

Annual Parish Meeting, Wednesday 23rd May 2018

Chairman's Report for the Parish Council year 2017 - 2018

Introduction / opening:

Ladies and Gentlemen, residents and parishioners of Kirtlington - good evening everyone, welcome and thank you for attending the 2018 Kirtlington Parish Council Annual Meeting. It is good to see so many of you attending, and to note that several of you have been to our Council meetings over the last year to put across your points of view or ask questions on matters that have particularly concerned you.

For those who do not know me, firstly may I introduce myself – David Richardson – a member of the Parish Council as councillor for the past two and a half years, I have been nominated as Chair of the Parish Council for this year ahead.

We have a number of apologies for absence this evening – we would normally have representatives of Oxfordshire County council and Cherwell District council in attendance and giving reports, however unfortunately Councillors Carmen Griffiths of OCC, and Barry Wood of CDC are unable to attend this year; we were due to see Cllr Ian Corkin of CDC but have a last minute notice that he cannot be here, but he has provided a report which will be delivered this evening.

Chairman's Report:

The Parish Council elections in May were uncontested, and as such your Parish Council consists currently of 4 councillors, including my fellow Parish Councillors Kate Buckingham-Fry, Stuart Jenkins and Richard Sadler - all volunteers who give up their spare time to serve their community and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their continued service, efforts and support. We have in Ruth Powles a pivotal member of the team, the Clerk, who is employed part-time by the Parish Council and is the Proper Officer to the Council, offering professional advice and support to the Council. As with every year it seems, the Clerk's workload this year has grown enormously.

As you can see, we are short in numbers by 3 and will be seeking to co-opt to the vacancies, so if you do know anyone who would like to join please ask them to come forward.

This report reflects last year's work under the Chairmanship of David Pratt, and it has certainly been another busy year.

Therefore I would like to thank David on behalf of the village, for the outstanding service he has given the village over the past 12 years. He has done a super job.

Also due a massive thank you is Helen Macbeth, for 31 years of dedicated service to the village. Helen's analytical mind, insight, skills and local knowledge will be sorely missed.

Last but not least, thank you to Sam Tylor who served on the Council for the past 5 years, bringing a wide range of help and skills to the village.

In planning terms for the last year, we continue with the gestation of the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan, and we have now reached the stage where a public consultation on the Plan is under way, closing on 19th June. As you are aware our involvement in this Neighbourhood Plan allows us to be fully involved in policies regarding how and where the necessary housing developments take place in our district. As always, a big thank you to Christine Marsh and Helen for the huge amount of time they give to this project. Currently we expect the Referendum on adoption of the Plan to take place in the early Autumn, following on from the Examiner's report over the Summer. Please do note that paper copies of the MCNP can be read in the coffee shop of the Kirtlington Village Stores, at the Church, or accessed online – I will pass on the web address to anyone who would like to view, and this consultation period finished on the 4th June.

With regards to local planning issues of the more strategic nature, rather than individual, private applications:

The “Jersey Cottages” proposal for 20 new homes including 7 affordable homes was refused permission in November, largely due to concerns regarding the proximity to the historic park and despite considerable support from the village, and from the Parish Council in principle, as the option that would give the village the much need types of housing with the minimum impact.

The proposed development of 10 houses off Mill Lane was refused by Cherwell District Council but taken to appeal by the developers; the Planning Inspectorate dismissed the appeal in March this year. KPC (the Parish Council) worked hard on behalf of the village to get this appeal dismissed.

A smaller development at Akeman Spinney was supported by KPC in principle (subject to details) and the application for 5 new homes here was given permission by Cherwell District Council in December last year.

Our continued and grateful thanks are due to Christine Marsh and Paul Kurgo, whose work on the Planning Sub-committee has been invaluable in aiding the village throughout these complex issues.

On to Highways issues – a persistent concern for villagers and a number of areas have been addressed this last year:

- a Community Speedwatch programme is in the formative stages, set up in collaboration with and assistance from TV Police; we now have a roster of volunteers, the majority of whom have had training from TVP recently, and the equipment to carry this out so will be looking to instigate this in the coming weeks.
- Parking issues where potential Road Safety issues present have been addressed as a result of work by residents and KPC, with the an information (leafleting) campaign for persistent infringements culminating in the addition of white line markings at the entrance to Dashwood Mews; following this success, issues with parking on Bletchington Road are being looked at currently.
- KPC’s work with the Church and County Councillor Carmen Griffiths has secured the agreement of the County’s Highways department to properly tarmac Church Lane up to the Church gate.
- we still have a bus service, now called the 250, and we encourage parishioners to use this service.

With regard to the more regular Parish Council activities, we continue to manage the village assets on behalf of the parish and I would like to start by thanking Jim Draper and Brian Cherry for the outstanding work they do in looking after our playing field.

Also, a huge thank you to the VHMC for all they do in upgrading and maintaining this essential village asset – the Chair’s report to come will give more detail, but they have had an excellent year and continue to grow this into a thriving hub for all of the village.

There will need to be some repairs to the War Memorial and we are currently obtaining quotes so the work can be done, plus there will also need to be some work done to the fencing of the Play Area and sports field, which take place this year.

Lastly, we are very grateful to KWACS for all the work they have done in improving and maintaining the village pond; thanks also to Smiths of Bletchington who provided digging equipment and personnel to achieve this.

We do have a representative here tonight to give a report, but I would like to mention also the Kirtlington Scout group – I am particularly encouraged to see this re-introduced and growing successfully, as a huge asset to the younger residents of Kirtlington.

On a less positive note, many will be aware from the recent VN article of an issue with access to the village's Defibrillator – KPC have lodged a formal complaint with South Central Ambulance Services, and having received a response that raised more questions than it answered are persisting with this issue, which the Parish Council consider to have the utmost importance and gravity.

KPC would also like to thank all the village volunteers who selflessly give their time to all the societies helping those in need, the youth club, the sports teams and the scouts, that make this village so special; moving forward into this coming year I personally would very much like to see others in the community following the lead shown by the volunteers represented here, and increase the demographic of those giving their time to provide and support all of these tasks and activities to be more fully reflective of the make-up of the village as a whole, who all benefit from and enjoy the fruits of their labours.

Finally, I will close with a very big thank you to our Parish Council's Clerk for the enormous amount of work she does for the village, being the glue that holds the administrative functions of the village together.