

LEAFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting
held in The Village Hall at 8.15pm on Wednesday 15th May 2019

Those Present: Cllr Juli King (Chairman), Cllr Luke Caunt, Cllr Gina Pearce

In attendance: Sharon Henley, Clerk/RFO, District Cllr Kieran Mullins, County Councillor Liam Walker (part of meeting)

Members of Public: 7

1. **Welcome & Apologies for Absence:** Apologies were received from Jane Digby and Christian McGuinness of Leafield Village School.
2. **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 16th May 2018:** These were approved at the Ordinary Council Meeting on 10th October.
3. **Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting:** No specific action required on any points raised.
4. **Annual Report of Leafield Parish Council:** (this item was reported after items 5 and 6 to allow reporting from attendees who could not stay for the full meeting)

The Chairman reported on the main activities over the year:

- **Councillors:** The Council had been working with only four councillors out of seven since November which had been a challenge. The elections recently took place and there were four councillors elected (unopposed) with one additional co-option expected at Monday's Annual Meeting. Two co-options were still sought.
- **Clerk:** The Council did not have a Clerk in post from May to September but appointed Sharon Henley in September who had previously covered Clerk's maternity leave in 2015-16.
- **Burial Ground:** The Council had been working with Cemetery Development Services to get Planning Permission for the plot of land adjacent to the Churchyard to be used as a burial ground. This required a 'Change of Use' application from agricultural use to a burial ground. The field had been purchased approximately 15 years ago. Lots of different surveys had been required but Planning Permission was granted, although due to the ground having poor drainage there was a great deal of work required to ensure the ground was fit for purpose. The Council had already spent £15,000 and still needed to pay for work to be done before the ground could be used for burials. The Council continue to work on this and may require a loan to fund part of this project as significant monies were required.
- **Churchyard:** The churchyard at St Michael and All Angels Church was almost full and the PCC had applied for its closure. It was proposed that the Parish Council take on maintenance responsibilities for the closed Churchyard but this was still under discussion. The Council had concerns about the ancient churchyard with retaining walls, headstones and trees and they were a small Parish Council who would be taking on additional maintenance responsibilities.

The Revd Mansell was attending and was asked by a parishioner why passing responsibility for the closed Churchyard to the Council was being proposed. He responded that this was due process for the PCC and that this was a recognised policy. Cllr Pearce said her understanding was that this did not always happen as there was one closed churchyard still being looked after by the church across our area.

In response to further questions, Cllr Pearce said the new burial ground would be owned and managed by the Council and they would manage all administration and burials. The site would allow 256 burials with an anticipated burial rate of 2.5 per year. The Council were looking at developing a percentage of the plot for cost reasons but the drainage may dictate the minimum percentage that could initially be developed. Councillors were asked whether sites with better drainage had been considered. Cllr King responded that three potential sites had originally been looked at (one was behind Greenwich Lane) but all of the village was built on a clay bed. In addition, the area chosen was adjacent to the Churchyard.

- **Play Area:** The Council was responsible for play area at Village Hall. This had suffered from vandalism over the past few months and the ageing equipment had required some expensive remedial work to ensure it was safe to use. Over the Easter holidays the skate ramp had been vandalised by undoing nuts and bolts then replacing the railing without doing up the fixings and the railing collapsed and landed on young lad. The railing

had been spot welded to stop a recurrence. There were continual litter problems in the play area and car park.

