



**Great Shefford Parish Council**

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## **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING MINUTES**

**THURSDAY 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022 in the Great Shefford Village Hall**

### **1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

Cllr. Steve Ackrill welcomed everyone.

Cllr. Clive Hooker, ward member sent his apologies.

### **2 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF 6 MAY 2021 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

The minutes were approved.

### **3 CHAIRMAN ANNUAL REPORT**

Good evening and welcome to Great Shefford's Parish Assembly, as many of you will be aware this annual event is actually a legal requirement to hold.

It's good to be back in the village hall for this meeting following last years 'virtual' Assembly held on Zoom. Whilst I believe that, both virtual and especially hybrid meetings are certainly here to stay, in certain circumstances face to face meetings are better and in my opinion this event is one of those occasions.

I'm pleased that we do finally seem to be coming out of the worst of the Covid pandemic, whilst there are still a worryingly high number of people contracting Covid it does, in the majority of cases, seem that the symptoms are much milder with the latest variants.

Before I go on to give brief rundown on what the PC have been up to over the last year I wanted to formally ( for the minutes ) wish Ray and Sarah a long and happy retirement ( it is hard to believe that it is already around 8 months since they sold the shop and left the village ) and also formally, albeit belatedly, welcome Mintu and his family to the village and wish them every success with the shop and post office.

The June PC meeting last year was the first face to face meeting held since the March 2020 meeting, so whilst it felt initially strange I'm sure most Cllrs would agree it felt good to be back..

When I was thinking about what I would say this evening I dug out what I said last year and I was struck with a sense of déjà vu , Planning , Speeding , Dog Mess , The Recreation Ground and the Precept were all mentioned last year and I'm afraid will be again this year. Just because I could, I then looked back on the PC section of the website to check some old minutes, they go back as far as 2013 on the website, I was vice chairman at the time and guess what, very similar stuff was mentioned even back then and probably every year since. Looking at those dates does make me think I've been kicking around too long and that somebody else should probably take the job on soon!

Back to the last year, As always planning applications remain a large part of the PC world, this has been somewhat different during the Pandemic as we were unable to visit sites to look at

applications and as a Council we rarely comment unless at least one Cllr has visited the site. I'm please to say that we are now able to visit again so now need to get back into the routine of doing so. Speeding within the village doesn't seem to get any better, lack of action by the authorities is, as always, blamed on lack of resources. There is a scheme called "Community Speed Watch", a group led by Linda Bowden are undergoing some online training to be able to video speeding motorists so they can receive a written warning but as always it comes down to the police to actually carry out any enforcement and we're then back to the lack of resources again. If anyone would like to know more about this or to get more involved then please let me know and I'll ask Linda to get in touch. Whilst talking about speeding, I'm probably tempting fate by saying that so far the new chevron that the PC installed at the bottom of Hungerford hill seems to be working as the crash barriers and fence have thus far remained intact.

The Recreation ground remains as popular as ever both from people inside and outside the village, it is still responsible for a large percentage on the PC expenditure with what always seems to be something that needs repairing or replacing. I'm sorry to say that 2 large pieces of equipment are currently out of action having failed their recent safety inspection. We are hoping these can be repaired "in house" which whilst still costly will undoubtedly save the village money running into the thousands. The thing I find most worrying is the equipment that has failed now by having rotten timber is the equipment at the top of the slope that I still class as the "new" stuff, it's frightening where the time goes as it seems only yesterday that we held an opening ceremony at the park and our two district Cllrs at the time ( Graham Jones and Gordon Lundie ) were photographed racing each other down the new slides when in fact it was back in March 2011. We have recently received a request for some adult gym equipment in the park to be considered and research into this is currently being undertaken so if you have any views for or against this or if you would like to be involved with the project which will undoubtedly involve both fundraising and grant applications please do get in touch.

Whilst still talking about the park , for the second time we held our "carols in the park" in conjunction with the church which again was a success and thanks must go to Miri for taking the lead on this. Thanks must again go to Charles Parry from Templars Farm for once again donating the Xmas Tree that was erected on the green opposite the petrol station , they seem to get taller every year to the extent that we have taken to putting the illuminated star on the top before we stand the tree up.

