

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD ON TUESDAY 2nd MAY 2023 FROM 7.30PM AT RACKLEYS CHILTERN HILLS

ATTENDANCE: Cllrs – Mrs A Bolton, Mr M Detsiny, Mrs M Dunning, Mr G, Coulter, Mr C Harries, Mrs D Graham, Mr W Hunt, Mr J Nicolson, Mrs J Osborn, Mr C Stewart, Mr K Wright.

Mrs H Glasgow, Clerk

ABSENT: None.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCILLOR – None.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 15

Chairmans Annual Report

Councillor Coulter gave the following report –

Changes on Council

Simeon Achurch left after many years of service to our Council.

Thank him for his contribution particularly as a member of our Planning Group.

Warm welcome to Anne Bolton joined as a replacement for Simeon and has also kindly stepped up to replace him on our Planning Group.

Work of our Council and the Challenges we face.

Street Lighting

One of the main areas of our spending accounting for slightly more than 15% of our annual spend.

Historically energy supply costs were the main part of this expenditure but our progressive replacement of old lanterns with LEDs has significantly reduced this cost.

However, maintenance costs have increased dramatically and amounted to £23,000 last year the major element of which was replacing failed lanterns with LEDs.

Currently only about 60% of these lanterns have been converted to LEDs and at a cost of about £500 per streetlight our Council is limited in terms of how quickly this can be done.

The good news is that LEDs should last significantly longer, and replacement of failed units should become far more infrequent.

Woodlands

The Parish Council is responsible for a number of woodlands and areas with mature trees around the village.

This includes Moorend Common, Ditchfield Common, Moor Common, Ridge Close and Oakshaw Wood.

Council has a duty of care with regard to the safety of the trees in these areas and an annual tree inspection is undertaken.

Inevitably leads to tree works needing to be undertaken which appears to be increasing each year and now accounts for 7% of our annual spend.

Owning woodlands is an expensive luxury.

Allotments

The Council has 3 Allotment Sites at Chalky Field, at Bunkers (Church Road) and at Sandyfields (at the beginning of Cadmore End).

There are currently no vacancies at Chalky Field and Bunkers but there are some vacancies at Sandyfields and anyone wishing to have an allotment should contact Hayley Glasgow our Clerk.

The Council “loses” money on allotments in that the rental income from allotment plots is less than the spending on them but this is not a large amount of money

Last year the income from allotment plots amounted to around £1,300 and spending on them to £3,600.

The Council is currently investigating plans to re-organise the allotment plots at Sandyfields and improve the access arrangements to them.

Clarion

Sure you will all be familiar with the Clarion which is the quarterly magazine/newsletter published by the Lane End Parish Council

The Council does not exercise editorial control over this publication which is entirely in the hands of an independent editor – Katy Dunn.

The Clarion does attract an advertising income which amounts to approximately £5,000 per year. However this does not cover the printing and publication costs which are around £14,000 per year.

Notwithstanding that, the Parish Council believes that the Clarion fulfils an important role in our community and one which is valued by many of our parishioners.

Grass Cutting

The Parish Council is responsible for much of the grass cutting that takes place in the Parish but by no means all of it

The areas cut by the Parish Council include Ditchfield Common, Moorend Common, the Lane End Playing Fields, Bolter End Common, Cadmore End Common, the Village Green and a number of other smaller plots.

In addition the Parish Council cuts the grass verges along all of the roads within Lane End.

The majority of the remaining grass areas in Lane End, such as Millenium Park for example and the grass area by Greys Dormer, are the responsibility of Red Kite.

There is a debate between those who would like to see the grass areas cut less frequently and those who prefer the grass areas to be cut short throughout the growing season. The Council tries to steer a happy medium between these two sets of conflicting views.

The cost of all of this grass cutting amounts to almost 12.5% of the council’s annual budget, which is a not inconsiderable sum.

Donations

The Parish Council made donations amounting to £8,500 in the current year.

The major donation was to Cadmore End Village Hall for £7,000 to meet the costs of a new boiler and ensure that the Village Hall had sufficient funds to continue operating.

In addition grants of £500 were made to Community Matters, The Lane End Players and the Mother & Todler Baby Group based at the Elim Church.

Sale of our Chalky Fields Site

Long running saga but as yet no clear end in sight.

Chalky Fields Site designated as suitable for housing development in the WDC Local Plan.

Council agreed to sell the site and an agreement was reached with NK Homes to purchase it.

Planning process has now been underway for over two years but appears close to a planning determination.

However NK Homes are looking to renegotiate the terms of the agreement reached with them.

As such it is quite possible that the sale may not progress and our Council may have to return to the market and start again.

This will inevitably lead to a delay of 2-3 years before any capital receipts are forthcoming from this sale.

Essentially it is watch this space!

Vote of Thanks

Finally, I would like to offer a particular thanks on behalf of myself and our Council to our Clerk Hayley Glasgow who does a tremendous job and makes our lives so much easier. Hayley is well thought of by all of our parishioners and is an exemplary Clerk in every possible way.

I would also like to offer a vote of thanks to all of the members of our Council who give up their time to support and serve their community.

It is invidious to pick out individuals but I would like to specially thank :

1. Our Planning Group of Will and Anne who review, often visit and then assist our Council in commenting on all planning applications that come before us.
2. Will who has taken the lead role in organising the Christmas in the Village Event for the last few years. This has included wading into the Duck Pond by the Grouse & Ale almost every year to reinstate the Village Christmas Tree after storm damage.

Finance

The Parish Council remains in a relatively strong and robust financial position.

The budget set for 2024-25 will seek to maintain this position.

2023-24

In our last financial year our Council recorded a small budget surplus of approximately £10,000 with an overall income of £211,000 and expenditure of £201,000.

Income :

- Our Precept was £174,500
- Other income amounted to £36,500 and included :
 - Clarion Advertising - ££5,500
 - Allotment Rents £1,300
 - Grants and Donations - £3,700 (Rural Payments Agency)
 - Devolved Services £3,750 (Buckinghamshire Council)

- VAT Reclaim on expenditure in 2022-23 - £20,000

Expenditure :

The main items of expenditure accounting for **88%** of Total Expenditure are as follows :

- Salaries and Wages - £53,000 – Clerk and other employees
- Open Spaces & Commons - £39,500
 - Grass Cutting - £24,000
 - Woodland Maintenance - £13,500
 - Commons Projects - £2,000
- Street Lighting - £31,500
- Clarion - £14,000
- Insurance & Legal Fees - £14,000
- Lane End Playing Fields - £11,000
- Office Expenses - £6,000

2024-25

The Parish Council has set a Precept of £182,000 for 2024-25

This is an increase of **4.3%** on the value of the Precept set in 2023-24

However the cost to individual ratepayers will only rise by only **3.2%** due to an increase in the rateable value of the Parish – for example new properties such as those at Clinkard Place and extensions to existing homes.

The increase for 2024-25 has therefore been set well below the rate of inflation

Meeting closed – 20.23

The Annual Parish Council meeting will follow immediately after.