

## **FINMERE PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

#### **in Fimmere Village Hall**

Present:- Councillors, Mike Kerford-Byrnes (Chairman) (MKB), Katherine Grimston (Vice Chair) (KG), Stephen Trice (ST) and Mike Kirby (MK)

In attendance:- Sharron Chalcraft (Parish Clerk and RFO) (SC), and 26 members of the public

1. Apologies Apologies were received from County Councillor Ian Corkin, District Councillor Barry Wood, District Councillor James Macnamara, Phillip Rushforth, John and Barbara Cunningham, PC Shaun Sullivan, Mrs Caroline Tucker (Headteacher of Fimmere School), Ms Lynne Cooley (FOFSA), Mike Geelan (Fimmere Cricket Club Chairman), Sophy Jones (Operation Playground), Claire Targonski (Fitness Training), Heather Donnelly (Scentwork UK) and Sandra Kerford-Byrnes

#### **2. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2017 were circulated and approved.

#### **3. ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS**

The PC officers for 2018/19 having been appointed at the PC meeting on May 8<sup>th</sup> 2018 these appointments were announced as follows:

Chairman Mike Kerford-Byrnes (having indicated his willingness to continue)  
Proposed: Steve Trice  
Seconded: Mike Kirby  
Carried unanimously

Vice Chair Katherine Grimston (having indicated her willingness to continue)  
Proposed: Mike Kerford-Byrnes  
Seconded: Steve Trice  
Carried unanimously

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

Parish Clerk Sharron Chalcraft (having indicated her willingness to continue)  
Proposed: Mike Kerford-Byrnes  
Seconded: Steve Trice  
Carried unanimously

#### 4. POLICING REPORT

As PC Sullivan has been called away on Royal Wedding duty he is unable to attend tonight's meeting but sends a report:

I have looked at the crime figures within Finmere and I must say there really isn't anything of note which is good news. There has been the odd theft and with the summer soon hopefully in full swing then I would advise residents to make sure their sheds and outbuildings are secure and any tools or machinery locked away.

Some villages have been experiencing theft from vehicles although the offenders are targeting those cars vans etc that have been left insecure, so again a reminder to residents to make sure their vehicles are locked and secure.

The PCSO's Abbie and Louise will be carrying out some speed enforcement in the village at some point in the near future. So, again, to all the locals please be aware and keep the speed down. 30 mph is not a target you have to reach, so in a lot of cases, especially where Finmere is concerned, 20mph or lower is sufficient.

#### 5. HS2 LIAISON

Chris James of Effiage Kier, Civil Engineers and Cheryl Snudden (HS2 Community Engagement Officer), spoke about the proposed activity in the area. EK are responsible for preparing the ground and carrying out bridging works, tunnelling etc for a 50 mile stretch of the line from Aylesbury to Southam. There will be 75 over bridges, 17 viaducts and 5 km of 'cut and cover' tunnel in their section. This will involve 24 million cubic metres of earthworks (enough to fill 240 Albert Halls). Currently 150 people are employed on planning the work, based in Birmingham. The work should start in 1 year. Fusion are carrying out enabling works now and EK are carrying out site investigations, boreholes etc.

Any impact of the works on A roads will be minimised by building to the side and then re-routing the main road over the new bridge. Traffic to do with the work will be the biggest impact on the local area. Mitigating the effect by managing HGV movements is being addressed now. The two main measures are: 1 – use of the 'trace' (the track bed itself) to move earth from site and 2 – precast constructions to minimise movement on site.

Notice to proceed is expected by this time next year and the work will then take approx. 2 ½ years. The laying of track and electrification will follow, with a proposed completion date of 2026.

Ques – What about the workforce, will there be compounds?

Ans – It is hoped that the need for purpose-built compounds can be minimised. Other agencies, including the MOD, are being approached in order to make use of existing facilities. The company is engaged with local councils down to PC level and there are local employment targets. The team are currently looking at providing park and ride schemes to

avoid work journeys. It is also hoped that many staff, including main offices, can be based a lot further away from the track to minimise impact.

MKB – In the environmental statement prepared by government last year journeys to the motorway around the area were to be some 1,400 a day for 38 months. Banbury and Bicester have been very worried about possible gridlock.

Ans – EK are still reviewing forecasts compared to the environmental statement, there will be a downward revision.

MKB – It is not necessarily the HGV movements that will affect us most. The village is likely to be worst affected by displaced traffic being forced off onto minor roads. The local alternative route is a road which runs through the middle of the village and past the school. Also, the A421 is being raised to the west of the village, it is noisy now and a road higher than the surrounding hedges, with vehicles gearing up for the incline, will be much worse. Is it possible that ‘quiet tarmac’ could be used to mitigate the effect?

Ans – The neighbouring village of Mixbury has similar concerns. There is a monthly traffic meeting with the various authorities. Our concerns and those of Mixbury will be relayed next week. The design team have been looking in detail at levels and they do not believe the finished section of the A421 will be any higher than at present.

Comment – The road through the village passes the school, there are no footpaths and many children walk to school, surely this is a safety issue?

Ans – HS2 has established a road safety fund which could be used to pay for pavements. Many communities are already applying for funding.

Comment – Several villagers point out that footpaths are not wanted in the village.

Ans – Perhaps it would be best to use traffic calming measures to reduce speed, this would be a matter for the local authority.

Comment – We could use chicanes, or even a gate, to slow down and discourage traffic.

ST – When will we know the figures for traffic movements so that we can have an idea of impact?

