

FREELAND PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 22ND APRIL 2022 AT 7.30PM IN FREELAND HALL, FREELAND, OXFORDSHIRE

PRESENT:

Chairman:	Roger Faulkner
Vice-Chairman:	Mary Ann Canning
District Councillor:	Merilyn Davies (until 8.45pm)
County Councillor:	Liam Walker (until 8.45pm)
	Parish Councillors: Bill Phillips, Amy Jackson, Andrew Bird, Peter Foster.
Neighbourhood Police:	Not present
Clerk/RFO:	Not present
Minute-takers:	Lisa Smith & Fay Friend

Plus 59 electors of the Parish.

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone.

1. APOLOGIES:

Andy Bain – away.

Perrin Hatwell – away.

Alaa al-Yousuf – away.

PCSO Ben Hallam & PCSO Helen Keen – work commitments.

The Chairman explained that as the previous Clerk Lisa Smith had now left the Council and her successor, Fay Friend did not start until 1st May, the Council was officially without a Clerk. However, both Clerks had agreed to come along and take the minutes of the meeting to assist.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON 20TH APRIL 2019

The Chairman advised that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2019 had been signed off and that a copy was on display at the back of the hall for electors to read during the refreshment break. Copies were also available from the Clerk if required.

3. ANNUAL REPORT BY ROGER FAULKNER, CHAIRMAN OF FREELAND PARISH COUNCIL ON PAROCHIAL MATTERS.

The Chairman began his talk by introducing himself and welcoming everyone to the meeting. There had been a number of big changes to the Parish Council since the last Annual Parish Meeting in 2019.

Parish Council membership changes

He explained that the last elections to the Parish Council had been held in May 2021 when several previous councillors stood down. He thanked them for their hard work, especially Peter Newell and Robert Crocker, the outgoing Chair and Vice Chair

respectively. The three continuing councillors were Mary Ann Canning, the current Vice Chair, Bill Phillips and Peter Foster and they were joined in May by Amy Jackson, Andrew Bird, Andy Bain, Tony Tomkys and himself. At the first Council meeting Roger was elected to the role of Chair and despite being mostly a new team they were already working well together. Unfortunately Tony Tomkys resigned in the autumn but the Council then co-opted Perrin Hatwell on to the Council.

Change of Parish Clerk

Another big change had been that of the Parish Clerk. Lisa Smith had done such a tremendous job for over 13 years and on behalf of all the Councillors both past and present, and everyone in Freeland he passed on their thanks for all her hard work and commitment to the role. Many individuals and groups within the village had contributed towards leaving gifts which were presented to Lisa at a recent meeting of the Parish Council but the Chairman wished to acknowledge, publicly, Lisa's hard work and present her with a further token of our appreciation. Some flowers were presented to Lisa which were very gratefully received. He also advised that as from 1st May a new Parish Clerk, Fay Friend had been appointed who was present at the meeting. The Parish Clerk does a lot of work behind the scenes and he hoped everyone would support Fay as she took on her new role.

Covid -19

Covid-19 had continued to affect lives, and the Parish Council were aware that many residents and their family members had contracted the virus or were impacted by its other effects, including family finances. He explained that we were very fortunate to live in a community where there was a great deal of community spirit and this was demonstrated by the volunteer prescription and shopping service that was set up, as well as a food bank by the Village Hall. He passed on his sincere thanks to all those who took part in this and also to those who were willing to open up their homes to Ukrainian refugees. There were a number of families in Freeland and Hanborough who were expecting people to arrive soon, and some had already arrived, and the Parish Council wanted to support host families in any way possible.

All things Green!

The work of the Parish Council included a wide variety of topics had increasingly incorporated what might be called "green matters". A Naturehood Group had been set up and he passed on his thanks to Russell Fisher and Amanda Watson for spearheading its various activities which have included the setting up of wildflower trial sites around the village, the planting of hedgerows in the Amenity Area of Broadmarsh Lane and the graveyard at St Mary's and 15 tree saplings at various locations around the village. The Council took part in the "No Mow May" initiative whereby some of our grass verges were left uncut to help wildlife and biodiversity. Three hornbeam trees had been replaced on the field and the barbed wire in the hedge behind the play equipment had been removed – he thanked Steve Sparrowhawk for seeing to this. Other tree work had included the removal of dead, and possibly dangerous, branches overhanging the path or road, the replacement of posts around the memorial trees (thanks to Graham Lay) and a significant cutting back of the laurels along Broadmarsh Lane.

