

**ARNCOTT PARISH COUNCIL**  
**ANNUAL OPEN MEETING – TUESDAY MAY 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017**  
**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

**INTRODUCTION**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to this open meeting and thank you for coming along.

The purpose of this evening's meeting is to give you the opportunity to hear the annual reports from the parish council and the voluntary organisations that we have in our village. We also have representatives from the MOD, Bardwell Youth FC and the Scout group. Towards the end of the meeting there will be an opportunity for you to ask any questions that you may have.

Please note that the parish council meetings are held here in the village hall on the first Tuesday of each month starting at 7.30pm. There are usually twelve meetings per year plus the annual open meeting in May. All parishioners are welcome to come to the meetings and talk with the parish council about any items of concern that they have relating to our parish.

**PARISH COUNCILLORS**

Your parish council currently has six members and many of you here will know who we are. For those of you who don't, my name is Paul Wilson and I am the current parish council chairman. The other five councillors are Lee Savidge who is the current vice chairman, Martin Byrne, Adrian Doore, Di Selby and Nicola Smith. All of your councillors live in the village.

This time last year I was a fairly new recruit to the parish council. Taking over from John Cooper as parish council chairman was a little daunting so, on a personal note, I would like to say a special thank you to John, Anne, Lee and Martin for always being available to give me their advice, guidance and the benefit of their experience. I'm also grateful for the fact that they didn't put my telephone number on their call blocking lists.

All of your parish councillors are volunteers and give their time freely. However, just like everyone else, the councillors have many other commitments in their lives so finding time slots to carry out parish council work isn't always that easy to do. All councillors attend the monthly meetings whenever they can but there are times when it isn't possible to have a full council at a meeting. However, a minimum of three councillors have been present at every meeting since last May so all of those meetings have been quorate. Although councillors are legally entitled to claim a small financial allowance each year for services given, no expenses or allowances have been paid to any councillor during the last twelve months.

**PARISH CLERK**

Our parish clerk is Mrs Anne Davies. Anne is not a member of the parish council but is employed by it. Anne's role carries a big responsibility and she plays a very pivotal part in the running of your parish council. Anne takes care of the necessary clerical work needed, maintains the mandatory financial records that are required and advises the parish council with regard to legal and financial issues. We all benefit from Anne's experience, wisdom and knowledge. Her advice and guidance on the various parish matters that arise is always much appreciated. It's fair to say that we would definitely struggle without her know-how so, on behalf of us all, I would like to say a very special thank you to Anne for all of the work that she does on behalf of everyone in our village.

**WHAT DOES THE PARISH COUNCIL DO ?**

Your parish council does its best to ;

- 1) Make reasoned and balanced decisions that it believes are in the best interests of our community.
- 2) Ensure that the money belonging to our parish is used wisely.
- 3) Help with parishioners' problems and concerns where those are within our remit.
- 4) Liaise with the appropriate authorities to try and get various projects, repairs and work carried out as is necessary throughout our village.

- 5) Ensure that the views and feelings of our parishioners are made known to Cherwell, Oxfordshire and other authorities and organisations as appropriate.

The work needed for all of these things is ongoing and gets done during each month on a part-time basis. Most people will be oblivious as to the work that goes on to try and get our village problems resolved. A councillor will typically be involved with making telephone calls, writing, sending and answering emails, occasionally meeting up with district and / or county council people, going to the occasional meeting and generally trying to arrange for things to happen.

Common issues such as speeding, parking, road and pavement repair, street lights etc. require action to be taken by the Oxfordshire and / or Cherwell authorities. Unfortunately, all your parish council can do regarding these problems is to keep making contact with those authorities to try and get resolution. To this end the parish council maintains close contact with both our district and county councillors in an effort to make sure that they are aware of our problems and concerns and to ask them for their help and advice as necessary.

Items and issues of concern to the village are discussed at the monthly meetings as they occur throughout the year. These items and issues are documented in the minutes of the parish council meetings and they also form the basis of our village entry in the Parish Matters magazine. The minutes of our parish council meetings are available on the parish council website or on request from the parish clerk.

### **WHAT HAS THE PARISH COUNCIL DONE ?**

A few examples of things done over the last year would be the repairs to the vandalised bus shelters, establishing a cutting and maintenance plan for roadside verges following on from Oxfordshire County Council's decision to stop verge cutting, making arrangements for surveys and maintenance of trees and hedgerows, arranging for the purchase, installation and training course for defibrillator units, getting a first aid training course organised, reporting and chasing up street light, road, pavement and drain issues. Not that much at first glance but a lot of work needed to make it all happen.