Ans – Hopefully the figures should be confirmed by September.

Comment – That is only 6 months before commencement. Given the response time of local authorities; work would need to be starting now.

Ans – Based on the current environmental statement figures work is already being carried out to improve the road system. There is a relief road under construction at Chipping Warden, road widening at Wardington and the local motorway junctions are being improved. Specific access routes are being reviewed to identify pinch points, Great Missenden is having work carried out also for this reason.

Ques - If nothing is set out for the local roads then how is this work being decided on?

Ans – Some projects are being identified by route analysis but also many communities are petitioning

Ques – How are the A roads to be paid for? The County Council can't afford the cost of maintenance now. Any work will not be in time for next year.

Ans – You need to talk to OCC about these matters.

Ques – When it comes to the A421 how many miles of track building will be accessed from Finmere?

Ans – North from Warren Farm past Mixbury, south to Newton Purcell.

Ques – Can these vehicles then travel in either direction to get to the motorway?

Ans – Yes, but there will be routing controls. There are some very difficult access points, at Chetwode for example the access is down a very small track called School Lane which comes off a roundabout on the A421. The track south to Calvert will be accessed from there.

MKB – There will obviously be significant movements in the area, despite mitigation of the government figures, and the village is anxious about the impact. Will there be further movements after construction when the stones and materials for the track bed are brought in?

Ans – Possibly. EK are happy to attend another PC meeting in the future and bring detailed maps showing the layout of traffic routes. The HGV routes are to be sent out by Cheryl Snudden (HS2).

Ques – Clive Birch – Local village roads are simply not designed to cope with the existing levels of traffic, leave alone traffic diverted from elsewhere. Surely there could be 'joined up' action and funding to help with this. OCC Highways should be pressing for proactive action. Is there any join up with Highways?

Ans – Yes. In addition to points made earlier be assured that transport is the biggest challenge and the most thought is going into coping with it.

Comment – Clive Birch – I am not being 'nimby' when I make these comments, there really is an intractable problem with traffic in the village already.

Ques – Two properties at Warren Farm have been purchased already. What is the plan for them?

Ans – Cheryl Snudden – Properties will be made habitable and will be rented out if possible, on short leases of 6 months to 1 year, and sold when the project is completed. If properties are listed then it is often too expensive to carry out work on them for rental so they will be maintained until the project is completed and then sold.

Comment – One of the properties already has a HS2 worker living in it.

Ans – HS2 can always be contacted if there are any problems regarding empty properties.

Contact details for HS2 and EK are available in the hall and given to the PC and they will attend future meetings with updates.

## 6. FUSION LIAISON (Enabling works for HS2)

Simon Griffiths and Simon Wells of Fusion explained the works taking place locally in preparation for HS2. Environmental surveys are being carried out and new habitats are being constructed to mitigate the effect on local wildlife. As well as ponds for rehoming newts etc there are hedgerows, woodlands, basking banks for reptiles and bat boxes. There are also road improvements being put in place and a lot of tree planting.

Warren Farm (referred to in Fusion plans as Oaks Farm) and work on the river Great Ouse at Mixbury are the most local sites. Warren Farm is the site of a large tree planting of some 24,000 indigenous trees and there will be new fence lines along the bridleway.

These sites are nearly completed now, the work is seasonal and there will now be no more planting until autumn or next spring. There is also trial trenching for archaeology being carried out at Warren Farm. Residents will be notified of any finds. Photographs and maps of these activities are at the back of the hall and will be left with the PC.

Ques – What happens to the Warren Farm woodland in the future?

Fusion will carry out maintenance of the woods until 2020, the land will then be handed over to EK and when the project is completed will revert to the landowners and local authorities.

Ques – Why so many trees at Warren Farm? They will need thinning.

Ans – This was the number recommended by the environmental survey.

Ques – Are these trees to deaden the sound of the trains?

Ans – No, these woodlands are for habitat replacement and are only on the west side of the track. Any trackside planting will come later and is detailed in the HS2 plans.

Ques – How many sites do Fusion have open?

Ans – At the moment 7 sites between Brackley and Aylesbury. So far 40 plus sites have been identified.

Ques – MKB – What about barn owls?

Ans – We covered barn owls at a previous PC meeting. There has been a survey of the route and boxes will be placed.

Comment – Cheryl Snudden (HS2) – HS2 has a Community Engagement Plan. People can raise a matter individually, there is a free phone and email available. There is also an Environment Fund for community groups or activities. The CEP is administered by Groundworks. If you are unsure if your project qualifies you can ring and ask for advice. Wendover got £450k for work in the woods. Steeple Claydon got funding for the restoration of one of their churches, though the fund cannot be used to directly fund religious activity. There is funding for businesses on some sites. Bucks and Oxfordshire Commonplace website has a tile for Finmere, all information is on this website. The PC have this link.

Ques – Could this link be put on the PC website please?

Ans – MKB – Yes, certainly.

## 7. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

MKB gave a brief round up of the activities undertaken by the PC during the year and of their continuing plans – the new mower for the playing field, the spring clean, continuing work on contracting with the Village Hall and Playing Field Committee, purchase of the spinney etc. Issues raised by residents were also detailed – traffic and parking issues, potholes, the landfill site etc.

Ques – You mentioned potholes in your report. Is anything being done about the huge pothole at the entrance to the Old Banbury Rd?

Ans – MKB – That will be placed on the June meeting agenda.

