

CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE: OCTOBER 2020

I hope that you were all able to make the most of the beautiful summer weather this year to the extent possible in the current situation. As we get into the Autumn and period leading up to Christmas it is clear that things will still not be returning to the normal we are accustomed to any time soon. With the exception of August, the Parish Council has been continuing to meet on a regular basis via zoom.

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) maintenance and improvements: There are a number of long standing requests to OCC for maintenance or improvements to the village that are now finally coming to fruition.

Pavements: Work to perform a complete resurfacing of Hardwick Road pavements was completed in the first two weeks of October. There was some disruption to school run drop off the for a couple of days but we tried to keep the school informed of the progress. Hardwick Road work was prioritised due to the poor condition it was in for so many years and the need to support families using it for access to the school. Work to repair damaged parts of other pavements at Swanston Field, the High Street and Manor Road is planned as part of a separate program that is expected to happen by the end of the year. This will be done by a different contractor focusing on repairing marked out areas using “slurry seal” work as opposed to a complete resurfacing.



Contractors apply final layer to Hardwick Road pavement surface, photo courtesy Jim Donahue

Street Drainage clearing: OCC drainage contractor OPC have been in the village a number of times since June to clear blocked drains. They had done a considerable amount of investigation and drain clearing in the area around the Greyhound following the Flash Flooding in June. The work to clear drains on Swanston Field and Hardwick Road is largely completed. They were unable to finish the upper High Street drainage clearing work including repair work at the Art Gallery due to access issues with the road closure on Whitchurch Hill, but I have now asked for dates to return to finish the work.

Longer term drainage solution: OCC have said that they have decided on a solution to address the shortcomings of the drainage system in the “Greyhound bowl” area. This will involve replacing a pipe connecting the drainage at the Greyhound side of the High Street with the main drainage system on the other side of the street with a larger diameter pipe. They have put this in next Fiscal Year’s budget request. This follows recommendations from the Flash Flood Team formed from Emergency Team members. Their reports are available on the Web-site.

A dangerous rut on the side of Hardwick road opposite the Jubilee walk has now been repaired after being escalated as a priority. The hedges there were also now cut back to make more space for vehicles to reduce the need to drive on the verges.

Traffic and Parking issues in the Village: The Parish Council recently held two special meetings on Traffic and Parking issue. A second informal consultation on the TAPAG High Street parking and traffic flow proposal was held on 03 September. The Parish Council then held an Extraordinary meeting to consider the feedback from the Open Days and agree a way forward.

At least 29 participants spoke at the 3 hour consultation on 03 September (plus myself, members of TAPAG and our Clerk Jane). Based in the notes from the meeting:

– 8 supported the TAPAG proposal, 14 did not support it in its current form, 6 people were undecided or did not express a strong view.

– 10 emails were also received just before or shortly after the meeting. 9 of these objected to the TAPAG proposal, 1 was in favour. Many of these were in support of one resident's email objecting to double yellow lines in the village and wanting residents parking to be in place before moving forward with changes to parking

While the number of objections raised at the second Open Day were still far fewer than the number of residents showing support for the proposal at the Open Day in February, the Parish Council has taken this feedback on board and agreed the following revised priorities for TAPAG to address, at an Extraordinary Meeting held on the 1st October:

- 1) Addressing safety of pedestrians on the pavement in front of the Ferryboat Inn should be a short-term priority.
- 2) The desire to get residents parking in the village is clear. It is recognised that this will take some time as SODC still needs to take over parking enforcement, so this is likely to be a medium-term goal.
- 3) Councillors were generally supportive of designated parking bays and revised parking restrictions to address congestion, safety, and parking issues; however, with reduced congestion from Covid-19 restrictions in the short-term, we now have time to review all aspects of the current proposal developed by the TAPAG and the traffic consultant. We also agreed that any changes to parking should be linked to implementation of Residents Parking making this also a medium-term initiative.
- 4) As parking and congestion issues will now be addressed in the medium-term, TAPAG should also look at other issues that had not been previously investigated in any detail in the shorter-term:

