

From the Chairman of the Parish Council

Since I spoke to you last the Parish Council has gained new members who have exciting ideas and enthusiasm for improving the facilities in Whitchurch on Thames.

This is exactly what is needed in these times of austerity, where everything is being cut back and our council is being expected to take on more responsibilities than it has done in the past but with similar resources.

The more people can do for themselves the better and these are the villages which stand out from the rest, they look cared for, people are proud of them, they look well maintained and not neglected, an example to all.

We have many new projects in the offing which have come from our new councillors and as they come to fruition you will see changes around the village for the better. This is all done by a group of volunteers, they don't get paid, they just give up their time and have a common desire to make things pleasant for people in the village and endeavor to keep it that way.

So welcome Carrie Hart, James Polansky and Jon Steward who join Jim Donahue, Dave Bowen and James Norman on the Parish Council.

The Whitchurch on Thames village fete is on the 29th August this year so put it in your diaries. A good time will be had by all I'm sure. Have a great summer.

Keith Brooks

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCIL'S JULY 2015

FROM CLLR KEVIN BULMER

GENERAL OCC REPORT

CHIEF EXECUTIVE STEPS DOWN

Joanna Simons will be stepping down as Chief Executive in September in order that OCC can carry out a review of senior management arrangements. The aim is to reduce costs in the light of further funding cuts announced by the government. Earlier this year the council had a series of robust debates about whether to remove the post but concluded that a permanent change required further consideration. Following further cross party discussion, it has been decided to put an interim arrangement in place pending a senior management review. The council has reached an amicable agreement with Joanna to step down so this can take place.

BUDGET 2014/15 REVIEW

The final outturn for the 2014/15 year was an underspend of £0.196m on a budget of £424,185m, which is an impressive achievement despite all the pressures that exist. The good news is that there has still been investment in Highways with a capital expenditure for 2014/15 year of £43.1m. This was £17.8m higher than in 2013/14. Major projects completed include Kennington Interchange, Witney Ducklington/Station Lane Junction, Oxford London Road, A4130 Bix dual carriageway and A420 Shrivenham Bypass. There was £14.8m spent on highways structural maintenance programmes.

COUNTY COUNCIL AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT BUDGETS – UPDATE

Since 2010 the council has saved £204 million with a further £88 million of savings to be made by 2018. A report to the Cabinet on 24th May stated that there could be another £50M - £60M of saving to be found. There will be more clarity on this figure after the budget on 8th July. This will be a challenge to the County Council with the increasing pressure on both adult and children's social care – currently around 50% of the budget is spent on just 2% of the population.

EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRES

The Early Intervention Service and Children's Centres are currently supported by a budget of approximately £16M. As part of the service and resource planning

process for the period 2014/15-2017/18, possible savings of £6M against this figure were identified by a cross-party Cabinet Advisory Group. These savings could be achieved if the Early Intervention Service was integrated with Children's Social Care. This proposal was debated at the Cabinet meeting in June and it was agreed that full proposals would come back to Cabinet in September after a summer of engagement with partners. A full consultation process will then take place.

SUPPORTED TRANSPORT SERVICES

OCC needs to save more than £6M on supported transport services, and a consultation is currently taking place about how this can best be achieved. (The consultation closes on 14th September.) OCC has asked the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC), a not for profit, community development organisation, to act as the independent facilitator during the consultation. Some money can be saved by running existing services more efficiently, but savings will also have to come by reducing the current £4M a year the council pays in bus subsidies and to run the Dial-a-Ride service. To comment on the proposals or to attend one of the five public consultation events, contact the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council on 01865 883488 or email orcc@oxonrcc.org.uk.

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

At the July Cabinet meeting the Local Transport Plan for 2015-2031, Connecting Oxfordshire, will be considered following public consultation. The business case for delivering the A40 bus lane scheme and developing the long-term A40 strategy will also be considered.

RECRUITMENT OF 'SHARED LIVES' CARERS

Shared Lives, a scheme established over thirty years ago, enables people over the age of 16 who needs support or accommodation, to become a regular visitor to or move in with a Shared Lives carer. Together, they share family and community life. Typically, people supported by Shared Lives have a learning or physical disability. By joining the scheme, they often become a permanent part of a supportive family and by doing so increase their independence. Shared Lives is also used to give breaks to unpaid family carers or as a stepping-stone for someone to get their own place. The Oxfordshire Shared Lives Scheme currently supports around 80 people in long term arrangements and a further 40-50 people who use the service for short breaks. The scheme is constantly seeking to recruit new Shared Lives Carers. Please spread the word about Shared Lives and to encourage more people to sign up as carers. To find out more visit www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sharedlives

