

The Parish of Great & Little Bourton, Oxfordshire
Annual Parish Residents Meeting
Tuesday 14th May 2024 at The Community Hall, Great Bourton
Chairman's Report

As always, I must firstly convey my thanks to my fellow councillors for all that they do to manage the community activities for which we are responsible.

Our Vice Chair, Andrew Johnson, keeps us up to date on local health matters, the school and Cluster Care activities. Gilly Duckworth together with Jo Beales and Gill Brooks, are progressing the Little Bourton improvement programme and Gilly regularly checks the defibrillator in LB and also 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 event this year 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, is our representative on the Community Hall committee and reports back to us with any matters which need attention – and there are many issues which we shall need to take up with Hayfield Homes, in order to rectify some of the problems which have recently been identified, some of which we have previously reported to them. We have also been delighted to welcome Steve Martin to the team. Steve comes with a wealth of experience which he quickly deployed to take responsibility for reporting all that the community speed watch team do and has also taken an active role in managing the extensive repair issues for the Village Hall and latterly in the critical work needed for the Community Hall.

Our clerk, Steve Bowen, continues to provide a comprehensive admin service to the council and often takes on the responsibility for some of our projects such as the liaison with CDC and their legal team to finalise the management of the open space connected to Garners Field. Because his workload is above and beyond that of most parish clerks, on his suggestion, we decided to appoint a separate financial officer and we have now added Rachel Pheasey to our team. This has already proved to be a very good decision, Rachel brings a level of financial expertise to the council and already has successfully and smoothly move out bank account to Unity Bank, used by many parish councils and can offer us a more reliable and flexible service than our previous provider, Barclays. It should be noted here that the appointment of a separate finance officer does not impact on our finances as the clerk's paid hours have been reduced by the number of hours our finance officer works.

Without the support from fellow councillors, our clerk and our newly appointed finance officer, my job would be many times more difficult than it is, so I thank them all most sincerely for their commitment, their diligence in all that they do and their many hours of work they give to provide the best we can for our residents in both Great and Little Bourton.

Our thanks are also due to many residents who take a keen interest in community needs and have provided all sorts of services. Simon Bull and Maurice Prew often work quietly in the background to help with specific tasks and this year have pruned the trees in the churchyard and Michael Jeffries helped with the disposal of the waste material. Jon Pheasey continues his work as our GB Super-User Fix my Street representative and keeps a close watch on our potholes to report them. Martin Damen has been looking after our parish clock and has been diligent in his care of it for which we are very grateful. Sadly he and his wife Margaret are planning to leave the village but typically thoughtful Martin, he has sought two other residents to take care of the clock in his place, which is marvellous.

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. Last but not least we must thank Ian Cooper who responded to the call to organise a Community SpeedWatch team which he has done most ably. Liaising with Thames Valley Police, organising the teams to monitor the traffic through the villages and recording their findings. Along with all the volunteers, to whom we are grateful for their time and commitment, we have been able to demonstrate that we are doing all we can to reduce the speeding problems.

There are many 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 have been 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.

This year has seen an extensive list of challenges: We have had to contest the revised CDC draft Local plan where 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 new dwellings to our housing stock, so feel we have done our bit to support the local need for more housing.

We have responded to both of the housing development applications in Cropredy since both may have an adverse effect on Great Bourton with increased traffic. One application has been withdrawn and the other, proposed by Brasenose College to include a

doctors surgery, has been approved by the planning committee and will include a new doctors surgery under a Section 106 agreement.

We also need to protect Little Bourton from any development which may eliminate the green space between our parish and Banbury and we shall be speaking at the Inspector's appeal meeting to lodge our objections to the proposed development of 170 houses in Hanwell which will develop the last of the green space between them and Banbury. If this development is approved by the Inspector, in a parish which has far more than us with its Historic Heritage sites, we shall struggle to protect Little Bourton.

Alongside all the planning and enforcement issues we have on hand at the moment, we have other responsibilities which will not only be time consuming but will need some financial investment this year. Urgent repairs at the Village Hall and the necessary work on the Community Hall which I have previously mentioned. No doubt both will impact severely on our reserves this year and will influence the precept this year and in the forthcoming years. Also, each year, Oxfordshire County Council reduce the services they provide for us which means if we want these service to continue, they need to be paid for by the parish. Maintenance work will also be needed on the allotment site with the replacement of fencing posts.

For such a relatively small parish as ours, there's a lot to do. We have plans to produce a neighbourhood plan which will be used as a reference for future significant planning applications; a conservation area distinction will also be applied for in Great Bourton which again will help to determine the outcome of planning applications.

Everything we do is ably supported not only by our parish councillors but by many residents who have a keen interest in our communities and generously give their time to help us be the parish we are and I thank them all most sincerely.

Sue Upton

Chairman Bourtons Parish Council

12/05/24