

## **ARNCOTT PARISH COUNCIL**

### **ANNUAL OPEN MEETING – THURSDAY JULY 29<sup>th</sup> 2021**

#### **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 questions.

##### **COVID19 ERA**

Tonight is the first time that a parish meeting has been held in the hall since February 2020. The Covid19 outbreak has made the last 17 months very difficult for many people in our community. For some it’s been a period of desperation – possibly with little or no work, varying lengths of self-isolation and very little, if any, contact with family and friends. Everyone has struggled with not being able to see their families other than on social media. Some people do not have or use social media so they have had to endure a higher level of loneliness and isolation. Grateful thanks and much applause are therefore due to many people in our village during these challenging times for their help and support for others. Within a very short time from the start of lockdown, Heike Mackenzie, Charlene White and Peter Forrest put together the village’s Covid19 support group and offered their help to those in need. When we couldn’t drive to the supermarkets we thankfully had Jan, Spencer and their family in the village to provide people with a much needed fruit and veg service. They went out of their way and provided a home delivery service to many. Tomas and his family worked so hard to ensure, as best as they could, that provisions were available at the One Stop Shop. Other residents looked out for the less abled people in our village and provided errand services for them. While many of us isolated in the safety of our homes, many people had to go to work and carry on as normal and, in doing so, they put themselves in danger of becoming seriously ill and possibly dying. Enormous thanks has to go out to the fantastic efforts of the many thousands of delivery drivers, repairmen and women and the key workers in our NHS, care homes, schools and the service and utility industries who put their own health on the line to help everyone else who were, for the most part, out of harm’s way. Just to say thank you seems so insufficient. We all watched the news. We saw the efforts and despair of the hospital staff across the world and we witnessed the harrowing scenes of people struggling, and often failing, to stay alive. Thanks to the vaccines developed by the brilliant scientists around the globe, we, in the UK, are all in a better place today than we were this time last year. Sadly, the same can’t be said for the poorer nations on our planet and I hope that situation changes as soon as is possible. It is to be hoped that in the not too distant future, life as we used to know it will be with us once again. Fingers crossed.

##### **ARNCOTT PARISH COUNCIL**

This council currently consists of myself, our vice chairman Mr Lee Savidge, Mr Martin Byrne, Mr Russell Todd, Mrs Linda Hooper and Mr Paul Hooper. All of your councillors are village residents and they attend council meetings whenever possible. Since the outbreak of Covid19 in March 2020, parish council meetings have been conducted online and all of those meetings have been quorate.

All councillors are entitled to receive a financial allowance for their services. However, your councillors are volunteers and give their services free of charge. No councillor has claimed any allowance for doing parish council work and my grateful thanks go to all of them for volunteering to serve on the parish council and also for their hard work and the contributions that they have made and continue to make in carrying out the business of the council on behalf of our parish.

Thanks are also due to both our previous county councillor, Dan Sames and our district councillor, David Hughes for their help and advice on various parish issues.

## **THE PARISH CLERK**

Mrs Anne Davies is our parish clerk and she does our book keeping, maintains the financial records and deals with much of the necessary clerical work. Anne also provides the council with objective and independent advice regarding procedural, legal and financial matters and that is always much appreciated. 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.

## **PARISH FINANCE AND FUNDING**

The funding of parish expenditure is mainly financed from the precept money received from CDC each year. The precept money comes from a small allocation taken from everyone's council tax and that money pays for many things. Examples are insurance renewals, playground inspections, emptying of the litter and dog poo bins, general repairs, clerical costs, maintenance of trees and hedges and the grass cutting of the open green spaces and roadside verges that the parish council is responsible for. Projects are paid for from available grant funding and / or from money held in the parish reserves.

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.

## **WHAT DOES THE PARISH COUNCIL DO ?**

Your parish council tries its best to ;

- 1) Make reasoned and balanced decisions on behalf of our community.
- 2) Ensure that parish money is used wisely.
- 3) Help with and try to resolve parishioners' problems and concerns where those are within our remit.
- 4) Liaise with the 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 the appropriate authorities and organisations.

## **WORK AND PROJECTS**

Ownership of our village infrastructure is varied so the responsibility as to who should resolve village issues is also varied. The parish council endeavours to take care of its responsibilities in good time whenever possible but issues regarding roads, speeding, pavements and kerbs, manholes, street lights etc. require action to be taken by our local authorities, the police or the MOD. The council maintains a liaison with our district and county councillors and the MOD. Their help and advice is asked for as and when necessary.

Updates regarding parish work, projects and issues are printed monthly in the local Parish Matters magazine. The research, planning and organising that is necessary for project work to be scheduled and done is very often a joint effort between the parish council and the village hall management committee. That work is done on a part time basis on many days throughout each month so my thanks go to the members of the parish council and the village hall management committee for their valuable contributions.