Garden of Remembrance

The Garden of Remembrance saw the first interment of Ashes in 2019, and since then another two have been interred and two more local families were planning to inter the ashes of their loved ones soon. There was now a new storage cupboard and bin by the tap at the entrance to the Garden of Remembrance and the wooden archway was completed in 2020. The Council planned to introduce a sculpture in the near future to the Garden of Remembrance. The Parish Council also purchased a metal “Tommy” sculpture that was put up on The Green around Remembrance Sunday.

Village Hall / Playing Field

A number of changes had taken place in and around the Hall and the Parish Council continued to be grateful to the Village Hall Management Committee who manage and maintain the wonderful asset for everyone to use and enjoy. The rear of the car park was tarmacked in January 2020, and bike racks and a new grit bin were also installed. A water supply had been added to the playing field where verti-draining and shockwave treatment were undertaken to help improve the drainage. A new storage shed was built in April 2021 for which he thanked Robert Crocker and Mary Ann Canning for getting this done. Two large wooden picnic tables had been installed on the rear patio outside the Newell Room and two new benches installed by the large wooden climber in the playground. The play equipment was checked every week and a professional annual inspection was also carried out. Further additions to the play area were made last year – a covered wooden sand shack, another sunken trampoline, a wooden climb-on tractor and new safety surfacing under the large slide. Having mentioned benches the one on The Green was replaced and our thanks go to the Teddy Girls for raising the funds for this. Thanks also to Graham Lay who had done a lot of maintenance work in power washing the benches and treating them with linseed oil.

Little Free Library

The Little Free Library continued to be well used and the old phone box outside the Village Hall had also been converted into a second Little Free Library – Roger passed on his thanks to Matthew Ruddle for setting this up and maintaining them.

Transport / Parking

Transport through Freeland was one of the Parish Council’s major concerns. The Council were thankful for the volunteer drivers and helpers of the community bus which takes residents into Witney on a Thursday morning, The Council were also pleased to have been able to support First And Last Mile in establishing a new bus service that goes from Long Hanborough , through Freeland and Eynsham to Stanton Harcourt and Standlake. The bus stop on the A4095 had been moved slightly and a new bus shelter would be installed there in the coming weeks. Parking often presented a problem around the school so white lines had been painted around the junction of Oakland Close to try and help with this.

Speedwatch

Freeland had a very active Speedwatch Team and following the easing of Covid

restrictions their activities were resumed in Freeland on 5th September 2021. During the following seven months, up to 7th April 2022, 92 sessions were held with 8,077 vehicles being monitored. Of these, 812 (10.05%) had been recorded as travelling in excess of 35mph. The highest speed recorded was a car travelling along Wroslyn Road towards The Green at 63mph!! It had been noticeable that since the resumption of activities the speed of vehicles travelling through Freeland had decreased slightly and it was encouraging to note that nobody had been caught doing more than 50 mph since 18th January. As sessions were held at different times of the day on different days of the week and at various locations if anyone travelled through the village in excess of 35mph they were likely to get caught. The Chairman passed on his thanks to all the Speedwatch volunteers for giving up their time, often in cold, windy or wet conditions, who were trying to make our village a better and safer place to live.

Traffic Calming / Speeding

The Parish Council also had a Traffic Calming Working Group who were exploring ways of reducing the speed and volume of traffic through the village. A traffic survey and a 20mph survey had been carried out and discussions had recently taken place with Liam Walker, County Councillor and James Wright from Oxfordshire County Council Highways Department. With the advent of the park and ride and the dualling of the A40 along with the Salt Cross Garden Village the Parish Council continued to work hard to make sure the interests of Freeland residents were taken into account.

This also applied to other planning matters, most notably the proposal by Inspired Villages to develop the land by Freeland House which generated very strong opposition not only from the Parish Council but from over 250 individual residents. This proposal would be discussed at the WODC Planning Committee very shortly.

The village Community Led Plan was reviewed and updated in January 2021 and the Council were currently discussing the possibility of a Neighbourhood Plan which Amy would be talking about later.