- **Village Hall:** The Council continued to support the hall with a donation to cover the installation of new fire doors. The Council also plan to provide an air source heat pump as a gift, forming part of the planned Village Hall Extension Project, approx. 15% of total project costs and environmentally friendly.
- **Car Park Project:** It had not been possible to progress this over the year owing to large expenses incurred for the Burial Ground project. The Council would need a loan to progress but could only take out one loan and that would have to be in association with a loan for the burial ground. A parishioner asked about having a footpath installed in the car park which was suitable for older people and pushchairs etc. Cllr King said they had a contractor to regularly carry out pothole repairs and try to stop parking directly outside the hall to protect the surface. The Council had looked at matting filled with gravel. Drainage issues had caused the potholes.
- **Phone Box Project:** Deborah Triff was fundraising to provide a red phone box on the site of the old green phone box and use this for community benefit with support from the Council. Deborah was fundraising to provide this for the village.
- **Roadworks:** There had been a lot of disruption to the roads from Gigaclear, Thames Water and the gas mains installation. Gigaclear recently submitted plans to the Council for works on Parish Council land and these were awaiting final confirmation.
- **Remembrance Day Soldiers:** These were placed on the Green to commemorate last year's centenary and were popular with villagers. The Church's Lych gate was pretty and also the poppies in the church. It was hoped to display the soldiers again this year.
- **Flagpole:** Two volunteers raise the flag on commemorative and replaced flag. The St George's cross goes up on St George's Day.
- **Daffodils:** Deborah Triff's fundraising car boot sale enabled the purchase of a quantity of bulbs. One type chosen was a native small bulb. These were planted on roadside verges and on areas around the Green by Deborah Triff and a group of 36 volunteers. The Council would like to thank Deborah for her efforts which looked wonderful in the Spring.
- **CCTV System:** This now required extensive work to get it up and running again and it was hoped to get this done in the next couple of months. It would not be cost-effective to move it prior to the new extension as the current interior location would not exist following building works.

5. Report from County & District Councillors:

5.1. Kieran Mullins, District Councillor reported:

- It had been a busy time within the District Council, with local elections. He congratulated District Councillor Gill Hill on her re-election. The nature of the Council had now changed in its political make-up with 28 Conservative seats, 10 Liberal Democrats, 9 Labour and 10 Independent. There was a new Chairman and Vice Chairman and 10 sub-committees to steer but it was a good mix.
- The Euro Elections would be held on 23rd May.
- Kieran now had lots of 'green' responsibilities. Last year a 'Water Day' had been held. The River Windrush was polluted and he would like to follow up on this project. He was working on reducing single-use plastics across the district. He had been speaking to large organisations to ask them to take responsibility for litter.

5.2. Report from Liam Walker, County Councillor (report taken after item 6) – Annual Report 2019

- **Potholes:** Our team continue to improve a number of roads in the village making use of our new Dragon Patcher machine that works best in rural locations. We are now carrying out more patching work rather than sweep and fill method of repairing potholes. This year we have more than doubled our Highways Maintenance budget and across the country remain one of the top authorities for repairing potholes. Please remember to report defects via FixMyStreet.com or via the FixMyStreet app.
- **Education:** Parents will now know what Primary School their children will be going to in September and it's great news that 93.39% of parents (out of 7,125 applications) in Oxfordshire got their 1st preference. In my Division 75 parents got their 1st preference with just 1 getting their 2nd preference.

- **Infrastructure:** The County Council has been doing a lot of work over the past 4 years on improving the A40 through the A40 Corridor Strategy. This has included major improvements like the new roundabout at West Witney, changes to the Ducklington Lane junction, and the Wolvercote Roundabout. The next stages are releasing land for the Shores Green slips in East Witney as well as a new P&R at Eynsham. The plans also include extending the dual carriageway from Witney to Eynsham and an Eastbound bus lane to Oxford along with sections of Westbound bus lane to Eynsham. Plans have been completed for this after a consultation late last year and we now await a response from the Government to see if our infrastructure bid has been successful.
- **Highways Improvements:** Over the Summer last year I and two other County Councillors conducted a review into the Highways Department at OCC as part of our roles sitting on the Performance & Scrutiny committee. In the report we set out recommendations for ways to improve the Department. We listed around 16 recommendations. An example of one of those is Oxfordshire moving to a permit authority rather than remaining as a notice one. This gives greater power to our team and more joined up thinking with utility companies to ensure we are causing minimal disruption to the road networks. It's not an easy task to coordinate with gas, water, broadband and electricity companies but this change will go a long way to making improvements. It is hoped this will start to be rolled out from January 2020.
- I'm always happy to take up any issues or concerns local residents may have and I can be contacted via email: Liam.Walker2@oxfordshire.gov.uk

