

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 3 APRIL 2023
AT 7.30PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllr T Suter, Chair of the Parish Council
Four members of the Parish Council and the Parish Clerk
8 members of the public

The Chairman welcomed everyone. The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 11 April 2022 were approved and signed.

Chairman of the Parish Council's Report

It has been a year of musical chairs; I stepped down as Chairman in the early part of last year and Cllr David Lindsay was appointed Chairman with a focus on several main projects.

Cllr McGuirk stepped down as a Councillor. Caroline was a hardworking and diligent Councillor and we thank her for all support. The vacancy was advertised and Jake Brown was co-opted onto the Parish Council with councillor responsibility for the allotments.

Good progress has been made in Millennium Wood and towards the purchase of a new piece of play equipment in Miss Cross Field. Trees and hedging have been planted at the Recreation Ground and the Parish Council is in a good position moving into the new year.

I extend my thanks on behalf of the village to all Councillors for their time, commitment and support and also to Andrea, our Parish Clerk.

Responsible Financial Officer's Report

The internal audit of the 2021-22 financial accounts was undertaken by Mr Dick Heinrich between 9th May and 8th June 2022 following the Scope of Work agreed by the Parish Council.

The internal audit concluded that the control objectives had been achieved throughout the financial year and the Income & Expenditure account and Balance Sheet were a fair reflection of the financial position of the Council. The financial affairs of the Council were in good shape, with substantial reserves, made up mainly from Community Infrastructure Levy receipts set aside for agreed future projects.

The introduction of the Scribe Accounting software has been a major benefit to the Responsible Finance Officer during the year and has further improved the quality and transparency of all financial matters. The audit was simplified by the output that was generated by Scribe, producing useful overviews of all transaction.

The 2021-22 financial year saw both Income and Expenditure fall under the £25k threshold allowing the Parish Council, having met the required criteria, to exempt itself from an External Audit. This did not mean any less reporting from a transparency point of view and all financial documents were made available for public scrutiny during the period of Public Rights and published on the council's website.

Total expenditure was £10,762, the main headings of which were council administration, grass cutting, purchase of new accounting software, subscriptions and insurance. It was noted that expenditure related to dog waste bin emptying had fallen significantly since the appointment of a new contractor. Other expenditure included further Community Infrastructure agreed funding for second phase of bulb planting and donations to charitable organisations including Citizen's Advice, the Maple Tree. The Parish Council continues to support the Village Hall with an annual grant and St Peter's Church with a contribution towards the cost of grass cutting.

Total income was £19,686 made up of the Precept (£16,300), the amount of income the Parish Council requests from the District Council to include in the Council Tax that you pay each year, Community Infrastructure Levy (£1,462) collected from new development. Grant funding from County and District

Councillor funds and village organisations was received towards the purchase of goalposts for the recreation ground and refurbishment of the war memorial.

Finally, I would like to thank the Parish Councillors for their support during the year and to Dick Heinrich for his continued support with the Internal Audit.

County Councillor's Report

County Councillor Freddie van Mierlo had given his apologies and submitted his annual report for 2022-23, a summary follows:

Now 2-years into its first 4-year term, it is an opportune moment to reflect on the progress made by the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance administration since taking control from the Conservatives. Its vision is laid out in the 9 priorities adopted, that includes 'putting climate at the heart of everything we do'.

The County Council is responsible for delivering a range of services to residents of Oxfordshire, including adult social care, children's services – including for children with special educational needs and disabilities, and of course, maintaining Oxfordshire's highways and transport infrastructure, and a range of other services, including libraries, fire and rescue, and coroners' services.

Adult social care is the largest responsibility of OCC in terms of spend. Demand is growing due to our ageing population and an increase in complexity of needs. In Oxfordshire, we are seeking to manage this demand with a pioneering 'Oxfordshire Way', that aims to keep people active and independent for as long as possible in their homes and communities. Children's services remain a challenge, particularly in the area of SEND. The service receives this year an inflation busting boost to its budget of 12.3% (£18.8m), which will provide much needed funds.

In transport and highways, the county is leading the way by moving to 20mph as the speed limit for villages and towns. The newly adopted Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP5) is a radical change from the previous plan, and places an emphasis on active travel, public transport and reducing car journeys. Its ambitious targets to reduce car journeys by 25% by 2030 and 33% by 2040 will shape infrastructure decisions going forward, and be a powerful tool when developers seek massive car-centric developments (e.g., Chalgrove Airfield and Harrington). The freight strategy (which sits as part of LTCP5) is being developed further with inputs sought from communities on area weight restrictions and problem areas for HGVs. The strategy seeks to move non-local freight onto the strategic road network (M40, etc.), rather than use inappropriate local roads.

