

# **ARNCOTT PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL OPEN MEETING 20<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2016 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the last open Meeting in May 2015 our friend Neil Thompson has passed away, his cheerful hard work for the parish and the village hall has been greatly missed, and I want to express my grateful thanks to Christine Dunkin, who has taken on the jobs that Neil did. We have also lost the services of Rob Hill, who has moved away, and again many thanks to Paul Wilson, who has filled the breach admirably. I have also decided it is time for me to step down, and this report for the year to April 2016 is my last act as chairman. As there were insufficient nominations to require a ballot to be held on May 5<sup>th</sup> the new Parish Council consists of Lee Savidge, Martin Byrne, Paul Wilson, Ade Dore and Paul Genge. There will be a short meeting later this evening to elect a Chairman and a 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.

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 again decided 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 we 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 £36, totalling £14,000 for 2015-16. We asked for an increase of £500 for 2016-17, which has been 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 £8,600, insurance is £2,000, maintenance of the Village Hall has cost £600, clerical costs, accounting, subscriptions etc were £1,900, we spent £1600 on a new notice board and refurbishing the others, and miscellaneous costs were about £200. This gives a total expenditure of just under £15,000, with about £700 of VAT to be reclaimed against these outgoings.

We have received the £42,000 community benefit from SunEdison, which has covered the costs of the improvements to the village hall roof and the garage that were carried out last year, the installation of the solar panel system, the heating radiators will be replaced this Summer, and there is still some money left for redecoration, security improvements etc.

It should be noted that all expenditure over and above the money received for the precept, from letting out the football pitch, and from donations, was funded by grants and bonuses from Oxfordshire CC and Cherwell DC, and SunEdison. The parish is in the fortunate position of being able to put £75,000 into a savings account, and there is also a large sum available to us from Cherwell DC to improve our sports facilities.

## **GENERAL UPDATE**

The work to the village green, to remove the old car park and return it to grass was eventually completed, the decision not to turf the area resulted in a saving of £1500.

The War Memorial project was delivered on time (just), and we utilised the £1500 mentioned above to fund the engraved panels that were not originally included. We also decided to protect the site with bollards, at an additional cost of £2450, and have arranged for the planting and maintenance of the garden to be carried out professionally.

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

The motocross track continues to run to the agreed schedule, we have not received very many complaints about the noise recently, my impression is that it is not as popular as it was when it first opened.

We still get the occasional complaints 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., and the latest craze seems to be climbing onto the roof of this hall, damaging the main door in the process, and with potential for damage and loss of life if the solar system is interfered with.

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, anti-climb cladding and fencing the football pitch, this all has a cost that impinges on the money available for other potential projects.

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. We have complained to the Bicester Garrison, and have received a reply that personnel will be strongly reminded not to speed. We have contacted OCC requesting 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 all the parish councillors I have worked with over the past 5 years, especially Lee Savidge for all the time and effort he has put in to the village web site, Martin Byrne for all the unpaid maintenance work that he does, and Paul Wilson, who joined us after we lost Neil and Rob. 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. Special mention here for Paul, whose CAD expertise allowed us to visualise the memorial in full detail before any work was carried out, and helped the stone masons and sign makers by transferring his information onto their databases for a perfect fit and right first time job. Last but not least Chris Lavery for providing us with a place to meet, and an endless stream of tea, coffee, biscuits and cakes, and Marion Moore, Tony Webber and everyone else who helped out with the garden.

I am very pleased that more people have offered to become parish councillors. Full membership of the PC means that the PC is more aware of what is going on around the village, what parishioners would like to see done, and spreads the workload, as members do take holidays, go away on business, or are unable to attend for family and other reasons.

John Cooper  
Past Chairman, Arncott Parish Council  
10<sup>th</sup> May 2016