- i. Traffic calming initiatives on Hardwick Road.
 - ii. Pollution reduction initiatives such as car sharing and use of emissions boxes.
 - iii. Pedestrian safety crossing the High Street at Eastfield Lane, for parents and school children, in particular.
- 5) It was also agreed that moving forward, all initiatives should build upon what TAPAG had already done, but the council recommended a re-structuring of TAPAG to provide the following benefits:
- A clearer strategy that is communicated better with more detailed documentation of the proposals
 - Enable the addition of new members including someone with skills at documenting and communicating the proposals.

Village Green Security: Whilst things seem to have settled down a bit on use of the Village Green with the weather changing, we are continuing to address security of the Village Green to ensure it is a safe for use by all residents.

- Cllrs Steward and Ferguson have reviewed options to improve the security of the Village Green to protect against access from travellers and recently met with a security expert from Oxfordshire Gypsies & Travellers Services. He confirmed that our Village Green is secure and the location is generally unattractive to travellers. He did identify a few relatively small changes to reinforce the security of the existing gate near the car park which we have agreed to follow-up on.
- The Parish Council is in the process of procuring two new signs to be installed reminding people that “We love our Village Green” and asking them to be respectful in terms of dog fouling, litter, and noise in this residential area.
- Police operation signs remain in place along with increased patrols by Thames Valley Police while they investigate previous

incidents involving broken glass left at one of the football goals. The Parish Council is still investigating options for temporary use of CCTV following advice from the police.

Tea Hut replacement: The Cricket Club is now planning to refurbish the Cricket Pavilion instead of replacing it. They have asked the Parish Council to consider taking responsibility for the replacement of the Tea Hut with the idea of having us own it to allow it to be of general use for residents of the village in addition to being used for Cricket Club matches. While the Parish Council has still have not made a decision to take responsibility for replacing the Tea Hut, we have received a grant from OCC Cllr Bulmer for £2,000 for the Tea Hut replacement.

Notable planning applications:

Coombe Park Fence – Work to replace the green metal spiked fence with one with wooden palings is now progressing well. Planting of indigenous shrubs in front of the fence was also agreed in the approved planning application and will happen in due course. I think we can all agree that is a huge improvement and much more suitable for the Thames Path and the AONB. Well done to Coombe Park Estate, SODC Planning, and everyone who fought to get these changes approved.”

Eastfield House: The latest application from Ross Healthcare for partial demolition of Eastfield House to support an expanded 45 room care facility was refused by SODC at the end of September. This follows objections from the Parish Council and numerous residents on a variety grounds including inadequate local infrastructure to support it. SODC reasons for refusal were around the impact on two protected Lime trees and a protected Cedar tree. A similar planning proposal was approved by appeal in the past and we expect Ross Healthcare to appeal this decision, although there is no guarantee that the appeal will be successful this time.

Other news in the Village:

- **New Vicar:** I was pleased to attend the Licensing Service for St Mary's new vicar, Rev James Leach. I know it must be difficult for him to meet residents of the village in this situation, but he has now moved into the vicarage and is looking forward to meeting everyone. He mentioned some people have stopped by to say hello and is planning virtual services in the near future.
- **Remembrance Sunday:** The Parish Council is discussing options for Remembrance Sunday ceremony with Rev. James and Goring Heath Parish Council that comply with government social distancing guidelines. We are looking at an option of video streaming of the event with a limited number of participants.
- **Fibre Broadband:** A number of people in the village have expressed interest in getting High Speed Broadband fibre to their homes. With so many people working from home, this is more important than ever. Martin Bengtzen and Peter Reeve have volunteered to investigate options on how the village can get access to high speed fibre broadband to the door and will keep the Parish Council informed of any actions that we can take to support them.

