

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 4 MAY 2021
AT 7.30PM VIA ZOOM

Present: Cllr A Sheppard, Chair of the Parish Council
Five members of the Parish Council and the Parish Clerk
County Councillor Harrod
12 members of the public

The Chairman welcomed everyone. The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 8 April 2019 were approved and signed.

Chairman of the Parish Council's Report

It is two years since the last Chairman's report; last year's meeting was an early casualty of lockdown due to Covid. Nevertheless, the Parish Council did not miss any meetings as Zoom was quickly established as the way forward.

Meeting via Zoom had Pros and Cons: on the Pro side, many more members of the public attended than usual, and reviewing Planning Applications on screen worked well.

On the negative side, it made meaningful discussion much harder, and I think I speak for all Councillors when I say a return to physical meetings is welcome, and the June meeting is planned to be in the village hall.

The Parish Council were ready and willing, along with a host of parishioners, to offer help and support, to anyone who needed it, during lockdown, which was heartwarming and a sense of community prevailed, aided by communication via the Haseley Update emails, The Haseleys magazine, and Facebook page. I think we all felt lucky to be living in this place at that time.

So, what has the Parish Council been doing over the last year? Contrary to popular opinion we did not just talk about dog waste and where to put it!

Adult exercise equipment was installed on the Playing Fields, at no cost to Parish Council funds. A consultation was carried out on ideas on how to spend the Community Infrastructure Levy. The response rate of 36% was excellent, and the results were used to decide spending priorities. So far, money has been spent on contributing to the improvement of the surface of Backway and purchasing the many daffodil bulbs that have brightened up our spring. We will focus next on replacing some of the Children's Play Equipment that is coming to the end of its life.

The allotments have been very popular and expanded to meet demand. The Parish Council's IT infrastructure has been updated and made more cost effective, and a Parish Council Facebook page opened to increase outreach to villagers. The revamped Haseleys website is a work in progress. An accounts package has been purchased, which should, once established, save the clerk time and enable the Parish Council to more easily and effectively monitor its budget.

Thirty-six planning applications for the Parish have been reviewed and responded to during the past year, and continues to be an important and time-consuming part of the council's work. Some are quite significant and technical: there are currently plans for three solar farms locally under consideration and the Gas Power station may yet re-emerge. The Parish Council also responded to The Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire to 2050 and the national consultations on the Planning System and the 'Planning for the Future' white paper.

The Parish Council continued to respond the on-going South Oxfordshire Local Plan: I represented the Parish Council remotely at the Examination in Public and we responded to the Main Modifications consultation following the inspectors report. Chalgrove Airfield is a strategic site in the adopted Local Plan, and the Parish Council has engaged with the Highways Department to try and mitigate potential traffic effects on The Haseleys. There is an outstanding planning application, for the development, which

is currently in hiatus due to a damning objection by the Civil Aviation Authority. Whilst Chalgrove Airfield, should it happen, would have a pretty devastating effect on the locality, the threat of Harrington is of even greater concern to most parishioners. South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) are now commencing work on their new Local Plan, and there is great pressure for housing in Oxfordshire so the re-emergence of Harrington is a threat that the PC is very much alive to.

Preliminary work has agreed Terms of Reference for Neighbourhood Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan would enable the community to play a much stronger role in shaping the areas in which we live, because, unlike the parish plan that was completed a few years ago, a neighbourhood plan forms part of the SODC Local Development Plan. Once adopted, decisions on planning applications would be made using both the local plan and the Neighbourhood plan.

This is a very significant undertaking and it will only be possible to pursue it with considerable help from parishioners, prepared to step up and get involved. Look out for further news and information on this and if you think you might be are interested, do make contact.

There is currently a vacancy on the Parish Council, created by Elisabeth Spencer stepping down after many years of service, her contribution will be much missed. If you are interested in contributing more to your community and you think it might be of interest, find out more about this rewarding and important role by talking to any Councillor and applying to the Clerk by 16 May.