As ever, I continue to advocate for projects and issues important to local communities and individual residents. Issues have ranged from road agreements, active travel, trees, road markings, flooding, children's services, and much more!

Housing developments also remain a concern for residents. While strictly speaking a district matter, the major road developments associated with Chalgrove airfield development, and the potential Harrington development bring in County level concerns. I continue to oppose both schemes, which would have a deleterious impact on the local environment and climate due to their remote and rural locations.

District Councillor's Report

Caroline highlighted some key items from her report for the year 2022-23 as follows:

Planning - Harrington

In the last year the most consequential one has been the proposed new town of Harrington, at J7 of the M40 near Great Haseley. I have been (and remain) completely opposed to the concept of a town of 6,500 houses being built in that location - beautiful, open countryside far from jobs and sustainable transport hubs.

Solar Farms - Another issue that has been particularly pertinent in this ward (especially along the M40 corridor from Milton Common to Lewknor) has been the proliferation of proposals for solar farms. Two (Harlesford and Cornwell) have been approved and are going through the more detailed planning process before construction starts. These, together with proposals for solar farms at Milton Common and Lewknor represent over 330 hectares of open agricultural land.

I have worked with local communities to try to prevent such a massing of solar farms in a small area of valued landscape and productive farmland. I think most of us accept the need for solar power to contribute to our energy mix and wouldn't argue against the installation of some dispersed solar farms on agricultural land across South Oxfordshire. But like many residents, I would much rather see solar on roofs, and am concerned about the impact of the scale of this industrial development. I successfully made the case at SODC Full Council this spring for policies to address this - but I am worried that the new council will ignore the resolution: none of the Lib Dem candidates supported the motion, arguing, in fact, that it is unnecessary to have any limit. Residents in affected parishes will need to continue to make the case for the protection of their countryside.

Chalgrove - In March, Homes England (HE) confirmed that they are still determined to push ahead with the development of Chalgrove Airfield (which was allocated as a strategic development site in the current Local Plan). In light of opposition from the Civil Aviation Authority (and unflagging resistance from the residents of Chalgrove village), HE seem to have gone back to the drawing board and was able to give very little indication of their strategy, mitigation etc etc. HE said they would be bringing forward new plans in due course - though gave no indication of timescale.

Climate Change - SODC declared a climate emergency in 2019 and an ecological emergency 2021. The council has set targets to be carbon neutral within its own operations by 2025; and for us to be a carbon neutral district by 2030. I was keen to support SODC's own net-zero aspirations but remain sceptical about the council's capacity to set - and more importantly deliver - a target for the whole district.

With funding from central government, SODC has worked with other Oxfordshire councils on a strategy for creating a network of charging points for electric vehicles. This has included charging points in council car parks. I have been concerned that the focus of these strategies is the city of Oxford and the large towns in the county. It is essential that villages also receive EV charging capacity: they are often vibrant spots in our tourist economy and, just as in towns, many village-dwellers do not have access to their own charging points.

Caroline confirmed she would not be standing as a District Councillor in the forthcoming elections and thanked councillors and clerk for their support whilst she had been the ward councillor for Haseley Brook.

Reports from Organisations in the Parish

Great Haseley Cricket Club (Chris Groves)

Summary of Season 2022

43 Matches Scheduled - 32 Completed

- GHCC (3), Tiddington Ills (9), Tiddington IVs (9), Tiddington U15s Boys (2), Tiddington U15s Girl (1), Holton (7) and Bodleian (1)

Developments

- Shipping container relocated from Tiddington now being actively used for storage of equipment (Ride on Roller, Tractor mower from Ariens when on loan)
- Roll on covers have been reconstructed and were used throughout the season.
- Purchase of Rotary Mower from 3rd party hire and purchase of leaf blower from Taylor Blackall grant will aid wicket preparation and maintenance
- "Open" net session run on Thursday Evenings from 18.45 was successful and well attended
- "Patio" furniture kindly donated by Tiddington CC now provides a "café" like feel to the pavilion on match days

- Statistics from all available scorebooks have now been digitized.

Outlook

- Develop a stronger connection with Tiddington CC.
- Long term “lease” (5 years) could provide access to funding for pavilion improvements and installation of astroturf practice wicket.

