

## **FINMERE PARISH COUNCIL**

**Draft Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

**in Finmere Village Hall**

Present:- Councillors, Mike Kerford-Byrnes (Chairman) (MKB), Katherine Grimston (Vice Chair) (KG), Barbara Cunningham (BC), Dr Adrian Wood (AW), Anna Wood (ANNW), Mike Kirby (MK), District Councillor Barry Wood (BW) and County Councillor Catherine Fulljames (CF)

In attendance:- Sharron Chalcraft (Parish Clerk and RFO) (SC), Louise Greenwood (Environment Agency), Pip Dealtry (Volunteer Connect) and 20 members of the public

1. Apologies Apologies were received from Parish Councillor Kevin Ochel, Rev Christobel Hargraves, Mrs Veneeta Rayner, Head Teacher, Mike Geelan, Chairman of Finmere Sports Association, Roger Fiander, Neighbourhood Watch, Rosemary Fiander, School Governor, Gloria Fowley and Dawn of Beavers, Cubs and Scouts and Ben Wragg, OPES.

### 2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2012 were circulated and approved.

### 3. ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS

The PC officers for 2013/2014 having been appointed at the PC meeting on May 7<sup>th</sup> 2013 these appointments were announced as follows:

Chairman Mike Kerford-Byrnes (having indicated his willingness to continue)  
Proposed: Katherine Grimston  
Seconded: Kevin Ochel  
Carried unanimously

Vice Chair Katherine Grimston (having indicated her willingness to continue)  
Proposed: Barbara Cunningham  
Seconded: Kevin Ochel  
Carried unanimously

RFO Sharron Chalcraft (having indicated her willingness to continue)  
Proposed: Mike Kerford-Byrnes

Seconded: Barbara Cunningham  
Carried unanimously

Parish Clerk Sharron Chalcraft (having indicated her willingness to continue)  
Proposed: Kevin Ochel  
Seconded: Mike Kirby  
Carried unanimously

#### 4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The report is attached

#### 5. FINANCIAL REPORT

The report is attached

#### 6. REPORT OF COUNTY COUNCILLOR MRS CATHERINE FULLJAMES

This was moved to later in the proceedings as Councillor Fulljames had several parish meetings to attend this evening.

Cllr Fulljames apologised for her lateness and explained that this was her third meeting of the evening, the others being in Stoke Lyne and Stratton Audley. The County Council elections took place on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and Cllr Fulljames was elected to serve for another four years, this being her 25<sup>th</sup> year! The County Council now comprises 31 Conservative members, 15 Labour, 11 Liberal Democrat, 2 Green and 4 Independents. The Conservatives are therefore one short of an overall majority and the council has moved to No Overall Control. The Conservatives are working with three of the Independents to run the council which had its first meeting today. Cllr Fulljames is responsible for the Ploughley Ward which now includes 22 villages. Following boundary changes Upper and Lower Heyford, Wendlebury, Chesterton and Middleton Stoney have been added. The last, being Cllr Fulljames home village, was lost to the last boundary change 8 years ago. These villages have a range of problems.

In February the County Council discussed the setting of the Council Tax rate for 2013/14, the government having requested a zero rate increase. Regretfully the Council found that to maintain services the rate had to be increased by £23.12p.a. for a band D property. Cllr Fulljames regrets but supports this increase; there is a limit to the cuts that can be made in services. For example the Fire Brigade has had to be pared down to the bone despite the marvellous job they do and the pride the Council has in them. Twice a year they offer free electric blanket testing, Cllr Fulljames urges villagers to take advantage of this service.

In Bicester the Library will be moving to a new location. The Bicester Community College had a bad inspection result this year. The Head Teacher of Cooper School, Ben Baxter, is to run both establishments. There is to be a new Free School on the old Upper Heyford Air Base. This will open in September for children 3 years and up.

Locally Cllr Fulljames maintains close links with MKB and BC over the liaison meetings and is always happy to pursue any concerns at county level. On the matter of HS2 Cllr Fulljames is a member of the Community Forum at Westbury. Oxfordshire is only affected in one small area, Godington, Newton Purcell, Finmere and Mixbury being the villages involved. The Forum meets in Westbury. HS2 is an important issue and Cllr Fulljames opposes it completely. A motion has been put to OCC that billions could be better spent on improving the present railway. We have to work to mitigate the effects locally as the government seems bent on implementing the scheme. There are appeals taking place, if villagers feel strongly they should please support their local action group. This is headed by Bernie Douglas, if you want to stop HS2, please help! Wendlebury is to have Evergreen 3, a line from Bicester to Oxford, and Milton Keynes eventually.

Cllr Fulljames asks if we have a champion, or contact person, for the issue of rural broadband provision. At the moment the PC do not. OCC do have a budget for improvements and can be contacted for funding. Another source of funding is the Big Society Fund; each Cllr has £10,000 to spend in their ward annually on community projects. Finmere PC has applied for funding for the purchase and fitting of a new public bench, this request should be dealt with shortly.

