

OXHILL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD ON 14TH MAY 2019 AT 7.30PM
IN OXHILL VILLAGE HALL

Present

Cllr Harbour (Chairperson), Cllr Hunt, Cllr Rivers-Fletcher, Cllr Robertson and Cllr Stuart

Christine Coles, Parish Clerk, County Councillor Chris Williams and one villager

1. Welome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Report from Parish Council

Another busy year with the main drivers being Planning Applications to review and comment upon, speeding in the village concerns and the ongoing saga of Leys Field.

The Parish Council had something in excess of 20 Planning Applications to review and comment upon with the proposed development at Church Lane consuming considerable effort and external expertise as it came around a few times as the owner of the land refused to accept both the PC view and that of SDC that it was an undesirable development. The other Application that the PC saw several times was that of various phases of the Manor's reconstruction but this time the Applications were for positive improvements.

Speeding in the village, largely but not solely, by outsiders, occupied a considerable amount of time as the PC debated amongst themselves and with professionals from Warwickshire County Council (WCC) Traffic Department what could be achieved. The PC have agreed a scheme with WCC, had it costed and placed an order for some new signage in the village and hope that work will be completed this summer. The PC consider this scheme to be a 'base' solution and expect that they shall have to do more to try to slow down traffic in the village, the issue will continue to be discussed and new solutions implemented.

The development on Leys Field continues to cause concern amongst the PC. It appears as though the development was approved under pre-existing rules that seems to allow the Developer to make changes, to the scheme that he submitted and was approved by SDC, without the need for any further approvals, which is very disappointing. The PC will continue to monitor the situation and make representations wherever possible.

The developments by Piper Homes on Green Lane and Whatcote Road have also required monitoring, attention and correspondence as that Developer continues to flout the few rules that they were given (SDC 'forgot' to include in their Planning Approval certain rules that would have required them to 'manage' the site in a better manner!).

Two prominent Councillors decided to stand down at the end of the fiscal year, Grenville Moore and Duncan Harper. Both of these gentlemen made strong contributions to the PC's work over the last several years and the PC are grateful to them for the time they have expended on behalf of the village. The Chair was pleased to welcome both Peter Rivers-Fletcher and Malcolm Robertson to the PC to join Lis Stuart, Sue Hunt, Christine Coles (Clerk) and himself.

3. Report from County Councillor Chris Williams

Introduction – The past year has been routinely administered and Oxhill has avoided some of the pressures that have been experienced elsewhere in the county. During the past year Warwickshire County Council (WCC) has restructured the Children's Centres.

Some have been closed and others have had the focus of their operations rewritten. Five senior Officers are retiring from the County Council before the end of April and with Brexit uncertainties and the political purdah as a result of the forthcoming District Council elections in four of the five County's District Councils in May the routines of the Council has been altered.

Finance - The Budget was set by the full council for the next financial year on 7th February 2019. The overall riding strategy has been two-fold: to grow the economy and look after the most vulnerable in our community. The economy in Warwickshire is strong and is now recognised to be the fastest growing region in the country. At 30% growth since 2009, this is double the rate in England and 10% higher than the midland region. The unemployment figure is at a record low of 1.8% and the employment rate is also at a record high of 80.7% which is 5% higher than the national figure. The task facing the local authority is to create an environment that is pro-business and an attractive place to live and work. By working with their partners and the districts and boroughs as well as maintaining excellent relationships as a non-constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority the County Council have been very successful in attracting businesses and people to Warwickshire.

One example of this wider influence is the £80 million investment in the UK Battery Industrialisation Centre located on the Coventry/Warwickshire border which translates into jobs and rateable value for Warwickshire. In the autumn statement announced by the government Warwickshire will receive a one-off Social Care grant of £6 million plus £1.2 million for vulnerable pupils. With the principle of protecting the most vulnerable in our communities and the investment that requires we have increased the Council Tax by 3% with an additional Social Care precept of 2%. There have been no controversial reductions in the budget spending for next year.

WCC are about to start the third year of a three-year plan which was originally set in 2017 where WCC mapped out how they were going to deliver services to the high standards the residents were used to and at the same time making savings of £67 million. To date they have achieved this target. Be assured that Warwickshire County Council has a sound financial basis and problems that have affected authorities such as Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire will not occur in Warwickshire.

The County's revenue finances are in a healthy state with sufficient contingency reserves to cover any foreseen events. Future income streams are unknown as the movement away from Government Grants towards Business Rates as a source of funding is continuing with pilot schemes in some authorities. Council Tax continues to be capped although ring-fenced increases are allowed to meet specific budgets. The capital budget is mainly allocated to Schools and Highway projects to meet the population increase.

Public Health and Adult Care – The County Council held a Public Interest Debate recently on the subject of combined working between Health and Adult Services. This topic has been on the national agenda since Public Health was transferred back to local government nearly 10 years ago. It was clear that one of the major problems is communicating between authorities and the conflict between sharing information and breaching personal privacy (Human Rights). There are moves towards integrated working which will need support and legislation from the government.

Schools - The County Council's responsibility with respect to education, has been diluted since the introduction of Academies and Free Schools. It is the County's responsibility to ensure there are sufficient school places to meet the needs, that pupils can access their local school and that there is sufficient provision of "Good" education for those with Special Education Needs. There are only two Secondary Schools in the County that are not Academies. One of these is Kineton High School.

The Fire Service – The County Council is the Fire Authority for Warwickshire and the recent inspection report is being assessed. Most of the areas of concern relate to administrative and HR areas. The fire

prevention and operations are rated Good. A new Chief Fire Officer has joined the County Council. Over the past years there have been initiatives to link up the Fire Service provision with adjacent authorities. Any merger is complex and this one has proved difficult. WCC are presently looking at a form of collaboration with West Midlands Fire Service. At present there is a national debate regarding a combined Blue Light service between the Police, Fire and Ambulance Services.

Highways - It is noticeable that a number of road closures and traffic disruptions are currently taking place. There are a large number of housing developments, all requiring additional utility services and road improvements, which are adding to the congestion.

Cllr Williams ended his report on a good news story in as much as Warwickshire County Council has been named the Country's Joint Top Performing County Council for Highway Maintenance. Warwickshire was among 113 highway authorities, including 28 County Councils, which took part in a national independent survey which looks at satisfaction with Highways and Transport Services.

Warwickshire came out joint top for public satisfaction amongst County Councils for Highway Maintenance, condition of road surfaces and the quality of repair to damaged roads. The Council also ranked amongst the best in other areas, including condition of road markings, speed of repair to damaged roads, keeping drains clear and dealing with potholes.

This is an excellent result and reflects the continued hard work and commitment of Warwickshire County Council's Highways Staff.

4. **Report from District Councillor John Feilding**

Cllr Feilding was not present.

5. **Open Forum**

Cllr Hunt asked if the Parish Council are doing enough to welcome and involve new residents. The Welcome Pack is ongoing and should be ready for the summer. The village hall put on lots of events which are communicated via the newsletter. Cllr Williams added that a lot of other villages are going through regrowth.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.