Comment – Richard Billingham - The flooding in that pothole could be prevented by the clearing of the drain in the verge at that point.

Comment – I was not aware there was a drain at that point.

Comment – Richard Billingham – It’s a shame we couldn’t have a village task force, many of these problems could be solved by a group willing to get their hands dirty.

Comment – MKB – We have a volunteer who is going to clean and repaint the village signs this summer, any other work that could be done would be very helpful.

Comment – Richard Billingham – Well I am happy to be part of a volunteer party.

Comment – SC – If all volunteers are happy to give their name to the PC then they can be included on the PC’s insurance.

Comment – MKB – Perhaps a newsletter is called for, asking for volunteers.

## 8. FINANCIAL REPORT

The accounts for this year bear little resemblance to last year in their totals as the PC were happy to apply for and administer the landfill tax grant worked for so hard by Operation Playground. The play area has transformed the field and been a huge benefit to all the young people of the village and their families.

### **Income:**

The precept was raised to £11,000 for last year after much consideration by the PC as explained in detail at last year's APM.

The landfill tax grant was a very generous £36k.

Because of the expenditure of the grant there was a considerable amount of VAT to reclaim, which was also spent on the play area, and also last year's VAT arrived just after the previous year end.

Bank interest was again a very small amount.

The grass cutting grant for the last year arrived, as well as that for this year and it seems that this grant will continue, there is no more talk of reducing or removing it at the moment.

The Sports Club made their annual loan repayment, the amount outstanding is now only £1,000.

The VHPFC again contributed toward the play area costs.

### **Outgoings:**

Running costs dropped this year by some £758 despite an increase in expenditure on dog bins (second bill received within the year), playground inspection (play area needed initial inspection) and a slight increase in electricity costs. Various reasons included; reclassification of the Clerk's SLCC membership (to general administration), less expenditure on paving slab relaying, no mending of the computer, less expenditure on defibrillator pads, less expenditure on the village hall and also less expenditure on grass cutting.

Administration was higher this year by almost £400. This was despite a drop in legal fees from last year. The increases were in subscriptions (due to reclassification of the SLCC membership of the Clerk and Community First being charged at the beginning of the year), audit costs (an external audit was required due to expenditure levels over the year), insurance costs, software costs and also training in the new data protection regulations for the Clerk.

There was a 1% increase in salary this year as agreed nationally.

S137 expenditure was a lot lower this year despite the PC donating £200 to the school for the attraction of extra pupils to keep the school viable. This was because there were less requests

and also the contribution to the British Legion for the Remembrance Day Festival wreath was reclassified as the internal auditor pointed out that S137 was not the correct power in this case. This amount is well below the S137 threshold for the village which is currently some £3,144, this sum can be spent on benefitting the village and can be applied for by those with a project.

S144 expenditure was lower this year despite the purchase of a sign to help visitors to know where the defibrillator is, this is because the PC is no longer asked to contribute to the cost of planting at the war memorial.

The memorial wreath was purchased using the S145 power this year as it had been pointed out by the internal auditor that S137 should not be used.

There was of course the large expenditure of the landfill tax grant.

Capital expenditure was up, partly due to the purchase of office equipment, laptop and printer, but mostly due to the expenditure of VAT returns on more play equipment.

The income over expenditure balance for the year is some £3,600. This is partly due to the receipt of last year's VAT return and last year's grass cutting grant but mostly due to the lower expenditure on S137. There may well be projects in the village in the coming year that need S137 money but for last year there were few applications. This allowed the PC to build up reserves, though we are still somewhat short of the target for best practice of one year's precept in reserve.

The PC's total fixed assets have increased by more than £32k this year, mostly due to new play equipment but also as the PC has purchased office equipment and some safety related items like a sign indicating the location of the defibrillator and some sharps bins for use in the village spring clean.

The precept for the 2018/19 financial year was set at £11,330, a rise in line with inflation which in January was running at some 3%.

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, following transparency changes the draft minutes are now published within a month of the meeting on both the website and notice boards. Anyone wishing to apply for S137 monies can contact the Clerk or approach any of the Councillors who can explain the criteria for eligibility.

Copies of the receipts and payments account for 2017/18 and the bank reconciliation for March 31<sup>st</sup> 2018 were made available, these documents are attached.

## 9. REPORT OF COUNTY COUNCILLOR MR IAN CORKIN

This was read by MKB.

## Specific Issues

- **Traffic Issues:** Following an onsite meeting with members of the PC and officers from OCC, a series of village issues were discussed and are currently in hand.
- **Community Transport:** Following a recent meeting I chaired with parish reps, Community First Oxfordshire and OCC, I am pleased to confirm that OCC have agreed to trial a mid-week service starting in the Mixbury area (possibly including Finmere, it is currently with the transport planners) and terminating in Bicester. It will utilise the councils own transport. Various other options were discussed; and further information will be available soon. I am concerned that the current Friday service is likely to be withdrawn as the private operator has reconfigured some other services. More details to follow.
- **COUNCILLOR PRIORITY FUND:** As mentioned in recent reports the Councillors Priority Fund is now in place. I have a budget of £15,000 this year to use on projects that are important to local communities and where some degree of match funding is available. Applications are welcomed from PC's and community groups as per my recent email.
- **Oxcam expressway:** I attended a presentation from Highways England recently, which I circulated to all PC's afterwards. There is little to add to our current knowledge, but this needs watching very carefully indeed.
- **HS2 & East West Rail:** This continues to impact various areas of Ploughley division. Jnc 9 & 10 of the M40 will feature in transport routes for both HS2 and EW rail construction, so expect amendments around the junction to prepare it for increased HGV movements as well as major impacts on all the approved HGV routes.
- **HS2 community funds:** I met this month with the HS2 community engagement manager to discuss what funds are available for affected communities. I will update everyone soon. The impact of both the enabling works and build out will need very carefully watching locally.
- **Finmere Quarry:** Enforcement action is now underway with CDC (as notified separately) to have the unlawful accommodation and ancillary structures removed from the site