Other ongoing matters included the continuing problems of mobile coverage in Freeland, fly tipping, dog's mess on pavements and paths, speeding traffic, parking around the school and village centre, planning for the Queen's Jubilee as well as other things to which he had already referred.

The Chairman concluded his report with something that was not technically a Parish matter but that was worth mentioning. Freeland was well served by our two "posties", Clare and Nic Warner, who, out of over 20,000 applications, had received a national award for being the best post people in the country. Well done Clare and Nic

4. ANNUAL REPORT BY THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR (TO INCLUDE UPDATE ON 20MPH VILLAGE SURVEY AND THE A40 PARK AND RIDE SCHEME) – LIAM WALKER

Liam introduced himself and explained a bit about his role.

Covid-19 had dominated most things over the past 2 years, and it had been heartwarming to see communities come together to help the most vulnerable. He thanked everyone who had got involved and helped in some way.

Speeding through the village and parking around the school was an ongoing concern in Freeland, as it was in all of the other parishes in Liam's his area and sadly there was no easy solution to the parking around the school problem as many children travelled in from other neighbouring villages.

The local Speedwatch group had identified certain problem areas and he passed on his thanks to the volunteers who carried out these checks. He also passed on his thanks to all those that completed the 20 mph survey that was recently carried out. This survey had been somewhat divisive with opinions split as to whether residents wanted a 20mph introduced or not. Overall the outcome was that residents did not want a 20mph throughout the whole village, but of those that objected, many agreed that it would be worthwhile having zoned areas around the school and village hall areas that could be 20mph to help slow the traffic in these key areas. So, Liam would be working with the Parish Council to achieve this.

Liam expressed his gratitude to the First and Last Mile team who had set up a new bus service to serve Freeland and the surrounding villages.

He urged people to use this service as much as possible to ensure its longevity and he also passed on his thanks to the Parish Council for their support in acting as a conduit for the S106 developer funds that was initially funding the start-up of the service.

The A40 Park and Ride scheme was under way as part of a £180m project as well as the Salt Cross Garden Village. The impact on Freeland would be pretty big as Freeland was located between two major roads, the A40 and A4095. Liam was working with the Parish Council to look at ways to change the priority on Cuckoo Lane and directing traffic around Freeland via Cuckoo Lane rather than through it.

Liam took some questions regarding the car parking around the school and the associated dangers in getting in and out of Oakland Close. He also took a question about the dangers of increased emissions from cars if the speed limit was lowered to 20mph and the associated health risks to asthmatics.

Liam was then thanked his update and for attending the meeting.

5. ANNUAL REPORT BY THE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS TO DISCUSS WHAT THE DISTRICT COUNCIL IS DOING TO REDUCE THEIR CARBON FOOTPRINT AND BECOME A GREENER COUNCIL. - MERILYN DAVIES

Merilyn explained that as District Councillors, Alaa al-Yousuf was generally more involved in all the climate initiatives and that she was more involved with the planning side of things so her talk would concentrate on this.

Merilyn explained that she had been absolutely livid about the appalling plans from Inspired Villages to develop the land by the Freeland House Nursing Home into a retirement village, and she had made her views very clear to the developers and WODC planning department. It was important to protect the valuable green spaces within the villages, that had become even more important to residents during the past 2 years for them to enjoy on their daily walks. The North field on the A4095 was now also in danger of being developed by Pye Homes (who were now owned by Blenheim), and if this went ahead it would change the dynamics of the two villages. Merilyn was very opposed to this development and had made her views once again known to those concerned.

She also pointed out how important it was for local companies and services such as the GP surgery and Thames Water to comment on the large scale applications. Often in the past Thames Water had not commented on planning applications but they had stated that the sewage systems would not cope with the Inspired Villages proposals., as had the GP surgery in Hanborough which was vital to ensure their statements were taken into account when determining the application.

She acknowledged how lovely it had been to see the communities in Freeland and Hanborough coming together during Covid to provide help and support to each other. In general it was often the older generations who usually offered help and support to various initiatives, but this time around it had been the younger generation who had stepped up to protect the older and more vulnerable members of the community and this had been really heart warming to see.

Merilyn took a few questions about the principle of the Inspired Villages not being backed up by the Local Plan and that all future new builds should be carbon neutral.

