

Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council

Whitchurch on Thames Annual Parish Meeting

21st May 2019 8.00, The Old Stables, Whitchurch on Thames.

Present – Chair - Cllr Jim Donahue

Vice Chair – Rachel Hatcher

Cllr Warren Beard

Members of the public – Peter and Diana Smith, Laura Lucas, Eric and Molly Hartley, Clare Donahue, Matilda Oppenheimer, Neil Huntington, John Bradon, Keith and Diane Williams, Peter and Wendy Ferguson, Will Barclay, Dave Maynerd, Sally Woolhouse, Chris Martin, Bill Lewis, Vicky Jordan, Dawn Chesters, Gavin Jones, Gwen and Ian Bruce and Richard Wingfield.

1. Chairman’s Report - Cllr Jim Donahue - Welcome everyone. It has been a busy year for us at the Parish Council. Moreover, as it the first year that I have acted as Chairman, it has been a particularly year busy for me.

First, I would like to welcome our new members.

- Our Clerk Ina joined us in December, along with Warren Beard and Katherine Higley.
- Ina is based in Middle Assendon outside Henley and acts as a Parish Councillor there so can share much of her experience with us as a village of similar size. This is her first time acting as Clerk, but I if I can speak for everyone that she has very relevant experience, is working very well with the team, and is already adding a lot of value.
- Warren lives on High Street and is taking an interest in some of the traffic and parking issues, and will now be taking a lead role from the council on development and fundraising for the new Pavilion.
- Katherine, has been helping us with our GDPR compliance, and has taken an interest in other issues such as addressing traffic on Eastfield Lane during the school run.
- I would also like to welcome Jon Steward back after an absence of 2 about years. He just started this month because of submitting a nomination in the recent elections so he is filling the vacancy left by Sarah Hanfrey.
- We have published a complete list of councillor responsibilities and point of contacts for leading particular committees and working groups on the Village web site.

I am also very pleased that we have had close cooperation from many from volunteers outside of the Parish Council on many initiatives:

- You will be aware that John Bradon is now Chairing the Village Plan Team, after being a key member of the Village and Neighbourhood Plan teams over the past couple of years. I will not steal John’s thunder as he is going to be presenting the recommendations shortly, but I will say that I am very pleased with the draft recommendations that clearly

- cover the priorities of the village after much consultation. This is something that was initiated by the Parish Council 3 years ago, and the Parish Council has now committed to working to deliver all 20 recommendations as a priority over the next few years.
- Addressing Traffic and Parking issues have been highlighted as clearly the highest priority. There are also several members of TAPAG that have been working with chairman Rachel Hatcher from outside the council that I would like to mention: Will Barclay, Diana Smith, Dave Baty, Robin MacCaw, and Ben Riordan. Again, I will not steal their thunder, as Rachel will be giving an update shortly.
 - Neil Huntington is also taking a lead role in development of the new Pavilion from outside the Parish Council, taking over from where Carrie left off. He will also be providing an update shortly.
 - Finally, Jean Marc Grosfort has been doing an outstanding job working with Keith on the Village Hall refurbishments. I am pleased to report that Jean Marc has recently raised over £8,000 in grants to refurbish the Village Hall. Some of the improvements that have already happened you may notice tonight include the replacement of all the windows, which the PC funded last year. Jean Marc led a team of volunteers from Reading to paint the interior, has replaced the blinds and has completed a much-needed upgrade of some of the lighting. A number of other grant proposals are already in place for things such as the upgrade of the kitchen facilities, wifi installation, and an on-line booking system.
 - o There are also plans for regular teas on Wednesday afternoons targeted at those who may not be able to get out often or travel far, to offer them a sense of community. The first of these is on Thursday 13th June and are planned to happen on a monthly basis.
 - So, I am very pleased with the support these volunteers are providing which has proven to be very effective indeed. There will be more opportunities for other people to get involved in some of the new initiatives that John will be highlighting under the Village Plan. This will include the formation of a new Green Team to support improvements and maintenance to the village open spaces, a New Emergency Readiness Team, and the need for someone to ensure our drains are cleaned on a regular basis to avoid flooding.

One of our focuses over the year has been to improve how we work together as a Council to more effectively address the needs of the village.

