotes for gates and installation. Look at funding.
WHEN	2018

Action 28: Vehicle Activated Signs

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC/Village volunteers
HOW	Agree best sign and obtain costs. Agree funding and plan for use.
WHEN	2018

Enforcing the 7½ tonne weight limit is the responsibility of OCC Trading Standards and Thames Valley Police but they rely on the public to report breaches. There is a reporting form on the OCC website, a link for which can also be found on the village website.

Action 29: Reporting of overweight vehicles in village

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC and Neighbourhood Watch
HOW	Set up village campaign. Link on website.
WHEN	2018

Action 30: Upgrade of weight restriction signs into the village

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC/OCC/village campaign
HOW	Set up campaign to lobby OCC if required
WHEN	2018

Residents identified various areas in the parish where the state of the road is unacceptably poor. Chief among them were the approaches to the railway bridge north of the village and the state of the bridge itself, the damage to the drainage at the end of Ludgershall Road that causes flooding and ice in the winter, and the gradual obliteration of the white line at the foot of Vicarage Lane. Other hazards noted by respondents were caused by overgrown hedges and long grass where they obstructed line of sight. Litter, drainage and dog fouling were also mentioned, as was winter maintenance of minor roads between the village and a road that was gritted. Certain issues can be taken up by our County Councillor and residents are encouraged to report concerns to the Parish Clerk or Chair.

Action 31: Reinstatement of white lines at foot of Vicarage Lane

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC
HOW	Advise OCC
WHEN	Immediate

Action 32: Damage to village roads and repairs

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC/residents
HOW	Advertise 'Fix My Street' website, make reporting easier.
WHEN	2018/ongoing

Action 33: Reporting of overgrown hedges blocking lines of sight

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC/residents
HOW	Improve reporting process to OCC. Advertise 'Fix My Street' website.
WHEN	2018/ongoing

Action 34: Reporting of long grass in verges blocking lines of sight

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC/residents
HOW	Improve reporting process to OCC. Advertise 'Fix My Street' website.
WHEN	2018/ongoing

Action 35: Additional Litterpick for the village.

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC/residents
HOW	Advertise date in late summer after verges cut
WHEN	Autumn 2018/DONE

Action 36: Locate grit bin on Widnell Lane

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC
HOW	Agree location and fill new bin. Include in emergency plan directives as safest route out of village in event of heavy snow.
WHEN	Autumn 2018/DONE

Action 37: Dog bin for Lower End

STATUS	New
WHO	PPC
HOW	Price and agree site for bin
WHEN	Summer 2018

2019 REVIEW

The Parish Council has endeavoured to be as proactive as possible with regards traffic calming initiatives in the parish. Pedestrian signs were installed at the entrances to Widnell Park and the Playing Field in 2018 and the VAS sign has been a great success. Due to certain installation



difficulties PPC has been unable to move the sign to other locations in the village. Volunteers keep the batteries charged and replace them in the system on a regular basis. It is hoped this will be resolved in the near future. PPC's aim is to purchase a second system (possibly solar powered) and is working with the manufacturer to that end.

Half the money has been found for the procurement and installation of white gates at the village entrances from our County Councillor. Investigations are currently ongoing to find the balance.

Re-establishing the white lines on Vicarage Lane is still ongoing as PPC continues to apply pressure on the Highways Authority. Details of how to report road damage and streetlight issues are published on the village website (villagers are encouraged to report directly or contact the Parish Clerk if necessary). Similarly, the District Council can be notified of overgrown/dangerous verges.

The 2019 Autumn Litterpick was yet again very successful, as it was in 2018. Villagers are encouraged to participate. The date will be set by when OCC cut the verges. A grit bin has been installed near Widnell Park and a dog bin has been purchased for Lower End and has now been installed near Shady Lane. The allotment area has been cleared around the gate and sufficient space is available for two cars.

The Parish Council's reserves have been depleted over the last two years contributing towards legal fees for the planning application for a Gypsy/Traveller site on Widnell Lane. Sadly, this will directly influence how precept money is spent over the next couple of years.