Merilyn was then thanked for her update and for attending the meeting.

6. REPORT FROM PCSO BEN HALLAM & HELEN KEEN, THAMES VALLEY POLICE

Unfortunately, PCSO Ben Hallam or PCSO Helen Keen could not be present at the meeting. However, Ben had directed the Clerk to a website which had information regarding crime statistics for the local area, however there was nothing recorded for Freeland which was likely to be due to lack of reporting rather than a true zero. PCSO Hallam had therefore asked that residents be encouraged to report any crimes in the area so they had a clearer picture of what was being committed in the local area and they could then assess how the Police could then offer assistance.

7. WATER POLLUTION - PARISH COUNCILLOR MARY ANN CANNING WILL TALK ABOUT POLLUTION IN OUR LOCAL WATERWAYS AND WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION.

Mary Ann began her talk with some background information about rivers.

Recent data shows the poor state of English rivers now - only 14% are rated as being of good ecological standard or better, which meant they were as close as possible to their

natural state. The aim of the Water Environment Regulations 2017 was to achieve high or good status for all rivers by 2027.

Sadly our local river – the River Evenlode was not part of this 14%. Since 2015, the ecological status of the section from Hanborough to Cassington had been categorised as either 'bad' or at best 'poor' (in 2019). Back in the 1980's the water was clear and inviting as a place to play. Nowadays it was sad to see it as rather murky, opaque and sadly lacking in aquatic life.

The reason for this change was the build-up of excess nutrients such as nitrates and phosphates in the water. These occurred naturally and were essential for plant growth. They were also present in fertilizers and long term use had resulted in excess nutrients being washed into streams and rivers.

When concentrations of these nutrients were too high, an effect called 'eutrophication' occurred – the rapid growth of algae feeding on them suffocated other life and upsets the natural balance of the river. The water then becomes opaque and greenish or brown.

The run-off from farming was considered a 'diffuse' form of pollution and created a constant background level of raised nitrates in particular. Added to that were the 'point' sources, that is sewage treatment works which were a major source of phosphates. These come largely from human waste.

Locally we had our very own sewage treatment works operated by Thames Water at the bottom of Pigeon House Lane, which was not actually within the Parish boundary, but which most residents were probably aware of.

Mary Ann recently had a tour with the Area Manager and she gave a quick smell free version of the processes used at the sewage plant!

She admitted it had made her realize how well it dealt with the waste we produce – the problems occurred mainly when very heavy rainfall entered the sewage pipes or when blockages occurred due to items that shouldn't be in the system.

The treatment works served 7,600 people, receiving all the sewage, plus a lot of the runoff, from New Yatt, North Leigh, East End, Long Hanborough, Bladon, Church Hanborough, as well as Freeland. There were 9 pumping stations in the area and the main sewage pipe from the villages to the north runs under Wroslyn Road, along Blenheim lane, across the bottom of the playing field and down into the treatment works. A map of the sewage catchment area was shown.

The number of houses it served was increasing due to all the new housing built over the last 2-3 years, and there were no firm plans to upgrade the works in the near future. Every 100 extra houses added approximately 30 tonnes of raw sewage per day to the network. It is an activated sludge plant, which needed less space than the older style filter plants as it used deep tanks rather than a large surface area to process the waste.

The raw sewage was pumped in through a 6mm screen to remove everything that should NOT go down the toilet (wipes, kitchen roll, cotton wool, cotton buds, even floss. This type of waste cannot be broken down and was costly to remove as it had to be taken away to landfill). Inevitably some gets through and this caused blockages in the system and broken down pumps which may result in accidental spills.

This was where everyone could play a part in improving this situation by putting nothing but toilet paper down the loo.

Next, the screened waste flowed along a channel to the aeration tanks and if there had been too much rain, it would spill over the sides of the channel into two 5m deep storm overflow tanks. After this the screened sewage was fed into two large aeration tanks where air was forced up through the liquid to allow aerobic microorganisms to break down the organic matter. The result of the aeration was a mix of 'flocs' solids, and treated water. These were separated in a sedimentation tank, with the clear water at the top being discharged into the stream, whilst the concentrated sludge at the bottom of the tank transported to a thermal hydrolysis process plant to generate green electricity.

