

Minutes of the Caversfield Annual Parish Meeting
Wednesday 5 May 2021 at 7.30pm
Held virtually via Zoom

Present

Chairman:	Cllr Glenice Sutcliffe
Clerk:	Mrs Jane Olds
Caversfield Residents:	6 residents
District Councillors:	Cllr Lynn Pratt
Other visitors:	Col Jon Hannah (USAF); Ms Laura Haddy (RAF Liaison Officer)

Cllr Sutcliffe (Chairman of the Parish Council) welcomed everyone to Caversfield's Annual Parish Meeting and thanked them for coming.

1. **Apologies** had been received from District Councillors Nick Mawer and Jason Slaymaker.
2. **The Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting** held on 15 May 2019 were agreed to be a true record and were signed by the Chair.

There had been no meeting in 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Chairman's Report

The Chairman introduced herself.

I stepped up from Vice Chairman in September when Eleanor Booth-Davey our previous Chairman stepped down, Eleanor is currently the Vice Chairman.

In January 2019, we said goodbye to Councillor John Gilmore, who had to retire due to ill health. John first took office as a Parish Councillor in May 2000 and in May 2012 he was elected Chairman, in which capacity he more than ably served until his retirement. John sadly died in January 2020. The Parish Council would like to offer his family our condolences.

Our current Councillors are Eleanor Booth-Davey, Tom Astley, June Nisbet, Fiona Hitchcock, Stewart Boughtflower (Co-opted in 2020) and until recently Terry Williams. Terry has since resigned due to moving out of district, we thank him for his service & wish him well for the future. That leaves one vacancy, so anyone interested in joining the Council would be welcome to come along and find out what it is all about. It isn't onerous... there is plenty of support from our excellent Clerk, Jane, with training

available to all Councillors (old and new!), but it does not involve a significant time commitment, and is a great way to contribute to your local community.

All villagers are entitled to come to Parish Council meetings and either speak for three minutes at the beginning or observe the whole meeting. We are always grateful when villagers attend and contribute, as this is an invaluable part of the democratic process that we should like to encourage everyone to take part in. We normally meet in the Community Room of Gagle Brook School on the third Wednesday of alternate months at 7.30pm. But during the pandemic the Meetings have been held on-line via Zoom; unfortunately, the Government Authority for this terminates on the 6th May 2021 and it is unclear today when we may be able to resume meetings in person. But we are hoping to get back to normal at some point this year. If you would like to receive the agenda and minutes by email, please do sign up on our website.

As I am sure you will have seen from the Minutes which our Clerk diligently displays on the Skimmingdish Lane noticeboard and on the Parish Website, there has been a wide variety of discussions taking place throughout the last two years. The Council must ensure that our policies and procedures are kept up to date.

The Parish Council met eight times between April 2019 and March 2020. Six of these were our regular meetings and we held two additional planning meetings. The Annual Parish Meeting was not held due to the pandemic.

From April 2020 to March 2021 a total of 6 meetings have been held on-line via Zoom.

Due consideration and responses to planning applications within our Parish are required. The Council received just 4 Applications in 2019/20 and 4 in 2020/21 with the majority of these being for small extensions.

However, there have been consultations on the several larger developments planned – such as the two projects at Bicester Heritage – where worthwhile time was taken to listen to the concerns of the villagers who had made the effort to come to meetings, compose responses representing their views, and consequently see beneficial changes or additions made.

However, while Bicester Heritage is not in the Parish, we have been pleased to be included as a statutory consultee on their plans because of the potential impact on the village. The Parish values the opportunity to hear the concerns of villagers who have made the effort to come to meetings and make their views known in order that the Council is able to send an informed view back to the District Council.

The result of our response to applications can now be seen with the current works in progress on the A4421 crossing to connect the bus stops.

Most recently we have been consulted on proposals for alterations to the Banbury Road roundabout at the junction with Southwold Lane, after an initial Planning meeting held recently by Zoom. We will be keeping a close eye on the future plans.

Additional to annual “housekeeping” for the village noted in the Clerk’s Report, we were pleased that County Councillor Lawrie Stratford was able to support our request for a pavement, to connect the top of Springfield Road along the Fringford Road to the Bainton Public Right of Way entrance across the fields. We thank Oxfordshire County Council for undertaking the work. We also arranged for the Fringford Road pavements to be weed sprayed twice yearly to reduce the encroaching weeds, for the dog bins to be emptied and salt bins replenished.