Transport

When people travel out of the village, 90% of them usually go in their own car as driver, reflecting the lack of alternatives. Unsurprisingly, car ownership is high, but we still found 3 households with no car. At the 2011 Census there were 12 such households.

In 2016 OCC withdrew all subsidies on rural buses, with the consequence that Piddington was left without any public transport. At the same time, the Dial-a-Ride service was discontinued. By the initiative of some residents, a bus now makes a return journey between Piddington and Bicester on Friday mornings, for a trial period. It costs £5 a head and passengers cannot use their free bus passes. The Piddington section of Parish Matters will continue to promote it in the hope that more people will make use of it. Difficulty in getting to railway stations was also mentioned. Apart from Bicester, the second most popular destination would be Oxford and it is now not possible to make a return journey there by bus (or a combination of bus and train) unless the passenger is able to walk to Bullingdon Prison to catch the S5.

Of course, the existence of a car in a household does not mean that every individual has the use of it. Not only those without cars, but those with certain health or sensory conditions cannot drive and find getting to medical and other appointments difficult, especially if they need accessible transport, and young people are socially restricted, relying on parents to ferry them around.

The number of residents affected by the lack of public transport is quite small but for them the loss of the daily bus service, not only to Bicester but to Oxford as well, is a serious curtailment of their activities. Options exist for older people to use the Age UK service based in Brill to get to special appointments, but this has barely been promoted in Piddington, and it does not answer daily needs. Discussions are continuing about a local minibus service in the Bernwode area, but progress seems to have stalled. Some communities have managed to organise volunteer drivers, and this works well for them, but it relies on someone acting as a coordinator.

Of course, poor or non-existent public transport in rural areas does not affect only Piddington. The former Passenger Transport Representatives Group, which used to meet under the aegis of OCC to give feedback on the subsidised services, has continued as an independent pressure group and information exchange on rural transport, without the support of OCC. The Parish Council will continue to represent its villagers at these meetings and will be involved in any joint working groups deemed appropriate.

School Transport

Although not a specific topic in the questionnaire the village has had a turbulent few years dealing with issues regarding school transport at both primary and secondary school level.

State Primary Schools

Piddington village falls into the catchment area for Five Acres School, Ambrosden. However, Brill School remains the preferred option for most parents.

In early 2015, OCC recalculated the mileage from Piddington to the two schools. The new calculation being based on the shortest route, i.e. as the crow flies. This has led to an ongoing dispute with parents as the new calculations mean that families living along Lower End, being closer to Five Acres, are now required to pay for the Brill School bus even though the children all pick the bus up from the village. There is now an increase in the number of parents driving to the school rather than paying, meaning that the bus is on many occasions only half full.

The Parish Council believe that this is a matter that should be pursued and has been trying to obtain details of the two routes from OCC based on the freedom of information act so that it can compare the respective routes.

State Secondary Schools

Piddington's catchment secondary school is The Bicester School situated at Queen's Avenue, Bicester, for which transport is supplied for free. Children attending Lord William's School in Thame have to pay for school transportation subject to availability, which at present is very limited, thus increasing the number of car journeys. A number of parents now rely on a car share programme run and organised amongst themselves.

2019 REVIEW

The great unknown in discussing anything to do with roads, rail or transport is the proposed Oxford–Cambridge Expressway, with the development associated with it, including the reinstatement of the so-called Varsity Line, which has already started.

Meanwhile, there has been no improvement in bus services over the last two years, in fact there has been a deterioration in that it is no longer practical to use the S5 from Bullingdon Prison to travel to and from Oxford in one day, owing to timetable changes, even if one is able to walk to the bus stop. The privately arranged market day bus to Bicester continues to operate and provides a lifeline for those without their own transport and is well used.

There has been an improvement in both the train service from Bicester to Oxford or London Marylebone and the former Bicester Town station (now called Bicester Village). It is now possible to travel from either Bicester Village or Bicester North to Marylebone, the fastest journey time being 43 minutes. However, this does assume that potential passengers have private transport to the station.

