

The Parish of Great & Little Bourton, Oxfordshire
Annual Parish Residents Meeting
Tuesday 16TH May 2023 at The Community Hall, Great Bourton
Chairman's Report

Once again, my sincere thanks to our current councillors who have each taken on responsibility for various aspects of the council's responsibilities. Vice chair, Andrew Johnson, keeps us up to date on local health matters, the school and Cluster Care activities. Heather King has provided an important link with the Community Hall and overseen the Bourton's playgrounds. Gilly Duckworth together with Jo Beales and Gill Brooks, are progressing the Little Bourton improvement programme and Gilly keeps an eye on the LB play area as well as being our link with the Wildlife group headed up by Ann Brooks who is organising another Wildlife Day in June. Jo also takes responsibility for the Allotments, working alongside our Clerk to manage day to day activities and she also reports on the potholes in Little Bourton and is the FixMyStreet superuser for LB. Gill Brooks, the latest addition to our council, helps with much of the practical stuff when a councillor presence is needed such as the selling of the Fairport tickets.

Our clerk Steve Bowen continues to provide a thorough and proactive administration service to the council, which is a huge benefit given that we seem to have more than our fair share of issues for a council covering only 300+ households. I should say here that without Steve's level of commitment and expertise, my job as Chairman, would be at least ten times more difficult than it is.

Our thanks are also due to those residents who take a keen interest in community needs and have provided all sorts of services. Mervyn Probert and Clare Curnow keep us posted about public rights of way. Andrew Bradbury and John Melrose have been litter picking, Maurice Prew and Simon Bull have worked on the newly constructed footpath at the burial ground: they and many residents turned up to help with the new surface for the Community Hall car park. Tim Brooks and Chris Handler have also supported us with complicated planning applications and our Bourtons Questionnaire, respectively. Jon Pheasey is our Super-User Fix my Street representative for Great Bourton, so is keeping a close watch on our potholes and reporting them. Martin Damen looks after our parish clock and the dial is being refurbished this year: he has been diligent in his care of it for which we are very grateful. We further appreciate the committees of both the Village Hall and the Community Hall who manage each hall to ensure that they are a vital part and amenity for our community. There are others, who do things from time to time and forgive me if I haven't mentioned them all here but let me say that with a Council of only 6 members, it's so helpful when residents take a proactive approach to provide services which we otherwise wouldn't be able to deliver.

We are grateful for the continued support of our County Councillor George Reynolds and District Councillor Phil Chapman both of whom attend our meetings when they are able. George has provided the funds for the new seat which will be sited in Foxden Way to replace the one which was damaged beyond repair. Phil spoke very well for us when we were objecting to the Foxden Way development proposals which were ultimately refused.

In this, our election year, there were no new nominations for councillors, so the current council has been re-elected uncontested with the exception of Cllr Heather King who has decided to stand down this time due to work and family commitments. Apart from the responsibilities recorded above, Heather has been an outstanding Councillor and her knowledge of how things work in the public sector has been of particularly benefit to us. She has also provided a strong link with the Garners Field residents and reported on their difficulties with the current management company at our council meetings. Whilst this isn't a direct responsibility of the Parish Council, we are keen to support the residents where we can.

In light of Heather's resignation we shall therefore be looking to co-opt another Councillor after our May AGM. If any resident is interested in this position, please contact either me or our Clerk.

Going back to my reference of our having more than our fair of issues, you might be interested to know what's on our agenda for the rest of this year:

Our response to the CDC draft Local Plan: Several parcels of land of varying sizes, have been identified in our parish for housing development. If all were developed it would add a further 200+ houses to our villages. In the last few years we have added about 60 dwellings to our housing stock, so feel we have done our bit to increase the

housing stock locally. Furthermore we cannot be regarded as a sustainable parish give the lack of amenities and especially the poor public transport provision.

