

Sydenham Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 9th May 2019 at 8.00pm

Present: Alison Isherwood (AI)
David Wilkins (DW)
Cheryl Belson (CB)
Hayley Smith (HS)
Heather Mullins (HM) – Clerk
Apologies: Mike May (MM)

The meeting was pleased to welcome twenty three members of the parish.

Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council - Alison Isherwood:

Here is a very brief summary of the last year's work, details are provided in every newsletter throughout the year.

Planning

We have considered 13 planning applications this year with two going to planning committee and two from the previous year going to appeal.

Sydenham Grove

As advised SOHA took the original application to appeal which the Inspector upheld so they were granted planning permission in September 2018. An application was lodged for discharge of planning conditions in March this year and the PC were given dispensation to comment; such applications are not for public consultation. These comments were taken on board by the planning officer and SOHA have been asked to make amendments. SOHA advised the PC at the end of March that a decision had been made to postpone development of the site until market conditions are more favourable. This decision will be reviewed in six months' time. In the meantime, metal grilles have been fixed to the downstairs windows and doors to deter intruders on the site. The PC will request a meeting with the new Chief Executive of SOHA.

Undergrounding of electricity supply by SSE

The project has stalled with land access issues, predominantly due to lack of service that SSE has received from their lawyers and land agents, however the end is in sight. Final works are also subject to some limitations on access to the land imposed in the growing season.

Broadband

The properties at the Emmington end of the village now have a high-speed connection and a celebration of the 600th cabinet was recently held at the Inn at Emmington.

Playing Field

The new A-Frame is in place and the new cricket nets have been installed by the cricket club with a grand opening tomorrow evening, weather permitting.

Ditches and drainage

Usual ditch maintenance has been undertaken throughout the village.

The collapsed drain near to Sewells Lane was supposedly fixed by British Gas last summer but as is evident when it rains the problem still exists. Investigative drainage works will be undertaken by OCC Highways at the end of July when the road is closed for the pinch point installation, which we hope resolves this long-standing issue.

Potholes

The dragon patcher has recently been through the village. Parishioners are encouraged to report any problems with Highways via the County Council website, www.oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Village Clean up

The next clean-up is on Sunday; meet at 11am on the Green.

Speeding

We have finally found a cost-efficient way of installing traffic calming in the village and the pinch point on the approach to Box Cottages will be installed at the end of July. We are now concentrating on traffic calming on the Park

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View stretch and will consult with the village at every stage. With the scheduled road closure in Chinnor at the end of the month we propose an imminent community speedwatch programme which will be introduced by our PCSO Graham Davey next.

PC vacancies

Steph relinquished the role of Clerk last summer and it was covered by the PC for a few months. We are thrilled that Heather has agreed to return as Clerk from the beginning of 2019.

We are very pleased to welcome Cheryl Belson and Hayley Smith as new Councillors for the next four year term and are very sorry to say goodbye to Rachel Blake and Janet Potts who have both worked brilliantly in the team, covering numerous projects and always willing to take on actions; they will be hugely missed.

Rachel will be remembered as the 'queen of waffly bollocks', her own words, effortlessly completing grant applications, planning application consultations and newsletter articles. Janet was 'queen of footpaths' which she trod daily whilst dog walking and invariably bumped into villagers who would share concerns to be reported back to the PC; they would do similarly in the pub!. They will be a very hard act to follow but our new recruits, both Sydenham Fayre stalwarts, are all too familiar with village politics and are ready to take on the challenge.

There followed a presentation of gifts to the outgoing Councillors, Rachel and Janet, in appreciation of the huge amount of work they have undertaken on behalf of the village.

Presentation from PCSO Graham Davey, Thames Valley Police:

The Community Speedwatch program uses a Speed Indicator Device (SID) consisting of a screen on a tripod that records the speed of traffic going past it. The equipment belonging to Thames Valley Police is currently in repair but Sydenham PC are looking to borrow Chinnor's hand held SID. The Speedwatch cannot happen without plenty of volunteers as a team of 2-3 people is needed for each session. Please do let the parish council know if you can help. Once the data is gathered and submitted to Thames Valley Police letters are sent out to the vehicle owners containing a written caution. If the same driver is caught again within six months then a second, more strongly worded letter is sent. A third occurrence may result in a visit from the traffic police. If the data submitted from Community Speedwatch sessions indicates a speeding problem then it may prompt a camera van to attend in that location, which will result in tickets being issued.

Members of the public can report a vehicle to TVP even if the speed is unverified. The key detail required is the registration number, then the vehicle make and model if possible. The Vehicle Activated Signs in the village that display the speed of a vehicle can also be used for Community Speedwatch, although the mobile units are more versatile.

Hi visibility jackets must be worn by all volunteers for insurance, and this also acts a visual deterrent. Volunteers must ensure that they are in a safe position, well off the road, and the PCSO can advise on this when he assists with the first sessions.

Questions were invited from the floor :-

Pinch point installation – the process has been elongated as one objection to the scheme meant that the consultation had to go to a County Council cabinet meeting. The cabinet voted unanimously in favour of the scheme and applauded both the scheme itself and the use of money. The reduction of costs from £25,000 was congratulated at the APM.

Fly-tipping – while the District Council deal with fly tipping reports through their waste contractor Biffa, if anyone witnesses the act they can report the vehicle number plate to the police on 101.

The speed camera van – regular attendance on the B4445 was requested. When the police carry out a speed check using a hand held speed gun they can issue tickets but unfortunately a PCSO using the speed gun is not able to.