One positive note is that OCC now recognises that the loss of the subsidised buses has had a more severe effect on rural communities than expected at the time the decision was made and has recently established a team with a community transport remit, which among other things is providing support to the Passenger Transport Representatives Group and attending the meetings to facilitate information exchange. OCC is currently starting work on the statutory Local Transport Plan and an opportunity for input from Piddington will arise shortly when the consultation phase is reached. PPC will ensure that Piddington's interests are well represented.

PPC continues to investigate and put pressure on Oxfordshire County Council to reinstate free transport for all Piddington children going to Brill School.

Questions have also been asked why OCC does not provide transport for Lord William's School for Piddington children to access. At the present time parents must apply to Bucks CC for places on their buses, which are limited. Each seat costs £1000 per child per year.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

There is no excuse for village organisations not to be able to communicate to residents nor for residents not to be connected with their community. The questionnaire results indicated that the usual way of getting information was through 'word of mouth', Parish Matters and the noticeboards. However, a high number of comments regarding communication suggested email updates would be beneficial. The CLP village email list was set up at the launch event and became an invaluable tool for the Parish Council to communicate quickly and effectively with the community during the gypsy/traveller site application on Widnell Lane. A new email system will be introduced shortly to comply with the introduction of revised data protection requirements.

96% of respondents indicated that they were mostly satisfied that they could find out what they wanted to know and 83% felt that Parish Matters was 'fairly' or 'very' informative about matters pertaining to Piddington. However, comments from the questionnaire also included that Parish Matters was out of date or delivered late in the month. This should have been rectified over the last couple of months with a new editorial team and clearer guidelines. The editor now allows a late submission from the Parish Council so that it can include current discussions from its most recent meetings.

Email updates, the Piddington Facebook page, including the Piddington 'Swap Shop', and Twitter feed allow those who are time short to keep in touch whilst Parish Matters and the two village noticeboards serve those who are not technologically minded.

Furthermore, the Piddington website is full of community information and will shortly allow all village organisations to update their pages independently. However, only 17% of respondents use it on a regular basis and 39% have never used it. It is imperative that all village organisations encourage residents to make use of it.

96% of replies also state they would read a regular Piddington magazine/newsletter. PPC did produce 'The Parish Pump' from time to time which could be reinstated with a new editorial team if someone is interested in taking this over. Otherwise social media and more thorough coverage of Piddington events in Parish Matters appear to have taken over its place.

Action 38: Organisation of a Piddington magazine/newsletter

STATUS	New
WHO	Village volunteers
HOW	TBC
WHEN	Ongoing

Village website and to subscribe for inclusion to village emails:
<http://www.piddingtonvillageoxfordshire.org.uk/>

Facebook: Like the Piddington Facebook page at www.facebook.com/piddingtonoxfordshire

Twitter: Follow Piddington village news on Twitter at www.twitter.com or send us a tweet. If you don't have a Twitter account, sign up and find us by typing our 'handle' in the search box – @Piddingtonoxon

The Pantry: Follow The Pantry on Twitter @pidding_pantry

Follow @pidding_pantry or read The Pantry blog at www.piddingtonpantry.wordpress.com

OVERVIEW 2018

The publication of Piddington's Community-Led Plan has not been without its challenges and is an example to one the most important issues facing small communities the length and breadth of Britain. How to secure a volunteer base that can meet the needs and expectations of a community, particularly one which is not growing? It was not intended for the publication of the report to take so long but unfortunately other pressures took precedence.

However, what has been gratifying to see is that after the publication of the CLP results village organisations not only started work on the action points listed within the plan but have already completed a number of the suggestions made through the community consultation. It certainly makes me very proud of this village when I see the amount of funding that has

been raised by the Village Hall, St. Nicholas' Church and the Parish Council for schemes as wide ranging as a VAS sign, a new kitchen for the village hall, and the much needed renovation work at the church.