Ques: Phillip Rushforth asks - What is happening about the matter of the moss on the pavements in Chinalls Close?

Ans: The matter is ongoing, there is a concern over moss in another of Cllr Fulljames' villages but they do not have the same steep slope exacerbating the problem. SC confirms that the Assets Manager for OCC Highways is addressing the matter at the moment.

Ques: Mrs Grimwade asks – Would it be possible for the X5 to be asked to stop in the village on a regular basis?

Ans: The X5 is an express service. SC confirms that District Cllr Wood has been trying for some time to get the village added as a stop for the X5. Unfortunately, though it stops several times in Bicester, express services do not stop in the villages.

Ques: What is happening about the potholes around the village?

Ans: There is now a direct line through which members of the public can report potholes, even sending photographs as proof. SC confirms that Cliff Monger, Area Steward, has recently listed 11 potholes for filling.

Comment: Mr Grimwade observes that the council seem only to fill in the holes halfway and then go; also many of the worst potholes are on roads outside the village.

Ques: Mr Dayer asks – Now that the new police and crime commissioner has received a bad report is there any way in which he can be made accountable for the police budget? He has spent enough money to provide three more constables, which would surely be preferable.

Ans: Since the Police and Crime Commissioners replaced the Police Authorities around the country they are elected and responsible for budgets. You can complain directly to them.

## 7. REPORT OF DISTRICT COUNCILLOR MR BARRY WOOD

This was moved to later in the proceedings as Councillor Wood had three parish meetings to attend this evening.

Councillor Wood apologised for his late arrival but explained that parish meetings were like buses and tonight several had come along at once!

Cherwell District Council is not raising the Council Tax this year. To cut costs joint arrangements are now in place with South Northants Council. The two councils share officials with much more delegation. The lower layers of government are therefore more fulfilled and the higher layers are smaller and deal more strategically. So far this new strategy has been working well. The council is now looking at improving integration with Stratford upon Avon Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council.

Issues this year have included land use planning. A new local plan must be in place this year, detailing development zones, or speculators will have much too free a hand with the new regulations. The Council is still fighting HS2; they are engaged with Bucks County Council who are the leaders in this process. There is a need now to look at the process of mitigation. How can the country afford a £34 billion bill when it is supposed to be nearly bankrupt?

In Bicester the building of the new Community Hospital will be under way in the next few weeks. The town centre is rebuilt. There is a 7 screen cinema incorporated. Lots more commercial interests will be coming. Bicester Village is also to expand, with a new business park being built between it and the Wyevale Garden Centre.

Cllr Wood explains that he is by no means overburdened by the demands of Finmere residents and reminds all that they must feel free to approach him with any problems, he will do his best to put things right.

Ques: Mrs Grimwade asks – are transport and roads dealt with by CDC, as developments on the motorway side of Bicester plus this new proposal of the business park are bound to lead to traffic problems?

Ans: Phase 2 of the engineering works on Junction 9 of the M40 is due to begin. This will cost a lot of money and will make some alterations to slip roads, but will never result in the building of the flyover that some people favour. There is also to be new road that sweeps off to Chesterton where there will be a park and ride. This will run buses to Oxford and the Hospitals and should mean that there will be fewer cars on the road. On weekends this will act as an overspill car park for Bicester Village, also helping with congestion. There will be a shuttle bus into Bicester Village itself. This should start to take shape in the next calendar year. The ‘Esso’ roundabout will become a hamburger roundabout, meaning one which you can slice through the middle of. A slip road south would also be useful.

Cllr Wood thanks the PC for their efforts and those attending for their interest and attention.

## 8. REPORTS OF VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS

**Church** – a report by Reverend Christobel Hargraves was read by BC – see attached

**School** – a report by Mrs Veneeta Rayner, Head Teacher was read by SC – see attached  
**Village Hall and Playing Fields Committee** – a report was given by Illa Moss, Chairman – see attached

**Poors Plot Charity** – a report was given by Hugh Smith, Trustee – see attached  
**Neighbourhood Watch** – Roger Fiander asked if a replacement representative could be found as he is unable to continue due to work commitments. MKB asked any who were interested to contact the PC.

**Beavers/Cubs/Scouts** – a report by Gloria Fowley and Dawn was read by SC – see attached

**Football Club** – a report was given by Katy Whitton, Secretary – see attached

**Cricket Club** – a report by Mike Geelan, Chairman was read by Katy Whitton – see attached

**Brackley and Buckingham Districts Dog Training Club** – no report was given this year

## 9. LANDFILL UPDATE

Louise Greenwood of the Environment Agency explained that the permit in place for OPES at the Finmere Landfill Site was for non hazardous waste and operation of the Materials Recycling Facility.