I would like to finish by extending my thanks to all the Parish Councillors for their commitment and diligence in carrying out their duties over the last very challenging year.

David Lindsay for his excellent work on planning and updating our IT systems. Caroline Pickett for her energy, and enthusiasm, sorting the adult play equipment, and bulbs and managing the allotments. Paul Woodrow for willingly stepping up, and doing many money saving jobs around the village and his chairmanship of the Village Hall Committee. Caroline Mcguirk for providing the Parish Council notes for The Haseleys every month and for producing and analysing the very professional Community Infrastructure Levy consultation document. Tim Suter for volunteering to take on the work on the Neighbourhood Plan and Faster broadband and not forgetting Alice Gheissari for her time on the Parish Council, looking after footpaths. Finally thank you to Andrea, our knowledgeable and efficient Clerk and Financial Officer.

Fingers and toes are crossed that the Covid restrictions are lifted as planned and the Parish Council's plans for a village celebration party, on July 10 come off. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Responsible Financial Officer's Report

2020 and the pandemic – presented the Parish Council with some operational challenges. Not being able to meet in person and having to adapt quickly to remote meetings being just one. This was a learning curve not just for Councillors but also myself as Clerk.

The financial audit of 2019-20 accounts also had to be undertaken remotely. Government legislation pushed the deadline for submission of accounts to the External Auditor from beginning of July to the end of September.

The internal audit was undertaken by Mr Dick Heinrich between 21 April and 18 June 2020 following the Scope of Work agreed by the Parish Council.

The audit concluded the Income & Expenditure account and the Balance Sheet to be fair reflection of the financial position of the Council. The separation of the financial affairs of The Haseleys magazine from the Council's financial transactions would greatly reduce the number of transactions going through the Council's accounts in the following year 2020-21.

2019-20 financial year saw the receipt of nearly £11k of Community Infrastructure Levy, this together with a Precept of £15k and Haseley income from advertising pushed the income and expenditure

over the £25k threshold and required the completion of Part 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return submitted to Moore, the Government appointed External Auditors in July 2020.

The External Auditor's Report concluded the information provided was in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met. There were no other matters affecting their opinion and a Certificate of a 'clean audit' was issued on 15 November 2020.

A number of charitable donations were made during the year. The Parish Council continued to support the Village Hall and St Peter's Church with a contribution towards the cost of grass cutting and payment of the annual service of the church clock.

Finally, I would like to thank the Parish Councillors for their support and especially the Chair, Amanda Sheppard. I would also like to thank Dick Heinrich for his continued support with the Internal Auditor.

County Councillor Report

County Councillor Harrod reported the last year had been dominated by the pandemic which has had a huge impact on the County Council's delivery of services. Some financial savings have been made over the year due to a different way of working. Going forward the County Council will work in a different way using the positive lessons learnt such as hybrid meetings and selective home working.

During summer 2020 independent experts looked at different options for local government structures. Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council engaged PwC to complete the work, their report set out three options; a) Optimising the existing two tier collaboration, b) a new single unitary authority and c) two new unitary authorities based on a 50/50 split of population. The review didn't make any recommendations but rather enabled the start of useful conversations with Government.

A balanced budget was agreed in February 2021 providing continued investment in key services and avoidance of cuts to frontline delivery. The County Councillors' Priority Fund of £15,000 will be spread over two years.

After answering a number of questions the Chair thanked Cllr Harrod for his report.

District Councillor's Report

District Councillor Newton sent her apologies and could not attend the Annual Parish Meeting. Cllr Newton provided a report to the Parish Council meeting which followed.