Reduced speed limits - 20mph in the village has previously been researched but Oxfordshire County Council are not in support, and enforcement is a problem. Over the years an inordinate amount of time has been spent on the issue of speeding. Villagers who are concerned can volunteer for the Speedwatch which will have the most immediate effect.

The speed of vehicles leaving Chinnor and reaching the Inn at Emmington was highlighted, with a query on signs to warn of the 30mph limit ahead. This is outside the Sydenham parish boundary, although there has been previous liaison with Chinnor parish council on possible pinch points by the garden centre development, and a pinch point to

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replace the VAS sign at the Inn junction. At the time OCC Highways advised there was no developer funding available and the traffic calming measure recommended on the garden centre approach was a small pair of gates on the verge and road markings. County Councillor Jeannette Matelot mentioned that Chinnor PC are now implementing a traffic calming scheme funded by CIL monies with a pinch point on the approach to the garden centre site.

Report from County Councillor - Jeannette Matelot:

The full report below was referenced as being available in the minutes on the website, and villagers encouraged to contact their County Councillor by email jeannette.matelot@oxfordshire.gov.uk or via Facebook. There was a brief discussion on reducing the speed limit between Chinnor and the Emmington junction, and also regarding the use of Chinnor CIL monies resulting from the developments within Chinnor. Chinnor have ringfenced funds for public transport and ideas (such as a suggested Chinnor to Oxford bus via the Lewknor tube stop) are welcomed.

County Council newsletter April/May 2019

PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES

More than nine out of ten parents whose children are set to enter the classroom for the first time this September have been offered their first choice of primary school in Oxfordshire. A total of 93.39% of the 7,125 applicants have received their first choice – above all the recent national averages across the UK. The consistent high number of first choices achieved in Oxfordshire is due to the County Council's careful forward planning to make sure the right numbers of school places exist – since 2010 the Council has created more than 10,000 new primary school places. This means that since 2010 the number of primary school places in Oxfordshire has risen by 22%. About a fifth of that has been achieved by building and opening new schools, and the rest through expanding existing schools – with new buildings, making better use of existing accommodation, or by marginal increases in admission numbers. This year's figure of 93.39% for first-preference offers compares with the 2018 figure of 92.77%. Although the national average for 2019 will not be published for some time, Oxfordshire remains ahead of the averages for 2018 (91%) and 2017 (90%).

SECONDARY PLACES

More than 86% of children in Oxfordshire got their first choice of secondary school for 2019/20. This figure is likely to rise further if the Swan School in Marston is able to open its doors by September. A total of 94% have been awarded one of the three choices they listed on their applications. As in all previous years, these percentages are above national averages, despite an exceptional year for applications and disruption caused by delays in being able to confirm the Swan's opening. Around 400 more applications were received for secondary schools this year compared to last year – a total of 7,300 applications. A number of secondary schools have expanded in anticipation, but this was always likely to be a year of exceptionally high demand for Year 7 places. If it can open in September, the proposed Swan School would offer 120 of these Year 7 places. The County is waiting to hear whether the Government has cleared the school to open. Since 2011, more than 6,000 new places have been created in Oxfordshire's secondary schools, excluding the Swan's extra capacity. Further changes in the 2020s – including the new Whitelands Academy in Bicester and a new all-through school at Grove Airfield – will see the overall number of school places created since 2011 rise to around 8,000.

CLIMATE CHANGE EMERGENCY

OCC has formally acknowledged the impending climate change emergency, and is investigating potentially radical policies which could be implemented in the short and medium term. The County has a long history of activity on sustainability and emissions reduction:

- It has led the way nationally in driving waste reduction and recycling and is rated the best county council for recycling in the UK.
- For more than a decade, it has commissioned the Community Action Group project, which supports local communities to develop innovative projects and business models to drive sustainability in Oxfordshire. Now supporting 65 groups, this is the biggest network of its kind in the UK.

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- It has reduced emissions on its own estate by an average of 6% per year and is replacing all remaining streetlights with LED which will reduce the Council's overall carbon footprint by a further 25%.
- It works with a wide range of partners to position Oxfordshire at the forefront of the 'low carbon' transition, and has recently declared the world's first 'zero emission zone' in Oxford.
- It is a long-term supporter of the work of a not-for-profit 'Low Carbon Hub' which has just seen the 20th solar array installed on OCC's maintained schools.
- It will soon announce a ground-breaking 3-year project to demonstrate how a new energy system, fit for electric vehicles and renewable generation, can operate in Oxfordshire.

The County is looking at further wide-reaching measures following the October 2018 report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change). The report stated that global emissions need to be halved in 11 years and hit 'net zero' by 2050. Moving towards 'net zero' emissions will require intervention from all levels of government, and OCC recognises it has an important role to play. Practical measures include reviewing its carbon targets and investigating an Environmental Management System which will further embed consideration of carbon reduction and sustainability across the organisation.

