

Little Milton Parish Council
Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 25th April 2019
in the Pine Lodge Little Milton

Present: Cllr. Barry Coward (*Chairman*)
Cllr. Alison Shelton
Cllr. Steve Sidhu
Mr R Fergusson (Clerk)
County Councillor Stephen Harrod
Ten members of the public

Apologies for Absence

Cllr. Kate Daunt, Cllr. Paul Harrison, District Councillor Caroline Newton Revd. Simon Cronk, Charles Peers and Francois Van Merwe.

01/05/19 Introduction by Chairman

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Annual Parish Meeting and stated that it was helpful once a year to take stock and hear from the various village organisations so that we can better understand each other's problems and also celebrate successes together

02/05/19 Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 10th May 2018 were taken as read and the meeting approved the minutes as a true record of the meeting

03/05/19 Report by Chairman of Parish Council

The Chairman stated that about this time last year the new play area was opened and it is proving to be a success.

He then went on explain that the SODC Local Plan after a re-draft and necessary consultation had been submitted for Examination to a Planning Inspector. He stated that the Parish Council had argued against the Chalgrove Airfield development, focusing of traffic issues and increased flood risk.

The Chairman reported that the Parish Council had been actively involved in the consultation process for the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway and were watching developments very closely. He stated that some route options could come close to the parish and there are some options which may actually be beneficial to the village by taking traffic, particularly HGV's, off the A329.

The Chairman stated that the completion of the Neighbourhood Plan and its approval at a referendum in December 2018 had been a major achievement. The Plan is part of the planning process and puts a local flavour on the higher level policies set at District and National level.

The Chairman commented upon the Council's continued maintenance of the recreation ground, MUGA and play area but recognised that area around the gate required some attention. The Chairman thanked the volunteers who help in many ways to keep in it good shape.

The Chairman stated that the Council continues to support the village newsletter and expressed his thanks to Raymond Fergusson for his sterling work as editor. He was pleased to report that the newsletter was still self-funding.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to all those who have helped the Council during the last twelve months including the recreation ground team, volunteers who do the litter blitzes or regular litter collection around the village, HGV weight watchers, defibrillator checkers. There are other positive actions taken by villagers that often go unnoticed but are appreciated by the Council.

The Chairman was pleased to report that five people had put themselves forward to serve as Councillors and will be automatically elected as there were insufficient nominations to have a contested election. The new Councillors will take up their office on May 7th 2019.

The Chairman took the opportunity to highlight the difficulties that organisations within the village have of recruiting people to help run and support those organisations. He referenced the Village Hall

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and the Shop. He stated that the lack of support could well lead to the lack of such facilities in the future.

The Chairman stated that he and four existing Councillors were standing down from the Council in May. He commented that he had been a Councillor for fourteen years and eight as Chairman. He had enjoyed the privilege of chairing the Parish Council and he thanked his fellow Councillors for their wise contributions. He also thanked Raymond for his unceasing work as Parish Clerk.

Finally he thanked the village for its support of the Council over many years.

04/05/19 Financial report

The Clerk stated that a Parish Council needed to explain what services and facilities it provides to its parishioners and where it receives the money to pay for those services/facilities and that it manages the finances responsibly by holding an appropriate level of reserves to meet future needs. He explained that the finances are subject to an external audit as well as a review by our internal auditor Ian Dennis who also reviews the Council's internal control systems.

The Clerk started by reviewing the expenditure for the year ending 31st March 2019. He reported that the total expenditure was £52,850 which is large for Little Milton Parish Council. A significant part of that was in respect of the new playground amounting to £33,577. This was the final payment to Kompan. Expenditure on the Neighbourhood Development Plan was £7974. The total NDP expenditure is around £15,000 but this had all be paid for by grants received from SODC and the Government. The balance of around £18,500 of Council expenditure related to Newsletter £4,253; Recreation Ground £4,116, Loan Repayment £3,293; Council administration £3,167 and other expenditure of c £ 2,500. The Other expenditure cover a large number of relatively smaller levels of expenditure including verge cutting £900, core Council Insurance £458, painting of the entrance gates £395, audit fee £300. There was a write back of £450 on election costs as a result of an uncontested election