NEW DIRECTORY OF SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ADULTS AND CARERS

The County Council funded Community Information Network, has developed a directory of services for adults and carers. The aim of the Community Information Network is to provide information and advice to adults to help them maintain their independence and keep well. The directory contains a wealth of information about activities and support. Listings range from IT clubs, singing clubs, mobile libraries, health and wellbeing centres, to exercise classes and Women's Institutes. The directory can be accessed at www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire

If you have any feedback about the directory or would like to add any entries, please write to the Community Information Network team at: network@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk

CONTACT DETAILS

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The Whitchurch & District Theatre Club

Organiser: Christine Martin

"Sonia", Goring Heath Road, Whitchurch Hill, RG8 7PG

Tel: 0118 9844252 e.mail whitchurchtheatreclub@gmail.com

The Whitchurch & District Theatre Club takes you to musicals, plays, ballets, operas, classical concerts etc. once a month or more. Salisbury, Windsor, Guildford, Stratford and Chichester, amongst others, are often visited. Major London venues and productions.

Mainly matinees in the week, but sometimes evening performances and weekends. Holiday trips away.

Tickets purchased at group/concessionary rates.

Coaches depart from Pangbourne.

For our forthcoming programme please check the Whitchurch-on-Thames Website. Subscriptions £10 per annum but £8 if paid online.

Whitchurch-on-Thames Habitat Study Group

WoT-Habs will be doing a stand at the Village Fete on 29th August and inviting people to tell us about their own 'sightings' of flora and fauna within the parish. Our village map will be on display for you to enter the details, so please do visit our stand.



Oak Processionary Moth: an Update

OPM is still in Pangbourne, but at very low levels. The last nest was found there in March 2014 and was a 2013 nest.

The helicopter spraying will not be repeated in 2015, but the surveying will continue, including pheromone trapping. The proposal was for 100 pheromone traps at a cost of £250 each.

As the larvae, or caterpillars, of OPM are a serious hazard to oak trees and to human and animal health, it is important to remain vigilant and report any evidence of OPMs, wherever you may happen to find it.

You can find detailed information of what to look out for at Forestry Commission www.forestry.co.uk/oakprocessionarymoth where there is also a Tree Alert app or on-line form

Gill Goodwin



Whitchurch Pre-School

We have had a busy term at pre school. Creating lovely fathers day cards amongst our other art activities. We had a great visit to Rushall farm where the children enjoyed a bone rattling tractor ride, got up close and personal with the resident farm animals and even gave new born lambs their lunch. Continuing our work with wildlife, we had 'living eggs' which we watched hatch, the children had such fun looking after the baby chicks and watching how fast they grew!

Our annual sports day went extremely well, all the children (and adults) had a fun morning of events; with hurdling and hat wearing and balancing the children were all stars. The parents races were also particularly entertaining! We were very lucky that the sun shined on all our efforts!

We currently have a several spaces available. If you, or anyone you know, are looking for pre-school places to start in September, please contact Kathleen

Village Green Working Group Update – July 2015

Jim Donahue

I am pleased to report that the new Village Green Working Group was kicked off in June with great enthusiasm by all involved.

The participants include:

- Jim Donahue – PC – WG Chair
- Dave Bowen – PC
- Cormac Neeson of the Cricket Club
- Alastair Aitchison of the Football Club
- Gavin Jones – Whitchurch primary school sports teacher
- Adrian Coulas-Pitman – resident of Whitchurch
- WOTHabs representative to be invited to future meetings

The Working Group members got stuck in with a number of issues that we are already following up on:

- There should be a usage schedule published on the village web-site, and posted physically somewhere on the grounds. The PC is already looking at options for a notice board on the green.
- We discussed a proposal for a Village Green Activities Committee. Potential activities could include:
 - o Rounders Games
 - o Movies Nights
 - o Music festivals
 - o BBQ's and other social events to raise money for the new Pavilion
 - o Volunteers to build facilities such as BBQ's, fitness trails, or even the new Pavilion.
- Fundraising for the replacement Village Green Pavilion was discussed:
 - o Dave Bowen has dunking and gunge tanks that could be used at this year's Fete to raise money for the pavilion.
 - o The Parish Council has initiated a new team of Jon Steward, Carrie Hart, and James Norman to look at design options for a new pavillion.
 - o Grants and fundraising options are also being investigated.
- Football Pitch Maintenance – options are being investigated for repairs in front of the goals as this is repeatedly getting dug up.
- Facilities for Teenagers are being investigated that could include a basketball net.
- Village Green budget and charging is also being investigated but this is not seen as a critical issue now that we have agreed that the school should not be charged for use of the Green during normal school hours during term time. We are also following up Jon Steward's kind offer to maintain much of the green at no charge, which would of course free up other funds, but this would not take effect before the current maintenance contract is up in February.

