

SHIPTON-U- WYCHWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Report 2019-20



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Message from the Chairman

Dear Fellow resident

Here is our annual report which your Parish Councillors would have liked to present to you in person at an Annual Meeting, But I hope you find it a useful account of the activities we undertake on the village's behalf. As in last year's message, the more residents who join in the more we can do together. A difficult start to the new financial year but there is a solid foundation on which to build. Thank you for your continuing support.

Environment:

20 Trees



for 2020

We are all so lucky to live in such a beautiful rural village and to share our homes with many diverse wildlife communities and their habitats.

Your Parish Council believes that it is important not only to protect but also to enhance our environment for the benefit of all.

This year sees the initiation of a major new strategic initiative that represents an ongoing commitment to a range of environmental enhancing projects.

In 2020 we will start with:

- Planting 20 semi-mature trees
- Placing 20 bird boxes
- Locating 20 bug hotels.

A working party has been set up to make this all happen and we will be supported by a number of local environmental experts who will advise us, drawing on their specialist knowledge.

More details on these initiatives and future plans are available from the clerk and we look forward to updating everyone throughout the year and at next year's annual meeting.

Tim Yates

Planning

We have responded to WODC on over 20 planning applications with the aim of trying to balance the aim of supporting a vibrant growing village against the need to protect the AONB and the Conservation Area within it. Most applications were uncontroversial, but a number took more time and attention. First there was the need to ensure the Deanfield development proceeded safely and met the planning conditions; second the tennis club application for lighting (subsequently withdrawn); third the application for two houses in Gas Land (subsequently refused but with a new application pending); fourth the troubled Bowerham development (activity continuing). We now have the issue of the restoration of the listed Shipton Court wall.

Brian Rigby

Shipton Fair 2019

The village Fair, which ran alternate years in conjunction with the Church Fete, had not taken place for several years due to a lack of support. The Parish Council decided that perhaps the time was right for a revival, the aim being to create something different to other events in the area. The main criteria were lots of innovative games for adults and children and more importantly, cheap to play (20p for most of them) along with food, raffles, craft stalls and specialist items such as a Falconry display and dog show.

An inspection of the old Fair equipment found it all needed replacing. This meant that we had to start from scratch. By far the cheapest option was to build it ourselves. The Parish Council gave £3,800 towards the capital expenditure and this together with £600 remaining from the old Fair accounts and money generated by ourselves allowed us to proceed, with the help of Chris Fitzpatrick who constructed the fiendish games on display.

From my point of view, it was a pleasure to be once again reminded of the tremendous community spirit we have in our small village, not only with

the turn out and support on the day, but also with the generous donations over the past months. An event of this size would be impossible without the fantastic support and enthusiasm of those willing to run the games and stalls for us and those who kindly lent us their gazebos.

The Shipton Volunteers were tireless, many people probably didn't realise they were present from 10am – 4pm on the day before setting up the gazebos etc. They were back again in the morning at 8.30am and worked through to the start of the Fair, returning at 4pm to help with the dismantling.

We raised over £2,300. It was decided at an early stage of the organising to keep some money back for the next event for booking outside events and making new games etc. The remainder would be shared between those local groups that helped with running our game stalls and who were essential to the running of the event. It was hoped that this would encourage more groups to involve themselves next time as the success of the Fair depends solely on the support and help of the village. To this end we kept back just over £1,000 for the next event and divided the remainder between the groups at £150 per share.

The next Fair is scheduled for August Bank Holiday Monday in 2021. We are currently looking for 1 more volunteer to join the organising Committee to bring it up to 8. Anyone interested should contact the Parish Clerk Lisa Wilkinson or myself.

Tim Brunsden

Highways

New 30mph Zone

How hard could it be, we thought to reduce the speed limit from 40mph – 30mph on Station Road on the way out of the village towards Chippy.

Well the answer was, very hard and very frustrating- but worth it we think!

The residents along this stretch were the initial driving force and their cause was ably taken up by Ian Drainer, who did much of the work over the year.

The initial research included a feasibility study and permission had to be granted by Oxfordshire County Council; Thames Valley Police were also consulted.

OCC agreed to the speed limit reduction if it was funded by the Parish Council. Initial costs were £6,000. However, when inspected it was found that the Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) could not just be recalibrated and a completely new VAS would be required.

The final cost of £7,600 was made up of: equipment and signage £5,000; legal and consultation fees £2,600.

To cap it all, Highways didn't change the 40mph painted on the road once the 30mph VAS was activated which led to some confusion for the 2 weeks until the problem was rectified.

Tim Brunsdon

Volunteers Activity

The Shipton Volunteers are a group of volunteers who meet twice a month undertaking jobs to maintain, enhance and improve the village. We have now completed our thirteenth year and in this last year there have been 34 volunteers helping. We have completed 22 working sessions, which equated to a total of 389 volunteer hours.

