

# **Sydenham Parish Council**

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 8.00pm

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

Under the current restrictions concerning Coronavirus the scheduled Annual Parish Meeting could not take place in the Old School Room. In line with The Corona Virus Act 2020 section 78(2) this meeting was held remotely. As it was not possible to follow the usual social format, the Parish Council instead invited its regular guests to submit a short written report to update parishioners to compile into a full meeting report for the village website. Electors were still welcome to attend the meeting, and the Parish Council was pleased to welcome one member of the parish.

## **Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council – Alison Isherwood:**

Covid restrictions have meant that all meetings have taken place virtually since March 2020 and due to these restrictions we did not have an Annual meeting last year. The report therefore covers two years of PC business, and there has been plenty.

### **Planning**

We have considered 16 planning applications with two going to appeal.

### **Sydenham Grove**

Work on the site eventually started in February 2020 but was paused during April due to Covid restrictions and recommenced in May. The materials used reflect comments from the PC and villagers.

### **Undergrounding of electricity supply by SSE**

This project was finally completed in August 2020 after delays earlier in the year due to the weather then Covid restrictions. The undergrounding has been successful with no power cuts since.

### **Broadband**

Fibre to premises is now an aspiration in the village and whilst the Airband scheme did not attract sufficient interest Openreach are in the process of scoping a scheme for interested villagers.

### **Playing Field**

The playing field is maintained by Dave Wilkins with annual inspections by ROSPA. Any suggested actions are implemented; no major works have been required. Two new benches for the playing field were purchased by Sydenham fayre and one is dedicated to Will Munday, who used to maintain the field for the village.

### **Ditches and drainage**

The problem with drainage opposite Old Byre House was investigated in 2019 and some remedial works undertaken in 2020 but further works need to take place.

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The ditches from Slade Farm to Box Cottages and down Brookstones were dug out early in 2021 but the atrocious winter weather resulted in flash flooding by the pinch point, however the ditching works meant this drained in a few hours.

The very wet winter of 2020/21 saw extensive flooding in the village with the reintroduction of the pond on the village green! A village working party cleared the ditches towards the Stert junction of vegetation then these were dug out, together with the ditch from the Holliers Close junction. The underground pipes at the Stert junction, Holliers Close junction and by the green were all cleared and eventually the village dried up.

Flooding by the Inn at Emmington continues to occur at times of very heavy rain. The drainage ditches running alongside Copse Farm need to be cleared and this task will take place during the drier weather.

### **Potholes**

Major resurfacing of the village road took place in November 2019.

### **Speeding**

A pinch point was installed on the approach to Box Cottages at the end of 2019. This was funded in part by County Councillor priority fund and Community Infrastructure Levy funds which the PC receive for new housing in the village. A village meeting was held in July 2019 to discuss traffic calming at the Emmington end of the village. A pinch point coming into the village from the Inn at Emmington turn and a chicane near to Slade Farm were suggested. Reservations were voiced on a pinch point alongside the houses as access and on-street parking would be compromised.

Speeding on the B4445 was also raised and whilst the road is in Chinnor PC the houses along the Thame Road are in Sydenham PC and the danger posed at the junction for emerging traffic affects all villagers.

Plans for a traffic calming scheme near to Slade farm were drawn up by OCC Highways and with funding from the County Councillor Priority fund and CIL funds from the Grove development a chicane was installed in November 2020. Plans have been drawn up for a similar scheme on the B4445 on the approach to the Inn at Emmington turn from Chinnor. Our County Councillor has secured funding from the Central CIL pot for the scheme but as the costs have come in above the amount secured further funding will be sought.

Our County councillor has also secured funding for a 20mph zone through the village. A County wide scheme is proposed which would reduce some of the costs so we await progress following the upcoming County Council elections.

Another casualty of the very wet winter was the VAS sign on the junction approach by the Inn which nearly fell into the ditch. Whilst a chicane at this location will provide physical calming the sign was replaced, with County Councillor priority funds, with an updated model showing actual speed. It will complement the chicane once installed.

### **Footpaths**

A leisure survey was undertaken at the end of 2019 to help the PC understand villager priorities. The suggestion of adult gym equipment in the playing field was not widely supported but improvement of footpaths and bridleways was seen as a focus by villagers. The routes and progress are as follows:

#### **Sewells Lane bridleway**

The bridleway from Sewells Lane to the allotment entrance is extremely rutted by tractor use. It is virtually impassable in wet weather and very rutted and uneven in dry. The surface was flattened and hedges trimmed in the autumn of 2020 funded by the PC but the extremely wet weather in early October and continued use by the tractor rendered these remedial works ineffective. A solution for all users is being sought in conjunction with OCC Countryside Services and funding will be sought for an approved scheme.

#### **Thame Park footpath**

This route is a favoured one from the village but the stiles needed remedial work and made access difficult. A TOE grant was awarded to replace the stiles with gates and replace the footpath bridge so the route is now accessible to

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all, and widely used by villagers and visitors to the village coming across Thame Park. The project was completed in autumn 2020 so was ready for use in lockdowns 2 and 3.

### **Bridleway past the Jays**

This bridleway also becomes impassable during the winter months due to poor drainage. The landowner has undertaken some remedial works to improve drainage but more work is needed together with regrading the path. Discussion with the landowner is ongoing and the village volunteer group are also willing to undertake works once the path dries out.

### **Neighbourhood plan**

The neighbourhood plan was ready to go to referendum last year but this was postponed due to Covid. Voting will now take place today alongside local elections.

### **Pandemic activities**

The Parish Council set up a volunteer scheme for any villagers needing support during the first lockdown. Fortunately most villagers enjoy a support network from neighbours so few volunteer requests were made. Sydenham Mail is used regularly to update villagers on information locally and the village website has a page dedicated to Covid related information.

A book swap was set up by Cheryl Belson in the bus shelter which has been widely used by both villagers and neighbours, including walkers who have frequented the village in various lockdowns. Bookshelves were built by her husband Mat to house the increasing donations which were expanded to include games and puzzles, all of which have proved very popular.

An online village quiz started on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and proved so popular that the PC agreed to fund the online access software and the first anniversary of lockdown quizzing was celebrated on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2021! 40 quizzes were brilliantly orchestrated by Cheryl Belson, and became a lockdown highlight for a core group of villagers.

**Sydenham Fayre** became a sub-committee of the PC in 2019. Sadly both the 2020 and 2021 events were cancelled due to Covid restrictions, but the fayre team are hoping to put on a village celebration in September.

