Chair’s Report Fulbrook Annual Parish Meeting

May 30 2024

It’s been a year of challenges and change for the parish council since the last annual meeting. The biggest challenge has been the offer of a large parcel of land to the west of Westhall Hill for development along with a smaller plot in Garns Lane. As I’m sure everyone knows this came about due to the “call for sites” for housing development by West Oxfordshire District Council as it prepares for a new local plan to take the area up to 2041. Once word filtered out the parish council called an emergency public meeting last November attended by more than 50 people at very short notice. There was a unanimous vote taken to oppose these developments and since then we have kept a close eye on the process with the aid and support of our district councillor Hugo Ashton for which we are very grateful. To date there is no further information. The parish council has written to West Oxfordshire detailing our opposition to the proposed developments.

This past year has seen the improvements to the village playpark with new equipment installed after a successful grant application headed by Filipa Hinton and our former clerk Sarah Ebeling.

The parish council has continued to press for repairs to Burford Bridge – which I am pleased to say has now started – and for safety improvements for pedestrians crossing the bridge. There was a dialogue about this happening at the same time when the bridge is closed for the final part of the bridge repairs. We wait and see.

We also joined with councillors from Burford in a work party to clear the bridge of weeks. A useful coming together for a common cuase.

It has been a year of change also with the retirement over the past year of five parish Councillors Malcolm Taylor, Peter Burns, Filipa Hinton, Toby Stavely and Bob Warner and our parish Clerk Sarah Ebeling. I would like to pay tribute to them for their hard work and dedication and to thank them for their service to our community.

I myself only joined the council in February this year and have been joined by Richard Marsh who was coopted in March. We have also welcomed our new Parish Clerk Sara Hall who has joined us this evening for the first time.

All this change meant than we were down to two councillors by mid March and thus inquorate and legally unable to function as a parish council. So we applied to WODC for the appointment of a temporary parish councillor to enable us to meet and co-opt new members which I hope we can do in the meeting that follows this one. I am delighted that our District Councillor Hugo Ashton has kindly stepped up and joins us this evening.

Despite all this change the annual plant sale went ahead as usual this year and was a great success raising over £800. Our thanks to the Carpenters Arms for kindly hosting the event and for all those who grew plants and made cakes for sale.

For us, as effectively a new parish council, our task ahead is to listen to views of the village and so do our best to serve our village and to foster a real sense of community.

*Malcolm Allsop*

*Chair Fulbrook Parish Council*