I'm grateful to all those who have participated and have given up their time to help with their dedications and hard work. Also, my thanks to the Parish Council for their continued support and guidance.

Amongst the tasks undertaken during this past year were - the annual litter pick, cleaning the pavements of weeds in Spring and leaves in Autumn, supporting the Wild Garden and Diggers Wood, tidying the church grounds, Simons Lane, Swinbrook Road and helping set up and dismantle the fair.

If you fancy joining us then see our page on the Shipton-under-Wychwood website for dates and activities

(<https://shiptonunderwychwood.org/shipton-volunteers/>) or alternatively you can contact me on the below email. Similarly, if you have any thoughts on any different projects that we can undertake, then please let me know.

It is with great sadness I report that Gordon Gillett who led the Volunteers for many years sadly died on Sunday 26th April. He will be greatly missed. Not only was he the leader of the Shipton Volunteers he was also a Founder member and Trustee of the Wychwood Wild Garden.

Carole Arnold

carolearnold@shiptonunderwychwood.org

Playground 2019/20

It's been a busy year at the playground. We spent nearly £18,000 on a major refurbishment, required due to the age and gradual deterioration of some of the wooden components.

This refurbishment included replacing the existing balance beam gorge with a new multiple balance item. The wire of the zip was replaced, the brake replaced, and all the fittings inspected and renewed where necessary. We replaced the old rocker bike with a new rocker horse and added new rubber mulch matting around several items. The seesaw had a new base and the stairs on the mound had a new handrail. All the rotten wood was replaced, and we installed new rivets in the skateboard park, to replace those broken or missing.

Our hands are slightly tied when replacing or repairing playground items as they are required to be completed by an authorised playground contractor using authorised items and none of them come cheap! Unfortunately, the wood has a finite life and we are currently at the stage where some of it will require replacing each year.

This was in addition to the normal yearly upkeep. The compulsory yearly ROSPA inspection was carried out in July with no notable problems identified.

One of the zip wire bases worked itself loose after Christmas. This was due to the almost continuous heavy rain we experienced over several months. When the old concrete base was removed, we found a lake under and around it! Although a new, larger base was installed soon afterwards, it has had to remain out of order until the ground dried out sufficiently to bed the base securely in. Just as we were about to reopen it we had to close the playground due to the Corona Virus.

This coming year we have agreed a maintenance contract with Reids Playground Maintenance and a gardening contract with Sophie England. We will be repairing the crumbled pathway, repairing the tunnel which has almost rotted away and will be attempting to edge and tidy up the sandpit.

Tim Brunsdon

Super-fast Broadband

The provision of superfast broadband, with speeds of up to 900mbs to every house and business in our village, is nearing completion.

To date 431 properties in Shipton-under-Wychwood have been provided with a connection point (POT). Of these, 383 have a live connection and are able to order the service. The majority of the remaining properties are within private land and require a wayleave. For anyone wishing to check the progress of their connection, they can get an update from the postcode checker via www.gigaclear.com.

The build is due to be fully completed by the end of September 2020. In the meantime, we are working closely with the contractors to make sure that all the excavation areas are returned to their original condition.

If you have any questions please contact timyates@shiptonunderwychwood.org

Tim Yates

Finance

Shipton PC's income for the financial year 2019-20 was a little over £49,000.

Most of the income was precept supported by the usual income from the allotments and the burial ground. The carol service raised £430 which was donated to the Citizens Advice Bureau to support their work at Wychwood Surgery.

Expenditure this year focused on the speed limit reduction along Station Road which cost £7,600 and maintenance/upgrading of the playground at a cost of £17,500. The Fair also cost a significant amount (at £4,200), with most of the proceeds being donated to community groups.

Total expenditure was £65,900. As you can see there is a deficit of £16,000, which was planned due to the high level of reserves held.

Donations were given to support Wychwood Wild Garden, Shipton Bowls Club and Wychwood Primary school towards the gated access to the new Multi Use Games Area. A sum was also given to New Beaconsfield Hall to enable them to buy a portable P.A. system.

At 31st March 2020, the PC bank accounts held £87,419. Due to the still healthy reserves, the PC took the decision to run a deficit budget again for the financial year 2020-21.