## **County Councillors' newsletter for Thame & Chinnor April 2021**

*from Nick Carter & Jeannette Matelot*

### **LOCAL PROJECTS GAIN FROM COUNCILLORS' GRANTS**

A range of local community projects have benefited from this year's Councillor Priority Fund, and many of the grants were in respect of Covid-related schemes. Jeannette and Nick each had a £15k fund to disburse during the 2020/21 financial year, and the available money was fully allocated by the March deadline on a dozen different projects. This year's beneficiaries were:

- Thame Scouts: assistance towards installing CCTV security
- Barley Hill School: laptops
- Lord Williams's PTA: outdoor Covid-safe seating
- Thame Players' Theatre: new 'Talkback' system (jointly with SODC grant)
- Thame Town Council: commemorative blue plaque for Frank Kirby VC, CBE
- Chinnor Railway: assistance towards security fencing
- Chinnor's Red Kite Centre: operating assistance
- Aston Rowant Primary School: outdoor accommodation for classes during pandemic
- Sydenham Parish Council: assistance with traffic calming measures
- Tetsworth Parish Council: signage at entrance to village
- Tetsworth Primary School: laptops
- Invicta Summer Academy: helping children to catch up after missing lessons during pandemic.

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The County's budget for 2021/22 includes another Community Priority Fund, although the total available for each county councillor has now been reduced to £7,500 for each of the next two years. Across Oxfordshire last year, the total fund supported more than 350 individual projects, and a third of the grant money went to projects directly linked to Covid. Before the County elections on 6th May, any community group or initiative looking for urgent funding can access a number of other local grant opportunities, which are detailed on the Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action website.

### **BROADBAND COMPLETION IS A PERSONAL MILESTONE**

The County's recent announcement about the successful completion of its broadband programme is a landmark in Nick Carter's period as a County Councillor. In 2013, one of his responsibilities as a County Cabinet member was to launch the programme and steer its roll-out and development during the following four years. The aim of the 'Better Broadband for Oxfordshire' programme was to provide superfast broadband to homes and businesses across the county, and last month OCC announced its successful completion. A successor project, 'Businesses in Rural Oxfordshire', is now under way to deliver full fibre. The original 'Better Broadband' programme was a partnership between OCC, BT and the Government (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport), and the objective of its first phase was to provide superfast broadband to 64,500 premises by 2015 to reach 90% coverage. Phase two then began, and by the end of 2017 coverage had extended to 95% with a further 11,100 premises, assisted by some co-funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership and four of the five district councils. The final phase commenced in 2018 and extended coverage to 2,400 'hard to reach' premises, raising coverage to 98% across the county by 2020. This phase was funded by savings because the contract had been run so efficiently, and by a further £2.5m from BT which was triggered by the unexpectedly high take-up of superfast broadband. The Oxfordshire programme was recognised by BT as one of the best in the country, and as a result:

- 79,000 premises now have a connection of more than 24Mbps
- 23,000 additional premises have been upgraded with full fibre
- 850 km of fibre has been laid – the equivalent of Oxford to Orkney
- 705 fibre structures have been installed
- 76% take-up from all the broadband cabinets means more than 140,000 premises have superfast broadband that would otherwise not have been available
- The programme was completed below budgeted costs.

A coverage map is available on the Digital Infrastructure Programme website, which gives an overview of current and future broadband provision across Oxfordshire. The map will also display an estimate of existing speeds available for each premise and detail of future fibre upgrades. To use the coverage map, enter a postcode, which will then allocate the pop-up box with further details. It is at: <https://digitalinfrastructureoxfordshire.co.uk/progress-so-far/coverage-map>

What's next? Oxfordshire is the most rural county in the South-East and, as a result, the broadband programme has still not been able to reach a large number of more isolated premises. To continue working towards closing this coverage gap, the County won £6.3m of DEFRA funding to connect as many rural businesses to full-fibre broadband as possible. At the end of 2019, both BT and Airband were awarded contracts to deliver full-fibre broadband to nearly 1,000 businesses in the most rural parts of the county – and under these contracts, a further 900 residential properties are also due to be connected. The full-fibre connection will offer speeds up to 1Gbps and will bring superfast coverage in Oxfordshire up to 99%. This will add several hundred kilometres of fibre to the most rural parts of the county, with completion anticipated by June 2022.

### **NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR COVID HEROES AWARDS**

Oxfordshire's new High Sheriff, Monawar Hussain, is inviting award nominations to honour people who have played their part in the battle against COVID-19. The awards will celebrate those we have most to thank as Oxfordshire comes to terms with the last year. While there has been great suffering and sadness caused by the pandemic, there have been many tales of hope and heroism. In his first action since becoming High Sheriff, Imam Hussain says there are people who have not received the recognition they deserve during the last 12 months. He said: "I have seen bravery and heroism on a daily basis throughout the county over the last year, We must recognise that we still need those qualities because we are far from the finishing line at the moment. "We have seen many inspirational tales of altruism and love from across our communities towards those who are needy and to keep our county moving, despite the personal risk. "I want to highlight their stories by dedicating the High Sheriff Heroes awards to those making contributions, be they individuals, voluntary groups or businesses. But I need your help in nominating those who have carried out exceptional acts, during but not exclusively through the pandemic."

To nominate, email [oxfordshire@highsheriffs.com](mailto:oxfordshire@highsheriffs.com) for an application form.

### **EXPANDING THE ROLE OF HEALTH SCRUTINY**

The County has a statutory committee which scrutinises almost all health and well-being issues for Oxfordshire. The exception to this is a separate committee which oversees NHS proposals for the Horton General Hospital, jointly with Northamptonshire County Council and Warwickshire County Council. Now that the NHS is planning to develop a single Integrated Care System across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West, a new scrutiny committee will be formed for wider-ranging issues representing Bucks Council, Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council. This new scrutiny committee will also be able to keep a close eye on health services in the Thame & Chinnor area, where the NHS's responsibilities are split between Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. The health services have a legal duty to consult a local authority's health scrutiny committee about any proposals for a

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substantial development or variation in the provision of services in their area. When these substantial developments or variations are relevant to a geographical area that covers more than one local authority, then the new joint committee will be consulted instead. The health scrutiny powers include:

- a) Require officers of NHS bodies to attend committee meetings.
- b) Require the local NHS to provide information about the planning, provision and operation of the health service in the area.
- c) Make recommendations to NHS bodies.
- d) Refer proposals for substantial changes to the Secretary of State for decision, if the committee believes the consultation has been inadequate, or if there were inadequate reasons for not consulting, or if the proposals would not be in the interests of the local health service.