Our concern about the prospects of extensive further development in the Bourtons and the possibility that the CDC local plan might develop their idea of joining Little Bourton to Banbury, has prompted us to work closely with the Hanwell Parish Council on the current application (23/0853/OUT) to develop 170 houses which will join Hanwell to Banbury. Do please have a look at this proposal and send in your comments by the 19 May.

There have been several delays with the publication of the Local Plan, and we have made our response to the first draft. We await the final draft before we respond to it again.

Old Dairy Farm application Cropredy: Although this proposed development is in Cropredy, if approved it will greatly affect residents living in Great Bourton. The first concern is what will be the obvious increase in traffic through Great Bourton who will undoubtedly use this as the best route to Banbury and Leamington rather than drive through Cropredy and Williamscoth to access the A361. The M40 roundabout will also become more congested with the development of the warehouses which have been approved on the A361. Next is our worry about the probability of increased flooding which as locals know is a problem in the winter months and heavy rainfall throughout the year. We are not satisfied that adequate provision has been made for water run off or indeed that Thames Water's statement that the sewage works can cope with potentially over 130 more houses if both current applications for Cropredy are approved, particularly as this site has recorded many hours of dumping raw sewage into the river Cherwell in the past year.

Reduced traffic speeds: Recently we have now obtained the OCC Highways accreditation to introduce a 20mph speed limit and both Great Bourton and Little Bourton. We'll then instigate the Speedwatch campaign which will be able from time to time check the speed of traffic. A project which will only be successful if enough residents come forward to manage the campaign. Some residents have already completed the training and the equipment and necessary signage will be purchased by the Council. We are also in the process of applying for a reduced speed limit on Foxden Way but because of the nature of its location it does not qualify for the 20 mph limit. Currently it's 60mph but we hope to be able to reduce it to 40mph. Reducing it to 30mph might increase the likelihood of housing development approval for the land either side of Foxden Way.

Neighbourhood Plan: The questionnaires which we distributed in May last year have provided much of the information we need to put our plan together. This project began as a Vision Statement but has been delayed because we are aware that the criteria for producing such a plan, is being revised to make it easier for parishes to establish a Neighbourhood Plan. This is significant because Neighbourhood plans have to be taken into consideration when planning officers are determining planning applications, especially in large scale applications. Many parishes engage the service of consultants at a cost of between £18,000 and £30,000 to develop their plan but we believe that with the revised legislation we shall be able to produce our own, thereby having no need to increase the annual precept to any degree. We'll be presenting the first draft at a public consultation, hopefully in June/July, after which we shall finalise the plan and then need to get CDCs approval for its implementation.

Conservation Area: We have many Historic Houses in the Parish and again this is another consideration which carries weight in the determination of planning applications. Once we have the criteria for this, we shall contact all those residents who would fall into the areas which we believe would qualify. There are pros and cons to living in a Conservation Area and it is important that we make residents aware of these and gain their agreement to proceed.

Emergency plans: All Councils are advised to have an emergency plan in place although many don't have one. We are working to have ours in place before next winter. This again will rely on help from residents, for instance to spread the rock salt at junctions when needed, during the cold and frosty winter months. Most emergency plans also rely on residents keeping a watchful eye on elderly neighbours and we shall look to engage the same residents who provided excellent care of their elderly neighbours during the Covid lockdown.

We do get notified of variations in utility services which we publish but you will know from the recent communications from Thames Water during the pipeline improvements, that their information is often misleading and inaccurate.

Communications: As far as possible we keep our Bourtons website up to date but latterly the Facebook page for the Bourtons, acts as a more immediate information centre for road closures and the like. We would, however, urge residents to check the website from time to time as it provides the facility to see related documents to any news items. The Bourtons Broadsheet and Church services are regularly added to the website.

It is a legal requirement also for Parish Councils to publish all their documents on the website so the Agendas and Minutes of previous meetings are also published here.