6. Reports from Leaffield Community Groups and Local Organisations. The following reports were made:

- **The Reverend Paul Mansell** did not make a report but pointed everyone towards the benefice website <http://www.forestedgebenefice.co.uk/> for a wealth of facts about church activities. Deborah Triff thanked Rev Mansell for his Forest Edge Benefice Newsletter and Rev Mansell said he was always looking for input, photos and articles.
- **Leaffield Little 'Uns**, Sarah Harston reported that the group was thriving with lots of youngsters coming into the village. There were usually 12-15 children in the hall on a Friday morning with quite a few from Charlbury. The activities are mainly chat, play, tea and cake and session are attended by all ages from pregnant mothers upwards.
- **West Oxfordshire Community Transport (WOCT)** Margaret Burden reported on bus services through Leaffield. As only 3% of passengers wanted to travel to Chipping Norton from the Wychwoods this section of the service had been cut. Instead they had added another return journey mid-afternoon to the existing timetable. There had been a new timetable from 29th April but there was a fluctuating passenger market with each bus sometimes full and during other weeks there were few passengers. The WOCT attended the Fete with a bus and sought feedback on the service. Some elderly passengers struggled with steps onto the bus but this was a function of second-hand buses and they were a not-for-profit organisation. They had already had to replace one vehicle and were not breaking even regularly but still believed it was worth continuing. The service was 'use it or lose it'! The WOCT received £8k from developers in Milton and council funding towards their revenue. They were hoping revised timetable would help and once the weekday services were working well they hoped to introduce a Saturday service. A parishioner commented that an older passenger had commented that the driver had not helped elderly people aboard recently whereas 'The Villager' bus driver had done so. Margaret said their driver had been physically unable to help but was no longer with them and all other drivers can help people aboard. She thanked the Parish Council for their original financial contribution.
- **Community Gym Committee - Nick Birtley** – Chairman reported that during the last twelve months they had focussed on getting up and running after a burst pipe and appreciated the Parish Council's help. They were rebuilding membership and had new record numbers in February of 63 members. They were a non-profit organisation with any extra money made given back to community groups. They had been promoting this as no recent requests had been received, although they were liaising with the pre-school about equipment for

their outside play area and they had bought £500 of bricks for the Village Hall Extension Project. The Committee contributed to a new fire door in the Pavilion following an attempted break-ins. They had taken down old signs and put up a new metal sign to advertise the Gym. They scrapped the induction fee from the beginning of this year, following discussions with the Parish Council and continued to work to keep prices reasonable and offer discounts for a range of groups. Prices were similar to 5 years ago and they were celebrating their 5th birthday this year.

- **Leaffield What's On Annual Report – Deborah Triff**

Leaffield What's On goes from strength to strength and is now over 1 year old. We now have 245 subscribers, 227 emailed ones and 18 hand delivered paper copies, as well as a paper copy in the Shop, Fox, Pearl and Village Hall.

In April I leafleted the whole village which I intend to do once a year. It generated 15 more subscribers. Feedback has been that people find it very user friendly and organisers in the village have told me that it has made a difference to the numbers that attend events. Leaffield What's On Extra, is only to be used occasionally, but is good for last minute calls for help or last minute event advertising

The elderly population who receive the paper copies are very appreciative. So the time taken to do it is well rewarded. I would like to say thanks to Maren White who edits it for me each month. It is good to have a second pair of eyes and she often picks up on things that I haven't thought of which is great.

Red Telephone Box Project - This project is moving along nicely. Chris Russ and I have been red telephone box hunting in the area, but so far we have not found anything suitable. If we don't find one locally we can buy one from X2 Connect. These are boxes that have been refurbished.

Suggestions for the use of the box are, that it be used as a multi-purpose space, with rotating uses. Among the ideas are a small library, an information centre for village events, a swap shop board, a local history centre, leaflets with local walks, a place for a badminton set, boules and other games, and an art space for work created by local children and adults.

This year is very much about fundraising for a box, we hope to raise about £3,200 and once we have the money then we will look for a box to buy, as well as get village input for the use of the box.