Oxfordshire's existing health scrutiny committee will remain in place, comprising seven county councillors, five district councillors, and three co-opted non-voting members. The new joint scrutiny committee will consist of seven members for Oxfordshire, six for Bucks and six for Berkshire West (ie, two for each of West Berks, Reading and Wokingham), and there will be two additional non-voting coopted members, one of whom will be from the independent Healthwatch body. An Integrated Care System is a group of local NHS organisations working together with each other, local councils and other partners, to develop and implement strategies for the next five years. These strategies set out how an ICS intends to turn the NHS Long-Term Plan into local action to improve services and the health and well-being of the communities they serve.

Further details are at: [https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s54018/JHO\\_NOV2620R11%20-%20Health%20Scrutiny.pdf](https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s54018/JHO_NOV2620R11%20-%20Health%20Scrutiny.pdf)

### **ORGANISATIONS CAN BID FOR FUNDING**

Local organisations are being invited to bid for a chunk of £220m worth of grant funding from the Government to encourage economic growth and recovery from the pandemic. The County is managing the application process in Oxfordshire for the UK

Community Renewal Fund and is seeking bids from organisations. Following Brexit, the Government has set up the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the grant funding now available is a prelude to that. The County's chief executive, Yvonne Rees, said: "There are real opportunities here for local organisations to get substantial help in building for their future and contributing to the vibrance of Oxfordshire. If businesses and other organisations think a bid may help them, we look forward to hearing from them before the deadline at the end of May." Interested organisations from the business, further education and voluntary & community sectors are encouraged to look at the UK Community Renewal Fund Prospectus and the UK Community Fund Technical Note for Project Applicants and Deliverers before starting work on a bid. The prospectus provides detailed information on the fund's objectives, the types of projects it will support, and the process and selection criteria that will be used to assess bids. Successful UK Community Renewal Fund bids will be for 2021/22 only and activity must end in March 2022. Key points are:

- Projects must deliver against key local growth priorities: please speak to OCC to confirm suitability.
- Projects must be completed by 31st March 2022 and must be deliverable, efficient and effective.
- Applications must use the application form on this webpage.
- Deadline for applications by 5pm on Friday 28th May 2021 to: [communityrenewalfund@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:communityrenewalfund@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

More information can be found at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/about-your-council/counciltax-and-finance/council-funding-and-spending/community-renewal-fund>

### **BOLD AGENDA FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc's leadership group has endorsed new environment principles to manage natural resources, stimulate the green economy and achieve net-zero carbon goals. The move is in response to the Government's intention for the Arc to be the UK's fastest-growing economic region and a world leader in sustainability. Cllr Barry Wood, leader of Cherwell DC and chairman of the Arc Leaders Group, said: "The work that has been done on putting forward this set of principles will allow us to be ambitious and aspirational for the Ox-Cam Arc. These principles will embrace green spaces, housing standards, sustainable transport, energy generation and transmission, water management, and conservation." The set of principles will inform the future plans of local authorities in the Arc region, including local plans, council activities, and delivery programmes for other bodies. To back it up, the Arc Leadership Group is now developing an environment strategy in collaboration with Cranfield University, which will take account of best practice in fast-growing regions globally. The Oxfordshire Growth Board is also setting up an environment advisory group which will feed into this work. Cllr Bridget Smith, chairman of the Arc's Environment Group and leader of South Cambridgeshire DC, said: "If we are to double the economic growth in the Arc region then we must, as a minimum, be doubling nature and ensuring that we lead the way in zero-carbon living and working. "We look forward to working closely with Government and colleagues locally on taking the next steps. It will include embedding these principles into our planning so we can empower our businesses and residents by giving them better choices. "If we do this well, we hope that other regions and countries will be looking to the Oxford-Cambridge Arc as the leading place for environmentally sustainable development, just as we look to the Netherlands for best practice in cycling and cycling infrastructure." More detail on the environment principles is at:

[https://www.semlep.com/modules/downloads/download.php?file\\_name=2306](https://www.semlep.com/modules/downloads/download.php?file_name=2306)

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## COVID TESTING FACILITIES

Everyone can now access free Covid tests to use twice a week, and there are two types of testing available: symptom and symptom-free. Details are on the County's website. (1) People who don't have Covid symptoms can either:

- book free tests at one of Oxfordshire's 'symptom-free' sites,
- or access tests through their workplace or school,
- or collect home test kits from a testing site (symptomatic or symptom-free),
- or order test kits for home delivery,
- or a new 'pharmacy collect' service has also launched.

Alternatively, OCC's nearest symptom-free sites are The King's Centre, Oxford OX2 0ES, and The Beacon, Wantage OX12 9BX. Both are open 8.30am - 7pm (Mon - Fri), and 8.30am - 12.30pm (Sat). Further details are at:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/coronavirus-covid-19/prevention-andtesting/symptom-free-testing>

(2) One in three people with Covid do not experience any symptoms and may be spreading the virus without knowing. Rapid testing detects cases quickly and help to stop the spread. People who have Covid symptoms must self-isolate and book a PCR test as soon as possible. More information is available on OCC's symptom testing pages. The nearest symptomatic test sites are the Fuller Building Restaurant, Oxford Brookes University, Headington OX3 0BP, and Water Eaton park & ride, Oxford Road, Oxford OX2 8HA. There are also mobile testing units at: Chinnor Rugby Club; the Wheatley campus of Oxford Brookes; and Dalton Barracks, Abingdon OX13 6JB. Further details are at:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/coronavirus-covid-19/prevention-andtesting/symptom-testing>

## WATCHDOG VERDICTS BANISH VACCINE DOUBTS

Oxfordshire residents should have their Covid vaccinations with the same confidence as the millions of people who have already received a jab, says the County's Director of Public Health. He was speaking after a few EU countries had paused their use of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine following reports that a tiny number of recipients had developed blood clots. The UK's independent medicines watchdog, the Medicines & Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA), now says the reports do

not suggest the jab causes clots. Meanwhile, the EU's medicine regulator EMA says the vaccine is safe and effective, and there is no indication of a link with blood clots. Ansa Azhar, the County's Director of Public Health, comments: "If recent events elsewhere in the world had caused anybody to have small doubts about the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, the verdicts of these expert agencies should now banish those thoughts. "Vaccination remains the best way to prevent serious illness and death from COVID-19 and offers the best hope for coming out of the pandemic. The message in Oxfordshire remains 'when you get the invite, get the jab.'" A recent nationwide study shows the chance of becoming infected by Covid falls sharply after a first dose of either the Oxford or Pfizer vaccines. It found that the vaccines worked just as well in the over-75s and those with underlying health conditions, as they do in younger and fitter people. The research by the Office for National Statistics and University of Oxford also found a strong antibody response in all age groups from either jab.

