

FREELAND PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 20TH APRIL 2018 AT 7.30PM IN FREELAND HALL, FREELAND, OXFORDSHIRE

PRESENT:

Chairman:	Peter Newell
Vice-Chairman:	Robert Crocker
District Councillor:	Colin Dingwall
County Councillor:	Liam Walker (until 8.20pm)
Parish Councillors:	Mary Ann Canning, Bill Phillips, Tim Webster, Peter Foster, Matthew Ruddle, Jane Linnell
Neighbourhood Police:	Not present
Head of WODC Planning:	Giles Hughes (until 9.30pm)
Clerk/RFO:	Lisa Smith

Plus 100 electors of the Parish.

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone.

1. **APOLOGIES:** PCSO Phil Workman/PC Rob Webb – work commitments.

2. **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON 20TH APRIL 2017**
The Chairman advised that the minutes had been signed off and that copies were on display at the back of the hall for electors to read during the refreshment break.

3. **ANNUAL REPORT BY PETER NEWELL, CHAIRMAN OF FREELAND PARISH COUNCIL ON PAROCHIAL MATTERS.**

The Chairman began his report with an introduction about various planning matters that had kept the Council extremely busy over the past year.

Planning Matters

The Daniel Homes application for 41 houses in Freeland and access off the A4095 had been approved last year. The site had since been sold to Mears New Homes and in conjunction with Carlton Design Partnership, had had the site layout altered. The previous and the altered layouts were shown to the residents, and the altered layout had now been approved by WODC.

The new proposed Cotswolds Garden Village near Eynsham had caused huge concerns for the Parish Council with the proposals being part of the Local Plan and supported by the government and Oxfordshire County Council. The plan was for 2,200 houses stretching from the A40 along Eynsham Road towards Freeland. The Parish Council had submitted an objection to the North Eynsham Garden Village application and Giles Hughes would be talking later about progress to date with the Local Plan.

There was also a proposed Garden Village near Barnard Gate, that had been submitted by Gladman. This application had been submitted for approval but had come in later, after the North Eynsham Garden Village application and was not part

of the Local Plan. The outcome of the Barnard Gate Garden Village application was awaited.

The field opposite the Methodist Church (often referred to as the Chapel Field) was being put forward for possible development by Spitfire Homes. Representatives from Spitfire were due to attend the meeting but unfortunately had had to pass on their apologies as their plans were not as far forward as they would have liked, so no further information was available. They were however planning to hold a public consultation event to present their plans in the near future.

Pye Homes, who own the field between 71 and 83 Wroslyn Road and the area behind Wroslyn Road down to Woodlands would, at some point, be applying for development. Graham Flint of Pye Homes had met the PC Chairman, Vice Chairman and District Councillor Colin Dingwall to explain the situation. Pye's did not intend to make the access to this development via a road through the wood behind Woodlands, and there may even be the possibility to extend the wooded area. Instead, access was likely to be via the gap between 71 and 83 Wroslyn Road. No plans had been prepared as yet, so it was not yet known how many houses there would be. It was noted that as this site had not been included in the Local Plan, it was likely to need local support (with some considerable benefit to the village) to enable it to be passed at WODC.

The Methodist Church had had planning permission granted for a change of use to a shop/café/Village Hub and Roger Faulkner would be speaking about this further later in the evening.

He then went on to talk about the progress that had been made in Freeland over the past year:

Construction of the Garden of Remembrance

This was in the final stages of completion and Mary Ann Canning would talk about this project later on this evening.

Mobile phone coverage

The mobile phone coverage looked set to be improved. As reported at last year's APM, planning permission had been granted to O2 (CTIL) for a new mast at Millwood End in Long Hanborough. This would give a stronger (4G) signal to Freeland. However, this had not yet been built. Planning permission had also recently been granted for a new mast to be installed by Waldon Telecomms in Pigeon House Lane, although the exact location had yet to be agreed. Parish Councillor Peter Foster would be able to give more technical details should anyone require them.