Kind regards,

Jim Donahue, Chairman, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council

WHITCHURCH ART & CRAFT EXHIBITION – CANCELLED

This year's annual show was scheduled to take place on the weekend of 14th – 15th November. However, it is with much regret that the planning committee have decided that we should not hold the exhibition this year because of the worsening Covid-19 situation.

We have discussed all the issues in detail and looked at the appropriate current guidelines for the use of the Village Hall. Our conclusion is that even with the necessary strict hygiene protocols

in place, there would inevitably be potential risks for our great team of volunteers and of course the visitors.

The exhibition has been run by The Whitchurch Society since 1972 and it has always been keenly anticipated and well supported by our local community. It was therefore a very difficult decision to cancel this year. However, our team will do its utmost to return the show next year in its traditional format, with the Prize-giving and refreshments, and a very sociable event where everyone can gather to enjoy the lovely exhibits.

Meanwhile, to avoid too much disappointment, we are planning to organise an online exhibition in November, to showcase your art, craft and photography that you have been working on over the past year. Keep an eye on the village website where the details of how, when and what to enter will be posted.

Sally Woolhouse, Chair of the organising committee
sally@wotarts.co.uk

WHITCHURCH PRIMARY PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

After an enormously challenging few months during lockdown, our school has finally opened again much to our delight. Our children were both happy and nervous on their first morning back to school. They've settled in well and we owe a great deal of gratitude to the marvellous staff team led by our Head, Mrs Chesters, for all their hard work. Getting the school ready and compliant with all the new (and often changeable) government regulations has been a huge task.

We will continue to support our school through fundraising as much as possible in the coming year, but as you can imagine, this is going to be a challenge. In person events are out, and out of the ordinary fundraisers are in. Virtual quiz nights will replace our annual (and very popular) Quiz Night and the marvellous Christmas Fair will sadly not go ahead this November.

We are, however, delighted this year to be funding 21 new touchscreen Chromebooks for our school. Our fundraising goals include the annual maintenance and eventual replacement of the school's much used Astroturf.

We need your support more than ever and there are ways you can start helping today!

Amazon Smile

Amazon Smile will donate 0.5% of your purchase to our school as we are a registered charity. To date, Amazon Smile has donated £97.91 to Whitchurch Primary and I know we can increase that number massively this year if more of us sign up before the Christmas Shopping rush. Both the desktop and App versions now support Amazon Smile. You can support us by opening smile.amazon.co.uk and selecting "Whitchurch Primary School Association" as your chosen charity. The same products are sold at the same prices with the fantastic addition of Amazon making a donation to our school.

Whitchurch 'In It To Win It Club'

The 'In It To Win It Club' is a great way to raise funds for the school and our children. For as little as £12 a year (£1 a draw), you can enter and become eligible for the lucky draw. Each month a draw is held via a random number generator and three numbers are selected, if your number comes up, you win a cash prize.

To take part, please email whitchurch100club@gmail.com to pick your lucky numbers.

Matched Giving

If you would like to support children in your local area, we would love to hear from you. One way of doing this is through matched funding as part of a charitable giving scheme offered by your organisation.

Get in touch with us to learn more about matched giving or with any other ideas about supporting us at whitchurchpa20@gmail.com.

Elaine Mullins, Chair

Whitchurch Primary School Parents Association

Registered charity 1114159

THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S & ST JOHN'S, WHITCHURCH (AN INDEPENDENT CHARITY)

Although the Friends are still not able to organise social and fund-raising events because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we can contribute to the community by arranging work-days to tidy up the churchyards at St Mary's and St John's.

There were two sessions in late August at St John's to clear the brambles and weeds around the recently refurbished railings. Many thanks to the volunteers who took part in this important work.

The Friends have planned further work-parties at St Mary's churchyard on Sunday 18th October from 2pm, then at St John's churchyard on Saturday 31st October and Sunday 1st November, both starting at 9.45am. We will, of course, aim to maintain social distancing and if there are more than six volunteers at any one time, we will split into distinct groups. All will be most welcome to help complete this important community work.