Details here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-56844220>



## MAJOR INVESTMENT IN ROAD REPAIRS

The County is planning to invest more than £30 million this year in improvements for local motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. Roads, cycleways, bridges, drainage, and pavements will all benefit from the programme. Planned projects include resurfacing, embankment repairs, road edge strengthening, surface dressing to waterproof and extend the life of roads, and recycling schemes using new techniques that make use of old road materials. Oxfordshire's roads are generally better today than they were four or five years ago, and the highway team's brief is to get resources to where they are needed most. Repairs are identified either through reports from the public or during OCC's own routine inspections. People can report any defect at any time using Fix My Street. Between April 2020 and March 2021, the County treated about 1.5 million square metres of highway at more than 220 sites, with works valued at just over £20m.

## SORRY SAGA OF OX-CAM EXPRESSWAY

It was a cause for celebration at OCC when the Department for Transport announced in March that plans for an expressway linking Oxford with Milton Keynes and Cambridge had been scrapped. The Government's explanation was simply that the project was deemed "not to be cost-effective for the taxpayer". This understatement acknowledged what opponents of the scheme had been saying for a few years. OCC had originally tried to take a neutral view on the proposed expressway, and simply stated that if push came to shove, its preference was for a route to the west of Oxford. But councillors forced a motion through the Council which meant that it had to oppose the scheme. During the 2019 General Election, Jeannette and Nick were among a number of county councillors and local MPs who explained the depth of public opposition when the

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Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, visited Oxfordshire. As a result, he said he would review the project, and Highways England had to put the work on pause while the case for the expressway was re-examined. The proposed expressway would have torn a large and very expensive hole across beautiful countryside with no real benefit to local residents. Instead, the Government remains committed to East-West Rail, and in January it announced £760 million funding to deliver the next phase of this project.

### **WOMEN'S CYCLING TOUR RETURNS**

The world's best cyclists will be descending on Oxfordshire for the opening stage of the Women's Tour on Monday 4th October. The Women's Tour is Britain's longest-running professional cycle race for women and part of the prestigious UCI Women's World Tour series. This year, the opening stage will be flagged off in Bicester and will finish in Banbury. The County is again working in partnership with race organisers SweetSpot to deliver the event as part of a three-year commitment, which began in 2019. Different routes are planned each year to showcase the area to a national and international audience. OCC hopes that by welcoming back the race, more people will be inspired to take up or resume cycling. About 100 professional riders will weave their way through towns, villages and rural areas, inspiring local schools to organise themed sport and fitness lessons. Highlights of the race will also be screened on ITV4. Families are expected to line the route and contribute to an exciting community spectacle. Fans will visit Oxfordshire to watch the event and generate business for restaurants, cafés, hotels and shops. The Belgian Olympic medallist, Jolien D'hoore, won the race's first-ever Oxfordshire stage two years ago, on a route between Henley and Blenheim Palace, and more than 53,000 spectators watched the action from the roadside.

### **NEARLY ALL PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENTS OFFERED FIRST CHOICE**

More than 93% (6,409) of applications have been awarded their first choice of primary school in Oxfordshire. Last year's figure was 90.6%, so there is a higher proportion of children starting at their first choice of school for 2021/22. The County's Director of Children Services, Kevin Gordon, comments: "I am grateful to our school admissions team for all their hard work. The County Council's aim is to give every child a good start in life, and the school admissions team plays an essential part in that, year in, year out."

### **EQUAL SUCCESS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

For secondary transfers in the Thame & Chinnor area, 249 pupils out of 271 (92%) received their first choices, which either reflects the continuing popularity of Lord Williams's, or demonstrates that there is little alternative in this part of Oxfordshire.

### **SETTING THE PACE WITH ELECTRIC CHARGING**

Oxfordshire is one of the first places in the UK to have a comprehensive strategy which makes it easier for motorists to join the electric vehicle (EV) revolution. The County has adopted the Oxfordshire EV infrastructure strategy (OEVIS) that sets out key actions to allow more drivers to go electric by 2025. This will be five years before the Government plans to end the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles, and the new infrastructure will ensure that EV drivers have access to convenient charging facilities. EV sales in Oxfordshire are expected to rise faster than the national average — Oxford University researchers predict that by 2025 there could be more than 25,000 EVs on the county's roads, rising to 44,000 by 2027. The need for EV charging infrastructure is highlighted by local factors such as a 'zero emission zone' in parts of Oxford city centre, and the fact that around one-third of households across the county are unable to install their own EV charger as they have no off-road parking. As well as helping residents, the OEVIS will also focus on the needs of local businesses and employees, taxis, and logistics operations. One of its aims is to convert at least 7.5% of Council managed car park spaces for EV charging by 2025. Other objectives for this period include:

- Enabling and delivering public EV charging strategically across Oxfordshire.
- Adopting a common approach to managing EV charging in OCC's car parks.
- Enabling residents without access to private off-road parking to access a range of charging options.
- Encouraging developers to install high-quality EV charging infrastructure.
- Setting standards for public EV charging to ensure it is high quality and accessible.
- Working with partners to encourage other landowners to install EV charging infrastructure for businesses, residents and other users.

The strategy ties in with OCC's aim to make the county zero-carbon by 2050, and it will help to attract Government funding and private investment for EV charging projects. Meanwhile, the Oxford 'zero emission zone' is due to begin operating in a pilot area of the city centre from 1st August, and it will then roll out to a wider area of the city from spring 2022. The pilot comes after years of discussion and three rounds of public consultation by the County highways authority.