## More Generally:

### POTHOLE FUND BOOSTED TO REPAIR ROADS AFTER WINTER DAMAGE

Central Government has announced that local roads badly affected by recent winter weather will benefit from a further £100 million to help repair any potholes and other storm damage, Transport Secretary Chris Grayling announced on 26 March. Nationally, this money will help repair almost 2 million potholes as well as help protect the roads from any future severe weather. This is on top of the £75 million in government funding already given to councils from the Pothole Action Fund this year, as well as the additional £46 million boost for highways authorities announced just before Christmas. Around 7 million potholes across the UK will be filled due to this money, announced in the 2016 Budget. Oxfordshire's share of these funds comes to nearly £3m.

The winter has had a major impact on the roads. In total Oxfordshire County Council sent the gritters out on 76 occasions from November onwards. That compares to 45 in 2016/17. The council also had to put the snowploughs on to the gritters four times – something that had not been needed in Oxfordshire since 2012/13. A total of over 16,000 tonnes of rock salt

were used and over 90,000 miles covered by Oxfordshire's gritters from November to March which equates to 3.7 times around the world.

Oxfordshire County Council's gritters cover 1,200 miles of road on one gritting run – covering all A-roads, B-roads and some C-roads. Highways England cover the A34, A43 and M40.

The impact has been seen in February when over 7,000 defects were reported (Feb 17 there were 1,600 reports). We ask that people report potholes to us direct via [the](#) council's website – that sends the reports direct to our highways team who arrange inspections and repairs. We obviously also inspect roads very regularly ourselves. These are assessed as Category 1, 24-hour, 28-day repair or to be monitored. A Cat 1 defect is repaired within 2 hours, during the winter period there are often temporary repairs to make the defect safe and a more substantial repair is carried out later in better weather conditions.

### GOVERNMENT MINISTER SIGNS £215M GROWTH DEAL FOR OXFORDSHIRE

Housing Minister Dominic Raab visited Heyford Park near Bicester last month to sign a deal to deliver a £215m investment in transport infrastructure and affordable housing in Oxfordshire. The Minister met Councillor Yvonne Constance, the county council's Cabinet Member for Environment and Economy. The deal was signed by all six members of the Oxfordshire Growth Board: Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Cherwell District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council. March also saw the Oxfordshire Growth Board [announce the first year of projects to be funded](#) by an initial release of £30m for infrastructure projects as part of the Deal agreement. Government road money is for major improvements and cannot be used for day-to-day maintenance, but the investment will help to improve the overall standard of the road network.

### HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (HIF)

On 21 March the Government announced 44 bids which have made it through to stage 2 of its Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to fund major infrastructure projects. Two of the three HIF bids submitted by OCC last autumn on behalf of Oxfordshire made it through and will now progress to a co-development stage:

**Didcot Garden Town** – £171m is sought for transport improvements including a Didcot Science Bridge and A4130 dual carriageway, a new river crossing at Culham and Clifton Hampden Bypass. This would support the delivery of over 22,000 homes in Didcot, Culham, Harwell and Berinsfield. Additionally, up to £70m of cycle and other sustainable transport improvements are proposed for inclusion in the bid plan.

**West Oxfordshire Garden Village** – £135m is sought for further upgrades to the A40, building on existing schemes and based on the approved A40 Long Term Strategy including development of the Rapid Transit network and additional highway capacity on A40 transport corridor. This would support the delivery of over 10,000 homes in Witney & Carterton, and around Eynsham.

Detailed business plans will now be developed for the £300 million of transport infrastructure investment behind these two bids. The Growth Board partners expect to hear this autumn whether or not the two bids going through have ultimately succeeded.

## LIVE WELL OXFORDSHIRE WEBSITE CAMPAIGN

The OCC Adult Social Care Team is running a campaign to raise awareness of its *Live Well Oxfordshire* website. *Live Well Oxfordshire* brings together over 2,000 services and activities in one easy to search online directory – from residential care homes and care services that help people stay living at home, to transport services to get them out and about and new hobbies to enjoy. Residents can find useful information and advice on a range of subjects – all aimed at giving them greater choice and control over the support and services they, or a loved one, need. Details here: [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/livewell](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/livewell)

## 10. REPORT OF DISTRICT COUNCILLOR MR BARRY WOOD

It is a very great honour to represent the community where I live. I am delighted to have been re-elected to Cherwell District Council on May 3rd, to represent the villages of the Fringford & Heyfords Ward and I would like to say a huge thank you to all those who voted for me, I am very grateful to you all.