Ms Greenwood has been dealing with the landfill for some 5 years, she picked up a mess where control had been lacking and a lot of attention has been required. Rather than the 120 man hours per annum required by a normal site Finmere has been receiving 160 – 200 man hours per annum, due to the sensitivity of the situation and the sites poor track record.

During this time there has been a positive improvement in operations, with gas control, leachate management and the day to day operation all improving. The sites Operational Performance score has improved and complaints have reduced.

Over the last 12 months, April 2012 – March 2013, an audit of the site has been carried out. There is perimeter monitoring of gas and water levels. Equipment and procedures have been designated appropriate and fit for purpose. The few minor improvements suggested have been carried out.

There have been a number of unplanned inspections involving visits to the site and a thorough walk around and check; looking at matters such as litter, dust, gas, waste type and infrastructure. Quarterly liaison meetings are held, which MKB and BC of the PC attend, and these cover assessing the monitoring of data, compliance with the permits on emissions, the accuracy of procedures used and the engineering plan, capping etc. Complaints are also addressed.

Comment: John Cunningham comments – The site has an appalling record, OCC failed to monitor the site correctly, seven years ago then new operators said “please trust us” and then continued to over-tip. Only enforcement by OCC stopped them and then following an appeal and public enquiry which found in favour of OCC the EA prevented the removal of the over-tip due to the risk of release of injurious gases. After nothing happening for a while two years ago more tipping began, to sort out the new contours of the mound, apparently the original over-tip was too steep and couldn’t be removed so needed to be rounded off with more waste.

Ans: This was to ensure surface water run-off and site stability.

Ques: John Cunningham asks – That is understood, nobody wants another ‘Aberfan’, but mismanagement led to the depositing of 300,000 cubic metres of waste at a profit of £12 per tonne. At the public inquiry it was said that Premier Aggregates over-tipped because they needed money. How much more material has been deposited by the new owners? Some 200,000 more cubic metres has now been dumped, meaning a profit of £3million plus another £2 million. What are EA doing to punish this profiteering?

Ans: It is not EA’s job to punish offenders. The EA’s task is to ensure that there is no impact on the village. The current team cannot commit historically.

Comment: John Cunningham continues - EA and OCC were culpable for the original, planning application breaching, over-tip. Clearly villagers would like to hold all those responsible to book. In July and August putrefying waste from Silverstone was taken to the site. When John phoned the site the operators claimed not to have noticed.

Ans: OPES say that those on site were not aware of the odour until the waste had been tipped, when they took appropriate measures.

Comment: Sandra Kerford-Byrnes comments - These matters are largely historic; we need to learn to live with the landfill site. As closest neighbours we are no longer bothered by it. Often the smell is from Westbury drying plant. OPES are trying.

Comment: Illa Moss comments – I agree with Sandra, we need to get along for the future.

Comment: John Cunningham comments – The site operators have been criminally irresponsible and they are being rewarded for their behaviour, even being given the authority to further develop the site. Our children will inherit this problem.

Ques: Phillip Rushforth asks – What happens when a complaint about smell is made?

Ans: During operating hours this complaint is given straight to myself at EA. I then contact the site and give them details of the complaint, but not the complainant. The site operators then investigate and explain the actions they have taken in response. If there are a number of complaints then we will attend the site. We are based some 90 minutes away. There will then be a discussion and a check on procedures and records. If the complaint is made at night it will be given to the EA duty officer who may need to wait if he is unable to contact anyone on the site.

Ques: Phillip Rushforth asks – Do you feel that the drop in complaints really reflects an improvement in the site, or is it more likely to be due to ‘fatigue’ among complainants?

Ans: I could not say, but we do give feedback to complainants if requested.

Comment: BC points out – I have never received any feedback.

Ques: Andi Padbury asks – How much more tipping is to take place before greening of the site? Is there a timescale?

Ans: There is not much more to go, we are talking tens of tonnes rather than hundreds or thousands. OCC is closely monitoring. The mound should be finished by the end of this year and will be grassed over quickly. Trees will come later.

Ques: Andi Padbury asks – Is that the responsibility of the EA?

Ans: EA is responsible for engineering works; greening and trees are dealt with by OCC.

Ques: BC asks – Will the mound go brown again? Last autumn we were told everything would be finished, now it is this autumn.

Ans: The mound should stay green, but this is the responsibility of OCC.

Ques: BC asks – Do OPES fund this?

Ans: Yes they do.

Ques: Andi Padbury asks – What will be the impact of HS2?

Ans: If HS2 goes ahead it will run through the site. The route will cut through between the inert and non-hazardous areas.

Ques: MKB asks – Could you clarify that statement please?

Ans: The site is unusual as it has two types of permit. Some of the land has only inert waste, soil, bricks and stone. This land is across the old railway line which is to form the route of the new HS2 line. The non-hazardous biodegradable permit is for the land this side of the line and the site will therefore be separated. The new line will not interfere with any of the current engineering. Planning applications will need to be adjusted. The EA is not allowed to object to this. The route cannot and will not go through the mound. The slope may actually shield the village from some of the HS2 noise.