- You may have noticed that Parish Council meeting minutes now clearly identify both "Resolutions" to show where decisions have been made, and "Actions" to identify where the Council has agreed to take actions. Since May, we have agreed to take 121 actions, and 92 of these have been completed. The Council now maintains an **Action Log** spreadsheet on the Village website that shows what steps we have taken to complete each action to provide transparency to the village residents.
- We encourage residents of the village to contact the Council with feedback on issues they would like to see addressed as well as positive things they would like to see more of! To raise an issue, you just need to contact me, our Clerk Ina, or any Councillor via email, phone, or letter. We are maintaining a **Resident's Issues List** on the website that also explains the process we use to address the issues. We log all issues on the anonymous list to ensure they are not forgotten and to enable residents to see how they have been addressed. Of course, it may not be possible to address all issues raised to the Council, but if this is the case we will explain why. Since May, we have completed 21 issues and are working to address 8 more.
- Examples of issues we have addressed include:

- Improved grass cutting on the village green – increasing from every other week to weekly
- Getting urgent repairs done such as to a broken manhole cover on Manor Road pavement, or a broken fence on the Village Green due to people climbing over to fetch footballs.
- Some are questions or request for support for SODC or OCC for things like bin removal or chasing drain repairs.
- Examples of this we are still working to address:
 - The Boat – some people have expressed concern about the boat, but we know a growing number of people are also strongly in support of the boat.
 - Inconsiderate parking for traffic at the Hardwick Road and High Street intersection.

There have been a few significant planning applications that the parish Council has strongly objected to:

- **Eastfield House planning application** – I am pleased to say that SODC rejected Ross Healthcare’s application to demolish Eastfield House in January after several objections from the PC. This is good news for the village, but of course the situation is far from resolved. Ross Healthcare may still choose to appeal the decision as they have done in the past, and even if the appeal is rejected, the building will remain empty in a state of disrepair until a positive decision can be made for its use at some point in the future. Review of this application had been a priority for the Council since we initially objected to the application in October, and we held an extraordinary meeting in November to see what could be done to prevent these types of things happening in the future.
 - One thing that came out of this more formal establishment of a team as a Village plan initiative to conduct a re-assessment of the village Conservation Area Appraisal to ensure it is clear what is included. This will also be reflected in the Village Plan.
 - We have also been working with SODC and members of the village to ensure the property is secured to prevent the possibility of people illegally accessing the site and to prevent further deterioration.
 - We will continue to watch this situation closely and be proactive where we can, to try to ensure its condition doesn’t deteriorate further, and to ultimately help find a suitable use for this important building.

Since January, there have been at least three other planning applications that the Parish Council has strongly objected to:

- **Coombe Park Fence** – the new owners of Coombe Park have installed a new metal fence along a long stretch of Hartslock Bridleway and are proposing to install further fencing behind houses along Manor road. Whilst we understand the need for the new owners to secure their property, and the old fence was clearly in need of repair, we objected to the design and location of the new fence that is much closer to the bridleway. The fencing that was initially put up without planning permission clearly has a negative impact to the AONB, which is along a very visible section of the Thames Path popular for walkers.

- **Bozedown Yurt application** – the Parish Council also objected to the proposal described as ‘5 Yurts Glamping site.’ The location of the yurts in the alpaca field below the Iron Age fort site would clearly detract from a much-loved view in the AONB. In addition, while the intention of the application is not to plan development of new homes, the proposed yurts would be permanent self-catering structures that could in time be converted to permanent houses and set a precedent for further development in that area of the village.
- **29 Swanston Field** – infill housing proposal. While infill development is allowed in certain situations, the proposal to have two driveways in a narrow front garden had a number of issues, related to traffic congestion, pedestrian safety, and development that is not in keeping with the local area, and would set an inappropriate precedent for Swanston Field. SODC has now also refused this planning application.

We are still waiting for decision from the District Council on the first two applications. The Parish Council supports Coombe Park and the Bozedown Alpaca farm as important parts of our community, and are happy to work with the owners to discuss alternate proposals that would be in keeping with the AONB.