I can tell you that, to date the District Council is doing very well on the delivery of infrastructure, services and amenities that benefit both town and village residents alike. Cherwell District Council has not raised its share of residents' council tax for the last nine years, a record I am very proud of because it has been delivered whilst investing heavily in the Districts' town centres, sport & leisure facilities, the provision of affordable housing and we continue to be in the top ten councils nationally on recycling, with 84% of our residents happy with this service. On affordable housing, our Council has won awards for innovation and entrepreneurialism, for both the "Build" project which has thus far delivered 190 dwellings converted from old derelict buildings in the towns and the Graven Hill Bicester "Self-Build" project. Bicester has benefited enormously in recent years from its big town centre re-development to include a multi-screen cinema and free parking and the Council is investing too in the re-development of Banbury Castle Quay in the coming years. All the operational activities of the Council have recently been scrutinised by the Local Government Association and the Council was rated as being in a strong financial position, well placed to address the challenges it faces, having good quality members (Councillors), having made good investment decisions to provide future income and having good relationships with Town and Parish Councils. Essentially going forward over the next four years, I intend to continue to lead an effective, innovative and efficient Cherwell District Council and as your District Councillor for Fimmere, stand up strongly for and represent the interests of our village, as I have done for the last 16 years.

## 11. REPORTS OF VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS

**Church** – The report was read by Peter Lepper, Church Warden:

Church Activity:

- a. Number on the Church Electoral Roll – 26

- b. Average attendance at services – 8-14 people
- c. Festivals: attendance at Christmas and Easter remained about the same in 2017 – 41 people came to the midnight service and 42 on Christmas Day, 30 on Easter Day. Attendance at Harvest was less (23), as was attendance at the Remembrance Day Service (32). But it was fantastic to have 90 people at the Carol Service, including both the Shelswell Church choir and the school choir.
- d. The school held 3 end of term services in church, as well as their Harvest Service. It is always a delight to have them and these services are well supported. The church has been serving tea and cake after the services, which has been appreciated by all.
- e. In 2017 there were 2 weddings, but no baptisms or funerals.
- f. The main fundraising event in 2017 was the Fete-abili-tea (fun day).
- g. Over 60 people were invited to a thank you party held in February for all volunteers and supporters of the church.

#### The Church Building

- a. The Church is in fairly good condition. Due to financial constraints only urgent repair work has been undertaken. All mandatory work recommended in the 2013 Quinquennial inspection has been completed. The Church clock is currently not working. It has been serviced but the spring is still jumping off. Peter Lepper and Peter Dix hope to take over maintenance.
- b. There are 11 volunteers on the mowing rota for the churchyard and the new mower has been serviced and is proving most effective.
- c. A bench for the porch has been purchased by the PCC using a donation from the Finmere Cubs and kindly provided by Wilkins joinery.

#### Financial Situation

- a. This is becoming increasingly difficult. We need to find approximately £15,000 to keep the church open and in good repair, cover electricity and insurance, and pay for our clergy.  
We would love to fit a toilet and small kitchen area into the church but at the moment this is a pipe dream. Regular giving is not increasing and as the congregation grows smaller and older, they are finding it increasingly difficult to organise fundraising events.
- b. Peter has met with some of the mums from Operation Playground, and along with two volunteers from the village we would like to set up a fundraising group to look at the possibility of holding some events across organisations.
- c. We are also about to embark on a Parish Giving scheme. As well as asking regular church goers to reflect on their giving we will also be inviting villagers to consider a small but regular donation to help keep the church functioning. We do hope that the village will get behind this, so that we can keep this wonderful historic building available as a resource for the community.

**School** – Caroline Tucker (Headteacher) submitted the following report:

Since we last met at the AGM in May 2017 the school has been extremely busy and I am delighted to be able to share some of the events from the past year with you this evening.

We began this school year with the installation of a new perimeter fence and new school gates. These have not only improved the overall appearance of the school grounds but are

much more secure in keeping our pupils safe at all times. In the autumn pupils planted spring bulbs along the new fence line and it has been a joy to see them flower over the past couple of weeks.

In September 12 children and 3 members of staff travelled to Abernant in Mid-Wales to take part in a residential activity week. We had an extremely successful time and all the children enjoyed activities such as canoeing, hiking, abseiling, climbing, den-building and learning about nature in amazing surroundings.

We continue to be busy in class and have been learning about topics such as The Romans, Frozen World and Children around the World. We continue to work in partnership with North Oxfordshire School Sport Partnership and are very proud to have been awarded the Sainsbury's Gold Kite Mark for PE and the Youth Sport Trust Silver Award for PE. We compete regularly in festivals and competitions and often travel to Cooper School in Bicester to use their sports facilities.

We continue to be supported by the diocese and the church; both Revd Alice Goodall and Revd Bill Muncey are regular visitors leading assemblies for the children. We attend church regularly and have held our Harvest, Christmas and Easter services for parents in Finmere Church. Our next event in church is an end of school year Celebration of Learning which will be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> July at 1.30pm and all residents are invited.

We have supported several charity days in school, ensuring the children are learning as much they can about the world around them; Macmillan Coffee Morning, Children in Need, Sport Relief and in a few weeks' time we will take part in Race for Life in aid of cancer charities.

Our pupils continue to make excellent progress and our staff are able to ensure each child is being challenged and is learning well, often with personalised provision in our small class settings. Parents continue to support the school and we receive excellent feedback from parents and carers; in recent questionnaires to parents, 100% agreed their child was happy at this school, feels safe at this school, makes good progress at this school and that the school is well led and managed. In addition, 100% of parents said they would recommend the school to another parent.

It is lovely to know parents are happy with our work, but we know it is important to listen to the children's views too. In recent pupil questionnaires; 83% said the school helps them do as well as they can, 100% said teaching was good and 89% agreed they were happy to come to school (most of the time)! We asked the children how we could improve the school and were rewarded with some lovely answers: a school kitten, longer playtimes, a trampoline, a TV and some light bulbs that change colour, so we can have disco parties every day.