The Parish news has undergone some changes in recent months, Virginia Parkes expressed a wish to step down from the job as editor, thanks must go to Virginia for the time and effort she has put into producing the magazine over the years. A request was put out by the PC for any volunteers to come forward to help with the production going forward, sadly nobody was forthcoming from within the village. Eunice took the lead on behalf of the PC to do some research into alternatives, an offer to prepare the magazine for printing was received from someone up north (apologies I can't remember exactly where) who does it for a job / hobby. With the help of Linda Bowden, Eunice and Linda managed to put together the Xmas edition that was Delivered to every house as normal. Another plea for help was inserted into the Xmas magazine but alas nothing was forthcoming so a decision was taken that we would no longer be able to produce printed copies of the Parish News and it would change to an online only newsletter. Linda, with the help of the chap that produces the online Chaddleworth Newsletter are currently producing the online version for Great Shefford. Due to GDPR regulations this can only be sent to you if you ask us to send it and give permission for your details to be securely held for that purpose the January meeting. We did reluctantly have to increase

the precept this year up to £18,000 from £16,000, having checked back the precept had been at £16,000 since 2014 so we haven't done too bad really. The precept of £18,000 means the addition to the council tax of a band D property of £43 to cover the expenditure of the PC (just short of 83 pence / week which must be considered a bargain these days )

Most reports in recent years have included an update on the long-awaited Flood Alleviation Scheme but this year I'm going to leave the update on the flood scheme to Richard Hancock from the EA who will be speaking shortly.

This year there have been no changes within the PC so I have nobody to say goodbye to and nobody to welcome on board so I just need to thank the Cllrs who all freely give their time to the village for all they have done in the last year and last but by no means least I would like to personally thank Kim for still managing to put up with us and doing a remarkable job of keeping us on the straight and narrow, Thank you Kim.

I would normally say at this point that I'm happy to take any questions about the PC, what we do how we work etc but there is an item a little further down this evening's agenda where I'll do my best to answer any questions that may arrive.

Thank you.

(Mailchimp is being used for sending the newsletter so no data is being held by the PC or anyone acting on our behalf). I have some slips here with the email address to register to receive the newsletter, so please do come and grab a slip afterwards.

We prepared our budget as always at the end of the year so that the precept (for those not aware this is the amount of money that the PC request from WBC to on running the village) can be set in

## **Cllr. Steve Ackrill**

### **4 FLOOD ALLEVAITION SCHEME**

Richard Hancock from the Environmental Agency provided an update on the Flood Alleviation Scheme.

### **5 GREAT SHEFFORD UNDER 5s**

We are a registered charity for educational purposes. We run a Baby & Toddler group on Monday mornings and a Pre-School each Tue., Wed., Thursday from 9.15 – 2.45pm. We are the main hirer of the village hall and have a remarkable capacity to run a Pre-school which does not look like a pack away setting but also clear it away as if we had never been here!

We employ 5 staff and have 23 children on roll from the local villages. Last year was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the group. This is a remarkable achievement when so many similar settings have closed, including Boxford last summer. We are registered with Ofsted and have an "Outstanding" inspection grade.

The difficulties -

95% of our funding is from the government via the Nursery Funding. If you have any preconceived ideas that this means we are comfortably making ends meet, then I must disarm you of these. Early Years Funding is hopelessly inadequate and is a large part of the difficulty in attracting staff. Last year our funding per child, per hour, was reduced by 5p, to try to balance West Berks Early Years budget. This April we have had an increase from £5 to £5.13 per child, per hour. However, as the minimum wage rose by 59p per hour this has quickly been swallowed up. The government sets very

stringent criteria on running an Early Years setting in terms of staff qualifications, Safeguarding, Curriculum, policies, training and overall provision.

The positives -

Our team has very high expectations of the provision we provide –

We have a wonderfully enthusiastic Forest School Leader, Morven, who has just completed her 2 years Forest School training with Fruits of the Wild in Oxford.

Our newest Pre-school member is starting her training in Newbury.

We have retained staff for many years and continued to develop them professionally.

What is our contribution to the community?

To give children a really positive early experience of education and socialising. The children feel cherished and cared for.

To support families from a wide range of back grounds; to prevent parents being isolated, to be a listening ear, to help parents manage additional work.

To help children develop a love of the outdoors and nature.

Early Years is great value for money; get the foundations right and the following years will stand a better chance.

Thank you

Denise Herrington

## **6 GREAT SHEFFORD SCHOOL**

April 2021 – April 2022

When I think back to April 2021, we were just starting out again, having provided remote learning and on site education since January. Despite the challenges faced, the staff, parents and governors all worked tirelessly to achieve the best outcomes for our children during this period but it has to be said that we were incredibly grateful to all be back in school. One of my ‘golden moments’ this year was our first Whole School Collective Worship. It was outside in the sunshine and it gave everyone a sense of our school community finally being back together.

Our vision remains the same and we still ‘Go the extra mile’ but our strapline which was developed with all our stakeholders is now ‘Living life in all its fullness’. We want our children to reach their full potential by having the knowledge and skills to achieve it. So with this in mind, staff have created a curriculum, following the National Curriculum which is designed specifically for our school. We know that our children know more and remember more when they experience it first-hand so we have built in a programme of trips and visits. For example, just since September, our history curriculum has included trips to Ufton Court, The Wantage Museum, Swindon and Cricklade Railway Centre and Littlecote Roman Villa. Our RE curriculum included trips to St Mary’s Church and a pilgrimage from Great Shefford to Chaddleworth. Our pilgrimage also gave us the opportunity to study the landscape and two different settlements. Kingfishers went to the science museum, Red Kites are due to go to a Sikh gurdwara in Slough and we are planning a whole school trip before the end of the summer term. We have taken part in sports tournaments – archery, football, rugby, Paralympics to name a few – and have more planned for the term. We took the children in year 5 and 6 away on an outdoor adventure residential trip to The Manor in Shropshire. Each evening, we sat together and reflected

on our day and prepared for the next one. These are the experiences that they will remember forever.