AIR QUALITY

If new plans succeed in reducing traffic congestion in Oxford, similar measures may be considered for other towns across Oxfordshire. The proposed programme in Oxford includes measures to improve air quality and reduce traffic levels in and around the city — such as a Zero Emission Zone, a congestion charge, access restrictions, and more Controlled Parking Zones, along with the possibility of a workplace parking levy. If implemented, these measures are likely to have benefits across the county, given that a large amount of traffic coming into Oxford originates from other parts of Oxfordshire. OCC says similar congestion management programmes in other parts of the county may be able to be implemented to benefit air quality, with any such measures carefully selected and applied to each location. Once the measures have been assessed and implemented in Oxford, it will be appropriate to consider their wider application across the county. It is anticipated this process will begin from 2021. The County is undertaking a lot of other work that will contribute to air quality and traffic congestion improvements, including 'healthy place shaping', active and healthy travel, and helping residents to change to electric vehicles. The Council's own internal energy strategy commits it to change all cars and vans to electric as they come up for renewal, where this is operationally viable. It has trialled new vehicles, and has been installing charging points at corporate sites. To date, it has changed 2 cars and 7 vans for the Fire Service, and 3 pool cars. Orders have been placed for a fully electric accessible minibus, along with a replacement car for the Kingfisher safeguarding team. Trials of electric cars are currently taking place for the Adult Social Care team. Charging points have been installed at a number of the Council's premises, and a further 12 sites are due to be installed this summer.

Meanwhile, Public Health England has estimated the health and social care costs of air pollution are likely to approach £19bn a year by 2035 unless drastic action can be underwritten by substantial Government funding.

RECORD BUSINESS GROWTH

A group of 177 SME businesses in Oxfordshire has experienced the UK's second strongest growth in combined turnover in the last three years. Research by the investor BGF calculates growth through changes in turnover and employee size among Britain's private companies with revenues between £3m and £150m. This is a category of 13,286 businesses, of which 16% are based in the south-east. Oxfordshire businesses in this group have experienced turnover growth of more than 21.4% (£743m) in the last three years. This is the second-highest in the UK after County Londonderry, where the combined turnover growth was 25.6%. BGF said: "It's encouraging to see such strong growth in Oxfordshire. Unlocking capital to accelerate growth among businesses like these will have a major and genuine impact on industry, the economy and society." One of these local businesses is Adestra, a provider of marketing technology software and services, which has been backed by BGF since 2016. The company comments: "Oxfordshire has been a great home, with a strong community of high-growth technology businesses. "It's important that the UK continues to improve access to finance for businesses like ours — having investment and support at such a critical stage of growth was invaluable for us." OxLEP, the local enterprise partnership, adds: "These figures reflect Oxfordshire's ability to nurture genuine innovation and take it to a world stage. "Our economy is undoubtedly a

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strong and adaptable one. We have an excellent record of supporting small businesses, and we are recognised globally as a place for innovation-led growth. “Business in Oxfordshire will continue to thrive post-Brexit, on both a national and international scale.”

PARK & RIDE APPROVAL

The park & ride service for Oxford has achieved a 'world class' 96% overall satisfaction, in a survey of passengers by an independent watchdog. This places it equal first in England alongside one other operator. Research conducted by Transport Focus revealed passengers using the service were highly satisfied in 2018, up by 3% on the previous year. Passengers were asked questions regarding punctuality, journey time, value for money and the overall journey experience. The survey follows significant investment in the park & ride service ahead of the opening of the Westgate shopping centre in 2017. Improvements have included the introduction of single combined tickets for parking and bus fares, and new payment machines. New bus shelters and stops have also been installed in the city centre. The Oxford Bus Company invested £5.5m in its park & ride fleet in 2017. Each bus has contactless payment systems, free wi-fi, audio visual information, USB and charging points, and hybrid engines with the cleanest available emissions standards.

WOMEN'S CYCLING TOUR

The County announced last month that a stage of the OVO Energy Women's Tour, the UK's most prestigious women's cycle race, will race through Oxfordshire for the next three years. This year, on Wednesday 12th June, stage three will start in Henley, traverse the Chilterns via Pishill to Watlington, before returning via the climb of Britwell Hill to Sonning Common and Goring. Crossing the Thames at Wallingford, the route will pass through Didcot, Harwell and Wantage, cross the Vale of White Horse to Faringdon, before looping through Burford, Charlbury and finally Woodstock in the closing kilometres. Blenheim Palace will host the finishing line, the presentations and celebrations. Behind the scenes at the County Council, staff from different parts of the organisation have been working on the event's complex logistics, under the overall project manager Gabby (David) Heycock from the County's Fire service. This link: <https://we.tl/t-5j9KP5lmeS> provides a map of the route. The race will be managed using a rolling roadblock, which means any disruption to traffic and residents in local towns and villages will be kept to a minimum. This link provides a video of how a rolling road block works (starts at 2min 30secs):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcjf5xXPaUk&t=6s> About 100 professional riders will take part, and highlights of the race will be screened on ITV4. The OVO Energy Women's Tour is Britain's longest-running professional women's race and part of the prestigious UCI Women's World Tour series. The 2019 Tour begins in Suffolk with Stage One from Beccles to Stowmarket on Monday 10th June. Oxfordshire can expect economic and health benefits from hosting the prestigious event, with cycling fans visiting the county to watch the race, and generating business for restaurants, bars, hotels, B&Bs and shops. In a comparable stage in last year's race in Warwickshire, additional local expenditure linked to the event totalled £2m by around 100,000 spectators. Nearly two-thirds (63%) came from outside the county, and 67% of spectators said they were inspired to cycle more often. Local schools are being invited to organise themed sport and fitness lessons. Families will line the route to cheer on competitors, turning the event into an exciting community spectacle as this link shows: <https://youtu.be/ftGV8LAffo4?list=PLQU5alaC4Qf5Ucoj-ToazQNTmEAY3leDm>

DISTRICT COUNCIL PARTNERSHIP

OCC's partnership with Cherwell District Council continues to be developed since its inception in October 2018. This is recognised as one of a very small number of examples of a district and county council sharing staff and services in the whole of the country, and the County Cabinet will decide how to strengthen the partnership at its meeting on 23rd April. The two councils now share a chief executive, an assistant director covering regulatory services, public protection, trading standards, environmental health etc, an assistant director covering housing and commissioning, a lead officer for HR, and a legal and governance director. County staff are also sharing CDC's offices in Banbury, and these initial structural changes mean that capacity is retained in Oxfordshire whilst running costs are reduced. The two councils are now looking at how to collaborate or align further in areas such as ICT, children's social care and housing. **Nick Carter comments:** “It's fair to say that the ambition and extent of this project is breaking new ground.