Fundraisers for the Box are: Tea, Cakes, Music and Theatre on July 7th, at Fairspear House, which is perfect for a theatre and cakes afternoon. We have the school, Evergreens, a Popup Choir, the Charlbury Youth Theatre and other acts from the village involved. It is an all-inclusive, all ages, community event. The choir met for the first time last Monday and have already learned one song complete with harmonies, and the Evergreens will be practising for the next two months at their meetings. We have already been to the April meeting for a sing song which was met with great enthusiasm. There is a small working group meeting to help decide on the songs they would like to sing. The school have been very enthusiastic to be involved which has been great.

The Garage Sale is on Sept 8th and the Safari Supper in October.

- **Leaffield Village Hall** - report by Gina Pearce, Chairman

The Village Hall has had another successful year. It continues to service our community by offering a place for the following regular users to meet: Table Tennis, Yoga, Guides (Brownies will be starting shortly), Evergreens, Pilates, Upholsterers, Kettlercise, Youth Club, Little 'Uns, Badminton, Bingo.

In addition, the Pre-School use the Hall for indoor PE & Dance sessions when the weather prevents them from using the outside space.

We have a very healthy diary for the remainder of 2019 with people already booking for October, November and December as they are aware how popular our facility is. Bookings are for a wide range of events (birthday parties, anniversaries, weddings, craft making workshops, group meetings, training etc) from people resident within Leaffield and the surrounding areas.

The Extension Project, led by Jane Digby and Joe Coulson, is gathering pace. There is a grant application in with LEADER which if successful (we should find out in July 2019) will enable us to commence work in Autumn 2019 with a view to it being completed in the Spring of 2020. The additional facilities the extension will provide will enable greater use across the Village and further afield.

The response to the Buy a Brick Campaign has been fantastic and raised £2,400, thank you to everyone who donated or pledged. More than the money raised is the evidence it shows that the village supports the plan to extend and refurbish the Hall.

The Hall committee will be running/hosting fundraising events throughout this year and next because the more we can raise the less we will need to borrow so continued support from villagers is essential. If anyone would like to host a fund-raising event for us we would be most grateful.

The next event is the Wychwood Folk Club live music event on Saturday July 20th.

We are still struggling for volunteers to join our committee and, as is becoming common-place in current times, there are a few people doing many different roles to keep the facility operational.

We have had a couple of instances of vandalism during the past year which has necessitated expenditure to put right.

- **Guides – Jane Digby, Guide Leader (report received by email)**

Firstly I am sorry that I am unable to attend the meeting this evening. (Dress rehearsal for My Fair Lady at Chipping Norton Theatre tonight.)

Leaffield Guides continues, very successfully, with a small group of girls- currently 12 on the register- to offer a widely varied programme throughout the year. This includes, hikes and outdoor adventures, craft, badges, outdoor cooking, camps and local service projects. We mainly use the Hall for our weekly meetings but also our allotment and occasionally the Community Woodland for our activities.

This year sees the completion of the change-over to a completely new programme for the 21st Century with all new badges and awards.

We are very excited that after a long process Leaffield Brownies, is just starting this month and should be fully up and running after half term with around 10 girls aged 7-10 years. A new adult volunteer; Tina Wilson, who lives in the village, has come forward and has completed initial training to take up the role of Brownie leader.

- **Leaffield Pre-School, Jodie Clatworthy, Acting Pre-School Manager (report received by email)**

Leaffield Pre-School continues to appreciate the support they receive from the local community- especially the Village Hall.

Pre-School has been very busy this year with Children enrolling not only from Leaffield but also Finstock, Carterton and Witney. We have introduced outdoor explorer sessions, phonics workshops, PE sessions to name but a few.

We are very grateful to have the playing field and park available to us in addition to our wonderful garden. We rely on the village hall for our dance sessions and one additional weekly session- especially when the weather is wet.

7. To invite the public to raise any matters of interest:

Nick Birtley asked if the metal roadside sign pointing towards the Village Hall could have the Community Gym added. Cllr Liam Walker offered to look into this and he asked Nick to contact him with what needs to go on the sign.

8. **Any Other Business:** There were none. Cllr King said the Village Hall and Cemetery were on the next Parish Council agenda.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21.37 hours.

Signed: C. H. Pearce

Date: 12th June 2019