Finance:

Parish Council finances for this financial year ending 31st March 2019:

- Operating income: £30,663 (£26,000 precept plus VAT refunds and CIL money)
- Total payments: £31,882
- Our spend exceeded income by approximately £1,200.
- Reserves have been reduced from £55,197 to £53,978. This is the first time in several years that we have reduced reserves. This is primarily from investments preparing us to ramp up to the Village plan initiatives and including spend on the new windows for the Village Hall, funding for an Architect and other specialists for the new Pavilion, and funds for a Transport consultant supporting TAPAG in the Traffic and Parking issues.
- Reserves are earmarked for general reserves as well as future projects, which will now be focussed on initiatives coming out of the Village Plan. There is a three year projection of PC spend that is part of the Village Plan report. This is for planning and budgeting purposes and is based on estimates available now, but will evolve over time.

To close, I'd like to thank everyone, first of all for being here tonight to show your interest in our community, and secondly for the work you do for our community. Volunteers to run local groups and contribute in any way to our community are at the heart of our vibrant community life.

2. OCC Report Cllr Kevin Bulmer

- I. **3. SODC Report Peter Dragonetti** - The control of the council has passed to a Lib Dem Green partnership. I have joined the Green group, and another Independent has joined the Lib Dem Group, so that together the 19 councillors in this partnership form a majority of

the total number of councillors of 36. The new partnership wishes to work cooperatively with the other parties, including the Conservatives, to achieve the best outcome for residents.

Many other Conservative controlled councils in the south east have changed control, with issues about local plans and excessive development perhaps being the catalyst for the change. I am likely to be the Vice Chair of the Planning Committee, and also to sit on other committees.

I understand that there is wish to move from a cabinet form of administration to a Committee form. I do not fully appreciate the nuances of this change.

There was a strong rejection of the Local Plan, both from the successful Lib Dems and Greens but also Conservatives in the last Council. The plan is now going forward, but there is a joint working group of councillors, from all parties, and officers, to examine the options in redoing the plan. The key issue is to ensure that the 5 Year land supply is not compromised.

We hope that the government will look at such issues as the SHMA and other strategic drivers of the housing growth numbers, which have caused such damage politically, and modify the drivers of the growth in the plan.

4. Village Plan including traffic and parking initiatives

- a) **An update on the Village Plan – John Bradon** – See document attached at end of minutes
- b) Cllr Hatcher to update meeting on the new TAPAG initiatives and plans for the future

5. The Pavillion – Neil Huntington - The existing pavilion is beyond economical repair and is not fit for purpose. Therefore, the PC and the Cricket Club are promoting the provision of a new multi-purpose sports pavilion. The design and specification has been approved by the Parish Council and the Cricket Club. The replacement building is to be located in the south east corner of the Village Green in order to avoid potentially damaging the roots of a number of mature trees. Planning Consent was granted early in 2019 as an important milestone.

The Pavilion Working Group has been set up in order to raise the required finance. Various potential sources are to be approached, including public bodies, sports

associations and private individuals. The cost is being assessed, but is thought to be in the region of £200,000.

The programme for delivery will be dictated by the success of the fund raising exercise, but the target is to provide the new building within the next 2 to 3 years.

6. The Whitchurch Award – Richard Wingfield - The newly created Whitchurch Award for voluntary activity in the community, administered jointly by The Whitchurch Society and the Whitchurch Web, was presented by parish chairman Jim Donahue to Eric Hartley of Swanston Field.

Peter Smith, chairman of the Whitchurch Society, outlined Eric's great contribution to village life: *“For over thirty years Eric has overseen the publication of his booklet of local walks around Whitchurch, and there can be few houses in the village without a copy. Through this work Eric has become a champion of the local rural environment, protecting local footpaths, encouraging local landowners to grant permissive rights over their land, and educating us all into the local history and natural history of the area. The Hartley Steps on the Thames Path commemorate his efforts in this respect. Above all, though, Eric will be forever recognised, especially perhaps by fellow dog-walkers, as the nicest, most friendly and most courteous of people – a real force for good cheer around the village, and a great contributor to life in Whitchurch.”*

Eric, who was accompanied by his dog Molly, replied with some recollections of village life when he and his wife Betty moved into their house in Swanston Field 55 years ago.

For the inaugural year of the award scheme the selection was made by a small committee, diverse in age and gender, with the intention that next year nominations will be invited in advance from village residents.