### **VITAL CASE FOR REPLACING STREET LIGHTS**

The County's target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions was exceeded last year, boosting OCC's aim for Oxfordshire to be zero-carbon by 2050. The County has cut its own corporate carbon emissions by 8% in the past 12 months, beating its target of 6%. The replacement of boilers and streetlighting with more energy-efficient models, the installation of solar panels and the purchase of more electric vehicles were all factors in the reduction. The measures that have already been put in place mean 1,132 tonnes of carbon dioxide have been cut from the atmosphere. One of the key projects is the programme to replace all street lights with efficient, environment-friendly LED (light-emitting diode) alternatives. This is scheduled to take

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four years and a £40 million investment, which includes upgrading the lighting columns, and it is expected to produce savings of more than £75m over the next 20 years. This move alone will reduce the amount of carbon dioxide being produced by 70%. Currently, street lights account for around 7,596 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> every year – representing nearly 35% of OCC's operational emissions. More than 2,800 streetlights were replaced in 2019/20, saving 245,109 kWh of electricity. A lighting upgrade project has started at OCC's park-and-ride sites at Thornhill and Oxford Parkway. LED lighting with pre-programmed dimming units will save 31 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year and reducing energy usage by 70%.

### **PENSION FUND SUPPORTS CLIMATE SOLUTIONS**

Meanwhile, the Oxfordshire Pension Fund has committed to achieving net zero emissions on its investments by 2050. Along with 20 other investors responsible for more than £2 trillion of assets, the Oxfordshire Fund has made the pledge through the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change. The commitment covers both decarbonising existing investments as well as increasing investments in climate solutions. It is hoped that this will be an important first step to defining an industry standard for net zero investing. The fund also aims to ensure investors are working to help deliver the Paris Agreement on climate change, which is to keep global warming below 1.5°C. Other organisations to join this investment framework include the Church of England and the Environment Agency.

### **ANSWERS TO THE BBC'S CLIMATE CHANGE QUESTIONS**

Local BBC journalists have acknowledged that climate change measures are a hot topic for candidates in the County elections, and so OCC was asked to take part in the following Q&A-style survey. The County's answers help to clarify what is currently being done and what is being planned for future action – and they may also help to cut through some of the rhetoric during the election campaign.

1. *How has the Council tackled climate change, and how is it proposing to act in the following areas?*

#### *a) Transport*

OCC is currently consulting on a new vision for its Local Transport & Connectivity Plan that aims to reduce car use, emphasising a zero-carbon transport network, digital connectivity, use of public transport and active travel (cycling and walking).

The County is supporting a shift to active travel through walking and cycling measures and 'Low Traffic Neighbourhoods', building on cycling & walking infrastructure plans produced for Oxford and Bicester. The Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy, and charging infrastructure projects like 'Park & Charge' and 'Go Ultra Low', are supporting residents to transition to EVs. There is an electric-by-default policy for OCC's own fleet replacement and an 'agile working' policy to minimise staff travel. The County is also supporting emissions reduction through policy initiatives such as Zero Emissions Zone for Oxford city centre, the UK first, and Connecting Oxford.

#### *b) Buildings*

OCC is working through its local partnerships and its responses to local plan consultations to promote higher building design standards. It is also leading several innovation workstreams to support the delivery of net-zero developments. The retrofit of existing buildings will play a key role in countywide decarbonisation. OCC recently secured £1.5m to improve energy efficiency in homes in fuel poverty, and it continues to support the 'Better Homes, Better Health' advice service to residents. The County is also developing, alongside Oxford Brookes University, a tool to identify retrofitting opportunities. OCC is committed to net-zero buildings in its own estate, reducing energy demand through LED conversion and PSDS-funded decarbonisation projects, and has moved to REGO-backed green grid electricity.

#### *c) Energy*

OCC is using its strategic planning, innovation and economic development roles to put in place the policy, infrastructure and systems that will enable Oxfordshire's transition to a decarbonised, smart energy future. OCC is a signatory to the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy, which aims to secure a smart clean-energy infrastructure for the county and reduce countywide emissions by 50% by 2030. OCC partners with the city council, universities, community and private sector on Local Energy Oxfordshire (LEO) to explore how a smarter local electricity system could work and how households, businesses and communities can contribute to – and benefit from – a flexible energy market. The street lighting LED conversion project will reduce energy demand by 70% by 2025.

#### *d) Waste*

The County's recycling rates have been the highest in England for seven years running: currently 58.8% of household waste (national average 45.5%) and targeting 70% by 2030. OCC continues to support more than 80 Community Action Groups (CAG) and Replenish projects to reduce waste, grow local food, repair items, and move towards a circular economy. Activities this year have included electrical repairs (including laptops for locked-down children), community fridges (distributing food to families experiencing food poverty) and bike repairs for key workers. As we emerge from Covid restrictions, OCC will continue these efforts, engaging with residents to reduce waste further and recycle more.

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### e) Land use

OCC seeks to address the causes and effects of climate change via land use, through its role as planning, highways and waste authority:

- seeking to minimise carbon loss from land-use change and to develop climate-resilient landscapes
- developing and implementing policies that encourage the sustainable management of land, water, biodiversity, resilient landscapes and heritage
- working to support protected species and promoting countryside access
- increasing resilience through strategic flood management initiatives, such as the £150m Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme.

### f) Other

One of the commitments of OCC's Climate Action Framework is to reduce carbon emissions along its supply chain. By working with its suppliers, the County has the greatest ability to influence the carbon emissions impact of its purchasing and move towards a circular economy. It is also developing a social value policy for procurement that will encourage suppliers and contractors to demonstrate reduced carbon emissions and other additional benefits.

### 2. How much is the Council planning to spend on tackling climate change in 2020/21 and 2021/22?

In 2020/21 the County has spent:

- £390k for resourcing climate action team
- £270k for climate action commissioning
- £1.09m for environmental spend that supports climate outcomes, including strategic flood management, waste strategy, support for Community Action Groups
- £8.437m allocated capital budget (including street lighting LED conversion, EV charging infrastructure at OCC's estate, Salix



Energy Programme, Invest to Save Recycling Fund, and Climate Action Invest to Save Property Recycling Fund)

- £258k grant funding for Local Energy Oxfordshire (\*)
- £458k grant funding from Innovate UK for EV-charging innovation projects (\*)
- £25k grant funding from the Low Carbon Skills Fund for energy audits (\*)
- £18k grant funding from Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund for Benson Library project (\*)
- £760k for Active Travel projects that support climate outcomes (\*)

In 2021/22 the County is planning to spend:

- £390k for resourcing the climate action team
- £240k for resourcing a climate action programme for OCC's estate
- £270k for climate action commissioning
- £1.09m for environmental spend that supports climate outcomes, including strategic flood management, waste strategy, and support for Community Action Groups
- £12.253m allocated capital budget (including street lighting LED conversion, EV-charging infrastructure at OCC's estate, Salix Energy Programme, Invest to Save Recycling Fund, and Climate Action Invest to Save Property Recycling Fund)
- £408k grant funding for Local Energy Oxfordshire (\*)
- £342k grant funding from Innovate UK for EV-charging innovation projects (\*)
- £2.1m grant funding from Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund for heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency projects on seven corporate buildings and four maintained schools (\*)
- £1.5m grant funding from Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery to improve energy efficiency in at least 150 households in fuel poverty (\*)
- £3.2m for Active Travel projects that support climate outcomes (\*)

These amounts do not include:

- partner contributions that are routed through OCC
- external partnership work supported indirectly through OCC's involvement
- other commercial partners' budgets in innovation projects.