Ques: John Cunningham asks – This seems to be an expensive way to block noise; will OPES receive compensation?

Ans: MKB clarifies that OPES do own the old railway line at this point and this will be compulsorily purchased. HS2 will also block the area around from being given planning permissions. The area affected is not defined until the Hybrid Bill is given Royal Assent in 3-4 years. There will be a petition to move at that point and when this is decided the government will buy the land.

## 10. VOLUNTEER CONNECT – COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

Pip Dealtry of Volunteer Connect explains the Volunteer Community Transport scheme which is being administered in conjunction with Citizens Advice Bureau. The scheme is contracted and funded by CDC at Banbury and supported by ORCC. It is basically a volunteer brokerage service for community transport in Cherwell and covers Banbury, Bicester, Kidlington and all the villages around them. It has been running for just over a year. The scheme means that people can call one simple point of contact to obtain access to a

pool of volunteer drivers. If an ambulance, minibus etc are required then advice can be given to other organisations. The first journey took place in October and there are now 100+ registered clients. They can ring up if they have hospital or doctor appointments or simply need to go shopping. The elderly, those with mental health issues, health issues or the rurally isolated are all eligible. They ring a 0845 number which costs only at the local rate no matter where the call comes from. The line operates from 9a.m. – 5p.m. Monday to Friday and journeys can be booked for over the weekend or in the evenings. Ideally three days notice is required. The journey can be cross-border; as long as you live in Cherwell you are eligible. No wheel chair users can use the service; this is due to health and safety regulations regarding lifting and storage of chairs. There is other provision for wheel chair users in place.

Volunteer drivers are needed, only a few hours a week commitment is required. The duties are not onerous, only as and when the volunteer is able. All volunteers are CRB and DBS checked. References are also checked and the drivers are trained in aspects of confidentiality, health and safety etc.

An example of the scheme in action comes from Steeple Aston. Richard Preston, a villager, contacted the scheme and said that an ad hoc scheme was in operation in Steeple Aston but that it was getting too big, if the drivers were sent along would Volunteer Connect run the scheme in the village. The answer was yes. Steeple Aston managed to register about ten drivers for the scheme. They are about four times the size of this village. Each driver gets a pack with an application form, reference forms, insurance and CRB check information and training details. Initially the drivers operate locally but can soon move further afield and help in other villages.

In order to set up a scheme in Finmere one liaison would be needed; someone who could disseminate information. The payment to the driver is 45p a mile which includes any ‘dead’ mileage involved in reaching the client. The driver needs to inform his or her insurance company but in 90% of cases there is no impact on the amount of insurance required. Nobody has experienced difficulty so far. The journeys are usually there and back, so some waiting is involved. Most volunteers find the experience extremely rewarding. Interviews can be carried out in Bicester.

Pip leaves plenty of literature with everyone and encourages all to think about the possibilities of volunteering and to contact her direct if they are able to help.

## 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised.

MKB thanked those attending on behalf of the PC.

The meeting closed at 9.40p.m.



## **ATTACHED REPORTS**

### **Chairman's Report 2012 – 2013**

Once again, I have the pleasure of reporting to you on the activities of your Parish Council this past year.

And again I must thank all the Parish Councillors for their support and advice over the past twelve months. Attendance at meetings has been high, and the discussions fruitful. As always, our County and District representatives have been their usual helpful selves. Thank you all.

Last but not least, I wish to record my appreciation for the sterling work carried out by Sharron Chalcraft, who acts as both our Parish Clerk and RFO (treasurer).

Last time, I reported that, compared to the past, the year had been relatively quiet. It has largely been the same this year, with no highly controversial issues arising.

Not that it was completely silent. There were several matters that attracted and occupied our attention.

Firstly the grasscutting. The appalling and inconsistent weather of last year showed that our existing grasscutting regime would not cope. We examined what was done, and when, and found some anomalies. In July we agreed to increase the frequency of cutting so that all areas were addressed on a fortnightly basis, reviewing the results (and the costs) in the subsequent months. This we did, and we concluded that we should continue to operate on a fortnightly cut throughout the whole of this year, retaining the option to change if deemed necessary. This is not free, and we have had to plan for the additional costs of the grasscutting contractor. As a consequence, the village precept (contribution to the council tax) was increased by £550 – 10%. This means that the village precept is now £6050. Whilst this seems to be a significant rise, especially in current circumstances, please bear in mind that in 2004, the Precept was £5000 and had we kept up with Council tax inflation over the period, it should now be in excess of £6800.

Whilst on the subject of cost and its containment, the state of the village roads and the moss covered path in Chinnalls Close have run into the same obstacle. Roads and paths are a County

responsibility and, despite valiant efforts by both Sharron Chalcraft and Catherine Fulljames, all the problems are not yet fixed. We continue to press for a remedy from a cash-strapped County.