The Friends Trustees have to work closely with the Whitchurch Parochial Church Council (PCC) as they are the 'guardians' of our two historic churches. At present the PCC has applied for a grant from Historic England to carry out roof repairs and improvement at St Mary's. The PCC is also working with church building experts on possible improvements to St John's. Clearly, the Friends Trustees are keenly interested in the outcome of these possible developments. If appropriate, the Friends will help to financially contribute towards the outcome of such work at the two historic churches.

Finally, the Friends Trustees look forward to the time when we can, once again arrange social events for members such as wine tasting evenings, possibly a flower festival at one of our churches and the return of our popular Saturday morning ArtCafes.

Keith Williams, Chairman

Tel:- 0118 984 1139, Email: keithc.williams@btinternet.com

WHITCHURCH PRE-SCHOOL IS BACK AND THE CHILDREN ARE LOVING IT!

The Pre-School has started a new academic year with a really healthy number of children at the setting, including many new faces! We are now fully open, operating Monday to Friday 8.45am- 3.15pm, and have exciting activities lined up for our little ones at every session.

This term, the children have been exploring our new allotment with our Outdoor Learning Leader, Claire, where they have been dissecting sunflowers, playing with shadows, and learning about squirrels. The children have been undertaking a range of science experiments from “floating and sinking” to making their own lava jars. We have started running TastEd sessions that allow children to explore a range of fresh produce using their senses in a non-judgemental setting, like listening to crunchy vegetables and smelling citrus fruit. And of course, there is the usual painting, drawing, mixing, music, making, chasing, climbing, digging and anything else the children can think of!

Our fundraising drive this year is to improve the facilities in the indoor classroom, for which we are seeking to raise £6,000 overall. We would like to invest in apparatus to allow the children to exert energy constructively in the classroom, as well as replacing some of the tired playthings with open-ended toys that foster our children’s imagination. All our investments will be made to stand the test of time, and will be environmentally friendly.

The Whitchurch Walk 2020. This term our children are embarking on the inaugural Whitchurch Walk 2020. The children are aged 2

– 4.5 years old and with the support of their families have pledged to walk a collective of 350km's in November! The Whitchurch Walk 2020 is the perfect way for our children to be active, work together as a collective, allow new families to meet others within covid guidelines, and of course raise funds for the Pre-School. If you see the children of Whitchurch Pre-School walking (they will be easy to spot in their branded t-shirts), please do give them a cheer!

The Whitchurch Walk is sponsored by Warmingham & co and Classic Flooring.

For more details on the event and to sponsor the children, please go to: <https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/fundraising/whitchurch-walk-2020>

Bingo! We will be holding our 4th instalment of our infamous Bingo night on 26th November and open to all members of the local community! This is a really fun event, with some fantastic prizes to be won! The event will be hosted online. Please email fundraising.whitchurchpreschool@gmail.com for more information and to get your tickets.

Christmas Hampers. For the second year, we will be running our popular Christmas Hamper raffle. There will be some truly fantastic hampers up for grabs, including food, drink and other fabulous festive goodies! Raffle tickets are £2 each and will be available to purchase from the beginning of November.

The New Build. We are still on the hunt for a volunteer who is willing to oversee our new build. We do not have the expertise within our current parent body, and we are in desperate need to push this project forward, given the limited lifespan left of the existing building. Young families in the village rely on us to provide early years childcare and education to their little ones, and so we are asking if you have the skills and the time we desperately need for this project to help secure the future of our village Pre-School. If you would like to know more how you can help, please email me directly at chairpersonwhitchurchpreschool@gmail.com

Thanks again for all your continued support of our small, village Pre-School. It makes all the difference.

Mel Uglow – Chair, Whitchurch Pre-School

NOISY LIGHT AIRCRAFT

SNOW – Stop Noise Over Whitchurch – was set up to tackle the problem of noisy aerobatic light aircraft above the village. We think we've been successful.

