

APM

Moulsford Parish Council

Welcome to the Annual Parish Meeting of Electors, the first in person since May 2019.

This meeting is not confined to Parish Council matters although the Parish Council should have representation at the meeting it is not bound by the outcome of any matter arising in the meeting. In Moulsford recently, this meeting has been scheduled and run by the parish council.

Tonight, we have short presentations from MPC, summarising what has been happening and what are our priorities for the upcoming year. We also have other presentations from people and groups in and around Moulsford.

I'm going to start with the summary of what Moulsford Parish Council has been doing in the last couple of years.

As you would expect, MPC spent much of 2020 and 2021 discussing the effect of the pandemic in Moulsford and our response to it. We shut down the playground and we set up a support network for parishioners needing help – our thanks to Bernie Sachse and the team of volunteers who enabled this to happen. We also acquired a zoom account which was regularly used by the Parish Council, Events Committee, Pavilion Management Committee and Moulsford Coffee Shop. I have to say our meetings over Zoom were rather more enjoyable than usual as we had more members of the parish join in. I suppose our meetings offered an opportunity to engage in some form of interactivity in a bleak, social landscape, and they certainly provided some unintentionally jolly moments until the discovery of our individual mute buttons.

During the pandemic (I'm thinking about the time from the start of the first lockdown until the end of the last lockdown in July 2021) we managed some notable achievements – Cllr Andy Bryan worked with the Moulsford Residents' Group in response to the FotE planning application which threatened to change the outlook of our recreation ground, the centre of our village. The Residents' Group made a huge contribution, informing the village, keeping the issue in our minds, encouraging villagers to respond. Planning permission was eventually refused. Our thanks to the Residents' Group and also to Cllr Andy Bryan who produced an epic response – both material and articulate – on behalf of the Parish Council.

We also had a plenty of input from the community residing around Cranford House, particularly Martin Eagle, when the school put in temporary floodlights resulting in lots of noise and light pollution in our cherished dark skies. Another very satisfactory result when this initiative, too, was eventually thwarted.

MPC started our recreation ground project with a working group who scoped out what was important for Moulsford and how we could achieve that. There's still plenty of work to be done here but we have made a start, particular thanks to Peter Greathead for all his time and expert advice and, of course, to Jo Baker for instigating and running this project for the parish council.

Finally, the way our committees pulled out all the stops to be in a position to open up the pavilion and to put on an event as soon as allowable. With the situation and regulations evolving, plans were often thwarted but never did they lose their enthusiasm for trying. Amazing efforts from PMC, MEC and the Coffee Shop.

Later in 2021, the Sewage Treatment Plant upgrade finally happened – we inherited this from the previous council, so it had been a long time coming. This necessitated the temporary closure of the

allotments, which had to be slightly redrawn and reallocated and a new contract agreed with SODC who own the land. Our thanks to Cllr Ben Partridge for taking this on for us, we are however still waiting for a new lease from SODC who own the land.

Sadly, MPC had two resignations in 2021 – Bernie Sachse and Andy Bryan – both much valued by MPC for their considerable efforts on behalf of the village, particularly through the pandemic which stretched us all. However, we count ourselves fortunate to have been able to co-opt Martin Eagle and Sue Powell relatively quickly; MPC remained quorate throughout.

My final memory of 2021 is the run up to the Gala Evening the week before Christmas. So many preparations and massive aspirations but Covid cases were climbing, everyone was well aware how quickly the country could be shut down. The papers were full of super-spreader stories, neighbouring communities were cancelling events, people were reconsidering their plans and I was nervously imagining the embarrassment of being named and shamed by the Daily Mail! What was I thinking! The Events Team had all precautions in hand, Moultsford enjoyed a brilliant evening, with no reported infections afterwards. Particular thanks to Babs Leslie who played a blinder on the organisation of this event, Moultsford Prep who kindly allowed us to use their beautiful marquee and, of course, to Nigel Baker who made sure it went ahead!