S106 Funding

The Parish Council were due to receive some S106 funding from the 41-house scheme on Witney Road. The funds due were as follows:

£44,608 contribution towards the provision/improvement of local public sports/play facilities in Freeland;

£33,538 contribution towards the provision and maintenance of play facilities in Freeland;

£4,410 contribution towards the provision off-site of new public art to enhance public amenity spaces within Freeland (public art can also include public rights of way signage, street furniture etc);

These would all be paid *prior to implementation* of the development, but once the building work had commenced.

The Parish Council now needed to decide how they wished to use the funds to be provided towards sports and recreation, play facilities and the public art funds and the Chairman put this question to the residents to find out any views on how these funds should be spent. He advised that a suggestions box was available at the back of the Hall and ideas could be placed in the box during the refreshment break. A note asking for suggestions had also been placed in the Grapevine.

The following had also been agreed:

£171,922 contribution towards the expansion of Hanborough Manor CE Primary School.

£41,000 for improvements to be made to the existing bus services serving the development along the service route of Witney – Freeland.

£9,000 for a new bus shelter to be situated on the south side of the A4095.

The Chairman then talked about some areas of concern for the Parish Council over the past year.

Parking along Wroslyn Road

The parking of cars along on Wroslyn Road continued to be ongoing problem.

The Parish Council had explored the cost and feasibility of installing double yellow lines at three potential dangerous spots in the village.

1. Around Willoughby Fields
2. Near the Primary School
3. Near the Church on the bend North of Blenheim Lane.

As double yellows would only be installed if there were no significant number of objections, the Parish Council consulted in the 3 main areas.

The questionnaires were delivered on Tuesday 4th July and collected on Friday 14th July 2017.

The results were as follows:

Properties near Willoughby Fields

7 properties (24%) raised objections to the proposal to install double yellow lines. (Response rate: 18 out of 29 (62%))

Properties near School

No properties raised objections to the installation of double yellow lines. (Response rate: 6 out of 7 (86%))

Properties near the Church

5.5 properties raised objections (32%) to the installation of double yellow lines. (Response rate: 17 out of 17 (100%)).

The cost of installing the double yellow lines would be approximately £4,300 if there was just one consultation cycle. £2,600 of this was a fixed (non-refundable) consultation fee. A meeting would then be held at which all parties could express their opinions, including all householders affected. It was stressed that if there were any significant number of objections, the scheme would not be approved and the Parish Council would still have to pay the £2,600 fee. Also, if the scheme were approved in principle but needed anything but very minor tweaking, it would need to go around the consultation cycle again - with another fee involved.

Because of the considerable number of objections, the Parish Council had decided not to proceed with installing double yellow lines at the current time.

Speeding - Community Speedwatch Scheme

The Parish Council had agreed to participate in a scheme that allows residents to monitor speeds of vehicles in the village. A volunteer team had been checking vehicles' speed in the village using a radar gun plus high vis jackets and notebooks purchased by the Parish Council. The results had been very useful in determining the placement of the new Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) 30mph signs.

Speeding – VAS Signs

Two new Vehicle Activated flashing 30mph signs had been ordered from County Highways at a cost of £3,500 each. One was for traffic coming from the Eynsham Road going North towards the Green, whilst the other was for traffic coming from the A4095 going South on Wroslyn Road at the beginning of the downhill slope towards Willoughby Fields. Both of these areas were places where traffic had frequently been found to exceed 30mph by the Speedwatch Team.

The existing VAS on the Flashing Amber Light (FAL) post to the South of the School is to be moved to the other FAL to the North of the School at a cost of £90. Again, the Speedwatch Team had found that most of the speeding traffic near the school generally came from the northerly direction. These requests had been made to Highways and would hopefully be done in the near future.

Some “20 is Plenty” wheelie bin stickers had also been made available to residents to attach to their bins which would hopefully act as an effective reminder about vehicle speeds on refuse collection days.

Donations

The Chairman, on behalf of the Parish Council, wished to extend his most sincere appreciation to a number of village groups for their tireless work and generosity in giving donations to the Parish Council for various village projects. These were as follows:

Freeland Teddy Girls: £762.60 for the Garden of Remembrance;

Freeland WI: £400 for the Garden of Remembrance.