Daily site checks and alarms were in place to warn of problems. The effluent was monitored by the Environment Agency for turbidity (cloudiness) and ammonia – which was the most dangerous pollutant, but not phosphates or nitrates at present.

Sewage Spills

These occur after heavy rain - to prevent sewers getting overwhelmed by rainwater and causing back up to people's homes,, the sewage system has 'release valves' called Combined Sewer Overflows (or CSO's) which empty screened, but untreated sewage directly into streams and rivers.

The impact of untreated sewage flowing for long periods into a river is particularly harmful as the watercourse has no opportunity to recover.

In order to monitor sewage spills more effectively, The Rivers Trust has set up an online sewage map using Event Duration Monitoring (EDM) data., which is collected using water level sensors. These send a signal when untreated sewage and storm water starts to overflow, and again when it stops. These start and finish times are used to calculate the duration of the overflow event.

This is permitted to happen only in exceptional circumstances, yet between September 2019 and June 2020, 9 sewage treatment works spilled untreated sewage into the Evenlode for a total of 8,344 hours, which equates to 348 days – nearly a whole year of untreated sewage entering the river.

Their recent map shows that in 2021, permitted storm overflows locally included the Church Hanborough sewage treatment works which spilled 70 times for a total of 865 hours and at Combe - 48 times for a total of 728 hours.

Recent work by the Oxford Rivers Project has also shown that at one point downstream of the Church Hanborough sewage treatment works, levels of gut bacteria including E.coli were 100 times the concentration deemed hazardous to human health.

All this has seen a lot of publicity recently - The Parish Council wrote to Robert Courts in November last year highlighting these issues.. A parliamentary debate was held on 15th November, triggered by a petition to ban water companies discharging raw sewage into water courses – there was a fair amount of controversy over which way MP’s voted.

Thankfully, local initiatives are helping to improve things. The Evenlode Catchment Partnership has been working towards the goal of restoring the crystal clear waters of the river. It has a vision for an Evenlode with improved water quality, enhanced flood management, enriched biodiversity, with greater community engagement with rivers.

To achieve this it has a £3m budget (2020-2025) to deliver a range of catchment-based projects. These projects offer a great opportunity for local communities and organisations to work together on schemes that deliver benefits for freshwater ecosystems and wildlife and they would welcome our involvement.

Mary Ann joined the Catchment Champions in 2019 – this was a group of citizen scientists supported by the ECP and the charity Freshwater Watch. They have been measuring phosphate and nitrate levels across the entire Evenlode catchment since early 2019 and have found significant and consistent differences in phosphate concentrations upstream versus downstream of some of the sewage treatment works. In fact the use of a network of Citizen Scientists to monitor rivers more widely is now being proposed by Parliament’s Environmental Audit Committee.

Finally – a recent success story:

It has just been announced that Wolvercote Mill Stream at Port Meadow has received bathing water status and is only the second river in England to receive the status. This was achieved following citizen science-led water quality monitoring in 2021, led by the Oxford Rivers Project. Volunteers took water samples to be analysed by Thames Water labs for bacteria and other pollutants. (The spill highlighted above at Church Hanborough was detected during this sampling.)

Having bathing water status means there will be weekly water quality testing by the Environment Agency between 15th May and 30th September each year. I think we would all want to share their vision of a clean and healthy River Thames fit to swim, paddle and play in, teeming with freshwater wildlife.

Mary Ann concluded her talk by advising what everyone can do to help improve this situation:

- Consider getting involved with one of the local initiatives
- Use less water and install a meter

- Use less detergent and fewer cleaning products
- Don't put fats down the sink
- And above allDon't throw anything but toilet paper down the loo!

Mary Ann was thanked for her very informative and interesting talk.

As the meeting was running ahead of time, the Chairman brought forward items 11, 12 and 13:

11. FREELAND HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – ROBERT CROCKER/DOROTHY SHARPE WILL GIVE AN UPDATE ON THE USAGE AND MAINTENANCE OF FREELAND HALL.

Robert Crocker, Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee gave a brief report on the hall's progress over the past year. Covid had understandably, had a big impact on the Hall and bookings over the past 2 years. Functions and events had been particularly difficult with the ever changing restrictions and limitations on numbers. This put big constraints on "normal" behaviour for bookings.