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There are very few examples of a district and a county council working together in this way, and none to this extent. People in central and local government throughout the country are monitoring how the project is developing. "Cherwell District Council excels in innovative housing and regeneration schemes, and the County Council attracts infrastructure funding linked to housing, which improves the local transport network and other essential public services. "The County's ambition is to maximise this combination of skills, resources and national funding to make housing and economic growth work to the benefit of everyone. The way in which this growth is managed will benefit from ever-closer working between the two councils, and the relationship will also save money and provide more joined-up services for residents. "I hope SODC is closely monitoring these developments, because we should be aiming to replicate this arrangement in the south of the county."

EXPRESSWAY CONSULTATION

The County Council is pressing the Government for a full public consultation on the controversial Oxford-Cambridge Expressway, in advance of any decisions on the route of the road or the scale of its corridor through the Oxfordshire countryside. At a recent Council debate on the subject, Labour and Lib Dem county councillors voted to prevent members of the public from being consulted on the new road, which will run past towns and villages in the South Oxfordshire and Cherwell areas. However, they were outvoted by the Conservative administration, who argued that local residents and businesses should be fully informed and involved. **Nick Carter comments:** "It must surely be right for everyone to have a say in such a massive project, which would have an enormous impact on our lives and on the countryside around us."

COUNCIL TAX EXPLAINED

OCC is sending out a short, printed booklet about its services and how they are funded, within the current council tax bills. Recent work with focus groups showed that residents wanted more information on how the County Council spends their money. The leaflet will highlight the wide range of OCC's activities, which provide more than 80% of the average household's services. The leaflet is going to 280,000 households (some households receive e-billing, and it is not possible to send an electronic version of the leaflet). Residents receiving e-billing will have a link to the council tax page on OCC's website. The cost of printing and distributing the leaflet was £9970, or around 4p per household. *Nick and Jeannette will be interested to hear any feedback from residents.*

Meanwhile, new analysis by the independent TaxPayers' Alliance shows that a Labour proposal to base local taxation on a calculation of a property's land value could see annual council tax more than double in some areas.

HOME-SCHOOLED CHILDREN

Parents will be required to register home-educated children with the County Council under Government proposals which are intended to prevent young people from disappearing off the radar. A compulsory register of all home-educated children is being set up to identify children who may be at risk of harm or radicalisation, and whose education may not be to a high enough standard. The term 'home education' tends to be a catch-all phrase, referring to all children not in a registered school. This includes those who receive a good education at home, as well as children who are not being adequately educated, or attending illegal schools where they are vulnerable to dangerous influences. OCC supports the rights of parents to educate their children in the best way they see fit, but the Council needs to be able to check a child's schooling, to make sure it is suitable, appropriate and in a safe environment.

BLUE BADGES

OCC's amnesty on Blue Badges last month was followed by an on-street enforcement operation in conjunction with the police. More than 1,000 badges were checked in four days across the county, and 21 of them were seized because of misuse or abuse. The earlier amnesty saw the return of 200 blue badges that were not needed or should no longer be used. The enforcement operation also targeted the misuse of disabled parking bays. Credit goes to the County's blue badge administration team, who work to ensure fraudulent applications are detected and misuse is investigated, so that those who really need a badge are protected. Following changes in the national system for administering blue badges, OCC now ensures that applications can be managed entirely on-line, without requiring hard-copy supporting

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documents. Over 1000 customers have applied for a blue badge since these changes, with over 700 applying online. The new system gives applicants an eligibility decision 24/7, without needing to wait for a staff member to decide. Residents who are unable to apply online continue to receive assistance over the phone and at the County's larger libraries. The new system is 50% faster for residents who need support to complete their application over the phone. It is also better for the Council, which has reduced the need to handle weekly cheque payments from £4000-£6000 to £30-£60.

POINTLESS STREET SIGNS

The Department for Transport has published guidelines for county councils to remove 'pointless' road signs, warning that they waste taxpayers' money, clutter streets and confuse motorists. Local highways authorities are told to audit signs in their area and remove those that are obsolete or unnecessary. They should also adopt a "less is more" approach to the use of future traffic signs.

Nick and Jeannette will be interested to hear any suggestions about road signs which fall into this category.

OLDER PEOPLE'S STRATEGY

Care agencies and other services are examining how they work together, following the adoption of a new strategy which aims to ensure a positive future for Oxfordshire's older population. 'Living Longer, Living Better: Oxfordshire's Older People's Strategy' was produced in 2018 following the redesign of the county's Health & Wellbeing Board. It was developed by the County Council in conjunction with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. Residents, health and charity organisations, professionals, businesses, public sector organisations and community groups were engaged in devising the strategy so that it represented the views and aspirations of the broad population. It includes four themes which emerged during this co-production phase: being physically and emotionally healthy; being part of a strong and dynamic community; housing, homes and the environment; and access to information and care. The draft strategy went out for wider public consultation until February 2019, and there was strong agreement with its vision, priorities and outcomes. Planning is now under way on delivering the strategy, following approval by the County Cabinet and the Health & Wellbeing Board.