The Chairman concluded his report by passing on a number of thanks to various people/groups – these were as follows:

Nigel Green for keeping the lawns and hedges around the Village Hall, the Garden of Remembrance site and the Green so well mown and clipped;

Members of the Gardening Club run by Jill and Ray Evans for the wonderful display of daffodils throughout the Village and for their help in weeding the front garden of the Hall - and as part of that group: John and Margaret Hewitt for keeping the Pump on the Green well stocked with lovely flowers and John Hewitt for the War Memorial Restoration; Janet Dalton for maintaining the planter on Wroslyn Road (Tim Webster had agreed to take this over); Bill Phillips for constantly picking up litter and making the Village look so much neater; Matthew Ruddle for organizing the Big Lunch and the Little Free Library; The Internal Auditor, Brian Wildblood for his help in auditing the accounts; Kenny Wylie for editing the very helpful Village Grapevine; To the District Councillors (Colin Dingwall and Carol Reynolds) for all their help during the year and the County Councillor (Liam Walker) for his assistance with various matters.

He also passed on his thanks to all of the Parish Councillors for their individual efforts. In particular, he thanked the Vice-Chairman, Robert Crocker for all his advice and practical help on many matters throughout the year, Mary Ann Canning for her invaluable help and advice on the Garden of Remembrance, and Tim Webster for his horticultural knowledge and experience and help with a number of matters.

He also thanked the Clerk, Lisa Smith for her ongoing cheerfulness and untiring efforts on the Council's behalf throughout the year.

4. ANNUAL REPORT BY THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR – LIAM WALKER

Liam Walker gave a report regarding progress made during the past year by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). Liam explained that this was his first year serving as a County Councillor and it had been a bit of a rollercoaster year! He covered 8 parishes in total, which amounted to around 8,500 residents, including the Hanborough and Minster Lovell division. Liam congratulated the Parish Council on the fantastic turn out of residents, it was really great to see people at the meeting.

The decline in local bus services was something that Liam was currently working on. Meetings had been held with Stagecoach to try and come up with some solutions. At present the number 11 bus service was costing over £1,000 to run which was resulting in the service being run at a loss, and cuts had had to be made. A shuttle bus service from the local villages to Witney had been explored although Stagecoach had not been forthcoming with this option. The current Managing Director, Martin Sutton was due to stand down shortly, and Liam was hoping to lobby the new MD for a solution to the bus service issues. Liam and Robert Courts, the local Witney MP were also working on links to Hanborough station, where the platform was due to be extended by the end of the year.

The ongoing issues with traffic congestion on the A40 had some improvements in the pipeline. £35m had been secured since 2016 for a bus lane on the eastbound carriageway of the A40. It was also hoped that OCC's bid to the Government for the Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) in relation to the West Oxfordshire Garden Village would fund an extension to the eastbound bus lane, and also a west bound bus lane as well. Liam was also pushing to get a link road from the A40 to the A44 near the Wolvercote roundabout.

Potholes continued to be an ongoing problem and had kept Liam busy reporting them to the Highways team. With an additional £1.8m funding received from the Government this year, OCC had been able to invest in an additional Dragon Patcher machine that could fix and seal potholes much quicker and cheaper than traditional repair methods. Liam urged residents to report any potholes to the Fix My Street website, and ideally if photos can be uploaded as well, this would help to speed up the repair.

Liam responded to a few questions from residents regarding the frequency and timings of the local bus services serving Freeland, and whether any S22 community bus funding could be tapped into. A resident also queried the road drainage problem on Wroslyn Road near Oakland Close, where the road was often liable to flooding.

Liam was thanked by the Chairman for his attendance, his talk and his help since his appointment, and Liam then left the meeting at 8.20pm.

5. ANNUAL REPORT BY THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR – COLIN DINGWALL

Colin Dingwall gave a report regarding progress made during the past year by West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC). Colin had been a district councillor for the past 12 years. He was also a Cabinet Member at WODC with responsibility for 20/20 Vision, Innovation, Broadband and Housing. The second District Councillor for Freeland, Carol Reynolds had recently resigned her position following her promotion to CEO for a local army charity, and local elections were due to take place next month.

He firstly thanked the Parish Council for all their hard work within the parish and for what they had achieved and for the high turnout of residents who had chosen to attend the Annual Parish Meeting. It was another fantastic turn out!