Issues requiring the involvement of the highways and planning departments of the district and county councils are invariably long, drawn-out affairs. Getting repairs done to our roads, pavements, drains and street lights are no exception. Progress on the Woodpiece Road parking issue and the new Murcott Road build out has been slower than we would have liked. At various times during the last year your parish council and its clerk have been contacting people within the district and county council departments with letters, emails and phone calls in an effort to get solutions. Some of these efforts have resulted in some success. An open meeting recently took place to discuss possible solutions to the Woodpiece Road parking issue. Oxfordshire County Council agreed to our need for the additional road build-out on Murcott Road. We have been advised that this could possibly be built in August this year. Some new street lights have recently been erected along Ploughley Road. Unfortunately, seven months on, we still have no date from Oxfordshire County Council regarding the repair needed to the street light in the alleyway between Woodpiece Road and Murcott Road.

### **FINANCE AND FUNDING**

The day to day funding required for the village is paid for from the village precept money that the parish receives each year. The precept money is a part of your council tax bill and averages out at around £40 per household per year. The parish will receive a precept of £15,000 for 2017 / 2018. The financial report compiled by our parish clerk shows in detail where your money is spent and you can see the report should you wish to do so. The parish finances are audited on an annual basis. The precept money is used to pay for many things and a few examples would be the cost of buildings insurance, clerk's salary, playground equipment inspection and repair, emptying of dog poo bins, clerical costs, audit costs, repairs, cleaning. A major cost is the grass cutting that needs to be done several times a year on the open green spaces and roadside verges within the village.

The parish is in a sound financial position with total overall cash assets of around £120,000. £75,000 is deposited in a savings account with the Cambridge Building Society. £50,000 of that amount is kept in reserve for maintenance to the village playgrounds and equipment. The parish is also entitled to some additional funding. Oxfordshire County Council is currently holding around £12,500 so this money will be spent on the construction of the new road build-out along Murcott Road. Cherwell District Council is holding £49,996 which can be used for improving off-site sports facilities, pitches and changing facilities within our locality. Cherwell is also holding a further £7,500 which can be used for a village art project. A year ago, no-one in the district and county authorities knew where this funding had gone or how much funding there was. A massive thanks is therefore

due to our clerk, Anne, for all of her hard work and tenacity in pursuing those authorities and getting them to track it all down.

### **COMMUNITY**

With regard to our community, the parish council would ask you to please contact the police and report any anti-social behaviour that you see such as the driving of cars and motorbikes on the football pitch, acts of vandalism, damage, trespass, lighting of fires, underage drinking etc. The cost of repairing the damage to the vandalised bus shelters was £650 and that came out of our precept money and should have been used for something else.

If anyone has an idea for a community project then please send in the details to the parish email address or get in touch with any parish councillor. Funds may be available for that idea.

It is pleasing to report that Bardwell Youth FC continue to use the village football pitch. This is a mutually beneficial arrangement for the parish and the football club. The club chairman is here with us tonight to let us know how the season went for the youngsters and what the club's future plans are. We now also have a weekly Scout group here in the village hall on Friday evenings and the Scout leaders will talk about this a little later on. Hopefully, the presence in the village of both the football club and the Scout group will encourage our 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, then please get in touch.

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

I would like to say a very sincere thank you to all of my fellow councillors for all of the time they have given up and for the work they have done over the last twelve months on behalf of us all. Many thanks also to both our county councillor, Tim Hallchurch and our district councillor, David Hughes for all of their help and advice over the last twelve months. Both attend our monthly meeting whenever it is possible for them to do so. Particular thanks to David for all of his work on our behalf in progressing the Woodpiece Road parking issue. In addition to the parish councillors, there are many people in the village who give up their own time to be involved with our village community organisations. Without their sterling efforts there would not be any community organisations. These volunteers are involved with the Village Hall Management Committee, the Arncott Community Association, the Arncott Friendship Club and the Craft Club. Yet again, the vast majority of our villagers will be totally unaware of the hard work that these people put in behind the scenes for the benefit of others. So, finally, on behalf of the parish council and everyone else, I would like to say a massive thank you to all of those people involved with the running of our village community organisations.

Thank you very much.

Paul Wilson  
Chairman  
Arncott Parish Council  
2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017