By invitation, I visited White Waltham airfield in August and had constructive discussions about our concerns with the Deputy Airfield Manager. He agreed to designate a circular “no-go” area for aerobatics of 2 nautical miles (2.3 statute miles) radius centred on Whitchurch Bridge – the bridge is easy to see from the air, and 2 nautical miles is a distance light aircraft pilots are familiar with for other reasons.

Members of the West London Aero Club who fly out of White Waltham for aerobatics will be expected to follow this rule. However, it's important to note that White Waltham does not control the airspace above Whitchurch-on-Thames: Heathrow controls a corridor above 4,500ft and RAF Benson between 3,200ft and 4,500 ft. The airspace below 3,200ft is uncontrolled, and any light aircraft pilot has the right to fly in this airspace subject only to Civil Aviation Authority rules, The Rules of the Air Regulations 2015, etc.

The agreed “no-go” area gives us better protection against aerobatic aircraft than does reliance on these rules. There have been a few incursions since the “no-go” area was agreed, but these were reported to White Waltham who dealt with them robustly.

Geoff Weir



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VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT 2020

Eighteen months ago, the Village Hall team started on a mission to renovate and improve our Village hall. First we targeted some associations and individuals for donations to finance our mission; between March 2019 and March 2020 we raised just over £7,500.

Up to now we have:

- 1- Changed all the old curtains for new fire retardant roller blinds.
- 2- Repainted the hall with the free help of a lovely company in Reading as part of their community support.
- 3- Redesigned and refitted the kitchen which now is not only beautiful but far more operational, including new fridge, new freezer and a new convention oven (see photo below).
- 4- Restructured all storage rooms so that no banqueting or meeting material are stored in the kitchen and we have added 2 new cupboards (1 for Bridge Club and 1 for Arts and Crafts Exhibition group).
- 5- Installed a telephone line and a WIFI system- greatly appreciated by our Camera Club.
- 6- We have started Free afternoon teas every second Thursday of the month. All costs are sponsored by my company and so all donations given are for the Village Hall, helping us to buy some crockery and cutlery which we needed. In one year we raised just under £400. Unfortunately this lovely activity is suspended but we are planning a sort of take away cakes day before Xmas.
- 7- Installed a new beautiful hard-wearing flooring in the kitchen and in the small meeting room.
- 8- Cleaned all the roof and gutters and made repairs to the roof where needed.
- 9- Linked the two toilets to the main water system – they were previously linked to a very old water tank which needed to be replaced but which is now obsolete and not used.

- 10- Installed a new combi boiler (paid by the PC) which replaced the old non efficient system we had and provides hot water for the kitchen..
- 11- Added flower hanging basket outside to improve the look of the Hall
- 12- change the old notice board for two new lockable notice boards
- 13- Structured a new computerised reservation system for the hall – it should be purchased at the end of this year and fully implemented on the village web site by spring 2021. This will give us a far better control of activities and availabilities. When that is done we plan to redo the village hall web page to make it more appealing in order to try to develop more businesses/ groups for the village hall.
- 14- We registered for COVID 19 Govt help and we received a grant of £10,000.
- 15- Changed the doors of the toilets and repainted both toilets

The Hall has now also been equipped with all Covid related products and material to make it safe for any user.

Our most sincere thanks to the VH management team and to our friends and supporters.

Keith Brooks & Jean-Marc Grosfort



Newly designed kitchen at the Village Hall, photo courtesy of Keith Brooks

CRICKET CLUB: OVERVIEW OF 2020 SEASON

Despite the current restrictions the Cricket Club has just completed a really successful season. In terms of the number of players and the standard of cricket played. We have attracted a number of new young (and some not so young!) players. And thanks to the good weather over the summer, we were able to restructure our fixture list, and make the necessary adaptations to play under the current government restrictions (sanitisation, social distancing etc). We were not able to use the changing facilities or tea hut under the restrictions. But this was no bad thing as the weather was generally very good, and the facilities are now in quite a poor state of disrepair (more later).