(\*) These are 100% grant-funded projects, to deliver outputs by the funding body. They do not have any direct financial contributions from OCC.

### 3. Has the Council tried to raise extra funds to tackle climate change? If so, how?

The County obtained additional funding from the Government through:

- the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund – £2.1m for heat decarbonisation and energy-efficiency projects on seven corporate buildings and four maintained schools

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- the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery – £1.5m to improve energy efficiency in at least 150 households in fuel poverty across Oxfordshire.
- Active Travel Fund (DfT) – £2.9m for active travel measures across the county
- Innovate UK – £800,000 for EV-charging infrastructure innovation projects

*4. Is the Council considering any policies or projects that it has assessed as potentially increasing carbon emissions?*

New road building: Oxfordshire is a growth area with a commitment to build 100,000 new houses between 2012 and 2031. OCC has secured over £500m funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund, the Growth Deal and other sources for transport infrastructure, to build and extend major connections that support housing growth and prevent the impact of congestion and air pollution on local communities. In line with OCC's climate action commitments and the new Local Transport and Connective Plan's ambition to reduce car use, it will seek to encourage modal shift away from cars by providing high quality sustainable infrastructure for public transport, walking, cycling and bridleways.

*5. Is the Council considering any policies or projects that have been criticised for their impact?*

OCC is integrating the assessment of climate implications into its decision-making on policy, projects, plans and budget proposals. Infrastructure schemes are being assessed on their alignment with the climate action strategy and other corporate strategies through a scheme prioritisation tool. Environmental impact assessments are currently underway for schemes planned for next year. The County is exploring the possibility of using a carbon management standard to assess and reduce carbon emissions over the whole lifecycle of infrastructure projects. While being mindful of budget constraints, OCC is exploring innovations around materials and methods to reduce the carbon emissions of infrastructure projects, such as using recycled material.

## **DEVOLUTION AND COUNCIL TAX**

A report in March by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on devolution said the pandemic has proven how County Councils can deliver for their communities. The report argues that devolution to County Councils should be 'turbo-charged', saying this is crucial to help communities recover from the pandemic and essential if the Government is to deliver on its promise of 'levelling up' across the country.

Meanwhile, Nick and Jeannette have had a number of enquiries and discussions about Oxfordshire's recent above-inflation increase in council tax. Nick's response to residents and parish councils is as follows:

"I argued long and hard that the County should do some modelling based on a 'zero increase' for 2021/22 as one of the key options in its budget calculations. My argument was principally that a tax increase could not be justified after residents and

businesses had endured a year of such hardship. "I gained a degree of support for this, but not enough to make the County change direction. However, my arguments did influence its decision not to pursue the maximum allowable 5% increase. By levying a 3% increase instead, it was effectively deciding to forego a potential £8 million of additional income. "The reason for a succession of above-inflation increases in council tax during recent years is that successive Governments have been gradually shifting more of the tax burden from national to local. "During the last decade, the Govt has steadily and dramatically cut its funding to Oxfordshire, initially as part of the necessary austerity measures. It promised instead to allow the County to retain an increased element of new business rates, but this policy has not materialised so far. It also allowed the County to increase its local tax base by up to 3% each year, and for the last couple of years an additional 2% threshold has been added specifically to fund adult social care (a potential 5% total). "The cost of social care continues to rise by leaps and bounds because of the rapidly changing demography of the local population. In the face of inadequate central funding, local authorities such as our County Council are having to reduce their levels of care to the bare minimum, and I'm sure you will have noted the media headlines on this subject during the last couple of years."

## **TOP OF THE LEAGUE AGAIN**

The County has again been named the best-performing waste disposal authority in England, according to Government figures released in March. Last year in Oxfordshire, 1.6% more of household waste was recycled or composted than in the previous year. Nationally, the average for recycling in England rose by just under 1%. Overall, 59% of household waste was recycled and composted in Oxfordshire last year, compared with 57% the previous year. The national average was only 45.5%, according to the latest figures from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. In Oxfordshire, nearly 21,000 tonnes of food waste were recycled in 2019/20, but a large amount of food waste is still being placed in general waste bins. The County is keen to see further improvements in its drive to become a carbon-neutral authority by 2030 and to increase recycling to 70% by 2030. For residents looking to reduce their waste further, the Community Action Group network and 'Replenish' project offer tips and opportunities to get involved with local schemes. OCC also has the Waste Wizard, an online tool that can suggest places where items can be repaired or donated, or which bin to use for different waste.

## **REMOVING BARRIERS TO SUPPORT MEN'S HEALTH**

In Oxfordshire, statistics show 1 in 5 men die before the age of 65, and 4 of every 5 suicides are male. The County is concerned about an inequality in the provision of services targeted at men's health. Fewer men access services to support their mental and physical health than women, resulting in later diagnosis and treatment. OCC's public health team is partnering Healthwatch, the independent watchdog, in a webinar on 20<sup>th</sup> May (at 1pm) which will look at how to remove

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barriers to men accessing services and support, and to increase engagement with men locally. The webinar is free to attend, and can be booked at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/removing-barriersto-support-mens-health-in-oxfordshire-tickets-149711815069>

### **GP WEBSITE CHECK-UP**

Healthwatch Oxfordshire has published the findings of its recent survey looking at how easy it is to use the county's 67 GP practice websites. During 2020, patients were recommended not to attend surgeries for appointments. Healthwatch heard from patients that it was taking longer to get in touch with their GP surgeries using their surgery websites and by telephone. Given that patients were being recommended to use their practice website, the independent health watchdog decided to see how easy websites were to navigate for patients. All 67 Oxfordshire GP practice websites were surveyed between November 2020 and January 2021 to assess their ease of use and the clarity of information on the sites. The subsequent report recommends that all surgeries should review and update their websites by the end of July, and that all of them must make it easier to find information about how to register with the practice, in line with NHS guidance. Healthwatch will carry out a follow-up review in August. Read the report here: <https://cdn.whitebearplatform.com/hwoxfordshire/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/12144143/Healthwatch-Oxfordshire-GP-website-check-up.pdf>

### **GREEN LIGHT FOR AL FRESCO DINING**

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick told local authorities last month that planning rules for 'al fresco' dining and temporary shelters set up by pubs and restaurants should be waived until the end of September 2022. He said he was determined not to let red tape get in the way of "a great British summer", extending pavement licences for a further 12 months, making it easier and cheaper for pubs, restaurants and cafés to provide outside seating, tables and street stalls. He added: "I have told councils that we expect them to grant these licences very swiftly – with no need for businesses to re-apply or charge another fee."