Despite austerity measures, the District Council was in a very good position and had produced another balanced budget for 2018/19 whilst continuing to maintain all their services to residents with their 20/20 vision programme. This had been achieved by sharing services with other councils, ensuring efficiency provision without the need for cuts to services.

A small increase of £2.75* per annum had to be applied to the WODC portion of the Council Tax for the coming year – this equated to 5 pence* per week per household, and WODC were still the second lowest charging shire in the country (*figures applicable for a band D property). This meant that WODC should have a small surplus at the end of the year.

WODC had invested £1.6m to provide high speed broadband to everyone via an £8m contract with Gigaclear and BDUK (the Government's Broadband agency). This would mean that households would be able to achieve upload and download speeds of 1GB. Residents could visit the Gigaclear website and input their postcode to see when they would be connected.

Refuse collections were now being carried out in-house and new wheelie bins to replace the black recycling boxes had been introduced from October last year. Colin apologised to residents over the initial teething problems in the first few months where there were some missed collections due to a number of health and safety issues. However, West Oxfordshire were still in the top quartile in the country for their recycling rates.

The main issue for WODC currently was the West Oxfordshire Local Plan which Giles Hughes, Head of WODC Planning would be talking about later in the evening. There had been three big appeals against planning decisions in Long Hanborough over the past few years, two of which WODC had lost, and one where WODC had recently been successful: the Cantay Estates appeal for 94 houses on land at Church Road. Colin passed on his thanks to Stuart Brooks and members of the Hanborough Action Group (HAG) who had been very proactive in submitting responses and representations on behalf of residents.

A solution to the old shop site in Parklands was still being looked at, plus the possibility of a community shuttle bus service with a circular route around the local villages such as Hanborough, Freeland, North Leigh and Witney. Colin was also investigating the Quiet Lanes initiative to see if a 20mph zone could be implemented in Freeland near the school.

Overall the District was in a good position with low crime rates, good schools, excellent health and leisure facilities and free parking in many towns.

Colin responded to a couple of questions from residents regarding the length of time it had taken to get the Local Plan in place and agreed, that many villages were suffering speculative developments in the meantime, plus questions about waste and recycling.

Colin was thanked by the Chairman for his attendance, his talk and his help over the past year.

6. REPORT FROM PCSO PHIL WORKMAN, THAMES VALLEY POLICE

Unfortunately, PCSO Phil Workman could not be present at the meeting. However, he had sent a brief report regarding crime rates in the local area over the past year which the Chairman read out to residents.

Recorded crime figures in Freeland indicated that crime and crime related incidents had risen slightly by around 10 during the past 12 months. This was mainly due to an increase in Crime Related Incidents. The main offences were Theft, Burglaries other than a dwelling and Criminal Damage. No drug offences were recorded in the Parish, but the team had received lots of intelligence regarding several people who are using drugs, as well as locations of where it was happening, therefore the team were working hard to crack down on this.

The Woodstock Neighbourhood Team had been part of a shift in emphasis in June last year. Whilst the parish still had their PCSOs Phil Workman and Chris Jones, there were now 4 police officers looking after Woodstock, Eynsham and Kidlington, as well as the rural areas in between. The police officers were stationed at

Kidlington Police Office and therefore were spread a little thinner than before. They were making more use of the Thames Valley Alert system which was a great way that the police communicated with the public as well as receive messages back. Messages that are relevant only to Freeland and of interest to different community groups such as Shopwatch, Countrywatch, Pubwatch, Businesswatch etc could be sent out. Residents were encouraged to sign up for this at www.thamesvalleyalert.co.uk or speak to one of the officers.

The situation with Woodstock Police Station remained the same. Thames Valley Police currently rent the building from Blenheim Estates, but moves were still afoot to re-locate the team to another building in the town, although no timescale had been set for this. Many Woodstock officers would also be assisting with the Royal Wedding on 19th May.

The Neighbourhood Team were now more of a problem-solving team, which meant that they would act upon current intelligence, crime trends and issues that affect their community the most. Other Neighbourhood Teams could also be called upon to assist with warrants and enforcement and recently the Woodstock team had been in Witney and Banbury helping to stop the supply of drugs into those towns.

