

Shipton-under-Wychwood Parish Council

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ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

Introduction

This May the Parish Council will have completed its fourth and final year in office with elections being held on the 3rd of May for a new council.

The year has seen limited changes in personnel with Liz Leffman joining us as County Councillor and Becky Ward being co-opted to the council before Christmas. Unfortunately changes in Becky's personal circumstances prompted her to resign in January. We also had the sad news recently that Rodney Rose, our County Councillor for many years, passed away in March. Our condolences go to Rodney's family. He was a tireless supporter of the Wychwoods who always seemed to find spare funds whenever the village had the need.

As I reported last year, we continue to be inundated by missives from both Government and County. Many of the items that descend from Central Government especially are intended for larger organisations however we still have to respond. This has seen an increase in administration for our clerk and needless to say an increase in the bureaucracy that affects us. On the subject of administration, this year our clerk began to study for the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA) which, once she is qualified, will increase the flexibility of the decision-making process for the council.

Still on the subject of legislation we have been following closely the progress of the Draft Local Plan and are pleased to note that it is almost ready for submission. One recent development is that the Planning Inspector has recommended that the Charlbury- Burford sub area does not need to absorb any more large scale developments; potentially good news for the Wychwoods.

We continue to support local organisations and village infrastructure both as an individual council and in coordination with Milton and Ascott under the "Wychwoods Together" umbrella. The latest examples of this co-operation are the financial support that has been given to the Villager, West Oxfordshire Community Transport and the extension of the library contract. We are also liaising with Milton Parish Council with regard to the transport plan for the major new development in Milton. The latest news is that M&M (Mactaggart and Mickel) have stipulated in their contracts to suppliers that all HGVs must enter the site via the A424 and not the A316.

Highways

The condition of our rural roads continues to be unacceptable. The only positive over the last year was the partial repair of Leaffield Road. This was in response to our complaints and the efforts of our County Councillor, further backed by the unfortunate accident to a Tour of Britain cyclist. It does seem that it is only when there is an incident that anything other than pot hole filling occurs. We continue to report road surface damage and would ask parishioners to pass on problems to either the clerk or direct using the “Fix my Street” website.

Road safety and speeding continue to attract our attention. We are presently in consultation with OCC in an attempt to reduce the speed limit on Station Road to 30mph. OCC recently circulated to the public a consultation document detailing the proposed changes. We continue to support the Speedwatch Team in their efforts throughout the Wychwoods. The Team and the Parish Council are at the moment investigating the possibility of purchasing portable electronic speed awareness signs which could be used throughout the three villages.

The school and Milton Road now benefit from flashing warning lights; this is another example of the Wychwoods Together initiative working in conjunction with our County Councillor.

Finally, the consultation with regard to the Burford weight limit for road transport is ongoing; however there appears to have been little progress. Meetings with affected parties have been scheduled by the Highways Department on several occasions but have invariably been cancelled at short notice due to ‘further research being required’.

Communications

We have continued to publish hard copies of the Parish Newsletter supplemented by our email alert program and our new website. The new website is working well, has been well received and includes the ability to sign up for email notifications of new posts. The email alert program has also been successful, however new legislation relating to data protection comes into force in late May which will affect the service in the short-term. The main implication is that recipients of the service will now have to formally “opt in.” In the near future the clerk will contact existing users asking for their consent to receive the email alerts.

Planning

We have received and commented on a steady stream of planning applications over the last year. Most have been uncontroversial however the occasional application has raised concerns. It is worth stressing once again that when commenting on planning applications we attempt to assess the views of the village as a whole and that any comments or objections must conform with current planning legislation in order to have any impact. As mentioned previously we are monitoring the situation with the Milton development, in particular the impact of construction traffic on the road system.

Defibrillator

Thanks to the generosity of a private individual and the efforts of the WI a new defibrillator has now been installed on Fiddlers Hill. This is in addition to the existing machine at New Beaconsfield Hall. Shortly after the installation of the new machine a training session was carried out at New Beaconsfield Hall. Further courses will be scheduled in the future.