We had our annual litter pick in April and, pleasantly, found less litter than on previous years. There was one exception to this in that the evidence of dog fouling was still very apparent. It is not confined to a particular area of the village and is particularly obvious on the Playing field and the Old Banbury Road. We have had a visit from the dog warden who has given us advice as to how to proceed, which includes visits from his team and the opportunity for them to issue fixed penalty tickets to offenders “caught in the act”. For those of you who are as disappointed with the situation as are we, please be assured that we will do all that we can to identify the offenders and “stamp it out”.

The spectre of the HS2 rail line continues to loom over us, with the government showing no signs of doubt as to the direction in which they are proceeding. The announcement of parliamentary bills in the Queen’s speech shows that. However, some details of the apparent real costs are now coming to light and it is possible that the project will become simply unaffordable. We continue to participate in the various meetings with HS2 and its challengers and, should it actually come to pass, will strive for the best possible mitigation for our village.

The landfill site has been more active operationally this year, using the imported waste to create an acceptable shape to allow restoration that will not cause a landslide or set up pools of stagnant water. When that is complete, further covering will be added and some green will appear. We did invite OPES (the company now owning and operating the site, formerly owned by Premier Aggregates), but they felt unable to attend since they are approaching the conclusion of negotiations to secure funding for the continued working of the site. This includes the MRF (Materials Recycling Facility) and, if proven technology can be acquired, the gasification plant. However, for the present, only materials recycling will be developed at the landfill site. We have a representative from the Environment Agency who can address any questions that you have.

With regard to planning, the long awaited Cherwell Local Plan will shortly be submitted to the Planning Inspector for approval and/or amendment. This identifies Finmere as a category ‘B’ village, eligible for infill and conversion. Subsequent to this, work will start on the allocation of development sites across the whole rural area and some local land owners have already made suggestions in that regard. The Parish Council have submitted their opinions on these suggestions. The proposed Cherwell plan prioritises the development towards the urban areas and away from the rural villages to a greater degree than ever before.

Next year, the four year term of office for your Parish Councillors expires and there will be an election for the seven available seats. If there are only seven or fewer 'volunteers', the election will be uncontested, but if there are more, an 'proper' election will be held in May of next year. If anybody in the village is interested in serving as a Parish Councillor, please contact the Parish Clerk or myself. After all, it is your village!

The Playing field. Now we have ownership, we are in the process of addressing the governance of the entirety. This is not an easy task, since there is already an existing structure, comprising two committees, a Sports association, and two charities (each of these having its own governing document). It is further complicated by the questionable validity of these governing documents. It is our aim to provide a stable and enduring constitution that does not interfere with the current methods of operation which, while very effective, has no formal definition, and relies on the individuals that are at its heart. To that end, I am meeting tomorrow with a solicitor who has experience with charitable trusts who is also a parish councillor. I expect that the process will not be swift, but given the enthusiasm that exists within the village for the whole project, we will achieve a positive result as soon as is practically possible.

Looking towards the next year, we have another "May Fair" on Saturday, complementing the very successful Christmas Bazaar and a rerun of the Finmere Festival, which was a great success last year and, hopefully, will become an established feature of village life. These functions add to the pleasure of living in our delightful village, a fact that we can so easily overlook.

Thank you for listening.

Mike Kerford-Byrnes

14 May 2013

## **FINMERE PARISH COUNCIL**

### **RFO'S REPORT 2012 – 2013**

The slightly lower income for the year is explained by the one-off payment of an insurance refund last year and the fact that the claimed VAT refund did not arrive in time for the year end. This was only partially offset by the Jubilee Celebration grant given by CDC.

The income over expenditure balance for the year is £1,383.93, despite a greater expenditure on grass cutting with the decision to cut all areas of the village more regularly. This surplus arises because once again the PC did not spend all the S137 money available, the remainder being carried over into reserves.

This non-spend was not fully intentional. Unfortunately the Village Hall Committee was unable to obtain quotes and invoices for work on the roof as had been hoped. No contractors willing to quote on the job could be found in time. This is not a problem however, as now that the PC owns the playing field and the hall the PC reserves can be used to fund improvements.

The precept was raised again this year by £550 (10%) in order to cover the ongoing extra cost of grass cutting and to make sure that the PC could meet its obligations if the ability to raise the precept in future was curtailed, as had been mooted by government. This rise should cover costs for some time to come unless changes occur. The amount held in reserve is somewhat higher than the recommended one year precept but this will be remedied in the coming year with expenditure of reserves on the village hall improvements.

The S137 fund, this being money that can be spent in various ways to benefit the village, stands at £2,250 given the current size of the electoral roll and the amount per head allowed. This amount could be changed in the future. During this financial year the money was used in several ways. A payment of £100.00 was made to the Royal British Legion for their supplying of the poppy wreath for the Remembrance Day ceremony. The church clock maintenance cost £192.00. The insurance for the Jubilee celebrations was funded at a cost of £105.00 while the floral display at the entrance to the village cost £47.70. Servicing of the gas heaters in the village hall came to £300.00.