ACCOLADE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICE

OCC's Disabled Children's Care Service has been rated "good", and outstanding for "caring". The service's 'Shared Lives' scheme offers long-term accommodation and support, short breaks, respite care and day support, and there are 80 households of approved Shared Lives carers in the county. The service delivers home care and behavioural support services to disabled children, who, the inspectors said, receive "safe and exceptionally caring services" from the County Council. The report from the Care Quality Commission said: "We received positive feedback from parents and professionals on how staff had developed caring relationships with children and young people. Parents said their child or young person looked forward to seeing staff, which we saw evidence of during the inspection."

KNIFE SALES TO YOUNGSTERS

OCC's Trading Standards Service has been working closely with the police to gather intelligence relating to possible knife sales to young people, and has been running test purchasing exercises. Last year, the police undertook a round of knife purchases in one area, and four test sales were made to a young person. This was followed up with a test purchasing exercise by Trading Standards, after officers had provided retailers with business advice. Eight premises were visited and no sales took place, with the volunteer being challenged for ID at all stores. A further eight premises were then visited this month for a second round of test purchasing – and two multi-store retailers failed the test by selling a knife to a 16-year old test purchaser. Investigations are now underway regarding any potential offences. As part of Operation Sceptre, Oxford police also undertook a round of knife test purchasing this month. Having previously found that 7 out of 10 premises sold knives to a young person, this time 4 out of 13 premises failed the test. OCC's Trading Standards Service will also undertake a round of test purchases in Oxford soon, using the intelligence gathered by the police as justification for surveillance under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA). After the fatal stabbing of a customer in the Abingdon branch of Poundland a couple of years ago, the local Conservative MP, Nicola Blackwood, called on the Government to introduce tougher legislation on the sale of knives.

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In February 2018, the Home Office began that process by publishing a policy paper entitled 'Sale of knives: voluntary agreement by retailers'. Since then, the Asda stores have announced they will stop selling single kitchen knives by the end of this April, identifying that single knives were the most common knife products to be stolen in their shops. If any reader of this newsletter has concerns that a trader is selling knives, or other age restricted products to young people, please inform Trading Standards via the national consumer helpline on 03454 04 05 06 or textphone 18001 03454 04 05 06. For further details, please see: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/

IN BRIEF:

Government funding will be used in research into new road surface materials and pothole repair techniques, such as 3D printing. A digital hub is being set up for experts to share and develop innovations. Meanwhile, the Government has announced £200 million of further funding to assist county councils in repairing roads and potholes – enough to resurface an extra 1,000 miles of road. The sum consists of £50m for potholes and flood resilience, and £150m to reward examples of councils' best practice in road repairs.

The Commons Housing, Communities & Local Government Select Committee has called on the Government to stop leaving councils "in the dark" over Brexit and urgently provide more support. It said ministers should announce plans to replace current EU funding and devolve more powers to county councils. Meanwhile, Cabinet Office Minister David Lidington has given councils the green light to begin "contingency" plans for the UK to take part in European elections on 23rd May. He said Whitehall would reimburse "reasonable" expenses incurred by returning officers in preparing for a potential European election.

Figures from the Office of National Statistics show that a quarter of women over 50 are acting as informal carers for loved ones, along with one in eight men who act as carers for a spouse or parent. The report also found that almost two-thirds of those caring for their parents were doing so while working.

Funding for children's services across the country has been slashed by a third since 2010, research shows. A joint study by Action for Children, Barnardo's, the NSPCC, the Children's Society and the National Children's Bureau shows that funding available per child for all children's services in England – except schools and early education – fell from £813 in 2010/11 to £553 in 2017/18.

The National Education Union has found that most county councils are facing shortfalls in funding for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The NEU's report identified a £1.2bn drop in Government funding over the past four years, while the number of children with an education healthcare plan has risen from 240,000 to 320,000 in the same period. In Oxfordshire, the County Council plans to invest £20m to increase its SEND provision, including rebuilding Northfield School in Oxford with more pupil places.

National data shows the number of over-65s is expected to increase by 40% by 2041 to more than 14m. The biggest rise will be among those aged over 90, whose numbers will more than double from 500,000 to 1.2m in two decades' time. Rural towns and villages will see the biggest impact. Among the many implications is the need to revise the rules for developers to pay a Community Infrastructure Levy on over-55s' developments.

Latest figures on people who are unnecessarily in hospital while they await care show that 85 Oxfordshire residents had their hospital discharge delayed in December. This is five fewer than in November and 20 fewer than the same time last year. Oxfordshire's improvement remains better than nationally. In the last 12 months, delays have dropped by 19% locally compared with 11% nationally.

Nick Carter & Jeannette Matelot April 2019

Report from District Councillors Lynn Lloyd and Ian White - the councillors were unable to be present but sent the following report:

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District Councillors' Report 2018 / 2019

Dealing with Issues - We have continued to actively support our Parish Councils and residents with questions and issues concerning development ranging from questions about fences and hedges up to issues around new major developments. We continue to see developers submitting speculative applications which are not in accordance with Neighbourhood Plan aspirations but at Appeal, we are having greater success due to the adoption of NDPs as we have maintained Year Land Supply above 5 Years. Additionally, the Growth Board Agreement means we now only need to maintain a 3 Year supply for the time being, although this should be treated with caution as we need to maintain performance above target for when this concession expires.