The Clerk reported where the Parish Council received the money to pay for the £53,895 of expenditure. He explained that the precept is the amount of income that the Parish Council requests the District Council to include in the Council Tax. For every £1000 that the Parish Council raises through the precept it adds around £4.70 per annum to the Council tax bill. He reported that sources of income included Grants of £34,303 Newsletter advertising £5698; MUGA £849, other income £1519 and Precept of £11500. The Clerk pointed out that the precept per Band D equivalent property was £54.20 and that this should tell our residents that the Parish Council seeks funding from other than the precept to provide excellent facilities and services.

The Clerk concluded the financial report by reporting that the General Reserves were £14,482 and Earmarked Reserves of £688. He stated that this level of reserve was adequate to meet known future events and normal ongoing expenditure.

04/05/19 District Councillor Report

The District Councillor's report was delivered by the Chairman.

The District Councillor was gratified to see South Oxfordshire was ranked in the top six best places to live in the country and the best in the South East. This was due to a number of factors but then went on to say that the provision of public services played a part. The key issues covered in her report were:-

Planning

Caroline stated that much of the year had been occupied with the drafting of and public consultation on the SODC Local Plan and its vision for how South Oxfordshire should develop over the next fifteen years. The plan was submitted to Government on 29 March for Independent Examination and the Inspector's report was anticipated later this year.

Housing

One of the important elements of the Local Plan is its focus on housing and the need for affordable housing for our residents and through it we will be requiring all medium and large-scale developments

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to ensure that at least 40% of the dwellings are 'affordable'. It is the government that decides the definition of 'affordable' and we continue to lobby for a definition which makes homes in this expensive area genuinely accessible.

Waste and Recycling

Caroline reported that South Oxfordshire remains one of the best local authorities in the country for recycling, compost and managing our household waste. There are a number of factors behind our success amongst them: the comprehensive simple recycling programme, close monitoring of our contractor Biffa and the diligence of our residents.

Community Safety

South Oxfordshire experiences low rates of crime and remains a safe place to live. This is because a range of agencies work well together to tackle community safety problems that cannot be resolved by one agency working alone. There is also close collaboration with our partner District Council, Vale of the White Horse.

SODC Offices- Crowmarsh

Caroline reported that work had begun on the re-development of the SODC premises at Crowmarsh. The demolition of the badly damaged building, as a result of an arson attack in 2015, took place in the summer of 2018.

05/05/19 County Councillor Report

Councillor Stephen Harrod gave a report on of the activities within the County Council. The key issues covered

Unitary Government

A proposal for a Unitary Government of Oxfordshire was submitted in the spring of 2017 by OCC, SODC and The Vale, Cherwell. West Oxfordshire District Council and the City of Oxford did not take part. There is no update on the situation.

Council Budget

Councillor Harrod covered a number of items of the budget passed on 12th February 2019. These included Youth Provision where an extra £1m fund has been made available. Investment in schools, transport and street lighting where an extra £1 billion investment will be made over the next ten years. The investments will embrace new technology and more efficient ways of delivering the services.

Investment in repairing Oxfordshire's roads

OCC will be spending significantly more money on Oxfordshire's roads that will include re-surfacing, drainage, bridge repairs and footways as well as investing more in the repair of potholes. Councillor Harrod expected to see the benefit of the additional funding.

Adult Social Care

Cllr. Harrod commented upon the work done as result of the independent review of how OCC's Adult Social Care were delivered and will over time provide better support for older people and those with learning difficulties.

Oxford-Cambridge Expressway: OCC Response

OCC welcomed the announcement of the preferred corridors as part of the Oxford – Cambridge Expressway as it offered a degree of clarity on where the final scheme would go but it was very disappointed that access to the M40 through Oxfordshire was still unclear. OCC has determined a set of three tests to assess the decision making process for the corridor and the eventual final route. OCC will seek clarity on how the corridor choice is developed so that a decision can be made on the best route for the scheme.

Housing and Growth Deal Infrastructure Programme

The Oxfordshire Growth Board has published details of the infrastructure projects to receive funding in Year 1 and Years 2-5 of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal signed in April 2018.