This is perhaps a good time to remind everyone that the monthly financial report, given at the PC meeting and detailed in the minutes is available to view online, the minutes being posted only after their approval at the following monthly meeting. Anyone wishing to apply for S137 monies can contact the Clerk or approach any of the Councillors who can explain the criteria for eligibility.

## Report to Finmere Parish Council

It is now almost four years since I was appointed Rector of Shelswell, which comprises 10 churches covering 10 villages and 3 hamlets. To assist me in this task, I have a half time assistant minister. I also have a retired minister who assists and a lay minister who gives a considerable amount of time. We are also fortunate to have the help of other retired ministers who help at Easter and Christmas time.

I believe strongly that the church can play a strong role in village life – not just from the obvious spiritual point of view but also by assisting to build a strong sense of community and I have endeavoured to give time to both areas.

Community activities that now operate in the Benefice are:

Monthly Coffee morning (Hethe Village Hall/Muddy Duck) – organised by the Church  
Rectorry Rendezvous (The Rectory)- monthly coffee morning  
Pic-a-flic (The Rectory)– film showing followed by simple lunch  
Knit and Knatter – relaxed evening of chatter and knitting (with a skilled knitter available for assistance)

Following the reordering of Stratton Audley Church, various activities are now on offer:

Tai-Chai

Singing for All

Indoor Bowls

In September 2012 in addition to the holiday week for children (that has been running for over 30 years) we organised “Shelswell by the Sea” – a holiday at home for three days. There were various offerings from speakers, crafts, film showings, and trips out. This was a great success and is being followed up with other events in 2013.

We are also looking at how we might reach out to teenagers in our village and hope to start ad-hoc events in 2014.

Every Sunday there are at least five services across the group of Churches with a variety of types of service from very traditional to very informal. Finmere Church usually has two services a month (three when there are five Sundays) in addition to special services at Easter, Christmas, Harvest and Remembrance. Other new Benefice initiatives include:

Fun Church- an event held several times a year for all the family including a simple meal

Sunday Starts Here – (Held when there are five Sundays in a month) Coffee and croissants to share whilst we explore an issue that matters to us as Christians

The burden of caring for 10 listed buildings is a huge one and here in Finmere we are fortunate that the Church is in relatively good order. However, the lack of a toilet and running water, reduce the possible events that it could be used for. To maintain the church and a minister in Finmere costs in the order of £14,500 per annum, a sum that is not met and which leaves payment to the Diocese short. It is this payment that pays for the minister so it is important that more funds are raised. A core group of villagers are very supportive of fundraising events for the Church but more people are needed to commit to help lead the Church in this place. Some may say that they are interested in

the heritage of the building but not in the spiritual life of the church but if the spiritual life is lost then the building will cease to be used as well. The Finmere Festival, as a result of incredibly hard work by a small team of people, was a huge success last year and it is hoped that that success can be built on this year.

We are currently exploring the possibility of removing some of the pews at the back of the church to give more space for hospitality after services.

My role is both leader and servant and I do my best in both capacities to ensure that parishioners (i.e. all who are resident in Finmere, not just church attenders) know that I am here for them, whatever the circumstances.

**Christobel  
Hargraves (Rector)  
April 2013**



Oxfordshire County Council

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*Headteacher: Mrs Veneeta Rayner*

14<sup>th</sup> May 2013

### **Parish Council AGM – Report from Finmere C E Primary School**

#### **Number on Roll**

We currently have 41 pupils on roll. One of the strengths of the school continues to be the excellent child to teacher ratios which we are able to provide. We teach in two units: a 'Reception/ KS1 Unit' (Year R, Year 1 and Year 2) led by Mrs Sauvain and Miss Harkness, ably assisted by Mrs Preston and a 'KS2 Unit' (Year 3, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6) led by Mrs Godfrey, ably assisted by Mrs Pickwick. The flexibility of 'Unit Teaching' enables teachers to focus the teaching on where it is needed to help bridge gaps, and accelerate learning. 'Unit teaching' is effective in facilitating small group teaching to help stretch and extend pupils to help them achieve their full potential. 'Unit teaching' also empowers children to feel more secure and aids their focus to help them feel confident and happy in their environment and in their own abilities. Mrs Quine is our assistant SENco supporting children across both key stages to satisfy their individual needs.

#### **Significant Events**

We have embraced improvement and are proud to report that Oxfordshire County Council now judges us to be 'Good.' This is as a result of fantastic team work from staff,

#### **Improvements to School Building**

We continue to make improvements to the school building. This year we opened up the KS1 classroom to make a huge working area, redecorated one of the classrooms and entrance hall and have installed a tepee in the grounds.

