

ARNCOTT PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL OPEN MEETING – TUESDAY MAY 1st 2018

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to this open meeting and thank you for attending. Towards the end of the meeting there will be an opportunity for you to ask any questions that you may have.

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 consists of its full permitted quota of seven councillors - all of whom live in our village. For those of you who don't know who we are, my name is Paul Wilson and I am the current parish council chairman. The other six councillors are Lee Savidge who is our vice chairman, Martin Byrne, Adrian Doore, Di Selby, Peter Barnard and Andy Poppitt.

Councillors attend the monthly parish council meetings whenever possible and a minimum of three councillors have attended every meeting since May 2017 so all of those meetings have been quorate. Like everyone else, councillors have other commitments in their lives so finding time to do parish council work isn't always easy. All councillors are volunteers and do parish council work free of charge. Although councillors are legally entitled to claim a financial allowance for that work, no expenses or allowances have been paid to any councillor during the last twelve months.

PARISH CLERK

It is a legal requirement that a parish council must employ a clerk. Our parish clerk is Mrs Anne Davies. Anne takes care of the necessary clerical work, maintains the required financial records and provides the council with objective and independent advice with regard to procedural, legal and financial matters. Anne's advice and guidance is always much appreciated and we all benefit from her experience and know-how. On behalf of us all, I would like to say thank you very much to Anne for all of the work that she does for the benefit of everyone in our village.

WHAT DOES THE PARISH COUNCIL DO ?

Your parish council tries 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 projects, repairs and necessary work carried out.
- 5) Ensure that the views and feelings of our parishioners are made known to Cherwell, Oxfordshire and other authorities and organisations as appropriate.

Parish council business is carried out on a part time basis. A councillor's work involves talking to people, making and receiving telephone calls, writing, sending and answering emails. A councillor will sometimes need to find time during his / her working day to stop and make telephone calls during office hours to discuss parish business. That can be quite a time consuming exercise. There are also a few occasions when it is necessary for a councillor to meet with people from the authorities and also attend meetings.

Items and issues of concern to the village are discussed at the monthly parish council meetings and are recorded in the meeting minutes. The meeting minutes are available for viewing on the parish council website or on request from the parish clerk.

FINANCE AND FUNDING

The day to day funding required to pay for the necessary parish expenditure comes from the precept money received by the parish each year. The precept money comes from a small allocation taken from everyone's annual council tax bill and, for 2018 / 2019, the precept amount is £15,500. This money is typically used to pay for things such as the cost of buildings insurance, clerk's salary, playground equipment inspection, emptying of litter and dog poo bins, clerical costs, audit costs, repairs, cleaning and maintenance of trees and hedges. A major cost to the parish is the grass cutting of the open green spaces and roadside verges within the village that the parish council is responsible for. The parish finances are externally audited on an annual basis and the financial report compiled by our parish clerk shows in detail where your money is spent. You can see the report should you wish to do so.

OCC currently hold £12,500 of parish money and this will be used to pay for the construction of the new road build-out along Murcott Road. CDC currently hold nearly £50,000 of parish money which has to be spent, and will be spent, on improving the village's sports and changing facilities. CDC also hold a further £7,500 which can only be used for a suitable village community art project.

The parish is in a sound financial position with total overall cash assets of around £127,000. Of that amount, £75,000 is currently deposited in a savings account with the Cambridge Building Society and a further £50,000 is kept in reserve for the necessary maintenance to the village playgrounds and replacement of playground equipment.

ONGOING WORK AND PROJECTS

There is always ongoing parish council work with regard to problems within our village. Because the ownership of the village infrastructure is varied the responsibility as to who should resolve village issues is also varied. The parish council strives to take care of its responsibilities in good time whenever possible. However, problems with roads, speeding, parking, pavements, manholes, street lights, anti-social behaviour etc. require action to be taken by our local authorities – these being the county, district, housing, police or MOD. Regarding those particular issues, the parish council can only keep making contact with the relevant authority to try and get resolution. The parish council maintains contact with the MOD and both our district and county councillors to make sure that they are aware of our problems and concerns and to ask them for their help and advice as necessary.

Progress with the Woodpiece Road parking issue has been disappointing and much slower than we would have liked. It is worth mentioning that this problem was being discussed with CDC in October 1998 and the possible solutions put forward at that time were the same as those put forward in 2017. However, assuming that approval for the scheme is granted at the forthcoming CDC planning meeting this month, work on the phase one construction will hopefully begin sometime this year. The phase two construction will be addressed when phase one has been completed.

Progress with the new Murcott Road traffic calming buildout has also been extremely disappointing. Following on from a meeting with an OCC highways engineer in August 2016, construction was originally scheduled to start in August 2017. OCC has since given reasons (or excuses) as to why this did not happen and the parish council has been advised that the most likely time for the work to begin will now be August 2018 at the earliest.

The work done by the parish council is regularly reported on in the parish council meeting minutes and the monthly parish magazine. If you would like to know more details about any of the current and possible future work then please come along to the parish council meetings or ask a councillor.

COMMUNITY

The village football pitch continues to be used by Bardwell FC who have football teams for boys and girls of different age groups. The Ambrosden Scout Group use the village hall on Wednesdays for the cubs and Fridays for the scouts. Hopefully, the presence in the village of both the football club and the Scout group will encourage our local youngsters to get involved.

Where possible, the parish council will provide help for community projects and initiatives. A recent request was made asking the parish council to look into what options are available to improve the youth

facilities in the village and this is something that is being explored. However, for projects such as a youth club, the speed watch campaign, good neighbour scheme and the resilience program to run effectively, help is needed from volunteers within our community. The parish council cannot run these projects on its own. If there are any parents or other residents in the village who would like to volunteer to help out then please let the parish council know.

If you have an ideas for a community project then please send in the details to the parish email address or get in touch with any parish councillor. It's possible that funds may be available for that idea.

It is unfortunate that, from time to time, reports come into the parish council via emails and / or telephone calls regarding acts of anti-social behaviour that have happened within our village. Cars and motorbikes are driven onto the football pitch and instances of vandalism, damage, trespass, fire lighting, underage drinking, drug use, dog fouling etc. take place. The parish council has no legal power to deal with any of these issues so everyone and anyone who witnesses any of these things taking place need to contact the relevant authority and report it – preferably with photographic and / or video evidence. The cost of repairing damage to parish property comes from your precept money and if the money has to be spent on repairs then it is no longer available to be spent on something more worthwhile.

CLOSING REMARKS

I would like to say a very sincere thank you to all of my fellow councillors for the work they have done over the last twelve months on behalf of us all. A massive thanks goes to our vice chairman, Lee, for the enormous amount of work he has done chasing up the authorities about the issues with roads, pavements, manholes, kerbs, streetlights, police issues and website maintenance. Huge thanks also to Martin for his efforts in maintaining all things electrical in our village hall and for the installation of the necessary electrical wiring system for the use of the emergency generator.

Many thanks also to both our county councillor, Dan Sames and our district councillor, David Hughes for their help and advice over the last twelve months. Both attend our monthly meeting whenever it is possible for them to do so.

In addition to parish councillors, many other people in the village give up their own time to be involved with our community organisations – namely the Village Hall Management Committee, the Arncott Community Association, the Arncott Friendship Club and the Craft Club. Without their magnificent efforts there would be no community organisations. The majority of people will be totally unaware of the hard work that these people put in behind the scenes so, on behalf of the parish council and everyone else, I would like to say a massive thank you to all of them.

Thank you very much.

Paul Wilson
Chairman
Arncott Parish Council
1st May 2018