2023 Season

Cricket development continues to be supported in season 2023 with the GH hosting its first Women’s Cricket Triangular Tournament and U9s Cricket Festival.

Fixtures

Tiddington CC III	9 Saturday League Fixtures
Tiddington CC IV	8 Saturday League Fixtures + 1 Saturday Friendly
Tiddington CC U15s Boys	5 Monday Evening Fixtures
Tiddington CC U13s Girls	4 Tuesday Evening Fixtures
Tiddington U9s	1 Festival Festival
Tiddington Ladies XI	1 Triangular Tournament
Great Haseley CC	6 Confirmed Sunday Fixtures, 3 Thursday night T20s
Holton CC	6 Sunday Friendlies
Bodleian CC	2 Sunday Friendlies; 1 Wednesday night T20

Great Haseley History Group (Jane Simcox)

I am pleased to say that the churchyard project has now been completed. All the information is now with Alan Simpson for him to publish it in an electronic format. There were 1045 stones recorded, the earliest stone being 1415 and the oldest resident was 101 years old. It is hoped that the CD will appear shortly and it will be accessible from the History Group website. I would like to thank Jim Baldwin for his sterling work in converting our scribbles into something readable and all the other members of the group who worked tirelessly to get the job done.

The main project that the group has been working on is the plane crash that took place in Latchford Lane in November 1943. The History Group were alerted to this when I received a telephone call from someone in Long Crendon asking whether there was a memorial to those killed. All ten American crew were killed on impact when the plane narrowly missed landing in Great Haseley. The group is now raising money to install a memorial stone in the churchyard which it is hoped will be unveiled on Remembrance Sunday (12 November) one day shy of the anniversary of the crash. We are expecting representatives of several of the American families and the USAF Croughton will also be sending people. This will be a big event for the History Group and it is hoped that the whole village will be involved on the day.

Anyone wishing to join the group is more than welcome and should contact me on 01844 279631 (jane@janeanddavid.co.uk) and I will keep you informed of meetings etc.

Great Haseley & District Horticultural Society (Louise Bird)

2022 was a relatively quiet year as we started up again after COVID. We held a number of talks about subjects such as “Capability Brown-Hero or Hooligan” and “planting for autumn colour”, as well as a wonderful demonstration of festive flower arranging at Christmas.

On the August bank holiday Saturday the society, with help from a lot of volunteers, held a wonderful full scale show at Rycote Park by kind invitation of Sarah and Bernard Taylor. The rather hot growing season meant overall the number of exhibits were down but we were encouraged that by advertising more widely among the villages that we had a number of first-time exhibitors. We are resolved to hold a show this year which will likely be a small one, as the costs of running a large show every year are prohibitive. The committee remains small but we continue to try and keep the society and indeed the show which is such a feature of local life running.

The society continues to maintain the chapel on Back Way and early last year had an interesting and expensive encounter with the local wildlife. The chapel’s roof had experienced storm damage on at

least two occasions over the winter of 2021-2022 and was leaking. The insurers agreed to pay for the repairs and a contractor was appointed, however when removing the ridge tiles bats were found. Legally, this meant that work had to be halted. A protracted search was undertaken to find a bat expert who was both qualified to carry out a bat survey and willing to attend such a small job. After a number of weeks with scaffolding up a survey was performed and mitigating measures such as a bat box and leaving gaps in the horizontal mortar so the bats could still roost in the space were proposed. Following installation of the bat box, the expert and builders reconvened on site to finish the works, only to find that the bats, likely Pipistrelle, were no longer in residence! However, it is likely that they will return as they transiently occupy roosts and move around the area. Certainly, they are still in the vicinity as I see them flying in the garden. Unfortunately, while the insurance covers the cost of dealing with pests such as wasps it did not cover the extra cost of working around the bats.

I would like to finish with a tribute to Pauline Fincham who sadly passed away last summer. Pauline made a huge contribution to the society and more generally village life in Great Haseley. She was a dedicated member of the society for many years, having taken part as a child and served on the Committee in various positions, including Chair and most recently Secretary. Her death has left a huge hole at the centre of the society and we will miss greatly her support, enthusiasm and show running experience. However, above all we will miss Pauline as a friend, the world has lost a very special person.

Playing Fields (Chris Groves)

2022 - Successful season of cricket with the ground being used most weekends.

Third party booking for Covid delayed birthday party with an ABBA themed festival vibe.