### **Links with the Community**

The school continues to enjoy strong links with Finmere Church. Rev. Chris Hargraves takes collective worship on a weekly basis and pupils enjoy her visits to the school. We hold special services throughout the year such as Remembrance, Harvest and The Nativity in our local parish Church. These services are always well attended by parents, relatives and friends of the school and we would like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome members of the local community to join us for these special events. We promote Christian values and encourage pupils to respect others, forgive, treat others as they would like to be treated and make time to reflect.

### **Charitable Works**

The school is very conscience of charities and communities that are less fortunate than us. In our small way we try to help by holding special occasions to raise funds that support others. This year our events included McMillian Nurses, Comic relief, Children in need and Carols around the Christmas tree.

### **FOFSA (Friends of Finmere School Association) Events**

Thank you to members of the community who have supported our fundraising events this year such as the annual Bonfire and fireworks evening which was once again a resounding success. The chair Mrs Pearson has now stepped down after several years of dedicated service and Mrs Adams has taken on the role.

Veneeta Rayner

**Headteacher**



## **Report on Village Hall and Playing Fields – 14 May 2013**

The hall continues to be used by a variety of people, Beavers, Cubs, Insane Dance and dog training.

The hall also hosts parties for children of varying ages, wedding parties, annual events such as the Finmere Festival, Bonfire Night. The hall is also used as a polling station. The village hall and playing fields require maintenance like any other building and grassy area. Our thanks go to Alan & Trevor Jones who spend many hours each summer looking after the playing field, Alan also looks after the interior of the hall. Our sincere thanks to the Parish Council for grant towards the cost of annual gas heater service. Also, the PC provided us with a grant in 2011 towards the cost of the guttering, whilst most of the work has been carried out, we are waiting for some dry days to complete rest of the work.

A letter has been received from the Parish Clerk, expressing the Parish Council's request that the existing hall management committee continue with the management activities, under the authority of the Parish Council and I believe we are waiting for the official documents to be drawn.

The Village Hall Management Committee is also aware of the number of areas in and round the village hall that require maintenance or replacement. Members of the committee have worked hard on making a list of improvements to be made and obtained quotes from various sources for the improvements. It is the committee's intention to phase the improvements in: Phase 1- windows, doors, kitchen and insulation, phase 2- toilets, subsequent phases – heating, lighting, car park, fencing and if funds permit new floor and stage. Initial work has been followed by applying for grants from various sources. So far we have been granted £28,000 by the Landfill Communities Fund and we are sincerely grateful for the support from Opes Industries via GrandScape and in particular Ben Wragg. We are awaiting response from others. The committee is aiming to complete phase 1 and 2 by May 2014.

Financially, the hall just about breaks even, but thanks are due to the Parish Council whose financial support has helped the hall, to maintain some cash reserves.

Illa Moss

On behalf of the Village Hall Management Committee

## **POOR'S PLOT CHARITY**

### **Annual Report 2012/13**

#### **To Finmere Parish Meeting, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

The Poor's Plot Trustees are pleased to make their report to the Parish Meeting as follows.

During the year the Trustees comprised: Anita Bilbo (secretary), Hugh Smith (chairman), Sharron Chalcraft, Fred Tew until his death which ended many years as a committed and valued trustee, and Susan Tew-Bridson, who has recently left the area.

#### Activities and Financial Position in 2013/13

The charity continued to hold the 12 acre Poor's Plot field out on agricultural rent, and to administer the village allotment area and its fees. We are very grateful to Mr Peter Lepper for making the allotment land in Water Stratford Road available, and for continuing to play such an active part in providing it. There are 24 allotment plots of which 23 are being worked, with one vacant plot currently available for rent.

The trustees' priority has continued to be to rebuild the charity's financial position from a previous operating deficit in 2010. The accounts summary for the year to 2013 is:

Income	£811.89
Expenses	<u>£116.00</u>
Surplus	£695.89

It is important that our income from allotment and agricultural renting should be put to good use, in the spirit in which the charity was set up. In continuing to address this, the Trustees have secured the Rector's agreement to liaise with us if she becomes aware of any appropriate causes within the village.

As a result, the charity was able to pay a grant during the year to support Finmere residents' attendance at the Shelswell-by-the-Sea holiday week for older people. It also made a funeral bequest in memory of and gratitude to Fred Tew.

We are pleased therefore to report a closing bank balance of £3,659.51 at 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013. Our account with Halifax was closed in November 2012, when the bank decided to cease holding accounts for clubs and charities, and was transferred to Lloyds TSB. After the interest rate of 0.1% paid by Halifax, Lloyds TSB pays zero.

#### Outlook

The trustees continue to welcome any viable suggestions that Finmere residents may wish to make, at any time, regarding the further application of Poor's Plot funds.

# Annual Report from 1<sup>st</sup> Finmere Scout Group

We currently have 17 Beavers and 17 Cubs and quite a few children on our waiting list.

Last June we took the Beavers to The Quarries Scout campsite at Cosgrove for the day, they took part in rifle shooting and archery with qualified instructors. In November they had a trip to the RAF museum in London, whilst there they completed the Air Activities Badge.