There will be a follow-up meeting at the end of July. Please contact one of the WG members if you have any ideas.

A pleasant stroll

You and/or your visitors might enjoy a stroll through our neighbouring woods? Drive up the hill, turn right at the Hatchgate and park alongside the Whitchurch Hill recreation area. Walk towards the village and turn left down Orchard Coombe (this was a delightful cherry orchard). Follow the road round until it turns left towards the main road. As it does you will see a pond opposite on your right and a footpath to the left of it. The pond was the water supply for the cattle kept on this area, which was Whitchurch Common, and the hatchgate was placed to prevent them from leaving the Common.

Follow this narrow path to reach the road to Hill Bottom, turn right and walk down to meet the crossing of the Bridle Road on your right and Gashes Lane on your left. Turn into Gashes Lane and follow this bridleway into Great Oaks Wood. As you enter the wood the path forks, your path is to go left (the right hand one is your return route). Follow this enjoyable broad path through the wood until you reach a 'T' junction, turn left (the path straight ahead is now private); your path is marked shortly afterwards by a single post on your right and will lead you down a narrow track towards the Crays Pond to Goring Heath road (dogs on leads now).

Cross over with care to the broad lane immediately opposite. This is another East-field Lane which emerges at the top end of Shervill's Hill in Woodcote. You won't go that far but should follow the wooden fence on your right until the lane starts to bend left and on your right you will see a wooden kissing gate and a dominant footpath sign. Enter the woodland (Little Oaken Wood) here, you will be faced with three paths; take the middle one which has been clearly and splendidly marked and blazed by the Chiltern Society volunteers. Follow these blaze marks straight ahead, do not turn at any of the other marked paths to your left or right. You will meet and go through another wooden kissing gate and again go straight ahead but now down a marked but rather narrower path. You meet and now turn right onto a broad track (this is the bridle road to Exlade Street).

This track will lead you back to the Crays Pond road again (dogs on leads), cross over with care to the metal gate opposite. Follow this broad road (the many concrete pads hereabouts carried the huts where ammunition was stored during the war). Suddenly the bridle path narrows as it drops off to your left (unmarked) to re-enter Great Oaks, it soon broadens again and will lead you back down Gashes Lane. Cross the Hill Bottom road and go down the Bridle Road opposite to then turn right to return to your car.

You will have walked about 3 miles but you can shorten the walk by parking on the verge near the entrance to Gashes Lane. If you do start from Whitchurch and walk up to the Hatchgate turn it will add another 2 miles.

The impediments (trailers, trees etc.) you have passed en-route were positioned to discourage and prevent access to these areas by Travellers.

Eric Hartley



The Queen's Speech given at the State Opening of Parliament sets the Government agenda and thus the work of Parliament for the following months. Following debate on the speech itself Parliament was straight down to business on some of the key Bills on the agenda. This includes the European Union Referendum Bill which will make provision for the holding of the referendum on whether the United Kingdom should remain a member of the European Union, and the Education and Adoption Bill which will make provision about schools that are causing concern, including provision about their conversion into Academies and about intervention powers; and to make provision about joint arrangements for carrying out local authority adoption functions in England. I write periodic e-briefings on key Bills and other issues before Parliament and am pleased to exchange views on these. If you would like to receive these e-briefings please send an email to the address below and your email address will be added to the list.

With Parliament back in full swing the opportunity to raise questions of Ministers is again available to Members. This is a good way to raise the profile of particular issues. I took an early opportunity to question the Minister for Culture, Media and Sport on the poor broadband coverage within parts of the constituency. I remain concerned at the areas for which there are still no detailed plans to meet the promised speeds and will continue to lobby on this.

Another opportunity to get involved in specific issues in provided in Parliament is provided through the All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs). There are literally hundreds of these groups which meet on a wide range of topics. There is, of course, a limit to the number of these that it is possible to get fully involved in. In this Parliament I have been asked to take a lead role in the APPG on Design and Innovation, on Policing, and on Canada and Britain.

In the constituency my programme of meetings and visits is also back in full swing. This time of year there are many community fetes and I am attending as many as I am able to. These are a great opportunity for me to meet people and for informal discussions. In the same vein I will be undertaking my annual 'Village Tour' in the Conference Recess in September. There is a two week period that I try to use to get out and about particularly in the 100+ smaller villages in the constituency. This gives me a further opportunity to catch up with people and also issues that are specific to the community. It also gives me a chance to see any changes such as community investments and new housing developments. Details of this will be posted on my website and circulated via Parish Councils and Parish Meetings in due course.

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**To be added to my regular updates email me at
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