### **PAVEMENT PARKING BAN**

A ban on pavement parking is being considered by the Government. The rule is already in place in London, and the Department for Transport is expected to introduce a system of fines elsewhere later in the year. Exceptions would be granted for emergency service vehicles or highway maintenance vehicles.

### **AND FINALLY: DEVELOPER INCURS BUREAUCRATIC WRATH**

The wrath of the County's archaeologists has been heaped on a plan to construct a large solar panel farm on two sites near Tetsworth, and the developer has received a metaphorical rap on the knuckles. To paraphrase a model of polite bureaucrat-speak (below), the developer was effectively told: "Pull your finger out and do a proper archaeological survey, or you won't get your planning permission." In his comments to the local planning authority, OCC's archaeologist states: "We have previously provided archaeological advice on this site in a pre-application response in March 2020, where we advised that an archaeological desk-based assessment and the results of an archaeological evaluation would need to be submitted with any planning application for the site. "We have also provided advice on the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as part of the formal scoping opinion sought by the applicant in July 2020, where we further reiterated that a programme of archaeological evaluation would need to be undertaken. "We further advised that an archaeological evaluation would be required for this site as part of subsequent consultations for this application in October 2020. "Whilst the applicant has now included an amended desk-based assessment and geophysical survey within its submitted EIA, it remains clear from the conclusions drawn that these do not provide sufficient information on their own to understand the significance of any archaeological deposits that may survive on the site, which is identified to contain known Iron Age and Roman occupation remains and have a moderate to high potential for as-yet-unidentified archaeological deposits dating to the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods to be present that may be impacted by development. "The results of a trenched evaluation will therefore need to be submitted ahead of the determination of any planning application, in order that any impacts on this significance can be understood before we provide our advice in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (2019). "From previous advice sought and provided, the applicant has been aware of the need to implement this evaluation, so as to suitably inform development proposals, for some considerable time, but has however chosen not to implement it. "Subsequently, the applicant has now submitted a request that this evaluation be undertaken postconsent, identifying a number of issues including planning delays, crop issues and substandard ground conditions. "In regard to the issue that undertaking the evaluation at this stage would cause delays to the applicants' planning, the need for such was advised both at the pre-application and scoping stages and therefore could already have been undertaken to inform the determination of this application." Phew!

For anyone interested, application no.P20/S3244/FUL-2 is for "the construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic farm and associated infrastructure". The location is north-west of Stoke Talmage OX9 7HB.

*Newsletter by Nick Carter and Jeannette Matelot  
County Councillors for Thame & Chinnor*

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**Report from District Councillors Lynn Lloyd and Ian White:**

Since the Last District council Election, Lynn serves on the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee as Chair, Climate Emergency Advisory Committee and Community Grants Panel and has now been the Chiltern Conservation Board member for the district for the six years.

Since the last District Council Election, Ian serves as Chair on Scrutiny and Joint Scrutiny Committee and is a member of the Planning Committee.

Since last year, we have;

- Given £10k of Councillor Grants to local organisations like Chinnor Tennis Club, the Reading Room, Chinnor Community Pavilion/Parish Council for an electric car charging point, the Chinnor Parish Council for additional outdoor Gym equipment.
- Given COVID Councillor Support Grants to Towersey for additional waste bin, Oxford Association for the Blind and the Sharing Life Trust
- Worked with and supported the Parish Councils with responses to planning applications and Appeals and provided our own input at District Level on Planning Appeals and consultations.
- Supported production of the Neighbourhood Plan review
- Helped residents with Planning Applications and Appeals
- Supported District Leisure Facilities with projects for Go Active Gold, Diabetes
- Supported the reduction of homelessness
- Contributed to planning of Green initiatives
- Supported safeguarding and removed dangerous taxi drivers
- Supported the Local Plan 2034 through Inspection to adoption against a hostile and naïve administration that was unwilling to accept that its stance would lead to a free-for-all for speculative developers.
- We both continue to support residents in the Ward with issues, providing assistance where we can and directing them to those who can help if required.

**Report from the Sydenham Neighbourhood Plan Group – Michael May:**

The Sydenham Neighbourhood Plan team is chaired by Mark Kermack and has produced the Neighbourhood Plan, which is a very important planning document as it sets out the policies and parameters which any future development proposals in Sydenham Parish will need to meet, and it's policies take precedence over non-strategic policies in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

The Plan has been through a process of village consultation, review by SODC and Examination by an Independent Inspector. In early 2020 the Plan was approved by SODC to go to a village Referendum which was supposed to be held in March 2020, however Government cancelled all elections and referendum's due to the covid pandemic.

The village Referendum for the Sydenham Neighbourhood Plan is to be held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and the plan will be adopted as a legally enforceable planning document provided the majority of villagers, on the electoral register in the Parish, who vote are in favour.

**Report from the Old School Room – Mark Kermack:**

There is little to report other than the internal and external decoration was completed in November and the hall now looks very smart. The boiler failed in January but has been repaired under warranty.

We have applied for further assistance from the government in the form of a payment towards lost revenue and await to hear. We have opened up the parking for contractors at the Grove until 21 June following a request from the PC (excluding polling day). This is to help congestion in the village and is on the basis that there are no events being held in the OSR in that period due to current restrictions.

We are looking to hold an AGM at the end of June.