The receipts from hirers had dropped significantly, but thanks to a Government grant for small businesses and a WODC community charge relief the finances of the Hall were in fact pretty healthy. He passed on his thanks to Dot Sharpe for all the form filling she had had to do to obtain these grants.

The Village Hall was due to celebrate it's 10th anniversary this year, which also meant that we were nearly half way through the village hall loan from the Public Works Loan Board that was being repaid via the precept. The loan for the changing rooms was due to finish this year.

Robert passed on his thanks to Arthur Treherne for carrying out the maintenance work on the Hall, especially since the sad loss of Adie Buckingham who also assisted with the maintenance.

The Village Hall website had been updated making it much simpler and easier to book the Hall.

He concluded his talk by passing on his sincere thanks to all members of the village hall management committee for all their dedication and commitment and weekend cover provided for functions to enable the smooth running of the Hall.

They were in need of more volunteers so if anyone wished to get involved they were encourage to speak with Robert after the meeting.

Robert was thanked for providing his update.

12. NET POSITION REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2022

A copy of the Net Position report for the year ended 31st March 2022 was displayed at the back of the Hall together with the Club reports for residents' information. Copies were also available from the Clerk if required.

13. REPORTS FROM VARIOUS SOCIETIES IN FREELAND

Reports from the Allotment Association, Bell Ringers, Christmas Lunch group, Craft Club, Eynsham Consolidated Charity , St Mary's Baby & Toddlers Group (renamed as First Steps), Football Club, Freeland Baby and Toddler group, Parochial Church Council, Primary School, Freeland WI , and the Little Free Library were all displayed for residents' information. They would also be placed on the village website (under the Parish Council heading) for residents to read at their leisure.

There were also the proposals from the Traffic Calming group on display on the maps at the back of the Hall, plus the Naturehood group had a fantastic display stand with lots of useful information and some plants to take away for a small donation. The First and Last Mile team were also present to promote their 411 and 418 bus service and details of the timetable were provided on their stand and residents were encouraged to talk to them about this new initiative to provide a bus service to our residents.

BREAK FOR REFRESHMENTS: 8.25pm

MEETING RECONVENED: 8.45pm

8. FREELAND 2032 – A VISION – WHAT DO YOU THINK FREELAND WILL LOOK LIKE IN 10 OR 20 YEARS' TIME? PARISH COUNCILLOR AMY JACKSON TO CHAIR A SESSION REGARDING THE ABOVE.

Parish Councillor Amy Jackson introduced herself. She joined the Council in May 2021, when there had been a number of changes and the new Council were now beginning to see what people were interested in. There were a number of items that residents had spoken to her about and were keen to find out more or raise concerns about. Some of these fell under a broader theme of sustainability, which would be explored in this session of the APM.

The Parish Council were keen to play their part in improving the sustainability of the village. As many residents were aware the Council took part in a national initiative of "no mow May", whereby grass verges were left uncut for the month of May to help with pollination and improve biodiversity. Amy acknowledged that communication had perhaps not always been perfect but asked the residents to bear with the Council whilst the trial sites were developed with wildflower seeds which should in time provide a beautiful display.

Another factor affecting sustainability would be the Salt Cross Garden Village, and the Parish Council were hoping to obtain some more information about the development and its impact on sustainability as well as broader implications, although this was not currently available. It was felt this would need a separate stand-alone event as there was a vast amount of information to cover and as Liam had already pointed out, the Garden Village was likely to have a huge impact on Freeland.

There had been a great deal of publicity recently regarding the climate crisis and climate change and increasing sustainability and biodiversity within the village, so the following topics were discussed, with a number of Freeland residents invited to contribute their views on the subjects:

8ctd SUSTAINABILITY IN FREELAND – HOW WE CAN ALL DO MORE TO IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY IN THE VILLAGE SO THAT A LASTING LEGACY IS LEFT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS (CHRISTIAN SILK INVITED TO CONTRIBUTE).

Amy introduced Christian Silk, who gave a brief background, then provided a little of the science behind global warming before talking about the biodiversity crisis.