We continue to work with our MP John Howell in trying to improve control of development. John has been the driving force behind the Neighbourhood Planning Law which is now in place and he is driving a Private Members Bill through Parliament which will seek to limit Developers' right to appeal where a Neighbourhood Plan is in place.

We are delivering affordable housing at a rate well above our target. As at December 2018 we had achieved 263 against the cumulative target of 188 and the Annual Target of 250. Indications are that by the end of the (council) year we will have delivered at least 300 affordable homes.

Didcot Garden Town is a major part of our plan for development in the District, offering a significant number of jobs and home. Work on this project continues with various funding opportunities being announced.

Our plans to 'refresh' Berinsfield continue to progress and will bring significant benefits to this community and the wider district. An example of where development can bring benefits is the Market Place Mews development in Henley which brought us £300,000 for the small ransom strip on the edge of the site.

Work on the new Local Plan continues having been paused and revisited following important legal advice and will shortly be submitted for examination by the Planning Inspector. Whilst additional development is never welcome in the majority of our communities, the growing population, and the need for housing mean that unpopular decisions must be taken. Whilst there are various calculations used which suggest a lower level of housing will be needed, we have taken the best possible expert advice in determining the location and scale of development in respect of housing need, environmental impact, pollution mitigation, infrastructure and future employment requirements.

Through our support for the Growth Deal, we are also supporting a bid for the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) which will help provide the much needed improvements to our infrastructure.

Customer satisfaction - The council carries out a survey of residents every few years to learn about peoples' satisfaction with local area and the services we provide. The latest survey took place in January and February 2018. According to the survey, 77 per cent of residents were satisfied with the council's work. While the same amount felt the quality of services provided by the council was good but the number of residents who agreed the council was providing value for money has dropped by five per cent, in line with the national trend. However, 63-per cent were satisfied – this is higher than the national average, which has ranged from 47 to 56 per cent over the last five years, according to the Local Government Association. The survey also found rated most important by residents were community safety, waste and recycling, street cleaning, environmental protection and sport and leisure – and three-quarters or more of people were satisfied with the way these services were delivered.

Business Support And Development – We have set up the South and Vale Business awards to celebrate our fantastic business community with the Award Ceremony to be held at the fantastic Williams F1 Facility at Grove, near Wantage. Another initiative is the Pop-Up Business School to help future entrepreneurs get started (each a week long). The next one in Berinsfield starts on the 29th April. Although a joint OCC, SODC & BT initiative, the Better Broadband project continues to generate benefits for our communities with the 600th cabinet going live on the 15th March at Sydenham/Emmington near Chinnor.

Community Safety - Our Community Safety Team work closely with the CS Partnership strengthening the County's contributions; for example on how to identify cases of Female Genital Mutilation and on how to spot examples of modern slavery. We continue to grow the Safer Places initiative across the District and the "Ask For Angela" Scheme continues to grow in the District's pubs.

Waste And Recycling - We have again performed well in these areas being ranked 1st Place on the County and 2nd place nationally. Our level of complaints in respect of bins and waste collection is the lowest in the top 50 performers, running at less than half the average rate per 100,000. This is a good performance given that we make over 1,000,000 collections per annum. Performance has also been greatly improved by the introduction of the new fleet of vehicles by Biffa ahead of schedule due to reliability issues.

Finances - South Oxfordshire remains a financially sound Council. Despite increasing financial restrictions, we have been able to maintain our full range of services with a minimal £5.00 increase in our part of the council tax. We are conscious that pressures will increase as the Central Government Support Grant is now zero and we still do not have agreement on Business Rates Retention or New Homes Bonus (the grant given for houses that have been completed.) Our sound and prudent approach to money has enabled us to maintain our Capital & Revenue Grants scheme.

Community and Grants - This scheme has continued to provide much-needed funding for facilities in our communities. For example, a community pub is due to be renovated and brought back into use thanks to a £50,000 grant from South

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Oxfordshire District Council. Other projects include a new outdoor gym in Warborough, improvements to the village shop in Little Milton and a new roof for the village hall in Sonning Common. Goring Village Hall will get new lighting, sound equipment and curtains to improve its stage, and Woodcote Village Hall will benefit from electrical and lighting improvements and a new projector.

Woodcote Parish Council is also receiving money to help install a pathway from its new zebra crossing, across the recreation ground to the school. Over the course of the current financial year, the council has awarded more than £820,000 to community projects across the district. At last summer's Oxfordshire Charity and Volunteer Awards, the South Stoke Community Village Shop won the best group in South Oxfordshire, an award which was sponsored by the district council. This was in recognition of the hard work by the volunteers to create this community hub in a rural part of South Oxfordshire. This has obviously been appreciated by local people judging by its success.

So Community Lottery Draw – Over £28,000 has been raised by our local lottery which has been given to 67 good causes locally. Remember that we make no money from this; after costs all of the money is distributed to local good causes.

Leisure and well-being – Use of our leisure facilities continues to increase with over 750,000 visits to SODC Leisure facilities in the period April – December 2018. Go Active Gold continues to grow, as does its off-shoot Go Active Juniors, helping people at both ends of their lives who might not otherwise do so, to get involved in sporting activities. The Go Active Gold team aim to encourage people aged 60 and over living in rural areas to live more active lifestyles. Go Active Juniors is for anyone up to 18 years old. The project aims to increase participation in sport and physical activity by getting young people active in our area. The team offer a range of support including helping to find new coaches to deliver sports sessions, assist clubs to set-up new activity sessions and help clubs with equipment.