The pitch itself was in excellent condition, despite not being able to access it during the critical lockdown period during Spring. This is due to the hard work of our head groundsman and PC member, Councillor Jon Steward and other members of the cricket club.

On the pitch, we won the majority of our games with some very close and exciting finishes. One of the season highlights was the “Exiles” game, when past members, who have left the club to move to different parts of the country or the world, came back to play a match against the current members, for the 3rd year running. Whitchurch CC (current members) won narrowly. But it was great to catch up with old friends and their families and we all enjoyed a barbeque and a few beers together after the match.

The club and Parish Council, on a recent Parish Council Zoom call, discussed the Cricket Club’s proposal to renew the existing facilities which are now in a dire state of disrepair. The PC agreed to investigate the feasibility the CC’s proposal that the PC take responsibility for knocking down and replacing the old tea hut with a brand new one. While the Cricket Club would undertake to extensively refurbish the existing changing rooms. The CC feels that this is a practical and economical way forward, particularly under

the current circumstances. And would ensure the facilities are fit for purpose for the next 20+ years.

You can do this at our **funding** page, and help secure the future of village cricket in Whitchurch and an improved and more visually appealing village amenity.

www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/Whitchurch-Cricket-Club?utm_term=6y5WMqDbV

Cormac Neeson

THE GREEN TEAM

What's Happened Recently

A big thank you to all the volunteers who've helped with these tasks over the past three months, this has included:

- Working parties and individual work at the Village Green clearing away brambles, hollies, sycamores, thistles and ragwort in the wild area. Removing intruding plants around the car park. Removing brambles and nettles by the Beech Hedge.
- Working parties at the maze, strimming, edging and tidying
- Working party at the Manor Road Verges, clearing brambles, nettles etc. Also individual work mowing and care of the Manor Road Verges, as well as planning for future planting.
- Lots of other tidying, weeding, watering, clearing fallen trees and litter picking throughout the village
- Village Litter Pick, many bags of litter were collected over the weekend
- Weeding and replanting at the entrance to Wallingscote Drive
- In the Polish Church Garden we felled a tree, removed ragwort and moved plants in preparation for the build of the church footprint base. It's also being regularly mowed by a local volunteer!

- The build of the memorial base for the Polish Church started in August and should complete in October. More information about this project and it's plans can be found here; <https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/polishgarden.html>
Please contact me if you'd like to get involved!

COMING UP!

17th Oct 10am – Village Green (tools; secateurs/loppers and fork/trowel)

The two churches in the village and up the hill are having their grounds tidied on the following dates;

St Marys at 2pm on 18th Oct

St Johns on 31st Oct/1st Nov at 9.45am

More working parties to be confirmed depending on when Autumn arrives! These may include;

7th Nov 10am – Maze (TBC)

21st Nov 10am – Village Green (TBC)

Polish Church Garden – November, date TBC

GET INVOLVED!

We are looking for people who live near or often enjoy a particular green space to become a maintainer or guardian of an area. These volunteers might do small Green Team tasks in the area themselves when they have time (e.g. weeding, cutting back, litter picking) but also work with me to plan what regular work is needed each year in the area and to help input to the working party schedule. The list of open spaces needing guardians is here, let me know if you

are interested in an area! <https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/greenteam.html>

FIND OUT MORE

Visit our page on the village website <https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/greenteam.html> or contact me on 07557 852600 or alexa@ontherunhealthandfitness.co.uk

Alexa and the rest of the Green Team

EDITOR'S NOTES

The next Editon of the Village Bulletin will the Winter editon. The deadline for articles and content will be Sunday 10th January. Contributions are welcome from anybody in the village and should be in Word or PDF format.

Richard Williams (email: rwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com)



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