The current Local Policing Priorities were Domestic Abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation, Dwelling Burglaries and the Exploitation of Persons for the supply of drugs. The first two were mainly 'hidden crimes' which meant that they don't come to the public attention as much as the more traditional crimes and this is where the police were concentrating their efforts in reducing the risk to vulnerable children and adults. They very much relied on information from a number of sources; schools, parents, youth clubs, general info from around the parish etc. – so if anyone noticed something out of the ordinary, or they were concerned about the welfare of a child or adult, there were various ways to report it to the police and the relevant agencies: call 101 or report anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

The message to the public remained the same – be vigilant, ears to the ground and “keep ‘em peeled”, as a famous fictional copper used to say!

BREAK FOR REFRESHMENTS: 8.50pm

MEETING RECONVENED: 9.10pm

7. WEST OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN FINAL RESULTS - PROGRESS OF THE EMERGING LOCAL PLAN

Giles Hughes, Head of Planning at West Oxfordshire District Council gave a brief talk to update on the progress of the emerging local plan. Giles had been employed as the Head of Planning at WODC since 2014.

The Government required all District Councils to have a Local Plan in place which contained the Planning Policies to be applied across the district. Giles gave some background as to how WODC came to be where it is now with regards to the Local Plan.

The District Council had prepared its Local Plan, and it had to be independently inspected by a local examiner. The examination commenced in November 2015, where at the time WODC had a plan for the delivery of 10.5K houses up to 2031, which included at the time the provision of the Cogges Link Road in Witney. The Local Plan was unfortunately delayed due to a local campaign to stop the Cogges Link Road.

During the redrafting of the local plan a new Oxfordshire wide SHMA (Strategic Housing Market Assessment) was also necessary which called for greatly increased housing numbers. The clear message that came from the Inspector was also that a higher number of houses was required. In addition, all of Oxfordshire's district councils were required, under a duty to cooperate, to accept a share of 15,000 homes that Oxford City Council announced they could not provide. This large increase meant that WODC no longer held the required 5-year land supply which opened the door to the mass of speculative developments that had been seen in the past couple of years, especially in many of the rural villages.

More work on the Local Plan was done over a year to work out how WODC would meet the needs of the District, and various additional site proposals were added to the Plan, such as the West Eynsham site, North Eynsham Garden Village, West Witney plus others at Carterton and Chipping Norton. Once completed, a further consultation on the Local Plan was carried out, and further hearings were carried out with the Inspector in March and July 2017. Some further technical work was required, and then in January 2018, a letter was received from the Inspector to advise that in principle the Local Plan was capable of being sound, and that WODC needed to consult on some of the policies, which had now been done.

WODC were now expecting the final report from the Inspector in May time which would provide further clarity and they could settle any strategic issues such as the Garden Village location etc. Once WODC were in receipt of the report, it was up to WODC whether to formally adopt the Local Plan or not, but it would have to be adopted as it was whole, WODC could not pick and choose different elements of it.

Giles went on to explain that once WODC had an adopted Local Plan in place, they would be in a much stronger position to stop the speculative development in rural villages that had been rife over the past few years. It was hoped that it was only a few months away now of having the Plan adopted.

Another big area of work for WODC currently was the Oxfordshire Growth Deal where all of the Councils in Oxfordshire were working together with the Government to secure various funding for the County for additional projects in relation to economic development, strategic planning and growth, which included housing and transport infrastructure.

Giles responded to some questions from residents about the Growth Deal, WODC's land supply and the length of time it had taken to get the Local Plan in place and agreed, and affordable housing.

The Chairman then thanked Giles for attending the meeting and for his useful and informative presentation, and Giles then left the meeting at 9.30pm.

8. VILLAGE HUB UPDATE – TO INCLUDE AN UPDATE ON THE METHODIST CHURCH

Roger Faulkner, a member of the Village Hub group and ex minister for the Freeland Methodist Church gave a brief talk on the Village Hub group's plans to turn the Methodist Church into a shop/café/meeting venue. The Village Hub group had been set up and was being led by Colin Smith, Roger Faulkner and Alaa Al-Yousuf, together with other local resident volunteers.