The pandemic highlighted some important things in Moultsford – firstly the amazing walks and countryside, we all realise how lucky we are to be living here and able to have access to walks through our local farms and estates! Wasn't it wonderful to be able to exchange a few well-distanced words with others also out and about enjoying the fabulous weather in the first lockdown. Also notable was the adoption of digital for easy payments and simple video conferencing, we all love cashless and zoom now! With digital in mind, the parish council noted that our communication methods with villagers were not always good enough, particularly for timely and evolving situations. Cllr Sue Powell has taken this on for us, and will talk through the outcome of our discussions about parish communications later this evening.

2022 has largely been business as pre-pandemic normal. The exception has been the opportunity to apply for a pilot scheme for a more accessible version of the neighbourhood plan. If you are not already aware, the government describes neighbourhood planning as giving:communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area.

Importantly, neighbourhood plans are taken into account in the planning process. For councils, they establish what, where, how etc is acceptable and considerations around these matters. However, they do require a massive amount of work, in the end this deterred us, along with many other small communities, from attempting them.

The local placemaking plan, as a pilot scheme, has significant help from SODC planning department – both advisory and financially – and although there is no guarantee that the pilot scheme will be adopted, it would still be a valuable exercise as we would understand more about what is important to us and to planners. We applied on the basis it was too good an opportunity to miss.

Earlier this month, we were delighted to hear that our application has been approved and we have been invited to join the pilot scheme. We'll be setting up a working group once we have had initial consultation with SODC.

I can't close without marking the passing in October 2020 of Miles Powell. Miles worked tirelessly for the village during his years as a parish councillor, 8 of them as chairman. It's thanks in large part to him that this new council could so quickly pick up the reins and continue with business when it took over in May 2019. Miles is a fine example of someone who made a difference in especially so for anyone considering standing for election to MPC in May 2023 when a new council will be formed.

Finally, and most importantly, Moultsford is very fortunate to have many regular volunteers who use their valuable time to help keep our village a wonderful, residential location – in no particular order, our thanks and appreciation to:

- The Moultsford News Editor, Katya Abel and her predecessor Bernie Sachse, along with the team of distribution volunteers who coordinated by Linda and Daryl Dixon
- Moultsford Prep School who print our Moultsford News and mow the grass on our recreation field.
- Geoff Twibell as Moultsford's neighbourhood watch coordinator
- Local footpath wardens John and Val Viner
- Gail Slinger and Linda Dixon, plus those putting on the kettle at the monthly Coffee Shop at the Pavilion
- Jo and Nigel Baker and the team of volunteers looking after the Wildflower Meadow on the rec.
- Twinks and John House and the churchyard working party, keeping that a lovely, peaceful place to visit
- Morris Elvin for agreeing to continue the sterling work around the rec which was previously undertaken by his son, Rupert, whose passing we also sadly marked during 2021.
- Veronica Shann as the Age UK Moultsford representative.
- Peter Greathead for the Xmas Tree chipping service – also Peter and Ollie Smith regularly put chippings on the path behind the rec so it's not so mucky in the wet months.
- Pavilion Management Committee: Nigel Mansford as Chair; Philip Sachse – vice Chair; Deb Wilkins; Rhona Bellis – Treasurer – she also acts as internal auditor for the Parish Council also Peter Brass her predecessor; Emma Shakeri – Secretary; Karen Gilmore - Bookings Secretary; Tony Hughes – Caretaker.
- Moultsford Events Committee: Nigel Baker as Chair and his predecessor Dave Reynolds who stepped down in 2021; Stephanie Musk - Treasurer; Sue Powell – Secretary and her predecessor Bernie Sachse; along with Rob Longden; Niall Douglas; Tracey Lee; John Bleach; Katya Abel; Jo Haywood; Hilary Shaw; and Twinks.
- Finally, although not a volunteer, our thanks to Geoff, the parish clerk, for all your efforts, and for your good humour and common sense.

If I have missed anyone, my apologies,
but please do email me so that you are included retrospectively in this written report.

Thank you.