Food Standards – We continue to maintain the high standard of service by our Team in this important area. A number of businesses were subject to enforcement notices and we have successfully prosecuted a number for serious breaches of the regulation.

This is just a short summary of some of the things that the Council has done. If you are interested in a more in-depth report of the metrics of how we perform as a Council, these can be found in the monthly reports on our web site at: <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/about-us/how-we-work/policy-and-performance/performance-reports/performance-reports-201819>

Report from the Neighbourhood Plan Group – Mark Kermack

The Plan is nearly complete and has taken 17 months to produce from concept to completion. The plan is robust in terms of format, and rather than prescribing a set number of developments it contains policies for defining what is acceptable and what is not. It will very shortly be presented to the Parish Council for validation and will then be submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council for further review over six weeks, with their comments being sent to an examiner. If appropriate, comments will come back to us for the plan to be amended and it will then go for referendum, which is organised by SODC. If the referendum approves the Neighbourhood Plan, it would be incorporated in the SODC Local Plan. All elements within our control are complete and once the Plan is submitted to SODC it is out of our hands.

If the Neighbourhood Plan is approved, it will increase the amount of CIL money received by the parish by 10%.

Report from the Old School Room – Roy Harrison:

I was sat here earlier today at the Village Coffee Morning thinking how lucky we are to have this lovely facility in the centre of the village which is well used and in good order.

Earlier this year we had a new boiler installed and know that regular user are delighted to come into a warm hall, be it for yoga, coffee mornings, Parish meetings, band practice or whatever.

As chairman of the OSR I've got to admit the Committee have not met for a long time. However I think it is looking quite good despite perhaps a lack of TLC! The three trustees are Mark Kermack and Adele Stancliffe and myself.

Pat Hardiman regularly cleans and looks after the tidiness of the kitchen and ensures the toilet facilities are in good order.

Ken Hardiman is on hand to see to any maintenance problems which arise and I'm grateful to them both for all they do.

Jim Kendall is the OSR treasurer and annually submits the accounts to the Charity Commission and he has sent me the following overview of our financial positions as at 31st December 2018:

The OSR holds 2 accounts with Lloyds Bank in Thame. At the end of the year, the current account balance stood at £7,382.19 and the savings account balance stood at £7,523.89 making our total reserves £14,636.08 (not accounting for a small amount of around £70 held as petty cash).

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This is a very similar position to the previous year, when our reserves stood at £14,326.67 (again not including petty cash).

The main sources of income for the period were hiring charges (£3,346) and fund raising (£2,628) - it's worth noting that the fund raising was entirely down to the 200 Club. In addition there was around £840 received as donations.

The main items of expenditure were maintenance on the boiler (now replaced) and the electrical works which cost almost £1,900 during the year. In addition, we paid out £1,190 in 200 club prize money. Other significant lines of expenditure were (as in previous years) utility costs and cleaning.

The only other point worth noting is that the boiler has now been replaced at a cost of £2,950 - this cost however came in January and will therefore be included in the 2019 accounts.

So from a financial point of view I feel we are reasonably comfortable; however you will probably be aware that the adjoining Old School House is owned by the Oxford Diocese who are discussing selling it in order to pay the Parish Share- I'm not going to discuss the merits of that but I would like you to be aware that the Diocese also are the landlords of the Old School Room and that we are tenants on a 57 year lease which commenced at the end of 1999. We have therefore a further 37 years remaining on the lease – will the Diocese wish to sell the property when the time comes – food for thought!

Report from the Cricket Club – Dan Bradbury:

The cricket season is upon us, the club is alive and well and looking forward to the season. Last season went well, with 10-11 games. There have been changes over the winter - the nets have gone into the playing field with an official opening event tomorrow. The club are grateful for all the funds that have been raised over a four year process for these nets.

There is also a change in Captain as Dan Bradbury takes over from Toby Roe. Toby is stepping down after a decade – hats off to him for all his hard work during this time.

The season will be starting with a game this Sunday, and playing numbers are up to 32 this season. The club will be playing Blenheim again this year which is a great day out for spectators too!

Report from the WI – Siobhan McKee:

For a small village Sydenham has a strong WI with 26 members. There are monthly meetings on the 3rd Thursday of the month (except in August). The locations vary considerably, sometimes in peoples' homes and in the OSR.

There have been some very good speakers this last year, including the story of Andrew Carnegie, Blood Bikes, the RNLI past and present, and a tutorial on self defence. There has been an art workshop, marzipan fruit making, quiz nights, the traditional summer garden party and a lovely Christmas dinner in the OSR. Other activities include a willow weaving workshop, a visit to the donkey sanctuary, a wild flower walk, visit to the Chiltern Open Air Museum, lunch at Aylesbury College's Harding Restaurant, and the annual late afternoon walk followed by supper at the pub. It is a very mixed program with much fun to be had.

A report from the Church – Siobhan McKee:

A small nucleus of regulars at the 3 church services we have each month, but there is usually a good village turnout for most of the 'special ones' such as Easter, Mothering Sunday (although not as many children there now, even though there are many in the village), Christmas, Harvest and the Songs of Praises which were dedicated to the children and another to the Cricket Club. We're so lucky to have Joan DeVal as our regular minister - no matter which service she takes, Joan has a wonderful way of involving the congregation, particularly children!

There were 2 weddings (although one moved to Chinnor at the last minute, but the St Mary's choir did the singing) and sadly two villagers' funerals, Gina and Will.