7. Updates from representatives of groups active in Whitchurch on Thames

- a) **Association Football Club**
- b) **Art Café – Gill Williamson** – Information attached at the end of minutes
- c) **Crafty Knit and Stitch Group**
- d) **Cricket Club**
- e) **Goring and Whitchurch Spring and Summer Show** -Apologies sent – news article from Henley Standard attached at end of minutes.
- f) **Make Our Whitchurch Special (MOWS) – Leslie Maynerd** - When we moved here 4 years ago Leslie was dismayed by the very scruffy appearance of the High St and most particularly by the 2 areas either side of the path which leads to our

most beautiful and iconic church –after a few months she decided to tackle it herself and got permission from the owners Sally and the late Richard Howard to improve them. She formed Mows with Jon Steward and a few other interested parties notably Sally Howard who had to agree to the landscaping ideas. After 3 years the right hand bed has developed well and planting become established.

The Boat was agreed by the committee to be a good idea for the other side, a free boat was offered by Beale park and David and 2 committee members brought it back – this has become a contentious issue with just a few people making a lot of complaints about it and a lot people saying how marvellous it is. It was entered for the RHS ‘Its your Neighborhood ‘initiative last summer and was awarded a very good score – the certificate is on the window sill in the Old Stables.

After last summer the Mows group such as it was (5 people) voted for it to go but when this was reported to the council many people thought this undemocratic and vocally expressed via emails or to council members for it to stay – In the Autumn it was decorated by the Craft team for the 100th Anniversary of Remembrance day and what a beautiful tribute that was! No one surely could possibly complain about the effect of that. They went on to do various artistic displays often with the local primary school children helping, culminating recently in a French theme complete with French hens for the twinning weekend – huge thanks must go Gill and her team for all the hard work put into these displays

The boat has now been renovated and given a face lift and great thanks to Pete Woolhouse and Dave Maynerd who did all the woodwork and Jon Steward who varnished and painted it. It has now been planted up with flowers – slightly different from last summers which was all annuals and a nightmare to keep watered in the drought – there are more drought tolerant perennials this year so watering should be a bit easier. Grateful thanks to Sally Woolhouse for helping with the planting and supplying quite a few of the plants. For those who have criticised the boat – one comment being that it was a mess and let the village down –I would like to remind them of the weed and litter infestation that was present before it was tidied up. That certainly let the village down.

The boat has now, thanks to Gill and her team, developed into an opportunity to celebrate annual occasions and has also got the local children making valuable and enthusiastic contributions.

- g) Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability (PAWS) – Chair Jackie Hoskins,** presented by Sally Woolhouse. We are a group who try to encourage the development of a sustainable local community, and to help to reduce carbon emissions in line with the Government targets to keep Global warming to 2 ° C.

We give advice on subjects like plastic reduction and how to increase biodiversity in the local environment. This last year we encouraged the Pangbourne Fete Committee to go for a plastic free Fete and they agreed. To make it happen, the Committee provided bio-degradable plastic for all the stalls and then PAWS manned the recycling and rubbish bins to make sure that all items were disposed of properly. This was very successful.

We held 2 Workshops to show people how to make sustainable beeswax wraps that can be used to keep food fresh rather than using plastic wrap or throwing food away. These were well attended and participants went home with at least one piece of colourful wrap.

We have collected sufficient funds to give a sizable donation to the Pangbourne Village Toilets to help them install a drinking fountain and bottle filler outside the toilets in the Station Road Car Park. It is hoped that this fountain will provide fresh water and bottle refilling and so reduce the number of plastic bottles of water sold and thrown away.

Fracking has been a national issue this year and so we found a film, The Bentley Effect, that highlighted the problems associated with fracking in Australia. We showed this to a full house in November. Following the film Prof. Sir Brian Hoskins, a recent member of the Climate Change Commission, agreed to give a summary of the pros and cons of fracking and then answered members' questions. An 'animated' discussion followed.

Following the discovery of the rare Hairstreak Butterfly in Whitchurch, Peter Cuss, from the Butterfly Conservation group, explored the few remaining elm trees in Pangbourne and found a few butterflies on the elms growing in the Moors. Over the winter we worked with the Parish Council to get an agreement to plant some disease resistant Elm Trees on the Meadow to encourage the population growth of these butterflies. In February, we organized a tree planting session. The trees were provided by the Butterfly Conservation group, and Peter Cuss directed the operation on the Meadow. This area was chosen to make a link for the butterflies from Whitchurch Maze to the Moors area of Pangbourne where they can be seen on June evenings. We hope to find new areas to plant more trees next year.