He said the science on global heating was solid. The Earth's atmosphere naturally contained some greenhouse gases, which trap heat and keep our planet in a temperature range that life has currently adapted to. When energy from the sun reaches the surface of the Earth, it penetrates those gases, but when it tries to radiate away, most of it gets held by those same gases. By burning fossil fuels, humans had drastically changed the atmosphere by adding more greenhouse gases to it, which then caused it to warm up. The Earth was currently 1.2°C warmer than pre-industrial levels, and was currently heading for around an increase of 3° - 6° or more by the end of the century. Although this didn't seem much, this would have devastating consequences which would lead to more extreme dry and hot conditions, leading to drought. It also meant that when it rained, it would rain heavier and for longer causing flooding.

Because of these and other challenges, species were also being destroyed at around 1,000 times than the 'background' extinction rate typical of the earth's past. The global Living Planet Index showed, on average, a decrease of over 2/3 in populations of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish between 1970 and 2016. The State of Nature report found that the UK was "*amongst the most nature-depleted countries in the world*", with 1 in 4 British mammals now at risk of extinction. The most recent report by the British Trust for Ornithology found that more than a quarter of British bird species were threatened, including the puffin, the nightingale, and curlew.

Although it was easy to feel powerless, it was clear that lots of small groups operating around the world had the potential to create real change. This was the case even for our small village. A couple of examples were given of a village in Essex which was having a real push on sustainability, from litter picking to tree planting to banning single use plastic, and another organization that supports community based teams around the world to try and improve sustainability, were working on projects such as composting food waste, zero emissions transport and renewable energy. The concept was that by supporting lots of small actions it added up to a global response.

So in terms of what Freeland residents could all do to help the crisis, some examples were given around mitigation and adaptation, these were as follows:

Mitigation:

- Reduce transport emissions. Transport accounts for about ~30% of emissions, a large proportion of this comes from private cars.
- Encourage public transport, support local bus.
- 20mph limits. Encourages people to cycle as feels safer.
- Walking bus.
- Car sharing scheme?
- Reduce food emissions. Food is another large chunk of emissions.
- Reduce food waste, 30% of produced food was wasted.
- Support locally produced food, reduces food miles.
- Reduce meat consumption / consume locally sourced meat.
- Tree and hedge planting, absorbs emissions and increased biodiversity.
- Community renewable energy scheme. Has potential financial co-benefits for the village.
- Work with the community on insulation schemes.
- Repair cafes.

Adaptation:

- Tree and hedge planting to provide shade and reduce local flood risk.
- Support local food production. How do we protect ourselves from international food supply? Pass on knowhow for growing vegetables, co-benefit of reducing the cost to feed a family.
- Without air conditioning house temperatures will be problematic in summer, especially for elderly. Think about planting to provide shade now.

Christian said he would be interested in speaking to anyone in the village willing to join in setting up a group to look at what opportunities existed to improve Freeland's sustainability.

8ctd FREELAND NATURE RECOVERY (RUSSELL FISHER AND AMANDA WATSON INVITED TO CONTRIBUTE)

After an introduction from Amy, Russell Fisher and Amanda Watson provided a brief talk about the Naturehood Group. They firstly echoed the sentiments in Christian's talk about the state of Nature and the decline in biodiversity. They had already seen great things being achieved in Eynsham with regards to Nature recovery and wanted to do something small but that would still make a difference in Freeland, and so the Freeland Naturehood group was set up.

In the past year, a number of sites had been identified and they had secured confirmation that they could use these sites as trial sites for Nature recovery. Most sites were around 2mx1m in size and were located in Oakland Close, The Green, Parklands and the Broadmarsh Lane amenity area. An extra one was being added in the Amenity Area and on Wroslyn Road. Grass, although green, was not great for wildlife, so a mixture of Yellow Rattle (which helps slow the growth down of invasive grass species) and wildflower seeds were chosen.

Volunteers came out to help scarify and prepare the plots and the seeds were sown in Autumn last year, and it would be interesting to see how successful they would be. If successful, it was hoped further sites would be selected for similar sowing.

If anyone was interested in joining the group they were encouraged to talk to Amanda or Russell after the meeting or the Parish Council could put residents in touch with them.

Russell and Amanda were thanked for attending and providing their lovely stand.