It is a personal worry to me that the low numbers in church could, in the future, put the church's existence in jeopardy. There's already been talk about the future of Crowell church - although must emphasise no plan or decision has been agreed. I'm sure we all agree that having the church in the centre of our village is wonderful (it features in all the PC's Sydenham Mails) and having it boarded up and fenced off is not something any of us

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would ever want to see. There's a bi-monthly Songs of Praise - just half an hour of singing popular hymns - maybe people could think about coming along to that??

The main issue this last year has been the proposed sale of the Old School House which has been owned by the church, as part of the School Room since it was built in 1849 with money from local benefactors. With the C of E bureaucracy being off the scale....the diocese sold it to the Sydenham PCC in 1959 and then with the amalgamation of the parishes into the one United Parish, it transferred to that. However, it seems that PCCs can't 'own' property, so the diocese is still heavily involved.

There are few issues with the fabric of the church building which will need attention this year: the plasterwork on the walls around the altar, the ceiling in the small vestry, some of the wall heaters and loose planks of wood on the spire.

Finally, there was quite a surprise when the Rector, Maggie Thorne, sent an email on a Friday night at the end of February advising church wardens that she would be leaving to take up a new post in Wales. The bureaucracy I referred to earlier, dictates that no advertisement for a replacement can happen before the incumbent has actually left and the notice period is 3 months. In addition, the bishop advises that this is not the best time of year to try and find a replacement, so the recruitment process is likely to start in September, meaning, if everything goes completely smoothly, there won't be a new rector for at least a year. - most likely, much longer.

Report from Sydenham Fayre – Geoff Isherwood

The 2018 Fayre made a healthy profit of £5,691, which after being added to the existing balance and taking amounts to be retained into account meant that we had £5,473 to donate.

A large proportion of this (£2,500) went to the cricket club to assist with the purchase of their new nets. Other beneficiaries were the church, newsletter, WI, Thame Lions (in appreciation of their car park stewardship) and Aston Rowant and Lewknor schools. £500 was reserved for the construction of the 'Sydenham Super Santa Sleigh', an initiative suggested by villager Kate Grafham and executed by a group of villagers. The subsequent door-to-door festive collection added £496 to the Fayre coffers.

The balance in the Fayre bank account after all beneficiaries had been paid and expenses taken into account was £5259. We always need to retain a healthy balance to finance the next year's event, as there are significant upfront costs, approx. £3500, plus floats for each stall. However the £1500 we had been retaining to pay John Heathfield for work on the playing field equipment has not been invoiced and as the full spec of the work was not completed we have agreed that this can now be freed up.

Planning for this year is well advanced. We made a conscious effort to try to include local schools, groups and clubs; this was quite successful as we have Aston Rowant doing country dancing and a demo from Stokenchurch judo club. All our other regular attractions will be there. We have put out several calls for volunteers and hopefully there will be the usual surge nearer the date.

Once again, the big road signs are being updated courtesy of John Ashfield and Gordon McLeod and will be set up a couple of weeks in advance. Parking will be opposite Slade farm and thanks go to Murray Graham and Ian Harbour for allowing us to use their field again. As there is a possibility that the Chinnor road will be closed due to roadworks, we are trying to secure a field for parking at the Postcombe end of the village.

The programmes will be delivered to the village, Towersey and Kingston Blount at least three weeks prior to the Fayre. Our social media experts have excelled themselves so hopefully we will draw in a bumper crowd.

Report from Munday's Charity – Paul Stancliffe:

The Charity known as Munday's Gift was established in 1660 (i.e. six years before the Great Fire of London!) when land was given to the village by Robert Munday to provide allotments for the benefit of the villagers. Its original purpose was also to support the Church, the poor of the village, and to provide a fund for any "village emergency", but in 2010 the Charity Commission approved the following addition to paragraph 17 "General Benefit of Poor" of the rules of the Charity: "Subject to the payments aforesaid, the yearly income of the Charity shall be applied by the Trustees in making payments to any group/organisation or amenity operating within the Parish of Sydenham, whose purposes are charitable."

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After the enclosure awards the Charity became owners of 10 acre "The Upper Field" at the top of Sewell's Lane close to Crowell Brook, and 6 acre "Bounty Holly" accessed from the footpath beside the Old Chapel, where the remaining allotments are sited. The rest of "Bounty Holly" was let to William Munday until he died last October, and has now been taken on by William Browning who lives at Sydenham Grange Farm. He intends to continue to use it for growing silage and hay. The Parish's Footpath 5 runs through the middle of "Bounty Holly" towards Chalford. "The Upper Field" is let to Peter Quainton.

The income of the Charity comes from the allotment rents, the rent of "The Upper Field" and the grass areas of "Bounty Holly", and Bank interest. The rules of the Charity state that only residents of the village are allowed to hold allotments. The number of allotments in use has been constant in recent years but the Trustees would welcome any suggestions for encouraging more villagers to make use of them.

During the 1990s there was the possibility of small village charities being amalgamated and removed from the control of villagers. There were at the time some 45,000 small charities in the country aimed at relieving poverty. Those charities with an income of over £200 were said to be less likely to be amalgamated.

The Trustees therefore increased the rents to achieve an income in the region of £400 per year. In 2018/19 the income was £390.84 with an expenditure of £155 and our reserves are £2,385. We have offered to pay 50% of the cost of replacing the Playing Field gates, which is expected to be £600. The present rent of allotments is £10 per plot, or £5.00 per half plot per year.

The three Trustees of the Charity are appointed by the Parish Council, and at present they are Paul Stancliffe, Richard Cooper and Gordon McLeod.

The Chair thanked everyone for coming and there followed an informal open forum with refreshments.

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