Over the Spring this year we have been reviewing the provision of recycling and rubbish collection in Pangbourne. Since the charge for the Green Garden Bins was introduced last September we understand that a number of residents have been experiencing difficulties as they do not have the resources to pay the £50 per year for the bins. However, they are aware that food waste and garden waste can

be recycled and they do not want to put this waste in the black bins. We fully agree with this view. From the review we drew up a number of suggestions that we have sent to the Pangbourne Parish Council and West Berks District Council. We already have an arrangement to work with the Parish Council on our suggestions. We are working with this year's Fete Committee who want to provide another plastic free Fete, and PAWS will once again oversee the bins.

However, the group is not doom and gloom. We take a positive view that things can change and we also hold an annual Sustainable Barn Dance in October and a Christmas party where we can let off steam! So we have had a good year: reducing carbon emissions, reducing plastic, increasing biodiversity and a dance and party thrown in!!

If you would like to join we will be delighted. I just need an email address to keep you informed with our events.

h) Oxfordshire County Councillor

- i) St Mary's Parochial Church Council – Report sent - Revd Claire Alcock -** A year ago we joined other churches in a process called Partnership for Missional Church (PMC) designed to take churches through listening and observing their context and trying to discern how they can make a difference in the world. As part of this we made an audit of our geography, personal history & stats. and took time to listen to the views of different members of the church and community.

One theme that has emerged is social isolation, which is thought to be experienced by some in our community, as a result of inequality, ageing or health issues, working from home, or lack of access to services. The church is currently looking at ways to input positively in this area and would welcome partners who think the same.

The Art Café and Tuesday Community coffee mornings continue and provide income and also friendship for those who attend. The Old Stables is used throughout the week for various events and has been recently re-decorated. Various improvements to the fabric and resources of both church buildings have been undertaken with the help of The Friends of St Mary's and St John's, and larger scale projects are being discussed. Concerts in June, October and December in St Mary's reminded us that we would ideally like a toilet to be installed there, and St John's needs better facilities for families.

Our choir and bell ringers add to the richness of our worship on Sundays, as do

volunteers who read from the Scriptures and lead us in prayer, or occasionally preach. Our weekly prayer meeting is a hub of spirituality and the ladies bible study is still popular.

Three new organists have undertaken to learn from scratch; two young people were confirmed at St Mary's last autumn; several Christenings are booked in, and two supper events with guest speakers ("Science and Faith" & "Philosophy and Faith") were enjoyed by a wider group than normally attends church. Lent lunches and a Lent study group took place.

Very good numbers attended for Easter & Christmas and the special Remembrance services commemorating the centenary of WW1.

GDPR and Safeguarding training have been two other issues of note this year. We have had a year without a PCC Secretary, despite advertising on the web, putting extra pressure on PCC members to take and write up/distribute minutes and liaise with the Diocese. Suggestions of anyone willing to do this job (£500 per annum for about 50 hrs. work) would be welcomed!

- j) Theatre Club - Chris Martin** In 2018 the Whitchurch Theatre Club had fifteen outings: one ballet, five musicals, four plays, one concert, one carol concert, one garden show, one stately home and one trip away. We have visited theatres in Chichester, Oxford, Salisbury, Cheltenham, Guildford and major venues in London such as the Sadlers Wells Theatre, the London Coliseum, the London Palladium and the Royal Festival Hall.

One highlight of the year was a trip to Northumberland where we visited Durham, Hadrians Walls, Bamburgh Castle and Lindisfarne. Next month we have a trip going to North Wales.

At the Art Cafe last year we made a profit of £170 which was donated to the Oxford Playhouse.

Our members come from as far afield as Wallingford, Cholsey, Caversham and Theale, though the majority are from Pangbourne, closely followed by Whitchurch and Purley. The theatre club committee consists of myself, Sally Trinder, Meryl Weir, Sue Matthews and Jan Riddiford. Leslie Prater is our accountant. Our subscriptions are at present, £14 per annum but £12 if paid online.

k) Village Bulletin

- l) Whitchurch and District Allotment Society** – Bill Lewis I am pleased to tell you that the Allotment Society is in good health. All plots are occupied, some

being worked more vigorously than others and there are no people on the waiting list. Our last new member joined us at Easter to take up a half plot which was overgrown having lain fallow for a year. You should see the transformation he has achieved in six weeks ! Financially also all is well but we will be taking steps over the next few years to fill the hole in our sinking fund caused by the purchase of our new £700 water pump. Subscriptions were raised this year to a modest £25 per full size plot and we hope to inject new cash into our accounts from sales of plants at the Whitchurch Hill Fair next Saturday. Do come and buy our rhubarb !

