

**ARNCOTT PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL OPEN MEETING 15TH MAY 2015
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

INTRODUCTION

Since the last open Meeting in May 2014 the Parish Council has lost the services of Bill McDowell, and we now have five members. At last week's meeting I was re-elected as Chairman, with Lee Savidge as Vice Chairman. The parish councillors have worked hard on your behalf, and have progressed business and handled parishioner's queries and problems in a timely and efficient manner, despite having two vacancies, which we would like to fill and I would again ask you to consider if you can give the hour or two per week that is needed.

Parish Council meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month, starting at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, giving twelve meetings per year plus this annual open meeting.

I have decided this year not to give attendance details of individual councillors, as I know that everyone attends unless there is a pressing reason not to do so, and we all have other commitments, including work, family, and holiday. We were quorate for 11 out of 12 meetings, and our County and District Councillors also attend when possible.

Parishioners are welcome at any meeting, we have a number of people who attend regularly, but would like to see more of you come along and give your views in the Public Participation section of the agenda. Items of concern to the village are discussed as they occur throughout the year, and shown in the minutes of the PC meetings, which are available on the website or on request from the Clerk.

PARISH COUNCIL MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES

The major responsibilities are to ensure that the finances are kept in good order, maintain the village, ensure that the views and feelings of the parishioners are made known to Cherwell, Oxfordshire and other authorities and organisations, and to this end I have maintained close contact with both our District and County councillors, so that they are aware of our problems and concerns, and help with parishioners problems and concerns where they are in our remit.

Unfortunately many of the perennial problems, such as speeding and parking, require action to be taken by other authorities, and the PC can only press them to do so.

FINANCE

As stated above, one of our main responsibilities is the maintenance of the village; the funding for this comes from the precept, which is part of your Council Tax. The average cost per household is about £35, totalling £13,000 for this year. We asked for an increase of £500 for this year, which was granted, to help us with small capital projects, such as extra dog bins.

The Financial Report prepared by Anne Davies, our Parish Clerk, shows where the money goes, a brief summary is that maintenance of parish property has cost around £6,000, insurance is £2,000,

maintenance of the Village Hall has cost £3,000, clerical costs, accounting etc were £1,600, and miscellaneous costs such as helping with the parish church, magazine etc were £800.

All additional expenditure was funded by grants and bonuses from Oxfordshire CC and Cherwell DC with the exception of the Village Hall roof, which was paid for from reserves, in anticipation of the community benefit from Sun Edison, which is expected shortly.

GENERAL UPDATE

The work to the village green, to remove the old car park and re turf that area, is taking a great deal longer than expected. The whole project is funded by a £4,500 grant from OCC, so again at no cost to the parish.

Further work on the memorial garden on the village green is due to commence towards the end of June, with the existing slabs, plants etc being removed and the area extended to approximately double the current size. We are now looking at the type of war memorial that should be erected, with the current stone and the time capsule to be relocated adjacent to this new memorial.

Any suggestions for the memorial are welcome, as are offers of help and sponsorship for the paving, planting, seating etc. I have been asked to reiterate that this whole project is being carried out at no cost to the parish, it is completely funded by a grant from Oxfordshire CC and this year's New Homes Bonus from Cherwell DC, which was only released to the parish on the condition that it is to be spent on an approved community project. We therefore do have to work within this budget, with the aim of creating a simple dignified commemorative area.

If anyone has ideas for further community projects please get in touch with any parish councillor, as further funds may be available.

The operating of the motocross track, but not the ownership of the land, has changed hands twice during the past twelve months, and whilst the noise is still excessive on occasions they have run to the agreed schedule, and we have refused to agree to alterations to this. They are now starting a Car Boot Sale, and also offering fishing in their lake. The new operator was invited to attend but has not responded.

The new MoD Fulfilment Centre will not be built on C Site, and has been approved for construction in Telford, adjacent to an existing site and other suppliers and facilities there. I have been told that all three contactors proposals were for Telford, due to the Telford and Wrekin District Council's decision to spend around £130 million on developing the infrastructure and paying for the new buildings, which will be leased to the MoD.

We still get the occasional complaints made about local youngsters' behaviour, including vandalism, damage, trespass, lighting fires, underage drinking, leaving empty bottles and cans, driving cars and motorbikes on the football pitch, etc etc.

If you do see any of this type of incident please report it to the police on 101, and they will do their best to bring the offenders to justice. We are considering taking some preventative measures, such as cctv on the village hall roof, and fencing the football pitch, although there is a considerable expense involved relative to the current level of problems, which seem to have gone down.

I am very pleased to say that Bardwell Youth FC continue to use the football pitch, this is a mutually beneficial arrangement and we have representatives from Bardwell here today, who will tell us how

their season went, and what they are planning. We hope that this will encourage more local youngsters to get involved. If there are any parents or other volunteers in the village who would like to help out, or re-establish the youth club, or any other sports teams, please get in touch.

The extension of the 30mph speed limit along Murcott Road seems to have made very little difference to the speed of vehicles entering the village, including, disappointingly some uniformed military personnel driving private cars. I have complained to the Bicester Garrison, but I understand that Major Mapstone is no longer in that position, and have received no replies to date. We have been in touch with Tim Hallchurch, our County Councillor, asking him for advice and support about putting in a new buildout, or other measures, to try to stop this reckless driving.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Parish Councillors all give their time voluntarily to the Parish, and no expenses or allowances have been claimed or paid to any councillor in the past year. I want to thank Lee Savidge for all the time and effort he has put in to the village web site, a number of people have commented to me on how good it is. I want to thank Martin Byrne for all the unpaid maintenance work he does for the PC, he saves us a small fortune, Neil Thompson for all his time and efforts with the village hall, acting as caretaker and lettings secretary, helping to keep the hall viable, and Rob Hill for all his contributions despite having two young children, and for while, two jobs. You may be interested to know that Rob is now running a Rugby training scheme for youngsters up to 11 years old, and all being well there will be courses here in the near future. Finally thank you to our clerk, Anne Davies, for her legal and financial advice in addition to the usual clerical duties.

I would also like to thank on behalf of the PC all those who have worked on and with the various committees, especially the VHMC, ACA, the Fete and the War Memorial sub committees. Can I again emphasise the need for a full membership of the PC, as members do take holidays, go away on business, or are unable to attend for family and other reasons.

John Cooper
Chairman, Arncott Parish Council
14th May 2015