Finally, and probably most importantly, news about pupil numbers: in September last year, we had just four new pupils join our Early Years Foundation Stage. This September we are due to take 12 new pupils, taking our projected pupil numbers to well over 40. This is a very pleasing increase since last summer and I would like to thank the Parish Council for their support with publicity and raising the profile of our school in the wider community.

Many of our events are recorded in photographs and are on our school website and I encourage you to take a look at some of the exciting things we have been doing. School visits are always welcomed, please do contact the school office if you would to come and see us.

Ms Tucker asked that these lines should be added to her report:

A huge thank you to members of the village for supporting our school fete on Saturday. It was very well attended and a huge success. We raised over £2,000 which will be used to buy resources and equipment to support the children's learning.

**FOFSA** – Lynne Cooley submitted the following report:

FOFSA, a group of parents whose activities to date for the school year period September 2017 to August 2018 are as follows:

Fundraising – a quiz night in March, the Spring Fete in May, bonfire night at the end of October, the Christmas Fayre and Christmas lunch in December, three movie nights and ice lolly Fridays through the summer.

Items and activities funded – Pantomime trip, coach travel, poetry workshop, kitchen fitting, dance workshop, Key Stage 2 books, swimming bus, Atomic Science.

**Village Hall and Playing Fields Committee** – Paul Nash delivered the following report on behalf of Illa Moss, Chairman:

Principle activities in pursuit of our objectives: The hall is available for hire for a variety of clubs. Currently the hall is used on a regular basis by a dog training club and by a specialist dog scent trainer, fitness training, yoga, pilates and Finmere School. The hall also hosts a number of annual village events such as the Finmere School Fireworks Night. We have bookings for parties for children of varying ages, wedding parties and we have seen an increase in hire for such events. The hall is also used as a polling station and the Mums also use the hall for a school tuckshop on term time Fridays. Our thanks go to the tuck shop organisers since the funds are generously ploughed back into the hall.

Funding Strategy and Reserves Policy: Our strategy is to maintain the revenue budget on a self-financing basis i.e. lettings and hires. Currently we have sufficient reserves for day to day expenses and it is our aim to maintain that situation. The hall also maintains a reserve.

Volunteer contributions, grants and fundraising: The village hall and playing fields require maintenance like any other building and grassy area. The costs of maintenance are minimised through use of the time and commitment of the committee members, namely Alan Jones, Trevor Jones, Paul Nash, Phillip Rushforth, Steve Trice and Pat White. Our thanks go to all the members and especially to Alan and Trevor Jones who spend many hours each summer looking after the playing field.

In 2017 we saw the new playground come to life. It is a huge asset to the village and we have had positive comments from users. Our sincere thanks for their sheer hard work to the Playground Committee members, their partners and Steve Trice in bringing the much needed new playground to Finmere village.

Once the new playground was up and running there was the dilemma of how we decommission the old playground. The options were: to dismantle the playground and skip it or sell the equipment. It was decided to try and sell the equipment. Initially we felt that the villagers should be given a choice to buy any equipment, although there was some interest the equipment was just too big for a garden, however a village resident did buy some safety mats which raised £50. Steve and Paul were very keen to sell the equipment on eBay. We were not very hopeful but the thinking behind selling on eBay was if we do not try we will not know. The slide and see-saw were placed on eBay by Steve and the end result was a whopping £485 for the slide and £117 for the see-saw. Upon collection of the slide and see-saw the person who bought them also showed interest in the climbing frame and double swing. So, where there was no hope Steve managed to secure the sale of the climbing frame and double swing for £500. First our sincere thanks to Steve for having faith and raising over £1,000 for the equipment and to Paul, Phillip, Trevor and Allan in helping to dismantle the equipment. We would also like to extend our thanks to Vinny Rose for free hire of the kanga hammer, without which it would have been virtually impossible to remove the equipment intact.

The Village Hall and Playing Field Committee is continuing to operate under an informal authority of the Parish Council. I believe a meeting has been arranged by Mike Kerford-Byrnes with the solicitors to identify the steps to be taken to come to a regulatory and formal agreement between the Parish Council and the Village Hall and Playing Field Committee.

Our major expense for this year is replacement of the lawn mower. The purchase was originally thought to be funded by the three entities: The Parish Council (PC), Village Hall and Playing Field Committee (VHPFC) and the Sports Association (SA). The SA unfortunately decided that they were not in a position to contribute, therefore the funding of the mower fell on the PC AND VHPFC for a total cost of £6,050. We now have to decide the charges levied to the SA for the use of the playing field, to help towards the maintenance and grass cutting etc. The matter is now in the hands of the Chairman of the PC MKB to arrange a meeting and agree a resolution to the matter.

Following from above, in October the PC notified us of a proposal by the Chairman of the SA, Mike Geelan, to the PC regarding the pavilion. The SA would like to bequeath the pavilion to the PC for £1.00. In short if the PC were to accept the proposal then the upkeep of the pavilion would fall on the VHPFC. After discussion it was decided that we as the committee are not happy because as it is we do not have enough manpower to maintain the village hall and the playing fields. The matter is now in the hands of the Chairman of the PC, MKB.

Although we have not come to any agreement on fundraising events this year, we continue to look for opportunities to raise funds throughout the year.