At the AGM we welcomed Katherine Higley as the Parish Council representative for allotment matters. I have recently given her an update and tour of the site. Finally, our thanks are due to the Parish Council for its unobtrusive but helpful support when required.

- m) Whitchurch and Goring Heath Historical Society** - Sue Matthews – unable to attend We have had another good year of excellent speakers, with talks ranging from Regency Reading, Goring and Streatley's Hall of Fame, pleasure boating, Saunders boats and planes and drove roads. Also, there was a special treat in the visit and talk at Swanston House on our famous village (and wider) architect, Pearson, who designed the War Memorial.

We held Art Café coffee and cake mornings to raise funds for the speakers, very successfully, and thank you to all who supported them. Speakers are expensive so it is necessary to supplement our income in this way.

We had two outings, one was to Chalgrove where we were made very welcome in the church, coffee and biscuits and a very good slide show and talk on the wall paintings. This was helpful as they are now quite difficult to make out in places. We had an excellent pub lunch and then were then made equally welcome at the Manor House and were the first group to have a tour of this amazing ancient building for quite some time due to family illness. The other was to walk round the restored Abbey ruins in Reading.

We have two outings planned for June and July: a visit to two interesting historic local churches and a guided walk round Wallingford. We have another action-packed list of speakers this year so please come to Goring Heath Parish Hall on the third Thursday. Visitors are welcome. These meetings will start again in September with the Chilterns LIDAR project.

The Victoria County History has at last got around to documenting our parish. As they have been doing the rounds of the counties since the middle of the nineteenth century it is about time. Simon Draper has made several visits to plough through all our archives, and has found some really interesting things, so we look forward to seeing the final version later in the year when he comes to talk to us.

We get occasional local history enquiries which we endeavour to answer, and we are still selling our books. The latest purchaser was William Barfield Hutt's

granddaughter who bought all his books which she is looking forward to reading as she fondly remembers his stories. She was interested to see the family names in the Whitchurch School Log Book and promised to be back with questions.

- n) **Whitchurch and Goring Heath Twinning Association – Vicky Jordan** We celebrated 40 years of friendship with the people of La Bouille last year, with champagne, a restaurant meal and visit to Giverney to see Monet's garden. This year, on the early May Bank Holiday, we reciprocated by welcoming 24 people to our homes for a weekend of cultural exchange and enjoyment. Many visited the Fun day where we had a stall, and were taken to see the boat decorated by the Knit and Natter Group.

The evening reception at Goring Heath Parish Hall was addressed by Peter Dragonetti and Jim Donahue and then a three course meal was served. Between the main course and dessert Peter Ferguson's band of hand-bell ringers entertained us with well-known songs.

Our Sunday outing was to the Savill Gardens in Windsor and we then boarded a French Brothers boat at Runnymede for our cruise on the Thames during which we were served a cream tea. There was just time on Bank Holiday Monday to watch the Kennet Morris Men at Goring Heath Almshouses before our visitors had to board their coach for the return journey. There are photos on the web site of the weekend activities.

Next year we visit La Bouille, near Rouen, and I hope many of you will join us!

- o) **Whitchurch Primary School**

- p) **Whitchurch Society – Ian Bruce** – Ian confirmed that he would be unable to organize the Garden walk this year, due to a problem with ankle but was confident that the walk would resume next year.

The Society is involved in updating The Maze's commemorative bricks and the Art and Craft Exhibition.

A number of positive suggestions have been received about reviving the Society with younger volunteers taking over the major roles. These ideas are being developed and hope to be made public soon.

- q) **Whitchurch United Charities – Sally Woolhouse** - The trustees of the Charity have continued to provide valuable support to local students, in the form of grants to help with funding of essential equipment such as books, and any other costs associated with educational needs. The trustees meet twice a year to consider

applications which have been made in the past six month period. In the past year, the trustees have awarded four grants totalling £875. The number of applications has still been quite low but more than in the previous year.