The Freeland Methodist Church had closed for worship in April 2017, and the Hub Group were hoping to gain enough funds to purchase the building so that it could be used as a village shop/café/meeting venue (or all three!). Planning permission had recently been granted by WODC for a shop, café and meeting venue.

The Hub Group had been informed that the Church would be placed on the market in January 2018, but as yet this had not happened and there was still no news as to when it would become available. As soon as the market price was known then the Group could insert figures into their business plan and then could start fundraising.

It was hoped to eventually set up a village Co-operative to help run the facility, should the acquisition of the building be successful. So far, the group had received very encouraging support from the Parish Council, WODC and the local community for which they were most grateful. Last week the Hub Group had submitted a grant application to WODC for a Community Facilities Grant for up to £50K of funding. Liam Walker had also advised the Group that he would be giving the Village Hub Group a contribution from his Councillor Priority Fund.

The Parish Council had submitted three applications to WODC to nominate the Methodist Church as an Asset of Community Value, but sadly all three attempts had been unsuccessful.

Lots of preparation work was still required, and if any residents were interested in finding out more, they were encouraged to attend a cheese and wine evening being held on Friday 27th April at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. Tim Allen, the Chair of Ilmington Community Shop & Café had been invited to do a presentation on how a small group had managed to purchase their church for £120K and turn it into a very profitable shop and café. Attendance at the evening was free of charge.

9. COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH – THE SPEEDWATCH TEAM'S FINDINGS RE SPEEDING IN FREELAND

Angela Spriggs, a member of the Community Speedwatch Team gave a presentation about speeding in Freeland and the group's findings. Angela had been a resident in Freeland for 28 years and had noticed the volume and speed of traffic had increased significantly during this time. Angela was one of a team of 5 volunteers for the Speedwatch scheme following an advert placed in the Grapevine last year by the Parish Council.

The Community Speedwatch (CSW) scheme had been set up in conjunction with the local Police. Its aim was to educate drivers and to give them a gentle reminder about the speed limit. It also served to help reduce the chance of accidents and

injuries due to speeding. Many other local villages had also set up a Speedwatch scheme, including Cassington, Bladon, North Leigh, Combe, Woodstock and Stanton Harcourt.

The Community Speedwatch Scheme had been set up in Freeland and had been up and running for about a year. The team of team of 5 volunteers had been trained by the local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) to use a Radar gun to check the speed of vehicles travelling through the village.

The Radar gun was pointed at vehicles travelling through Freeland and the vehicle's speed is displayed on the gun. No photographs or videos were taken at any time, the Radar gun literally just recorded the speed at which a vehicle is travelling. Camera and videos were not permitted so the volunteers could not record any details on mobile phones.

Various details including date, time, make, model and colour of car, registration numbers of any speeding vehicles were then recorded by the volunteers and these were then passed to the Police to be entered onto their database by trained volunteers. A copy of the information sent to the Police was also sent to the Parish Clerk.

Warning letters were then sent out by the Police to the registered keepers stating that their vehicle had been reported as speeding. The first letter was a warning letter, the second was a stronger letter and further detected speeding could result in enforcement by the Police.

Strict guidelines were in place about where the CSW team could operate and there were also restrictions on weather conditions – they could not carry out checks in rain, mist, snow, fog or in the dark. The volunteers all had been issued with high-vis jackets as they had to be visible and they operated in various locations throughout the village based on where there was most concern about speeding traffic, or the impact of speed. They only checked one side of the road at any time, so only one direction of traffic was recorded at each session. They were not there to try and catch people out, it was more about educating and serving as a reminder about the speed limit through the village.

The Community Speedwatch Team give the Parish Council updates of how many vehicles have been recorded speeding in a given timescale, and where the main areas are in Freeland where speeding occurs.

Angela then provided some figures gathered over a 6-month period from June to November 2017.

During this time, 36 Speedwatch sessions had been carried out, each session lasting for an average of 1 hour. 3,095 cars had had their speed checked, and of these, 150 were exceeding the speed limit. This equated to 15% or 1 in 6 vehicles. 80% of the vehicles checked during the 36 sessions were travelling between 40-53mph which was very worrying as this was well above the 30mph limit. Feedback received from the Police was that 50% of the vehicles reported as speeding in Freeland were residents who lived in the village!