Reports from Organisations in the Parish

Great Haseley Cricket Club (Chris Groves)

Summary of Season 2020

Cricket Season 2020 was obviously hit by the Covid 19 pandemic. It was decided early in the year that all Great Haseley Cricket Club matches would be cancelled and as there was no league programme, any cricket played by Tiddington 3s would be accommodated elsewhere. With no cricket being played at the Haseley Cricket Ground (HCG), it was an ideal opportunity to focus resources on improving the facilities. To that end and thanks to some loan machinery from Ariens, a programme of spraying scarifying and cutting was put into place. Funds that had been secured for provision of sightscreens in 2020 were rolled over for use in the 2021 season.

2021 Season

Sightscreens were eventually purchased with funds provided from SODC Councillor Community Grant (CG19-20/142) and Councillor Priority Fund. Further ground works continued in spring 2021 in preparation for a busy season with the following cricket fixtures secured at HCG.

Fixtures

Tiddington CC	9 Saturday League fixtures
Tiddington CC U15s	4 Monday evening fixtures
Great Haseley CC	6 Sunday Home fixtures (& Potential Six a side tournament)
Holton CC	10 Sunday fixtures & 1 Midweek Fixture

Acknowledgements

All we have achieved to date would not have been possible without input from the following:

Caroline Newton - Councillor Community Grant – CG19-10/142

Steve Harrod - Councillor Priority Grant

Ariens - loan ride on Mower/Scarifyer and donation of wicket mower

Rob Peers – Spraying and Ground Clearance

Dan Bennett – Additional Scarifying and Rolling

Ray Manning – Wicket preparation

GHCC Work party – General ground clearance and tidy up

Great Haseley History Group (Jane Simcox)

The Great Haseley History Group has little report as we have been unable to meet. We were saddened at the death of one of our keenest members, John Andrews. He kept us all entertained with his knowledge of local history and putting it into context with national events. He will be missed along with his wife Jill who was invaluable in helping to set up various exhibitions that the History Group has put on.

We have continued with the Churchyard project and we have now completed approximately 450 gravestones with about another 200 to do. This has been a labour of love for those undertaking the work and has revealed fascinating life in Haseley throughout the years. We have found people who have died from the plague, a man who had four wives, all dying before him and sadly quite a number of graves for children. When all the stones have been recorded and a map of the churchyard has been produced, it will be made into an interactive file where you can put in a name, the system will find it and then click on it and it will show where the grave is together with the inscription.

David and I have spent the second lockdown cataloguing all the papers, photos, pictures etc., that have been donated over the years. This has been a mammoth task but whilst going through a bag donated by Rodney Newell who lived in The Barracks, we found some information about his work at the Forest Products Laboratory in Princes Risborough. I contacted Princes Risborough Area Heritage Society to see whether they would be interested in the photos etc., and they were delighted to see them. I also contacted Lord Williams's School as there were exam papers, school certificates etc., from the 1920s and the Archivist contacted me and I delivered the folder recently. I then received an email from the Head Teacher of the School thanking me. That is a first for me as I was usually the one being told off.

We hope to start monthly meetings once things have eased a little but I will put a note out to let those who are interested, know when we start these again. If anyone feels they want to come along and help with the churchyard project or just see what we do, they are very welcome. We meet at 10.30 each Wednesday (weather permitting) and work through to 12.00ish so do join us.

Great Haseley & District Horticultural Society (Louise Bird)

A quiet year due to the pandemic with only one talk at the beginning of the year, thankfully we cancelled our AGM which should have taken place just before the first lockdown.

While we've have had no formal events this year some limited socially distanced seedling swapping happened. We hope that we may be able to resume our program of talks and visits in the Autumn. We had planned to have a large show last year, because of the continuing uncertainty this will now happen next year.

However, we are keen to stage a show and we are planning to hold a small show on the usual date (Saturday of the August bank holiday weekend) which can be scaled or indeed cancelled according to the COVID regulations in operation at the time.

Playing Fields (Elisabeth Spencer)

It's been quite a year! A pavilion window was broken as a result of vandalism and some roof tiles replaced. A smart meter has been fitted in the pavilion. Three pieces of outdoor exercise equipment were installed in 2020 which have proved very popular. The problem of dog fouling continues.