Local transport: We still have circa £30,000 funds from the last Section 106 agreement and it is our aim to try to get a layby and bus stop on the main road at the Great Bourton junction with the A423. Any passing buses are unable to stop here at the moment without a safe stopping place. Initially this money is awarded to support existing transport but since we have very little in place for Great Bourton and Little Bourton all we can do is make the existing transport routes more easily accessible. We have already committed £15,000 from separate funds, payable at £5,000 per annum, to the Ability scheme which is available on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Individual planning applications: Throughout the year we see smaller applications which still need analysis and consideration and a response from us. In cases such as this, we always seek the views of nearby residents, check the impact to local footpaths and make our responses accordingly. Some are ongoing and subject to enforcement or appeal actions and we keep in touch with both the enforcement team and the planning officers regarding these.

Highways and Potholes: Like the rest of the country, we have suffered with a significant amount of potholes so have taken up the offer of Fix-my-Street Super Users and are lucky enough to have Jon Pheasey in Great Bourton and Jo Beales in Little Bourton who have taken on this responsibility. This means that potholes are reported more regularly and dealt with as they would be under the Fix my Street schedules. Both volunteers have had on-site training and we are grateful for their commitment to the scheme. Foxden Way however, is not covered, so if you spot a pothole that needs fixing, do please take a picture if you can and report it on FixMyStreet using the post code OX17 1QZ.

Other ongoing projects:

Damaged verges: Because of the necessary diversions and road closures during the Thames Water works, we have arranged a meeting with OCC Highways and TW to discuss how the damaged verges can be reinstated. The results of this meeting will be reported back at the PC meeting on Tuesday 16th May.

Voneus Fibre Broadband installation: At the beginning of this project, we held an on-site meeting with two Voneus representatives to understand their plans and how the installation would be carried out. This was prompted by the fact that they intend to erect a second pole on the Green, which is parish council land and does not belong to OCC who will allow them to erect poles on their land. Twice since, they have tried to erect a pole on the Green and twice, thanks to watchful neighbours, we have managed to prevent it. We then held a further meeting with Voneus to ensure that no further poles will be positioned anywhere without our knowledge. Where possible they should be negotiating with Openreach to share their poles thereby reducing the need for extra street furniture but it appears that they omitted this stage of proceedings in order to meet their closely timed schedule of installation dates. We are now in regular contact with Mark Burgess, OCCs Fibre Advisory Officer, who has stated that the design plans for the village are currently back with the planners and has requested that no further telegraph poles are installed within the village: excavation being the preferred method going forward.

Foxden Way Seat: The new seat will be re-positioned so that it doesn't fall foul of any grass cutting activity. The new site will however need to have the ditch piped in order to avoid damage when the ditches are cleared and permission has to be sought for the new site. This is now all in hand so hopefully the new seat will be in place soon.

Community Hall Land and play area- LAP: CDC are still negotiating with the developers to finalise the handover of play area and grounds so that it can finally be handed over to the Parish Council. We do of course need to ensure that we will not be responsible for any of the associated legal costs.

Village Hall: We are replacing one of the windows and refurbishing two of the exterior window sills this summer. The protective panel on the oil tank also needs replacing following some vandalism activity and we had placed an

order for this but unfortunately the contractor became unwell so another suitable contractor is being sought. We are also arranging for some more remedial work to be carried out on the guttering. You may have noticed that the lights along the pathway to the village are no longer in operation. We have enquired from OCC and Western Power whether we can add these to the existing street light scheme however our enquiry is not a priority apparently but we hope to make some progress before next winter.

There are a couple of other projects in the pipeline: our clerk Steve is grappling with an app for digital mapping – this will be most useful in plotting boundaries, public rights of way and planning applications as well as identifying the proposed conservation area.

Steve together with Sally Leszczynski, our retired chairman, are also putting together a register of Parish land with their accompanying documents.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention our thanks to the brilliant team of organisers who made our Coronation weekend so special with all the activities they organised. There was something suitable for everyone, which made it possible for all of us to feel part of the national celebration. This is what our community is all about, this is what makes it a pleasure and privilege to live in the Bourtons; this is what makes it rewarding to serve the parish as a councillor and serve our wonderful community.

Sue Upton

Chairman Bourtons Parish Council

12/05/23