In July the older Cubs had a weekend camp at Bromham Scout Campsite in Bedford. They learnt many new skills including, rifle shooting, archery, traverse wall, hiking, orienteering and the assault course. A very exhausting weekend but enjoyable, we were even lucky with the weather. The younger Cubs spent a day at Gulliver's in December on a Christmas special.

Beavers and Cubs held a Bring and Buy sale to help raise money for The Christian Aid Appeal at our local church. They raised £235.00

We took part in St. George's Day Parade in Bicester with the rest of our District. In November we had a very good turn out for The Remembrance Day service in our local church.

At Christmas we had a very exciting fancy dress party with some fantastic costumes. Well done to the Mum's. In January we had our usual trip to Buckingham Pantomime. What a fantastic evening, if you have never been its well worth a try.

We have taken up an allotment and hoping to get Beavers and Cubs interesting in growing some fruit and vegetables. If anyone has any garden tools they no longer need we would be very grateful if you would like to donate them to the Group.

Events planned so far for this year: a summer camp for the Cubs at Chalfont Scout Campsite and an activity day at Quarries Scout campsite for the Beavers.

Next year will be our 10<sup>th</sup> year in Finmere, many thanks to Phillip Rushforth for his help during this time.

Gloria and Dawn

## **Finmere Football Club - Secretary's Report to the Parish Council**

Finmere Football Club had an excellent season this year, with the First team starting in Division Two in the Banbury District and Lord Jersey League, and the addition of a Second team in Division Four.

The First team finished 6th in Division Two (out of 11 teams) and the Second Team finished 7th Out of 10, which is a great result for their first season. We also had a player finish in 3rd place for overall goals (25) in Division 2.

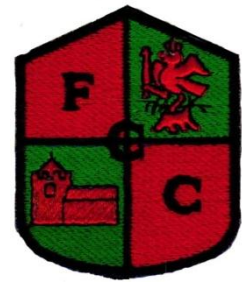
The past year has seen the completion of the Toilet block build, and the new toilets have now been installed and are working. We will continue to look at pavillion development alongside the Cricket Club with the two major improvements being weatherproofing the outside of the pavillion, and the installation of showers in the home and away dressing rooms.

As the season over-ran this year due to the weather, we have not yet received notification of when the new season will start, but we are assuming it will be around the beginning of September.

The football club will have a stall at the Tingewick Fete on the 13th of July so if anyone over the age of 16 is interested in joining the club, or perhaps just wants to come along for a training session, they will be able to meet the teams and find out more information then. Alternatively, they can email the club secretary at [katy.whitton@gmail.com](mailto:katy.whitton@gmail.com) who will pass your details on to the management team.

# Finmere Cricket Club

Oxfordshire England



For the Love of the Game

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO PARISH COUNCIL AGM 2013

For the second consecutive season, there will be no competitive cricket at Finmere. Although the door had been left open to us to return to the South Northants League, it was agreed at the Club's January AGM not to take up that option. The pool of registered players remains too low to sustain any kind of realistic challenge – even in the lowest league on offer. Instead the club will repeat the programme of Sunday friendlies that was so successful last season and which promotes exercise, social interaction and family enjoyment ahead of winning.

Despite the low number of members and patrons, the cricket club remain is in good shape financially, with ever-reducing match fee income being balanced by sponsorship from several local companies. In terms of the continuing pavilion development plan, joint initiatives with the football club will be a feature of the new season as they were the last - weather-proofing the exterior and installing showers in the changing rooms being the top priorities.

Any villager interested in supporting the club, either by becoming a member, or by playing in one of the Sunday matches, can contact me by email: [michael.geelan@eurospangroup.com](mailto:michael.geelan@eurospangroup.com).

Below is the 2013 fixture list as it stands:-

<u>DAY/DATE</u>	<u>OPPOSITION</u>	<u>VENUE</u>	<u>START TIME</u>
Sunday, 23 <sup>rd</sup> June	Lower Swell	Home	2.00pm
Sunday, 30 <sup>th</sup> June	Wicken	Home	2.00pm
Sunday, 14 <sup>th</sup> July	Sutton Courtney	Home	2.00 pm
Sunday, 4 <sup>th</sup> Aug	“No Stars”	Home	2.00 pm
Sunday, 8 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Pearmen	Home	12.30pm

Finally, I should like to formally express my gratitude to Alan and Trevor Jones for their continuing commitment to pitch preparation this season. Without the stage, there would be no show.

Michael Geelan – 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013

## **Addendum Report from Brackley and Buckingham Districts Dog Training Club**

Due to being on holiday Ray Churchard of the Dog Training Club was unable to deliver a report for the APM but forwarded the following to SC after the event.

We are doing well with many new dogs and owners attending and continue to “educate” both in control and responsible dog ownership. Not a lot more to say really.