2023 - ~50 cricket matches anticipated. King's coronation event organised by village hall committee for Sunday 7th May 2023. Currently there are no Third-party bookings.

St Peter's Church (Toby Garfitt)

The last year has seen a lot of activity. The restoration work on the tower roof and stonework was completed and looks splendid, as does the freshly gilded clock. The gates and pillars have also been restored, and the work is almost complete. The extension to the churchyard, which has been fenced and will shortly be reseeded, is to be consecrated by the Bishop of Dorchester on 30 April 2023. The lightbulbs in the church have all been replaced by environmentally friendly LED lighting.

Notable events in the church have included several big weddings, the funeral of Malcolm Prior, a service of thanksgiving for the life of HM Queen Elizabeth II with a book of condolence, a Come-and-Sing day culminating in a performance of Fauré's Requiem, and the monthly Food Bank collection organised jointly with the Parish Council.

The three-year project to photograph and transcribe all the gravestone inscriptions and monuments, undertaken by members of the Great Haseley History Group with the help of the Oxfordshire Family History Society, is now complete, and a CD will shortly be produced displaying all the information in an easily accessible form. A folder containing plans of the church and each area of the churchyard with every grave and monument clearly shown, and a complete index of names, is now available for consultation in the church. Another project led by the History Group will see the erection just inside the churchyard of a monument to commemorate the ten American airmen who died when their bomber crashed between Great Haseley and Latchford in November 1943.

The biodiversity of the churchyard is being explored in a joint project between the Haseley Earthshot Group and the church. A report on the dozens of different lichens has already been received, and a wildflower survey will be taking place in the spring and summer. The churchyard will be included in the Open Gardens event in June, with experts on hand to explain aspects of the rich biodiversity.

Great Haseley Sports Club (GHSC Committee (Lucy, Victoria, Emily & Jo).

The courts are still in good condition despite the cold and wet winter. They had not been professionally treated since before Covid and given there was a lot of moss and debris from the trees at one end, the Committee decided it was time for them to be professionally cleaned again. This took place last week

meaning the courts are now in good shape for the coming season. We also replaced the tennis nets and posts on both courts last summer.

Membership remains steady. Last year we kept the fees at the reduced rates which we have had since Covid as we feel this has encouraged a larger number of members. However, costs are increasing and we are edging closer to requiring the courts to be refurbished so we are slightly increasing the fees for the 2023/24 season to £40 for a family, £25 for adults and £15 for juniors/ seniors.

Tennis coaching commenced on Sunday 26 March 2023 with Neil James - our long-standing coach - delivering 18 weeks of lessons on Sunday mornings. There are 21 children having lessons every Sunday followed by an adult lesson.

We are planning on having a fundraising event and BBQ on Sunday 11 June 2023 immediately following the children's lessons to help raise money for the club as well as being a good opportunity for everyone to socialise.

Village Hall (Paul Woodrow)

It has been a busy year. The celebration of Queen Elizabeth's Jubilee was extremely well supported. The carol service is now a 'must do' each year, around 100 people attended the service in 2022, many staying for the pop-up pub which followed.

Pop-up Pub continues to be popular not only contributing to the income of the Village Hall but it was able to donate £800 to deserving causes. Hirings continue to bring in a steady income. There is approximately £24k in the bank plus reserves held in the Parish Council's accounts, which is planned to spend on improvements works to the village hall.

The cost of cleaning, maintenance, insurance and electricity amounted to just over £7.5k.

The Village Hall is here for use by the community, and free use is given to some groups. This fantastic facility along with local events would not be possible were it not for the support and hard work of the Village Hall Committee. Sadly, we ended the year with two resignations and one retirement. I would like to express my thanks to these individuals for their dedication and support over the years. On a positive note, we welcomed a new member to the Committee.

Open Forum – Questions from Electors / Public Discussion

The Chairman thanked all those involved in village groups, we are extremely fortunate to live in such a vibrant and active village. The Chairman then invited questions from electors of the parish.

The Pumpkin show had donated £400 towards a new piece of play equipment in Miss Cross Field and £1,500 towards seating in Millennium Wood. It was suggested and agreed that a plaque is placed on the seating to acknowledge the Pumpkin Show and its contribution to the village for over 30 years.

It was noted that last month's edition of The Haseleys did not carry contact details for Councillors. The Clerk will ask the editors if this can be reinstated.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.20pm

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Chairman
11 March 2024