Shipton Volunteers –Report from Carole Arnold

The Shipton Volunteers celebrated their 10th anniversary in 2017, by having a BBQ at the end of August. This was held in the communal orchard in the allotment, which made for a lovely venue. Old and new members attended and we were blessed with fantastic weather. It was a good turn out and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.

The hours for this year are broadly in line with the previous year, with 42 volunteers donating their time over 23 working sessions. There have also been separate sessions at Diggers Wood. I'm grateful to each one of these volunteers for their hard work in maintaining the appearance of our village.

The tasks undertaken this year include: the annual litter pick, cleaning the pavements of weeds in Spring and leaves in Autumn, supporting the Wild Garden, maintenance around the church yard and the allotments and the children's playground.

There have been 4 new members join over the past 12 months plus 2 students doing their D of E service.

The Parish Council also continues to provide support and guidance and this is very much appreciated.

If you feel you would like to volunteer, please contact me. You can find a list of dates and activities on the council website. Any help will be welcomed.

Green Spaces

The diseased horse chestnut on the recreation ground has now been felled. It has been replaced with three new trees that were planted in the autumn. These are two English Elms and a Tulip Tree

The new tree on the Village Green died and was replaced free of charge by Treotech. Green Scythe continues to do a good job maintaining the green spaces around the village. Grass cutting is a major expense for the village with the Parish Council budgeting for an annual cost of just under £7,000. A grant of approximately £1,700 is received from OCC towards the cost of cutting the verges inside the 30mph area. The grant has almost halved in recent years with no guarantee for the future.

Transport-Report from Bartha Pitman

Last year we reported on the loss of bus services in the Wychwood but this year I am pleased to report that since February we have a regular week day service to Witney and Chipping Norton courtesy of West Oxfordshire Community Transport and various grants including £1,218 from this parish. We hope it will be well used and a longer term feature of the Wychwoods.

Rail usage to and from Shipton station for 2016/17 was 6,568; 29.8% up on the previous year. However, the service has deteriorated in recent months with the "improved" rolling stock. We responded as a parish council to the recent consultation from the Department

of Transport on the Great Western franchise and with the help of our residents will monitor the situation. Hopes of an off-peak morning service are on hold until the line is double tracked and a new franchise agreement is in place.

Finance

Shipton PC's income for the financial year 2017-18 was £44,161. This is down £4,846 on the previous year's income because no grants for projects were received. Burial fees received were halved (£1,225 instead of £2,450) but other income pretty much stayed the same.

Expenditure was up slightly this year: £800 was spent on planting three new trees to replace the horse chestnut that had to be taken down at the recreation ground. £1680 was spent on an extension to the road at the allotments. This was in addition to the work on the road that was carried out previously, financed by the Tesco grant. Administration costs also increased due in part to the clerk undertaking her CiLCA qualification. Donations were given to support community bus services: £600 was given to the Villager bus service and £1,218 was given to West Oxfordshire Community Transport to support them to get their week day service up and running.

As at 31st March 2018 the PC bank accounts hold £93,186. £15,500 is reserves allocated to the playground and £1,000 is allocated to the primary school Multi-use Games Area. Due to the healthy reserves, the PC took the decision to run a deficit budget for the financial year 2018-19.

INCOME	2017-18	2016-17
Precept	33,768	33,118
Allotment rent & Wayleaves	1,089	1,183
Grass cutting grant	1,761	1,710
Grants	3,100	8,000
Burial fees	1,225	2,450
Other income	3,218	2,546
Total	44,161	49,007
 EXPENDITURE		
Council Administration	11,063	8,281
Parish Maintenance	6,443	5,170
Allotments	2,114	8,520
Recreation Grd/Playgrd	3,889	2,182
Donations to community bus	1,818	
Donations to local organisations	1,610	1,360
New Beaconsfield Hall subsidy	2,600	2,600
Library support	2,044	1,967
Other expenditure	7,159	9,413
Total	38,740	39,493
 Reserves in bank	 93,186	 87,765

