

ARNCOTT PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL OPEN MEETING – TUESDAY MAY 23rd 2023

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 should you wish to do so.

ARNCOTT PARISH COUNCIL

Arncott Parish Council currently consists of its permitted quota of seven councillors. 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 Martin Byrne who is our vice chairman, Paul Hooper, Alex Dean, Luke Collins, Danny Cooper and Dinesh Patel.

Our parish councillors are volunteers who give their time for free and do their best to carry out the work and business that is necessary for our parish to function as needed. No expenses or financial allowances have been paid to any councillor during the last twelve months.

Parish councillors come and go and it's sad for me to say that, having joined the parish council in March 2013, Lee Savidge has decided to resign from his position as a councillor due to work and family commitments. I joined the parish council in October 2015 and became parish council chairman in May 2016. Lee was elected as Vice Chairman at the same parish council meeting. At that time, Lee was far more experienced as a councillor than I was and for the first twelve months in my role as chairman, he was a much needed and very welcome mentor for me as I didn't have a great deal of know how about parish council matters. As the months passed and I became more experienced with the role, Lee became a valuable sounding board for me to get his opinions, advice and often direction in how best to deal with various parish issues. Since I have known Lee, he has worked from home but, despite his busy day job, he always managed to find time during the day to talk with me if needed about parish issues that had to be addressed quickly. Lee also managed to fit in taking care of the parish council's website and social media needs in addition to liaising with OCC and Sanctuary housing regarding road, pavement and streetlight issues, with Stagecoach regarding the village's bus services and with Thames Valley Police regarding speeding issues on the village roads. A lot of that work needs to be done during regular office hours and Lee found the time to interrupt his own work schedule to address such issues. Last, but not least, Lee and his wife, Nairne, were responsible for starting off the process to stop the scrapping of the Tornado fighter jet that served as the MOD gate guardian for many years. That aeroplane has special significance as it is one of the first Tornado test aircraft to come off the production line. It now resides in the Boscombe Down Aviation Collection and is undergoing restoration. I doubt that the overwhelming majority of Arncott parishioners would have any idea at all about the level of contributions that Lee has made to the parish over the recent years but there are a few of us that do. Very sorry to see you go Lee but many grateful thanks for your ten years of very valuable service to our village parish.

It's never been very easy to find willing replacements for outgoing parish councillors and it's very important to try and maintain our full complement of councillors to ensure that the parish council can function as required. So, as Lee departs, I am very thankful indeed that Dinesh has volunteered to take over Lee's role. Dinesh will be no stranger to those villagers who frequent The Plough Inn and, having known him for many years, I know that he will be a valuable addition to our parish council. Again, thank you very much Dinesh for joining us.

As a parish council we always endeavour to ;

- 1) Make reasoned and balanced decisions on behalf of our parish and our community.
- 2) Ensure that parish money is used wisely and only where necessary.
- 3) Help with and try to resolve parishioners' problems and concerns where those are within our remit.
- 4) Liaise with the utility companies, the county, district, police and MOD authorities to try and get projects, repairs and any other necessary work done that is needed within the parish.
- 5) Ensure that the views and feelings of our parishioners are made known to the various authorities and organisations as appropriate.

I believe that we have a good and caring team of people on our council with a valuable mix of skillsets and who have the interests of our parish at heart. On many occasions work that needs doing in and around the

village hall along with other bits and pieces that need sorting out within the village gets taken care of by one or more parish councillors. If possible, they do this work for free which means money from parish funds does not have to be used. My grateful thanks go to each of you for the time and effort that you have given and continue to give on behalf of our parish.

THE PARISH CLERK

Mrs Anne Davies is our parish clerk and Anne looks after our book keeping, maintains financial records and manages much of the necessary clerical work. Anne also provides the council with objective and independent advice regarding procedural, legal and financial matters and that advice is always much appreciated. Our parish benefits from her experience and know-how so, on behalf of us all, I would like to say thank you very much Anne for all of the work that you do on our the behalf.

PARISH FINANCE AND FUNDING

Parish expenditure is mainly financed from the precept money received from CDC each year which comes from a small allocation taken from the council tax that is paid by our village residents. That money is used to fund the parish's normal standard bills i.e. insurances, inspections, emptying of litter and dog poo bins, general repairs, replacement items, clerical costs, tree and hedgerow maintenance and grass cutting of the open green spaces and roadside verges that belong to the parish. Projects are generally 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 Anne shows in detail where and how parish funds are spent. A copy of the report is available on request.

INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS AND REPAIRS

Ownership of our village infrastructure is varied and so the responsibility as to who should resolve village infrastructure issues is also varied. The parish council does its best to take care of its responsibilities in good time whenever possible. Issues regarding speeding, roads, pavements, kerbs, manholes, street lights, electricity supply, water leaks etc. require action to be taken by our local authorities, utility companies, the police or the MOD. The council maintains a liaison with our district and county councillors, the police and the MOD and their help and advice is asked for as and when needed. Utility companies are contacted as and when necessary.

VILLAGE COMMUNITY

Wherever possible, the parish council will provide advice and, if feasible, help for community projects and initiatives. The parish council is not in a position to take on and run community projects by itself so crucial support and involvement for those would be needed from volunteers.

Community involvement within our parish is always wanted and is a good aim to have although it's not always so easy to get. Thankfully our village possesses many people who will help out when necessary and that was admirably demonstrated throughout the duration of the Covid19 epidemic.

For the last couple of years the parish has been lucky enough to benefit from the selfless and excellent work of Kaye Forrest, Jacqueline Carpenter and Rosemary Gaskins who, between them, have transformed the village's War Memorial Garden from what was a bit of an overgrown and weed ridden area into something that now, thankfully, looks completely different. Their continued work and efforts are clearly on show for all to see. My grateful thanks go to those ladies and also to the proprietor of Print Run – Mr Richard Milliken-Smith – for continuing to allow Kaye, Jacqueline and Rosemary the use of his water supply for the plants in the garden borders.

I would like to give a big mention and thank you to Fred Milloy. For many years, Fred has helped enormously to keep the village tidy. He can often be seen walking around the village with a big black sack and his litter grabber picking up the rubbish discarded by inconsiderate people. Most people are probably not aware of what Fred does but it would soon become obvious if Fred didn't do what he does. Our village is a lot tidier place than it would be without his efforts so, again, many grateful thanks to you Fred.

On the downside, the parish council quite often gets to learn about senseless acts of vandalism and anti-social behaviour that happen within our village. It's worth mentioning that the cost of repairing any damage to property belonging to our parish comes from the precept money paid by the village residents. If that money has to be spent on repairs then it is no longer available to spend on something more worthwhile. The parish council has no legal power to deal with such issues so anyone who witnesses vandalism and / or anti-social behaviour taking place should report it to the police – preferably with photographic and / or video evidence.

ARNCOTT ATHLETIC F.C.

Our village football club - Arncott Athletic FC – compete in the Banbury & District Lord Jersey League. Having been formed a couple of years ago, the club has progressed very well and many congratulations must go to the club officials and players for a successful 2022 / 2023 season. I wish them every success for the coming season and I will leave it to Tony to update the meeting further.

PALMER AVENUE 30mph SPEED LIMIT

After spending a lot of hours over several years trying hard to get agreement from OCC to extend the Palmer Avenue 30mph speed limit zone, it was good to see that this finally did happen around the middle of February this year. Thankfully the speed limit zone now includes the residencies and the MOD fire station alongside of the Palmer Avenue road. Many thanks go to both Dave Catling of Sign Sense Consultants Ltd and Calum Miller for their work and efforts in getting OCC to agree to and allow for the work to get done.

VILLAGE HALL MAIN FLOOR

The old oak block floor in the village hall was finally renewed in August 2022. The new floor is a high quality Karndean product and was very professionally installed by Carpet Trader Ltd. Many thanks to Derek Holland and his team for doing such a lovely fitment.

DISTRICT & COUNTY COUNCILLORS

I will say thank you very much to our county councillor - Calum Miller – and our district councillors – Angus Patrick and Gemma Coton for their help, advice and involvement with some of our parish issues during the last twelve months.

M.O.D.

There are always a few occasions during the year when village issues arise that need the input and / or action from the M.O.D. so it is necessary for the parish council to be able to make contact with the M.O.D. to try and get such issues resolved. I'm pleased to say that Kevin Jessop acts as the liaison between the parish and the M.O.D. and grateful my grateful thanks go to him his help on our behalf.

AVHMC & ACA

In closing it is only right to make special mention of the ladies who volunteer to make up the AVHMC and the ACA. Without those ladies there would be no-one to manage the running of the village hall, community organisations or community events. I am certainly very well aware of how much effort and commitment has been, and continues to be, put in on behalf of our parish by both of those groups. Yet again, I would suspect that the majority of our parishioners will be totally unaware of the amount of hard work that gets done in the background and behind the scenes so, on behalf of the parish council and everyone else in our village, I would like to say a truly massive thank you to all of them for their continued efforts and commitment.

Thank you very much.

Paul Wilson
Chairman
Arncott Parish Council
23rd May 2023