People live in or move to rural villages for a variety of reasons – the countryside, quieter life, safety and community engagement to name a few – without realising the difficulties. Piddington is a Category C village and as such has been deemed by Cherwell DC one of the least sustainable villages in the district. Cherwell's Master Plan indicates it is highly unlikely that anything other than infill development will take place until 2030, a sentiment backed by those who responded (50% thought a FEW additions over the next 10 years suitable). However, as things stand the village is caught in a Catch 22 situation. Our precepts are limited to a minimum level as our population has not grown. With no development opportunities the parish has no chance of receiving any 'New Homes' bonus money from government which goes into the parish coffers. This is compounded by the fact that as a Category C village most services have been discontinued and to try to provide these takes money the parish does not have. As a consequence, and from necessity, these responsibilities are taken over by volunteers either doing the work itself or by fundraising. The pressures on small rural communities in our district are immense.

However, what surprises visitors is its strong sense of community which is reflected in the fact that once someone moves to the village, they are inclined to stay here longer than expected!

Piddington is serviced by three principal organisations: The Parish Council, The Village Hall Committee and the Church, each run by volunteers either in principal positions or supportive roles. The CLP has shown that it is imperative that these groups receive community support and that succession is in place in time to prevent 'volunteer fatigue'. The success of any community relies on new blood working alongside old, respecting tradition whilst bringing new ideas and enthusiasm. The question is how to harness community good-will.

The answer is that everyone can play a part. Volunteering does not mean just serving on a committee but rather being involved in aspects of village life that have meaning to you. That could be the countryside and our local environment, as a parent of young children or teenagers concerned about facilities, worried about road safety, fundraising, emergency planning or the Neighbourhood Watch. There are opportunities for everyone to get involved.

The organisations mentioned above have all had to accept that ambition and expectation must be managed, sadly hampered by ambivalence and lack of support. There are certainly a number of action points raised for the Parish Council that cannot be completed without volunteers, and the Village Hall Committee constantly needs help at both the macro and micro level – from involvement with its refurbishment programme to serving behind the bar on a Pop-Up Pub night!

Parents have a particularly important role in promoting the needs of younger villagers. Whilst it is universally recognised that the village is lacking in facilities for the children living here progress cannot be made without parent participation. Both the Parish Council and the Village Hall Committee have been amenable to parent involvement since the CLP process began and will help with fundraise and promotion.

Rural communities are in the ideal position of being able to mould the type of environment in which our families live which is something our urban neighbours struggle to be able to do. It is for all of us to embrace this culture and be prepared to give something back.

2019 REVIEW

By Francesca Darby, Chair (Piddington CLP)

What an amazing place Piddington is, and what a celebration of community achievement this publication has become!!! On reading the reviews of my colleagues my pride in our village knows no bounds. How many of you recollect the first CLP meeting in 2012? The piles of post-it notes, the wish lists and 'to do' lists. The question at that time was how do we make any of it happen?

Fast forward to 2019, and what have we achieved? We are a village that obtained super-fast broadband before many of our rural neighbours through campaigning Village Networks and then Gigaclear. We have a village email and website second to none, and a very active Facebook presence. Our village hall has been refurbished and our playing fields rejuvenated. Our church will soon realise plans for a servery and toilet. Our young children will shortly have a new play area and health and fitness are actively promoted through the installation of the Trim Trail.

I think about the events that have been organised with fund-raising at their heart: Apple Day and our Harvest Festival, the monthly Pop Up Pubs, carol singing, Ukulele evenings, 'Greatest Hits Choir' and concerts in the Church. The music night that raised funds for our legal fees, our Arts and Crafts Club, 'Pidnic in the Park' and of course The Pantry Market which has been such an important part of the village calendar. What community fun has been had over the last few years!!!