Our future plans: Our core purpose is to continue to provide a sustainable, safe and high-quality community building for the use and benefit of the local community in line with our charitable objectives. We have been in a steady, sound and well-established state throughout the past year and will continue to manage and run the hall, ensuring that we can meet the following priorities:

- The hall is properly and fully maintained.
- Running costs continue to be met.
- Build up reserves to cover future repairs.
- Continue to have a strong and dedicated management committee that continuously reviews, updates and improves our management process.
- Monitor and react to the needs of users and the wider community.
- Promoting the hall for use by the local community.

**Poors Plot Charity** – The report was delivered by Paul Nash, Chairman:

The members of the Poor's Plot management comprise of Anita Bilbo (Secretary), Paul Nash (Chairman), Phillip Rushforth (Treasurer), Sandy Tresise and Alan Cochrane.

Background: The Finmere Poor's Plot comprises of a plot of land of 12 acres located to the west of the village. The land was originally made available for the use by the 'poor of the village' on a date prior to 1667. Without going into the 'trials and tribulations' of the management of the plot over the intervening years, the plot has never proved to be really suitable for the growing of vegetables, as was originally intended, and is currently rented by Peter Lepper for the 'growing' of sheep. For those interested, there is an excellent history of the 'Poor's Plot' written by Anita Bilbo, available on the Parish Council website. In addition, Peter Lepper has been good enough to make available a section of a field behind the village hall, that has been sub-divided into 24 allotment plots and this is now also managed by the Poor's Plot committee.

Poor's Plot Income: Income therefore comprises of the rent paid by Peter Lepper for the use of the original field plus allotment plot subscriptions. Current monies held by the poor's plot amount to approximately £4,000 + and this money is generally held for deemed, charitable use within the village.

Expenditure: With the exception of the annual public liability insurance, there has been no charitable or otherwise linked expenditure, to date, in the last year. However, in the last few weeks, the Poor's Plot committee has agreed to grant a sum of £420 to the 'Assisted Reading for Children in Oxfordshire' program, in payment of the Finmere school contribution for this program, in this year.

Outlook: The Poor's Plot, after being in existence for in excess of 350 years, has recently taken steps to register as a formal charity with the Charities Commission. This registration process is currently ongoing; and we hope that we will shortly be granted proper charity status with our own registered charity number.... possibly a somewhat overdue event.

The committee continue to discuss options for the further application of Poor's Plot funds, and welcome any viable suggestions that Finmere residents may wish to make in this regard.

In addition, any village resident who is interested in taking an allotment should please register their interest with the Secretary, Anita Bilbo who no doubt will advise them on the joys of allotment holding.

**Football Club** – Mr Jon How gave a report on the football team's year:

We play in the Banbury and Lord Jersey League. There are four Divisions in the league, Premier, 1, 2 and 3. Teams play on a Saturday afternoon.

First team competes in the Division 1, reserves in Division 4. Probably best if we don't go into the final league positions.

Planning has been granted for showers, but as it stands we are likely to go for positioning the showers within the club house as this is a cheaper.

We have struggled at times to field two teams every Saturday; but are optimistic that we will continue in 2017/18 with two teams.

The Club is loosely based at the Royal Oak in Tingewick, with after refreshments being provide by Landlady Sandra Diston.

The Club is grateful for the speed of which the Parish Council bought the mower and storage container. The club is very appreciative of the efforts put in by Trevor and Alan Jones in keeping the grass mown.

**Cricket Club** – The following report was submitted by Chairman Mike Geelan:

2017 SEASON IN REVIEW / OUTLOOK 2018 SEASON - The 2017 season was a transformative one for the Club. As well as winning most of our games (including, for the first time, beating Buckingham CC) we:

- Invested pre-season in the club's infrastructure – for example, we acquired a batting cage and a bowling machine, funded an ECB coaching course for one of our own and acquired a full range of junior training equipment.
- Determined to attract the players of the future – the Saturday morning youth coaching programme was oversubscribed on most weeks with many rating it higher than the sessions offered by the more established local clubs.
- Re-varnished and refreshed the sports pavilion exterior.
- Restored the all-weather strip to its former glory;
- Loamed the square post-season with a view to improving the playing surface for 2018, and .....

Having been blessed with good weather all Summer, we also had record numbers of spectators for a single season. The cricket club and the wider community of which it is a part, are now virtually inseparable. Without that wider support, Finmere would have withered on the vine by now. I am not entirely sure how the club's original focus on playing cricket for cricket's sake (as in winning matches at all costs and topping league tables) evolved into the much healthier world view of looking to win when we can whilst also nurturing and encouraging (some would say fast-tracking) young players, but, evolve it has. And, as we approach the 2018 season, there are even plans afoot for the youth side to take on – and,

probably thrash - the older members. Which, were that to happen, would be the best testament to the success of our new, inclusive approach.

The Club is always looking out for new players of all ages and experience. Should anyone in the village be interested in joining we are holding nets up at the ground on three consecutive Sunday evenings in May – 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> from 6.00-7.30pm. Alternatively, please feel free to contact me on 07860 560748.

**Operation Playground** – Sophy Jones submitted the following report:

The Operation Playground Committee have signed off the new Playground as completed and handed it over to the Village Hall, it is now maintained and managed by the Village Hall and Playing Fields Committee.

The Operation Playground committee met earlier this year to discuss funding raising events as part of the Village Hall and Playing Fields Committee.