No cricket or tennis was played in 2020 and there was no income from the Playing Fields. We look forward to both cricket and tennis recommencing in 2021. Thanks to Mike Howlett who looks after the pavilion all year round.

St Peter's Church (Toby Garfitt)

Like everyone else, the church has had a challenging and sometimes difficult year. The building has had to be kept locked for much of the time, with only a few Sunday services possible in the late summer and autumn, and no bell-ringing or flag-flying.

There were two funerals, for which numbers had to be kept below 30. On the other hand, it was permitted to hold events in the churchyard, and they proved very popular: a harvest celebration in September, the village Remembrance Day commemoration, which we were pleased to host, and a joyful Easter Day Family Communion service with over 100 people taking part.

Regular weekly services have continued on Zoom, and these have been appreciated by many, particularly those who have been shielding or who could not attend a live service even when there was one. And the church has been open on Sundays throughout, for people to come in and enjoy our beautiful building, and perhaps say a prayer.

The project to record all the monumental inscriptions in the church and the graveyard is progressing well thanks to Jim Baldwin and his team. Valuable work has been done by David and Jane Simcox, and more recently by John Gibbons, in clearing sections of the churchyard of dead trees and scrub.

Urgent building work was delayed by the pandemic and by the need to identify sources of funding, but a contract has now been issued for work to start on repairs to the tower roof and stonework. The churchyard gates and pillars will soon be removed for repair, and new fencing will shortly be installed along the boundary of the churchyard extension, a small triangle of land generously donated by John Alexander, with the help of a community grant from our County Councillor.

At a time when our normal income is insufficient to cover all our costs including our share of the Rector's salary and the upkeep of the building, these extra commitments are placing a severe strain on our finances, so we are enormously grateful for the grants and donations we have received. We are delighted to be organizing a collection next week for Christian Aid, to help people across the world who are much needier than ourselves.

Great Haseley Sports Club (Fiona Weiss - GHSC Committee – Charlotte, Jo, Mel & Viki)

The courts were extensively cleaned in March 2020 just in time for the first lockdown!

When permitted the courts were reopened in 2020 and coaching commenced with Neil James - our long-standing coach - delivering 18 weeks of lessons on Sunday mornings.

Membership fees were reduced for 2020-2021 due to lockdown. We had a good number of members last year, and when allowed the courts were used quite a bit.

The courts are now 20 years old but due to ongoing maintenance are still in good condition. We intend to replace the tennis nets and posts this year as they are getting very worn.

For the new membership year 2021-2022, we have kept the membership fees at the same reduced rates as last year and there has been a large uptake in membership already.

Coaching has just begun again for the season and there are 29 children having lessons every Sunday morning, as well as a few adults!

All of the GHSC Committee have served for at least 10 years and we are now looking for some new faces to join. If you are interested please contact us or come along to our AGM on Tuesday 8th June (venue to be confirmed).

Village Hall (Paul Woodrow)

2020 was very quiet. Finances are okay thanks to receipt of government COVID grants for village halls. There is an expectation some exercise classes may not return.

The hall is in good order, the dehumidifiers installed are doing the job. Quotations for replacement heating are being sought, however, there is challenge in that it has been discovered there is no insulation between the internal and exterior stone walls. The Committee is now looking at building a new insulated wall.

The Committee was pleased to be able to make the hall available for John Andrews wake and hope 'pop up' events will commence in the near future. A deep clean has been booked for Monday 10 May. The book swap will return when the weather improves.

Open Forum – Questions from Electors / Public Discussion

A parishioner asked if the Village Hall Committee had heard anything further from the Midsomer Murders production company about hiring the village hall? Paul replied that sadly he had not received any further communication.

Cllr McGuirk had received any enquiry about children's camping in Miss Cross Field or the Playing Fields. Elisabeth Spencer said similar enquiries had been received in the past and offered to contact the enquirer.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.15pm

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Chairman
11 April 2022