Everything we do at school is based on our Christian Values of Courage, Compassion, Trust, Friendship, Wisdom and Endurance. This term we are focusing on Wisdom and we are finding out what being wise really means – today two of our children had a disagreement and when one realised what had actually happened, they apologised and the other child said, “That’s okay. We all make mistakes. Even the teacher’s make mistakes!” What a wise and compassionate response from a six year old.

In September we welcomed our new Assistant Headteacher, Liz Sayer, who has had a tremendous impact on our whole school curriculum development as well as being our maths and Mental Health Lead. Our staff team has built through the year which has brought new expertise and opportunities for the school.

New developments include the running track which the children love and the designing of our reflection garden. The Shadow and House Captains are developing a programme of mental health strategies with support from our school Mental Health Lead which they are implementing across the school. Our clubs are well attended – we have given 106 spaces for clubs this term. We continue to offer Forest School, specialist PE coaching and music teaching and multiple opportunities for children to learn to play an instrument.

Our wonderful PTFA have been incredibly creative in raising money for the school – just the recent Pop-Up Café raised £527.65. They have worked so hard to provide funding for the reflective garden and also for our extra-curricular activities including the trips.

Last term was a challenging one with multiple absences due to Covid, an event experienced across West Berkshire schools and I would like to say thank you to our staff for the dedication they showed during this time as well as throughout the year. Parents were also very supportive and continue to be. This was greatly appreciated by us all.

Our governors have given been a fantastic source of wisdom and compassion throughout the year – thank you. We also want to thank the local community, Rev Miri, all our visitors and friends of the school who have helped us because they care about our children having the best opportunities.

As you can see we, as a whole community endeavour to give our children every opportunity to ‘Live life in all its fullness’.

**Alison Stephenson, Headteacher**

## **7 QUEENS JUBILEE EVENT**

Jane gave an overview of some of the activities which will be taking place during the Platinum celebrations - the programme was distributed to all households in both Great Shefford and Shefford Woodlands before Easter (See link below which is also on the village website) <https://greatshefford.files.wordpress.com/2022/04/queens-platinum-jubilee-programme.pdf>

Jane finished her talk to say that it was a pleasure working with so many of the groups in the village - a team effort!

**Jane Turton**

**8 GREAT SHEFFORD CHURCH**

I am Rector of the 6 parishes, 8 churches, plus two additional chapels of ease of the West Downland benefice. This includes St Mary's, Great Shefford and St Stephens Shefford Woodlands and St Thomas' East Shefford.

Thanks to all who support the church, with particular mention of the churchwardens, Parochial Church Council, bell-ringers, grass-cutters, churchyard working group. Particular thanks to the PC for support and advice during the pandemic. The Open Air Carols have taken place for two years now and have been a good collaboration which I think will continue beyond Covid. Thanks the PC for manpower and logistical support for open air Remembrance Services too, We are attempting to build in the best of our experiences of the pandemic with our original foundations as we return to church services. We aim to broadcast at least one service each Sunday on Zoom for those who cannot attend in person. (We have been successful in obtaining a grant to cover more than half of the cost of the equipment.)

We have more than double the usual number of weddings and funerals this year. Sadly there is a high number of funerals at present.

School visits and preschool visits are a key part of the life of our church and parish. These are much appreciated.

Maintenance of our grade 2\* listed buildings is constant and expensive. There is currently a problem with dry rot in the ceiling of the ringing room. This typifies the problem of repairs in the church in that we will not know how costly the repair will be until we start work.

Jubilee Services for all of the churches in the benefice will be:

Thursday 2nd 6.30pm at Chaddleworth - Evensong with the original service for the Sunday before the Queen's Coronation

Sunday 5th June 10am at Leckhampstead - Service of Thanksgiving - a short service so that people can get to their village picnics

**Revd Miriam Keen**

**9 WELFORD CRICKET CLUB**

Ian Herrington provided an update on the past year's activities at the Cricket Club.

<https://welfordpark.play-cricket.com/home>

**10 PARISH RESIDENTS** An opportunity for Parish residents on the Electoral Roll of Great Shefford Parish to ask a question or raise a concern that relates to their local community.  
**No questions were raised.**

**11 NEXT PARISH ANNUAL MEETING** -Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023 was confirmed.