Feedback from the local community had generally been very good and the Parish Council were grateful to the team for carrying out these checks which were acting as a deterrent as people never knew when the team would be out and about with their speed guns. Angela concluded her talk by asking residents to set a good example and to be mindful of the speed at which they were travelling. She also advised that the team would be happy to respond to requests for checks to be carried out in areas that were of a particular concern so anyone that wished to do so could get in touch with one of the team.

No questions were posed to Angela, so the Chairman thanked Angela for her very useful and informative talk.

10. CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH EVENT IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Freeland resident Julie Stuart-Thompson gave a short presentation on some plans for a Christmas Day lunch event to be held this year. Julie started her talk with some facts and figures gathered from Age UK.

49% of people in the UK aged 65 and over say that the TV or their pets are their main form of company. 49% of those aged 75+ live alone. 24% of pensioners did not go out socially at least once per month. 41% of people aged 65 and over in the UK felt out of touch with the pace of modern life and 12% say they feel cut off from society. These were just a few of the stats that Julie presented to demonstrate that loneliness and social isolation were an increasing problem within the UK.

The results of the Freeland Hub Household Survey carried out in October 2017 showed that out of the 147 questionnaires that were returned, nearly a third of residents (50) reported that someone within their house was currently experiencing loneliness or social isolation. Taken as an overall percentage of the whole village (570 houses), this equated to 19% of residents expressing feelings of loneliness and social isolation in Freeland.

There were also many residents struggling with income related issues. 30% of UK people lived below the medium income standard, yet they worked, owned a home but scraped by and missed out on certain benefits like free school meals and struggled to afford the extras in life that many of us take for granted.

So, there was clearly a need for people to be more sociable and Julie wanted to try and do something positive for the residents of Freeland. She had booked the Village Hall for Christmas Day and was planning on holding a Christmas Day lunch in the Hall to bring together those residents who may be spending Christmas on their own who may be suffering from social isolation/loneliness.

Some help from the community would be required and she asked the residents for their assistance in promoting the event, practical help such as peeling vegetables, putting up decorations, clearing away, putting up a Christmas tree, washing up etc and most importantly that if they knew of anyone who would be spending Christmas alone or who would benefit from some social interaction to get in touch with them and invite them along. Further details would be placed in the Grapevine shortly and Julie could be contacted via the Freeland Book Club or by the contact details below: Email: julie.st@btinternet.com Tel: 01993 880378.

The Chairman thanked Julie for her presentation and commended her on a very worthwhile project and wished her every success.

11. PROGRESS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

Mary Ann Canning gave a brief presentation of the progress made on the Garden of Remembrance (GOR) over the past year and the plans for the coming year.

As reported at last year's APM, £26,457.94 had been spent on the development of the Garden of Remembrance, which represented the cost of the hard landscape contract carried out by Nicholson's to construct the sitting areas and footpaths with associated groundworks.

During this financial year, a further £5,687.35 had been spent on the garden to carry out the soft landscape works, including planting and seeding. Of this a total of £2,862.92 was spent on the supply of plants at cost price from Freeland Nurseries. £1,540 was used for the supply and installation of 2 small benches, £382 for supply of hardcore to top up the allotment track, and £892.31 for additional topsoil to even out levels. It was pointed out that the topsoiling, hardcore and planting work had been carried out free of charge by Parish Councillors.

Quotes for the supply of the signs and arch had been obtained, and these would be installed during the next couple of months, along with the disabled ramp. The oak signs were being supplied from a specialist company, and there would be two signs in the verge at the entrance, plus one sign by the archway. The oak archway was being supplied and installed by Eynsham Park Sawmills.

Maintenance this year would be relatively simple, keeping the wildflower area free of pernicious weeds like thistle and groundsel, the grass mown and hedges trimmed. The majority of the planting had been completed, although there were still some plants to add around the sitting areas, and evergreens to enhance the hedgerow to the allotments.

The area had been seeded late last summer with 2 types of seed mix – a normal hardwearing mix along the paths, and a wildflower seed and grass mix elsewhere. A number of wildflower plugs had also been planted. The grass was now establishing itself, and for the first year it would all be mown on a regular basis to stop weeds such as thistle and dock getting into the wildflower areas. From next year a meadow regime would be established to encourage wildflowers, with mown paths to define the areas.