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Joint Strategic Spatial Plan (JSSP) - Oxfordshire 2050

Oxfordshire councils are working jointly on a County-wide strategic plan that integrates planning growth and infrastructure. The JSSP will address the strategic and cumulative implications of growth and set out a long-term framework covering the whole of Oxfordshire up to 2050.

Recycling Rates

Oxfordshire has been named the best performing County Council waste disposal authority in England for its recycling rates during 2017-18. This reflects the OCC commitment to work closely with the District Councils.

06/05/19 Report from Village Hall Management Committee

The report on the Village hall was given by Melanie Kinghan Chair of the Village Hall Management Committee.

The Chair reported on another busy year at The Pine Lodge with the committee working hard as always to keep the hall running smoothly and in top condition.

The Chair reported the changes to the Committee during the year that highlighted the lack of interest for new committee members to come forward. Melanie stated that the committee were considering new ways of operating in the future which could include sub-committees where their members would not be trustees.

Melanie detailed the maintenance work that had been completed during the year and included re-varnishing the outside woodwork and lobby, correction of an ongoing problem with the entrance door and replacement of the fire detector in the main apex of the hall.

The bookings have remained fairly constant and the regular events continue to well. Melanie thanked all those involved with the quiz evenings and the annual fireworks night. Melanie outlined the support to other charities as well as the funding of the Senior Citizens Lunch which is much appreciated by all those who attend.

Melanie expressed her thanks to all the committee as well as to Linda and Jim Lovegrove for their support to the committee in many different ways. Melanie also thanked Teresa and Chris for their advice as former members of the committee.

Melanie took the opportunity to reinforce her concern that the services of the village hall may need to change due to lack of committee member and hoped that the Annual General Meeting on June 11th would be attended by interested residents.

07/05/19 Report from Little Milton Shop

Mr Kevin Hunt, Chairman of the Village Shop, gave the following report on behalf of the Shop Management Committee.

The Chairman referred to the comments he made at the Annual Meeting in 2018 that highlighted the need for more volunteers as without it the community facility will be under threat. He stated that the situation was still critical and stressed that any help even for a couple of hours would make all the difference.

Kevin referred again to his report in 2018 where he stated that another key objective was to consolidate the financial situation in the forthcoming year after the refurbishment and its associated cost. He was pleased to report that this had been achieved. He also reported that the shop had widened its range and had acquired an upright freezer to stock frozen products.

Kevin reported that the Shop had managed to secure a grant from our District Councillors discretionary grants budget as well as grant from SODC towards the replacement of the tables and chairs in the café, the creation of a patio area in front of the shop and the retiling of the floor within the shop. All of which will improve our facility. This was also supported by the Parish Council. Kevin also expressed his thanks to all villagers who had participated in the SODC Lottery as the shop had benefitted from the cash that it generates.

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Finally Kevin thanked Alison in her role as shop manager and post-mistress, Julie in her staff role and to all the volunteers who give their time freely every week.

Mr Mark Willis offered his appreciation to Kevin for his commitment and hard work in his role as Chairman of Little Milton Shop

The Chairman welcomed the opportunity of speaking to the parish meeting and again urged for more support from the community.

08/05/19 Report by Chair of Little Milton School Governors

Linda Longshaw Chair of Governors gave a report on behalf of Little Milton School.

Linda stated that she was pleased to represent Little Milton School as the newly appointed Chair of Governors and reflected that it had been a largely enjoyable learning curve as she had to re-familiarise herself with the school having previously been a parent and governor ten years ago.

Linda reported that the number on the school roll was 52 of whom 15 children are from the village and this presented the school with a number of challenges. She reported that the new Headteacher Hannah Brown started in September 2018 and she was ambitious for the school. She is well supported with a dedicated and experienced staff team. Small classes have always been feature of Little Milton School and combined with learning that is high quality and personal is something that the school want to reinforce to a wider audience to attract more children to the school.

Linda reported that the two key priorities this year were developing the Maths curriculum as well as helping children manage their mental well-being though a MINDUp programme introduced last year.