The trustees are aware that the charity is still not widely known about and constantly endeavour to improve the publicity. It is hoped to appoint two new trustees during this coming year which will enable one or two of the longer-serving trustees to stand down.

As at 1st April 2019, the ex-officio trustees are :- Rev Claire Alcock, Sue Matthews, Ken Baker and the representative trustees are :- Peter Hawley (Chairman), Sally Woolhouse (Secretary), Sarah Dixon (Grant Applications Secretary), Nick Leadbeater-Hart (Treasurer), Katherine Higley (Publicity Officer) and Sarah Dragonetti

r) Whitchurch on Thames Village Hall - Summary update on Village Hall progress re-funding and upgrading.

What has been done so far:

- a. re painted the main hall
- b. installed new fire retardant roller blinds and entrance curtains
- c. in agreement with the new owner of Coombe Park cleared some of the big branches which were touching the roof
- d. analysed roof tile to ensure there is no asbestos
- e. received quotes for the cleaning and repairing of the roof
- f. installed monthly maintenance review and report
- g. reviewed all electrical installations with new ceiling lights
- h. set up a new Profit & Loss report which will allow us to follow the development of the village hall and have better financial control
- i. displayed some posters in the VH to inform residents of what is happening

What are we doing now:

- a. We have received, so far, £8000 of donations, not including the £2000 committed by PC for this project.
- b. We have reviewed and increased our proposed budget for different reasons:

- i. Some funding parties like ACRE do not consider a project which is less than £50,000
- ii. in our strategy we would like, with a better kitchen, to start serving monthly or bi monthly a tasty simple little lunch for the elderly and lonely residents of the village. In order to do so we need some new appliances and equipment which have been listed and quoted (to the maximum) – see annex A attached
- iii. with the builder who has quoted for the total work we have found a way to create disabled access and a disabled toilet. This is not only a plus but will be very well considered by funding parties.

c. We are now registered for funding with

- i. Awards for All (the Lotto) and all extra required documents were sent last week. We hope to have an answer before the summer.
- ii. We have registered officially with ACRE, sending all documents requested last week
- iii. We are going for a grant application with SODC by end of May

d. We are organizing afternoon tea, every second Thursday of the month from June – starting on the 13th of June.

e. - Organizing some of the information to be presented on posters and also on the website for better distribution see annex B attached re proposed funding.

We have set all funding documentation on the basis that the PC will pay for the works to be completed so that as an organization we can recoup the VAT

What is planned for the future:

- a. follow all funding avenues to ensure we get as much as we can
- b. when we know the total received re. funding we will have to review budget and decide to prioritise in case we cannot afford to do everything
- c. as soon as we start the upgrading we will need to promote the village hall again for resident and commercial use.
- d. Get BT to review proposed installation for line and wifi.
- e. Choose best reservation system we could use to move away from manual booking – making it easier and better for control

r) **Whitchurch Web Site**

- s) **Whitchurch Bell Ringers – Sue Matthews – unable to attend.** We have had two new recruits in the last few months and both are getting on extremely well. We would welcome anybody else who wants to come and give ringing a go (ropes not handbells) and if anyone is interested please get in touch with me. It is entirely secular, no obligation to be a churchgoer at all
- t) **Whitchurch on Thames Habitat Study Group (WOTHabs)**
- u) **WoTJam – Leslie Maynard** – presented by David Maynerd WOTJAM is a group of musicians who get together every Friday morning in the Stables to play jazz – they occasionally have a tutor for the morning to take a workshop and have reached quite a decent standard so if anyone wants to book a jazz trio/quartet contact Leslie Maynerd
- v) **WOTsing** Whitchurch’s own community choir – Geraldine Witcher. WOTsing, had its first meeting in May 2018 and has been meeting monthly since then. It is a choir which has the aim of being accessible for everyone, whether the last time they sang was as a child in school, or they have been told they aren’t good enough, or they can’t read music, or even if they are a trained opera singer! There are no auditions. We sing folk songs, songs from the shows, pop songs, and anything else people want to sing. We are not intending to be a performing choir, more like a family singing round the piano! We meet on the first Thursday of each month in St Johns church, Whitchurch Hill, and are grateful to Claire Alcock and the PCC for allowing us free use of the church. Each session lasts from 7.30 to 9 with a break for coffee and chat in the middle. New members are always welcome.