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**Report from the Cricket Club – Dan Bradbury:**

The cricket club had a very successful season despite the late start due to Covid. The season got underway in early June and we managed to play 8 fixtures during the summer. It was a great summer of cricket for the team, winning six of our eight games. The two games that were lost were incredibly close matches of cricket, one game going down to the very final ball. Over the course of the season we were very fortunate to have many local villagers playing for the team, Often as many as eight of the 11 players lived within the village. This year we look forward to an earlier start with our first game being away to Ibstone on April 18. We have 15 fixtures schedules across the course of this summer. We also look forward to a local weekend tour to Marsh Baldon and Eynsham on the weekend of July 10th. We will continue to play our home matches at Aston Rowant cricket club and as always we look forward and welcome any spectators who wish to lend their support to the team.

**Report from the WI – Siobhan McKee:**

What a very strange, worrying and difficult year it's been for everyone.

A year ago, we all knew that Covid 19 was here, but probably we hadn't thought that 2020 would pan out the way it did. Life has been so very different for everybody.

This, of course, affected our WI just as it did all other activities we enjoyed previously. Before lockdown started in March, we had presentations from Anne Borrowdale in January talking to us about 'How to thrive as we age' and Sydenham's very own Nick Potts giving us a marvellous account of his and Janet's trip to northern India and the Himalayas. Sadly, all our wonderful speakers for the rest of the year from April onwards had to be cancelled (or, we hope, postponed) and we carried out the AGM business in March via email.

However, we did manage to organise 3 socially distanced walks around Sydenham in August, September and October. The Covid rules for the first two allowed us to have supper in the Crown afterwards which was lovely.

We also held our Christmas party on zoom which was great fun!

We haven't, at this point, planned any speakers for this year as things are still pretty uncertain, although we are hopeful that we'll be able to have our annual garden party in July.

Once we are allowed to meet up again, and, most importantly, people are happy to do so, we'll put some ideas together for a monthly get together. So, keep the third Thursday of each month blocked off in your diaries, just in case!

**A report from the Church – Fiona Kermack, Church Warden:****St Mary's Church – the beating heart of Sydenham**

2020 and to date in 2021 has been a quiet year for St Mary's in some ways but very busy in others!

The **pandemic** has had a massive impact on church services across the UK and in all the time since lockdown in March 2020 (that long ago!) there has been a much-reduced number of services in Sydenham when we were allowed and able to hold them.

Our usual congregation attracting events including the Pets Service, Songs of Praise, choir concerts and of course all the Christmas festivities did not happen but **not to be beaten** and to offer a quiet place, we opened the church for private prayer and still continue to do so every Wednesday between 3 and 7pm and Sunday between 9 and 12 noon. Posies were delivered around the village to celebrate and remember Mothering Sunday, a social distanced Remembrance Service was held outside with great success, the annual Ride and Stride still took place and Communion Services were held on Christmas Eve and Easter Sunday. We even organised a **ZOOM Crib and Carol service** which was very well attended virtually. We thank Joan and Jacky for their help and encouragement.

For those seeking a regular church service, the United Parish, via its website, broadcasts a weekly schedule of prayer and reflection.

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All through this, with the help of willing volunteers the church has been kept **spic and span** with regular cleaning (covid guidelines in place), flowers refreshed, organ tweaked to keep it in working order and clock wound up. Big news is that the **church spire** has been repaired and we are very grateful to Mark Kermack for not only project managing the whole process but also securing monies to pay for it from several grants! Thanks go to some generous villagers too as well as Maurice Horwood who provided a new window foc. The leadwork has all been replaced, the clock face refurbished, the shiplap boarding replaced with new cedar panels over new felt and the large oak corner pieces replaced along with the replacement of some rotten timbers.

Whilst the scaffolding was up, the opportunity was taken to replace broken tiles on the roof and mend any failed leadwork.

The spire now looks very smart and will darken down as the oak and cedar starts to weather.

An old church like ours requires constant maintenance in order to maintain its fabric and the next job is to replace part of the central mullion on the west window. We are currently seeking a faculty for this.

Thanks to Nick Potts, a **churchyard volunteer group** has been formed with individuals or pairs responsible for maintaining an area. There has been a good take up. Fi Kermack has consulted with the Wildlife Trust who visited and advised us on caring for our churchyards to allow plants and wildlife to flourish whilst keeping it orderly. It is already looking better with a hedgehog box and slow worm mats in place plus ant runs and bee friendly plants to keep our wildlife happy!! Fi has created a document that sets out the churchyard layout and plan of action (Heather has this).

We look forward to 'business as usual' in the not-too-distant future!

#### **Report from Sydenham Fayre – Cheryl Belson:**

As with most events over the last 12 months, Sydenham Fayre was also forced to cancel in 2020. With government restrictions still currently in place and expected until at least the middle of June, the Committee have also had to take the difficult decision to cancel the event that would have been held on 5th June 2021 as well.

But there is some good news! We have started to plan a smaller event for the first weekend in September. This will be a relaxed village celebration, but will still maintain the favourite parts of Sydenham Fayre - music, barbecues, ice creams and of course, the Pimms and Gin Palace! The committee have already started planning and will be keeping villagers updated with our progress over the next few months.

#### **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."

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" is let to William Browning of Sydenham Grange Farm. The Parish's Footpath 5 runs through the middle of "Bounty Holly" towards Chalford. "The Upper Field" is let to Peter Quinton.

The income of the Charity comes from the allotment rents, the rent of "The Upper Field" and the rest of "Bounty Holly", and Bank interest. The rules of the Charity state that only residents of the village are allowed

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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 this Spring William Browning has prepared  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an acre of “Bounty Holly”, close to the Crowell brook, for the sowing of a wild flower area. He has also prepared just over two acres for growing a crop of Sainfoin (*Onobrychis viciifolia*) known as ‘Holy Hay’ (pictured right). It is a forgotten perennial legume and is an attractive plant, producing large spikes of pink flowers in early summer that are a magnet for insects. While it may not reach its full growth in the first year it should not need re-sowing for another three.



Sainfoin is drought resistant and its many attributes include being very good for cattle as well as invaluable to pollinators, attracting a wide range of bumble and honey bees, butterflies and many other invertebrates. You can see a crop of Sainfoin being mown at <https://youtu.be/7f4hWv6SFxM>

The willow tree at the Mill House from which a branch fell across Footpath 4 (the path which runs towards and across the Archer’s ground) also brought down two trees with it onto the open grass area of “Bounty Holly”. A tree surgeon has been booked by Nigel Whaler to clear it up during the third week of June.

At the end of 2020/21 the Charity’s reserves are £2,416. 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 (352805), Richard Cooper (353842) and Gordon McLeod (352366).

May 2021

The meeting concluded with a discussion about the format of the Annual Parish Meeting to be held in May 2022.

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