The Chair reported that the school held their usual celebrations at St James' Church including Harvest and Christingle with Ascension Day service on 17th May. The school also regularly visits the BBOWT nature reserve as part of our Forest School initiative.

The Friends' Committee continue to play an invaluable role in organising fund raising events for the school that bring parents and the local community together. Their fund-raising efforts has allowed the school to fund a woodwork bench, Ipads and Chromebooks for use in the classrooms.

09/05/19 Report from Orchard Pre-School

Nicki Rogers, Chair of the Orchard Pre-School, gave a report on behalf the Committee.

She stated that she had been the Chair of the Orchard for a few weeks.

Nicki reported that the Orchard Pre-School had undergone many changes over the past year but continues to improve and successfully provide a stable, caring and happy environment for the children. It is currently at full capacity with 34 children on the roll, and a waiting list already for this coming September Nicki also reported that the Orchard have a strong, experienced and ambitious team.

The Orchard continue to run a successful fund-raising programme that includes participating in the Christmas Fayre

The Orchard Pre-School have a small dedicated committee. Nicki expressed her thanks to Linda Nann the retiring Chair for all her hard work for the Pre-School over the past couple of years as well as to other members of the committee.

The future vision of the Orchard Pre-School is to continue to improve the offering to parents and children and to seek ways of using technology to improve to administrative tasks of the Educators that will benefit staff and parents. The Orchard is also looking at potentially looking at ways of increasing the service offered but this is at an early stage.

10/05/19 Report on St James' Church

The Reverend Simon Cronk's report on behalf of St James's Church was presented to the meeting by Raymond Fergusson

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The Rector stated that he represented three parishes within the Benefice, was involved with two village schools and was a trustee to five charities within the Benefice.

The Rector reported that St James faced many challenges of which the condition of the building was the most urgent. He stated that it had been decided not to pursue an extensive external fabric renovation but to pursue the route of surveying the tower in order to carry out the most urgent repairs resulting from the survey. It is recognised that this merely postpones a larger problem but does allow us more time.

The Rector reported that the level of church attendance at the regular Sunday Services remained relatively small. He reported upon two initiatives for children, a Saturday morning craft event looking at the meaning of Christmas and one looking at the meaning of Easter. These events were quite well supported by the community. The festival services at Christmas, Easter and Harvest were well supported. There was a special Remembrance Day service held on the evening of 11th November that was very moving. The Rector thanked the work done by Jane and Mark Wills in researching the fallen soldiers of the village and organised a commemorative booklet. He also thanked Jo Preston for organising special bookmarks.

The Church continues to support the school by holding services in the church for Ascension Day, harvest and Christingle.

The Rector stated that the lack of families attending the monthly All Age Worship was causing a review of what was on offer and that may mean a change of timing in the future as well as a different format of service.

Simon reported that Raymond Fergusson had announced that he would not seek to stand as Churchwarden after the current term ends in July 2020. Simon also reported that he had been appointed Area Dean of the Aston and Cuddesdon Deanery.

Simon stated that three issues remained. The one to find officers to maintain the day to day running of the church. The need to look at our work with children to try and secure a new generation of church community and the long term need to secure the longer term sustainability of the building.

Simon recognised that his report was not upbeat but presented a sense of realism. However the church has been around since 1844 and has survived with the support of the wider community and he thanked everyone who participate in the church cleaning, the flower ladies, the grass cutters and of course the church fete. The fete is an excellent example of the wider community making something they value happen as without them it would not. Equally the church will continue to serve the community for many years to come.

11/05/19 Parish Forum

The Chairman read out an email from Charles Peers that raised some issues relating to the apparent lack of mitigation of potential traffic on the A329 from the proposed Chalgrove Airfield site. He also questioned the tardiness in replacing the fingerpost opposite the Wheatley junction. The Clerk stated that he would respond to Charles.

Chris Coward wished to have recorded her appreciation of the work done by the retiring Council and the work done by the Chairman over a number of years. She felt that although reflected upon her husband it was a record on behalf of all the community

The meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.

Signed by

Chairman.....Date.....