Full accounts are below:

INCOME	2019-20	2018-19
Precept	34,247	34,497
Council Tax Grant	395	446
Allotment Rents and Wayleave	1296.19	1,042.09
Bank Interest	282.57	233.09
Burial Fees	1123	1,791
.00Carol Service collection	432.21	483.60
Grant for grass cutting	1,761.30	1,761.30
Other Income	2375.05	427.1
VAT repayment	7170.13	2707.53
Grants	0	2,904.22
TOTAL INCOME	49082.45	46,292.93

EXPENDITURE

Council Administration	11250.09	12,439.35
Parish Maintenance	3531.33	4,304.95
Subscriptions/Memberships	317.27	286.54
Allotments	1547.27	228.85
Recreation Field/Play Area	19650.47	2,393.17
Burial Ground/Church Yard	2425.43	1,800.34
Donations to Local organisations	3183.67	2,119.76
Donations Community bus	700	0
New Beaconsfield Hall subsidy	2600	2,600
VAT paid	6678.86	2,968.78
Library Support	2173.47	2,120.94
Projects	7600	2,300
Shipton fair	4200.93	1,721.20

TOTAL EXPENDITURE**65858.79 35,283.88****SURPLUS/DEFICIT****-16776.34 11,009.05****General Fund**

104,195.28 93,186.23

Add total Income

49082.45 46,292.93

Less Total expenditure

65858.79 35,283.88

Balance as at 31 March**87,418.94 104,195.28**

Lisa Wilkinson

County Councillor report 2020

The past year has seen a major improvement to the management of our roads across the County, particularly in our area. Rural roads have suffered from a lack of regular maintenance, and my colleagues and I successfully pushed for more money to be allocated to the Highways budget, which has meant that a lot of road have now seen some improvement. This includes some of the roads around Shipton, but there is still work to be done – for example on the road from Shipton to Ascott, which has a lot of potholes at the Shipton end. A key concern has been the issue of the wall at Shipton Court and the consequent partial closure of the road. Unfortunately, although Highways would have liked to open the road it has not been possible as long as work on the wall has continued. Officers have been in regular contact with the owner and are negotiating to get the road re-opened fully as soon as possible.

During the year we saw the 30mph zone in the village extended out as far as the station, bringing the houses at that end of the village into the 30mph zone and making the road safer for pedestrians. We will shortly see a weight restriction imposed on lorries in Burford, which will have a significant impact on the traffic that travels on the A361 through Shipton. Oxfordshire County Council will be monitoring the roads around the A361 to ensure that this does not push lorries onto the smaller roads. Before the pandemic struck, the Wychwood bus service was steadily increasing its passenger numbers and I was very pleased to be able to support it through my Councillor Priority Fund. I will be continuing to do this when this is over and will campaign for better funding for bus services across the county. One thing that we have learned over the past few weeks is that the drop in car usage has resulted in cleaner air and we need to do all we can to maintain this.

The focus of the County Council for the past couple of months has been the coronavirus pandemic. The council is responsible for the welfare of some of the most vulnerable members of our community, through adult social care and children's services. Even before the pandemic, both services were operating under a lot of strain due to underfunding. There have been issues about the provision of PPE to care homes and to frontline care workers who look after people in their own homes, and in mid-April the County committed £1 million to providing protective clothing to these key workers. I hope that we can learn lessons from this pandemic about how much we need those services and how important it is to fund them properly.

I am sure that when we look back at 2019/20, our main memories will be about the last couple of months, which have been very strange. We have been fortunate in this area to have had relatively few cases of Covid-19. I would like to thank all those people in Shipton who have looked after their neighbours, shopping for them and making sure that they are not lonely. This pandemic, while very hard for many, has served to emphasise the strength of community spirit in this area. I hope that everyone in Shipton stays safe and well, and I look forward to meeting you again after this is all over. In the meantime, I am still undertaking my role as councillor and

can be contacted any time, by phone on 01608 818153, or by e mail at liz.leffman@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Liz Leffman

District Councillor's Report

This is like no other annual report that I have had to write. So firstly, I want to share my sympathies with every single family that has lost a relative or a neighbour or a friend in these tough times. These last twelve weeks have not been easy for any of us. I have helped five families across the district who have suffered financial loss and have struggled to access shopping. I also want to thank volunteers in the village for their efforts by collecting medicines and organising shopping for residents; most of these efforts were co-ordinated through the parish council.

However, as we come out of lockdown we need to renew and develop society, so it begins to work for everyone. One of the biggest challenges over the last year has been planning. In Shipton, we have seen one or two very small planning applications that would have changed the area considerably, despite the protection from the Local Plan; we had to fight off these developers who were not in favour of affordable homes or preserving the nature of the village.

In the chamber before lockdown, I had been advocating for a consolation on the Witney to Oxford railway proposals (alas that was voted down by the Conservative administration); more electric-vehicle charging points and increasing our renewable energy; and, most importantly, myself and other colleagues, were lobbying for updated services to bring the council into the 21st century, such as live streaming of all council meetings.

As we emerge out of lock down, we must forge a new way forward in society that brings together these community values and bonds that have been made over the last three months. We must see a return to core community politics, where everyone's voice is heard, not just the majority.

It has been a pleasure conducting my 100th piece of casework just two weeks ago, and I now look forward to the next 100 pieces in the next two years. Please do all stay safe and carry on carrying for one another. This pandemic, which will come to define 2020 in the history books, can be remembered for the positives over friendships growing stronger and villages recovering and renewing the local economies, so it works for everyone in our society.

Stay safe and healthy,

Cllr Jake Acock

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