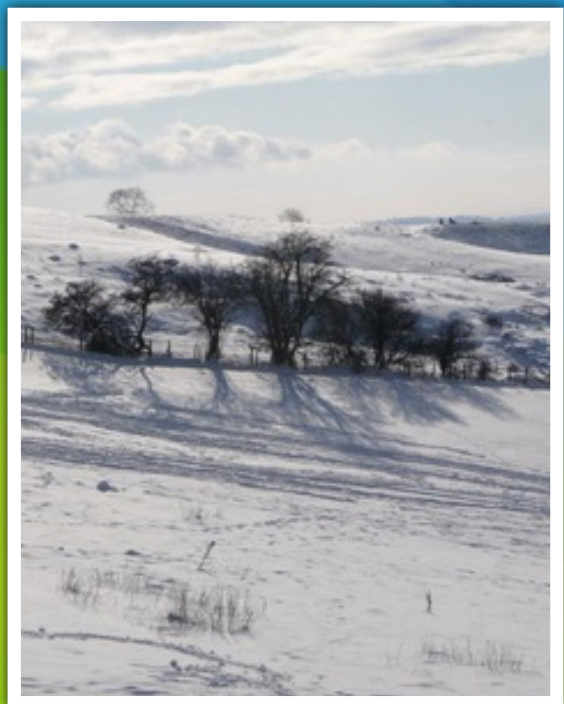
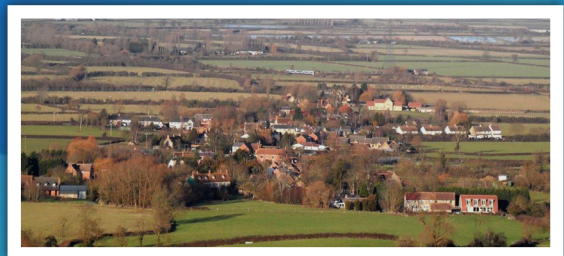
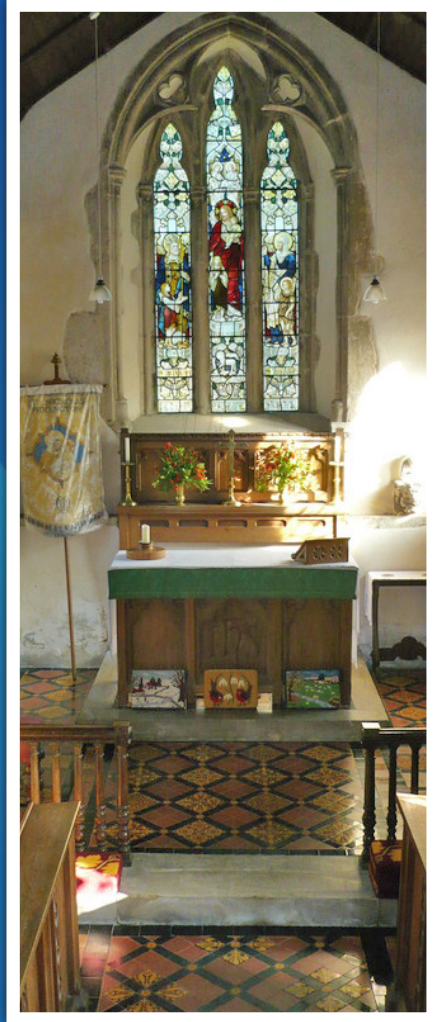
So, what happens now you are probably saying? Whilst the team who organised this CLP has now disbanded the momentum created by the plan must continue. In 2018 much mention was made of 'volunteer fatigue'. My hope is that having read this document many of you will have the enthusiasm to take on these new projects and challenges. The church needs to continue to fundraise, and it is imperative we find a solution to the lack of facilities for our younger villagers – hopefully with their involvement. There will also be the consequences regarding the announcement of the Ox-Cam Expressway to be addressed.

I also anticipate another CLP review will be needed within the next two years, including a further village questionnaire.

In the year ahead the Parish Council will lose three Councillors. It is imperative they are replaced. The CLP was instrumental in bringing four new faces to the Council at the last elections. Let the publication of this review be the catalyst for a new generation. It's a hugely rewarding role that puts you at the heart of community life.

I believe the CLP process has been a huge success. The results of the questionnaire were instrumental in the formulation of the action plans above and formed vital evidence for fundraising applications, where over £100,000 of grant money has been raised to date. Special thanks to everyone who has been involved in the journey so far, including the good folk at Community First Oxfordshire for their support. Let's continue to look forward and be proactive. It's about our community...

November 2019



... it's about our community