We will shortly be meeting to discuss events for the later part of the year or indeed how we can support other groups/ organisations across the village, e.g. Church fund raising, School Fund raising, Parish Fete,

Lynne does an amazing job running a Tuck Shop from the Village Hall on Friday's, proceeds go to Phillip as part of the Village Hall and Playing Fields fund raising.

**Yoga Classes** – no report was given this year.

**Fitness Training** – Claire Targonski reported that she was very pleased with the hall and the help of Phillip Rushforth, Booking Clerk, and that her experience had been very pleasant so far.

**Stay n Play** – no report was given this year.

**Dog Scent Training** – The following report was submitted by Heather Donnelly:

Scentwork UK had yet another successful year, launching our ‘new’ dog training sport at Discover Dogs held at the Excel Centre in London last October and Crufts at the NEC in March. We now have over 2,000 members on our facebook group and over 150 trainers throughout the UK.

Finmere Village Hall still continues to be the ‘Head Office’ as it is so well located, being pretty central in the UK.

As well as providing entertainment for our canine companions - and their humans! - we aim to educate the dog owning public as to their responsibilities regarding dog ownership especially within public areas.

During our weekly sessions we do now have residents from Gawcott and Tingewick and it looks as if we shall be having our first member from Finmere joining us shortly with their young Border Collie.

My thanks to Phillip Rushforth for his super speedy email replies - even taking the booking diary on holiday with him! - regarding the hall bookings and Alan for doing such a good job looking after the hall and for keeping an eye on things generally.

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

**Finmere Quarry** – No report was given this year.

**Yew Tree Motor Works** – No report was given this year.

**Red Lion** – No report was given this year.

**Footpath Wardens** – The following report was given by Roger Fiander (also on behalf of Rosemary Fiander):

We have walked most of the paths recently and they're all reasonable and easy to follow.

We're pleased to see new stiles have been put in place behind Chinalls Close and Stable Close.

There is still a need for waymarking in some places to be improved.

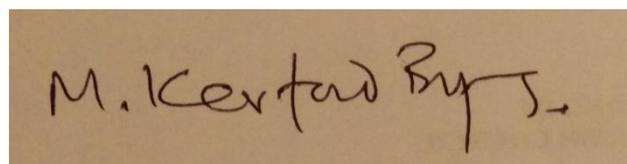
We have noticed one gate padlocked shut at the west end of the Old Banbury Road (the path that runs diagonally back across to Chinalls Close) which we have to report.

## 12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

**Joint Efforts** Following comments raised tonight regarding lack of volunteers for many organisations and a need for local action on matters like blocked gullies etc would it not be a good idea for organisations to get together and have joint efforts for the village? This is something that the Mums of Operation Playground have already been doing, as mentioned earlier. MKB confirms that this is something worth running with. This is to be an item on the June agenda.

MKB thanked those attending on behalf of the PC.

The meeting closed at 21.50

A rectangular photograph of a handwritten signature in dark ink on a light-colored, textured paper background. The signature reads "M. Kerford By J." in a cursive, slightly slanted script.

## **BANK RECONCILIATION – MARCH 31<sup>ST</sup> 2018**

### **COMMUNITY ACCOUNT**

Balance as per Microsoft Money	£3,988.46
Balance as per bank statement	£4,030.46

Outstanding cheques:

100821 – OPFA - £42.00 – (membership subscription)

### **BUSINESS MONEY MANAGER ACCOUNT**

Balance as per Microsoft Money	£4,805.56
Balance as per bank statement	£4,805.56

Signature of Chairman                      .....MKB.....

Signature of RFO                              .....SC.....

**Finmere Parish Council**

**Receipts and Payments Account – Year Ended 31 March 2018**

<b>2016 - 2017</b>	<b>Transactions Receipts</b>	<b>2017 - 2018</b>
£8,600.00	Precept	£11,000.00
£0.00	Landfill Tax grant	£36,543.76
£0.00	VAT Refund	£7,891.23
£3.02	Bank Interest	£2.25
£0.00	OCC Grass Cutting Allowance	£1,521.52
£200.00	Sports Club Loan Repayment	£200.00
£4,168.00	VHPF Committee donation	£708.89

**£12,971.02**      **TOTAL RECEIPTS**      **£57,867.65**

**Transactions Payments**

£4,650.31	Running costs	£3,891.86
£907.97	General administration	£1,305.85
£3,390.00	General admin - salaries	£3,423.96
£1,454.00	S137 (LG Act 1972) Vllge Benefit	£200.00
£44.85	S144 (LG Act 1972) Enc Visitors	£17.48
£0.00	S145 (LG Act 1972) Prov Ent	£100.00
£0.00	Landfill Tax Grant (inc VAT ret)	£36,500.00
£4,168.00	Capital expenditure	£8,821.23

**£14,615.13**      **TOTAL PAYMENTS**      **£54,260.38**

<b>Summary Receipts / Payments</b>	<b>2016 - 2017</b>	<b>2017 - 2018</b>
Balance brought forward	£6,830.86	£5,186.75
Add Total Receipts	£12,971.02	£57,867.65
Less Total Payments	<u>-£14,615.13</u>	<u>-£54,260.38</u>
Balance Carried Forward	<u>£5,186.75</u>	<u>£8,794.02</u>

These cumulative funds represented by:-

	<b>31-Mar-17</b>	<b>31-Mar-18</b>
Community Account: Balance	£383.44	£3,988.46
Money Manager: General Funds	£4,803.31	£4,805.56
	<u>£5,186.75</u>	<u>£8,794.02</u>

(Chairman) -----MKB----- (Finance Officer) ----SC----