Project progress has been severely hampered due to the Covid19 epidemic. For many weeks it was not possible to personally meet with contractors to discuss what was required. Companies and our district and county authorities suffered from a reduction in their workforces with the result that things took very much longer to do than normal. However, since the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2019 to date ;

- a) OCC were, after several requests, able to come and carry out some repairs to our roads, pavements and streetlights (although this will always be an ongoing issue).
- b) The goalposts were reinstalled onto the football pitch
- c) An audio and hearing loop system was installed into the village hall
- d) New oak posts were installed on the village green adjacent to Green Lane
- e) An outdoor gym facility was installed
- f) Concrete bollards were installed adjacent to Harper Close road to prevent vehicle access onto the playing field
- g) The village hall play area has been updated and refurbished

Next on the confirmed project list to get underway is ;

- a) The construction of the new car park facility to the rear of the village hall which is scheduled to start on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> August this year.
- b) The fabrication of metal barriers to be fitted to the village hall to prevent vehicle access onto the playing field
- c) The installation of concrete bollards at the car park adjacent to the village green to prevent vehicle access onto the village green.
- d) The installation of new suspended ceilings into the village hall toilet areas during August of this year.
- e) The installation of new LED lighting into both the village hall and toilet area ceilings during August of this year.
- f) The village hall toilet areas and lobby area will be decorated in August / September of this year.

In addition to the previous projects, work and research is ongoing to ;

- a) Arrange for the widening of the road section in Green Lane that is adjacent to the village green together with the repair to and reinforcement of the village green road verge.
- b) Purchase and install a new flooring system in the village hall
- c) To provide an additional changing room / storage room facility next to the village hall
- d) The refurbishment of the existing village hall changing room
- e) Try and get repairs done to the corner verges of Woodpiece Road and Buchanan Road.

## **COMMUNITY**

Where possible, the parish council will provide advice and financial help for community projects and initiatives. Advice is free. Financial help would need to be considered and agreed. It is also possible that grant funding could be available for the right project. To successfully run a community project, support and involvement would be needed from volunteers within our community. The parish council is not in a position to take on and run community projects by itself. If you would like to volunteer to help out with a community project then please let the parish council know.

The parish council often receives information about acts of anti-social behaviour within our village. Please note that the parish council has no legal power whatsoever to deal with any of these issues. Anyone who witnesses anti-social behaviour taking place should report it to the relevant authority – preferably with photographic and / or video evidence.

It's worth mentioning that the cost of repairing any damage to parish property comes from your precept money. If that money has to be spent on repairs then it is no longer available to be spent on something more worthwhile.

## **FOOTBALL CLUBS**

After an absence of around 12 years, it is pleasing to report that our village now has two football clubs - Arncott AFC and Arncott Athletic FC. Both clubs will be competing in the Banbury & District Lord Jersey League for the coming season and I wish them both well. !!

### **THE OLD PLAYGROUND**

Comments are made from time to time about what could be done / should be done to the old playground area that is enclosed by the houses of Woodpiece Road and Buchanan Road. It's difficult to say what could be done. In 2017, neighbouring residents were asked for suggestions as to what they would like to see done to it because whatever is done will affect them directly. Two or three residents replied and suggested the area be turned into allotments or a communal garden. Some of the area belongs to CDC – some of it belongs to Sanctuary Housing. Will they pay to remove the concrete and turn the area into something different ? Probably not so it's difficult to see how that land area will ever be changed from what it is now. Suggestions as to how to move forward with this issue would be most welcome.

### **PALMER AVENUE TRAFFIC SPEED**

The issue of vehicle speeds on Palmer Avenue when leaving and entering the village has been raised. Some vehicles travel quite fast past the residencies located along Palmer Avenue that are outside of the 30mph speed limit zone. In 2016, the parish council asked OCC to move the speed limit zone further along Palmer Avenue so that those residencies would then be within the 30mph zone. OCC informed the parish council that it did not have the £4,000 funding to pay for that to happen and that the parish council could consider using parish funds. The parish council decided not to do that as it believes the issue should be resolved by OCC. Another discussion about this took place during the July online parish council meeting and the matter was referred to our OCC Councillor Calum Miller and he was asked to raise the matter with the OCC highways department. To date, the parish council has not had a response from either OCC or Councillor Miller.

### **AVHMC & ACA**

Without the work and effort put in by the ladies who volunteer to make up the AVHMC and The ACA, there would be no community organisations or community events. Our village hall is managed by the AVHMC. The permitted use of the hall since the outbreak of Covid19 has been a rollercoaster ride. The ever changing rules and regulations as to who could use the hall, when the hall could be used and under what conditions was a nightmare to manage but managed it was as a result of the magnificent efforts and countless hours of hard work put in by the VHMC and, in particular, Wendy, Jo and Christine. They did everything that was necessary to ensure that the hall was compliant with the regulations and they have to be applauded and thanked for their wonderful efforts. I know and am well aware of how much hard work that took them to do and so, in closing, I will say many grateful thanks to you on behalf of us all.

Thank you very much.

Paul Wilson  
Chairman  
Arncott Parish Council  
29<sup>th</sup> July 2021