8ctd FREELAND HALL – A BEACON OF SUSTAINABILITY (ROBERT CROCKER INVITED TO CONTRIBUTE)

Amy outlined Parish Council plans to make Freeland Village Hall a 'beacon of sustainability' an idea originally brought up by Andy Bain in a Parish council meeting back in 2021– whereby ways would be sought to reduce the environmental impact of the hall. It was thought that the process of researching these opportunities could prove useful to Freeland residents – for example in identifying more attractive solar panels or ways of siting panels less obtrusively. Grants were possibly available from AICRE and these would be explored as part of the project. The Parish Council had set up a working group with the Village hall Management Committee to progress this.

On behalf of the VHMC, Rob Crocker was invited to comment on the initiative. He said an opportunity also lay in replacing the hall's gas boiler heating with ground or air

source heating. The cheapest form of heating was insulation, and they were fortunate enough to have a very well insulated Hall. Plans were in the very early stages meetings were scheduled to discuss how to take this forward and explore ideas.

Rob was thanked for his input and Amy said the Parish Council would continue to report back on progress in this area.

8ctd SPEEDWATCH (AILSA CLARKE INVITED TO CONTRIBUTE)

Lastly, Amy introduced Ailsa Clarke, a member of the Freeland Speedwatch team, to give a short update on Speedwatch activities to reduce traffic speed and make Freeland a safer and more enjoyable place to walk and cycle.

Ailsa had been a member of the Speedwatch team since September 2021. The village often felt like a rat run and so she wanted to do something for the community. Since the group had restarted their activities there had been a noticeable reduction in speed through the village, so behaviour did change.

Freeland was a long linear village and it was challenging to stick to 30mph. One driver was clocked driving 45mph from Freeland House towards the Green. It was felt that the group needed to continue, especially with the Garden Village being built and more cars likely to be coming through Freeland using it as a rat run.

Ailsa expressed her support for the 20mph zoned areas in the village which she felt was achievable, rather than having 20mph throughout the whole village which she felt was unrealistic.

Ailsa was also a member of the Traffic Calming Working Group and some proposals they were investigating was to have village gateways at each end of the village as a way of enabling behaviour change.

Ailsa was thanked for her talk and Amy then passed back to the Chairman for a question and answer session.

14. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Some questions from residents were taken regarding the 'No Mow May' initiative and how this would impact on the grass verges in the village, litter bin replacements, and a possible cycle path to Eynsham. These were all responded to. The litter bin between Oakland Close and the A4095 had been removed and needed replacing – the Clerk would follow this up.

The grass verge from Pigeon House Lane down to the Green would be left uncut, but would have the edges mown to ensure it looked tidy and tended to rather than abandoned! Residents were asked to bear with this as they wouldn't always get it right in terms of No Mow May, but the Council were keen to do their bit to help wildlife and

biodiversity and things could be tweaked along the way if needed. The entrance around the Garden of Remembrance would be mown to ensure it remained respectful.

A question was also raised about reviewing the Freeland junction on the A4095 in light of possible increased traffic with the Salt Cross Garden Village and reprioritizing to change to turn left into Cuckoo Lane rather than coming through Freeland – this was already being looked at as a possibility but nothing definite had been decided.

A query was also raised about a possible standby generator for the Village Hall to provide emergency electricity in the event of a mass power cut in the village – this needed to be directed to the Village Hall Management Committee.

A comment was also made about the last post in the village having been changed to 9.00am, rather than later in the day which was not helpful for those working from home. This needed to be directed to Royal Mail.

Freeland Village Survey

Amy then introduced the Freeland Village survey. This was open to everyone and not only restricted to those who live in the village, but to anyone who visited here. The survey would be available to complete both online (via a QR code) and in a paper copy and details would be in the next Grapevine. Paper copies could be returned to Amy or Fay Friend's house and there was also the chance to win 4 X £25 shopping vouchers in a prize draw, to those who returned their surveys. Residents were strongly urged to complete and return the survey. The Parish Council were keen to only make changes that the village wanted and wished to do it together with the residents so it was really important for them to find out exactly what residents wanted now and going forward in the future.

Queen's Jubilee celebrations – Sunday 5th June

One final request was made for some help with the Platinum Jubilee celebration being organised on the playing field on Sunday 5th June. The Parish Council were trying to organise a community village event but couldn't do this on their own so if anyone was able to offer some assistance were asked to contact Fay Friend, the new Clerk and their help would be greatly appreciated.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for their time, interest and input and the meeting closed at 9.40pm.