For Halloween 2019, we worked with the MoD Police, the UK Police, the County Emergency Planning Team and the Fire Service on a plan to ensure that everyone who lives in the village or visits on Halloween was able to navigate safely around the village. The plan worked well. We were pleased to have many fewer complaints and issues than in previous years. But due to the pandemic, the decision was made by the wider team of County Council Emergency Planning Team, Fire Officers, Police and MoD to discourage public participation in Halloween October 2020. However, a few houses were still able to decorate their doorways & gardens to keep the Halloween spirit alive. A few folks took a walk or a drive around the village for some very low-key fun & entertainment, social distancing being the new norm. No parties or problems were reported. Thank you to everyone for being understanding & sensible last year. Hopefully, this year will be back to normal, crossing fingers the weather is good.

The accounts and processes have been inspected by the internal auditor for both years and the forms for the 2020/21 external audit will be sent off shortly. The Accounts will be available for inspection in June - please contact the Clerk, Jane, directly if you would like to see them.

We should like to thank the MoD on behalf of Cherwell for their permission to have the Polling Station for elections in the Park on 6th May 2021 – it is much appreciated.

Finally, I should like to extend my thanks to my fellow Councillors for the time and effort they give to the parish; to our Parish Clerk, Jane, for her exceptional assistance; and to our County Councillor, Lawrie Stratford, and District Councillors, Lynn Pratt, Nick Mawer and Jason Slaymaker for all their support over the past two years. Councillor Lawrie Stratford has decided to retire and is not standing for re-election again, the Parish Council would like to wish him well for the future and thank him once again for all his contribution to our meetings.

5. Financial report for the year ended 31 March 2021

The Parish Council books have been inspected by the internal auditor and I have provided a statement of accounts which I hope explains the Parish finances. The Statement is also available in the 2020/21 Accounts section of the website.

As usual, the majority of the Council's expenditure this year has been spent on keeping the village clean and tidy and on the general administration.

The regular expenditure has managed to stay fairly static. Of course, the dog bin emptying (for which the Council has to pay £600 a year to Cherwell) and the grass cutting on Skimmingdish Lane and in Old School Close has to be done and the Parish legally has to have insurance.

A full budget for the 21/22 year was agreed in January. This year the Precept was increased to £6,386 (an increase of just under 3% or £186 on the previous year); which meant that Band D properties would pay an additional 10p over the whole year.

The Parish Council's Reserves Policy has been adopted in order to meet the Parish's obligations; these include holding the recommended three months' running costs, the possibility of having to pay for an election (at about £1,600), and various contingencies, including setting aside a sum for bus shelter repairs and this year, an insurance excess. Unfortunately, unless the Parish takes out a loan which is agreed by the Public Works and Loans Board, the Parish is unable to borrow money, so it is essential that funds are set aside in ear-marked reserves to pay for things when needed.

I have put on the Statement the S137 expenditure allowance. This allowance is published by Government and gives Parish Councils the power to 'to incur expenditure for certain purposes not otherwise authorised'. However, as the Council has adopted the General Power of Competence, there is a little more flexibility in the awarding of grants and general expenditure.

You can follow the Parish Council through both Facebook which we use as a virtual noticeboard, or via the website, which has a wealth of information. If you haven't already signed up to receive our regular updates and meeting notices, please do – you can find a quick form on the right hand side of the Home page.

If you have any questions, please do either ask now, or at the end of the meeting.

The accounts will be available to view from the beginning of June.

There were no questions.

6. Report from representatives from RAF Croughton

Col Hannah gave Squadron Leader Jayne Robertson's apologies. He gave a summary of the year.

Despite the pandemic, RAF Croughton remained fully operational and he looked forward to meeting people in person in due course.

Regarding the vacant local housing, there was no change or progress. They were waiting for the official report which had not yet been finalised.

It was hoped that the British American Committee would be re-starting the Caversfield Fete in 2022.

The CCTV had been implemented in the MoD parts of the village and along Thompson Drive. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation was currently working with Stratton Fields Management Company to come to an arrangement about the licence to operate.

7. Report from the British American Committee

No report had been received.

8. County Councillor's Report

Councillor Stratford had informed the Parish that he would be standing down at the next election and sent his apologies.

The Chairman and District Councillors paid tribute to Councillor Stratford. He had served Caversfield and Bicester well and wished him a good retirement.

9. District Councillors' Reports

Councillor Pratt reported that the bridge work at Howes Lane had been completed over the Easter weekend.

A consultation on the Banbury Road roundabout junction and a further consultation on the London Road railway crossing were currently under way.

Councillor Pratt wished to convey her congratulations to Bicester Heritage and to all the GPs and surgeries for the vaccination centre. It had worked very well.

CDC and OCC were currently holding joint meetings regarding how to open up again following the prolonged lockdowns.

The elections for District, County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner would be taking place the following day on 6 May.

10. Village Management Company Reports

No reports had been received.

11. Any other business

There was no further business.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

The minutes were taken by Jane Olds, Clerk to the Parish Council

The meeting closed at 7.56pm.

Signed..... Date.....