The garden would be officially opened in September, and available for use from then, with the intention of producing a leaflet to be circulated to the village publicizing the opening.

In the future, depending on possible fundraising, a gazebo over the WI bench to provide shelter may be installed.

A good deal of research had been carried out into how to administer interments and scattering of ashes, and a draft guidelines and fees had been drawn up for Freeland based on local charges and examples from Stoke Poges and Bladon.

The Parish Clerk, Lisa Smith, had been appointed as the Registrar to administer the garden and keep records of interments, plus liaise with families and local funeral directors. She would be paid on her current hourly rate.

Details of the plot layout was shown to the residents - the plots had been numbered on the plan and an electronic record would also be kept. In total 206 plots would be available for interment and an unlimited number for scattering ashes along the base of the hedgerows. (In reality, the ashes would not actually be scattered, but placed under a section of turf lifted for the purpose).

Once the schedule of fees had been agreed, this will be added to an information pack on the garden, which would include the guidelines for use, and a plan.

Some photographs were shown to the residents detailing the progress of the work from the footpaths being created, to the circle paved seating areas and the planting. Some photos were also shown detailing the different grass sowings and wild flower seed mix.

No questions were put to Mary Ann and the Chairman thanked her on behalf of the Parish Council for all her efforts to date with the Garden of Remembrance.

12. FREELAND HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE - UPDATE

Robert Crocker, Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee gave a brief report on the hall's progress over the past year.

The Hall was now 6 years old and was being used every day of the week, so it was important to keep on top of the maintenance work that was now required. In the past year the Hall had netted 1,076 bookings, 950 of these were on weekdays, 121 were at weekends and 8 were weddings (which was an increase of 3 from the previous year).

Robert passed on his thanks to the Freeland Hall Management Committee which was made up of friendly and very hard-working volunteers, with some roles now being partly salaried (these were the roles of Bookings Secretary, Decorator, Cleaner, and Maintenance).

He expressed his sincere thanks to Dot Sharpe, the Treasurer, who worked tirelessly and was totally dependable. He also thanked Shelagh Kardos for her role as Vice-Chair who could be relied upon to cover just about anything, Clare Mullett for her hard work as Bookings Secretary, Arthur Treherne who did a fantastic job with the never ending maintenance work, Jeanette and Steve who cleaned the Hall, Adie Buckingham who did some of the decorating, Jane Foster who kept the website up to date, and James Bugg who did a grand job as Secretary.

He also thanked all of the Committee members including Bill Phillips, Colin James Janet Dalton and Terry Jones for their sterling work and support, and to Ruth Mason and Victoria Eaton who provided weekend cover.

Robert also passed on his thanks to all those that had hired, supported and cared for the Hall, which was a fantastic village amenity.

A summary of the Hall's annual accounts had been made available to residents at the meeting. Usage of the Hall had increased each year and bookings were already being taken a year in advance. The annual turnover of the Hall was £25K, with £20K being spent in outgoings each year. £30K was being held in the bank account to help with the spiralling maintenance costs. Electrical tests had had to be carried out recently and these had proved exceptionally expensive, but nevertheless had to be done.

The Chairman then offered his thanks to Robert and the rest of the Hall Management Committee for their hard work and to everyone who had supported the Hall.

11. AUDITED ANNUAL RETURN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2017, WITH DRAFT UNAUDITED RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2018

Residents were supplied with copies of the Audited Annual Return for the year to 31st March 2017 and a draft statement the net position by cost centre report for the year ended 31st March 2018. These were both accepted by the meeting.

12. REPORTS FROM VARIOUS SOCIETIES IN FREELAND

Reports from the Allotment Association, Primary School, Gardening Club, Pre-School, Football Club, St Mary's Baby & Toddlers Group, Cricket Club, Scouts, WI, Parochial Church Council, Brownies, Mother & Toddlers Group, Little Free Library, Photo Group, Eynsham Consolidated Charity and the Craft Club were all displayed for residents' information. They would also be placed on the village website (under the Parish Council heading) for residents to read at their leisure.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for their time, interest and input and the meeting closed at 10.20pm.