

## FREELAND PARISH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2017 AT 7.45PM IN FREELAND HALL, FREELAND, OXFORDSHIRE

#### PRESENT:

Chairman:	Peter Newell
Vice-Chairman:	Robert Crocker
District Councillor:	Colin Dingwall
County Councillor:	Not present
Parish Councillors:	Mary Ann Canning, Bill Phillips, Tim Webster, Peter Foster, Matthew Ruddle, Jane Linnell
Neighbourhood Police:	Not present
Clerk/RFO:	Lisa Smith

Plus 100 electors of the Parish.

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone.

1. **APOLOGIES:** Carol Reynolds - away, Louise Chapman – ill, PCSO Phil Workman – ill.

#### 2. **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON 4<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2016**

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 of the current members of the Parish Council. The Councillors had been elected in May 2016 to serve for 4 years. One new Councillor had been appointed this year, Peter Foster who replaced Janet Dalton who left in May last year.

He then went on to talk about the many positive events that had occurred over the past year:

##### Play Park

Additional items of play equipment had been installed in the children's play park. This was discussed at the last APM and work started soon after that meeting. Mary Ann Canning was the lead councillor for this project. A WREN application had been successfully submitted and the Parish Council were awarded a £47,000 grant towards the project. As part of the grant conditions, the Parish Council had to show local fundraising, and the Freeland Teddy Girls had helped enormously in raising £2,167 for the play park. The new play park was officially opened by the school headteacher Sarah Nickelson.

##### Garden of Remembrance

Construction of the Garden of Remembrance had made good progress this year. Councillor Mary Ann Canning was the lead on this project and would talk more about it later in the meeting.

### Road signs/potholes

The signpost in Cuckoo Lane had been replaced and relocated by Highways, making the junction more visible and hopefully safer. The very rusty and tired looking road nameplates at the entrance to Church View had also been replaced. The long rut-filled utility trench along Wroslyn Road had eventually been filled in and repaired by Highways and this had greatly improved the road surface.

### Benches

Two new benches had been erected: one at the Busby Close bus stop which was funded by the Teddy Girls (£840) and the base was very kindly installed free of charge by Tod Fairfield. The second bench was installed in the Garden of Remembrance which was funded by the WI (£840).

Both benches were made by Oxford Memorial Benches with a special discount, and thanks were passed to Graham and Ria Lay.

### Shed on field & new path across field

The old shed on the playing field had been removed as it had become a health and safety hazard.

A new path had also been made across the playing field from the village hall to the Pigeon House Lane entrance, with £2,273 from funds raised in 2015 by Freeland Open Gardens. Shrubs and bulbs from the Gardening Club had been planted alongside the path, known as the Spring Walkway.

The Chairman passed on his thanks to Robert Crocker and his colleagues for the demolition and removal of the shed and for the installation of the new path.

### Big Lunch

The Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday was celebrated in June last year with a community style picnic called "the Big Lunch". Many residents attended what was an extremely happy and community focused event. The Chairman thanked Councillor Matthew Ruddle for organizing the event, and mentioned that another similar event was planned for this year.

### Sports Changing Rooms

Sport England had confirmed they were satisfied with the 6 reports and 6-monthly usage figures for the changing rooms and required no further reports.

Thanks were expressed to Ben Symonds, Matthew Hardy and Simon Brown for providing the usage figures over the past three years and for ably promoting youth teams in Freeland.

### Mobile phone coverage

The mobile phone coverage was to be improved. Planning permission had been granted to O2 (CTIL) for a new mast at Millwood End in Hanborough. This would give a stronger (4G) signal to Freeland. However, there were still technical issues to be settled (eg a link to BT land lines) and timing for the new mast was uncertain.

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

### Highway Matters:

### Parking along Wroslyn Road

There had been 3 recent serious accidents by cyclists colliding with stationary vehicles at night. Hazardous areas were deemed to be:

- Wroslyn Road from the North down the hill towards Willoughby Fields (for cyclists);
- The brow of the hill near Willoughby Fields with cars parked on the bend;
- Parklands entrance and around the school;
- Approaching the church area from the North with cars parked on the bend.

The Parish Council was exploring the cost and feasibility of installing double yellow lines at dangerous spots in the village. Residents were invited to give their views on this as it was noted this could be a controversial issue.

### Community Speedwatch Scheme

The Parish Council had agreed to participate in a scheme that allows residents to monitor speeds of vehicles in the village and several people had volunteered. A radar gun plus high-vis jackets and notebooks had been purchased and PCSO Phil Workman was due to visit to give instructions.

### Buses

The number 11 bus service timetable had been drastically reduced. The Parish Council had met with Martin Sutton, the Managing Director, and Trevor Bayliss, the Operations Manager, both from Stagecoach to try and improve the situation. A suggestion was made of having a more frequent shuttle bus between Witney and Eynsham rather than a poor Witney-Oxford service. Martin and Trevor agreed to explore this further and the Parish Council was awaiting their feedback. In the meantime, a resident from Hanborough was hoping to set up a community operated mini-bus and residents were asked if they were interested in joining a project group to take this forward to speak to the Clerk.

### Financial Matters - Precept

The Chairman explained that the precept for 2017-18 was increased by 2.56%. However, WODC had their own method of calculation that leaves out a grant that they give to the Parish Council, resulting in the increase being shown on Council Tax bills as 4.1%. But the precept over the past 4 years had actually been kept very small. Using WODC's own calculations, the change in Freeland's precept had been:

2014: -0.2%

2015: +0.1%

2016: -3.0%

2017: +4.1%

This gives a total for the 4 years of +1% (or +0.25% per year).

### Planning Matters

The Daniel Homes application for 29 houses in Freeland and access off the A4095 had been approved but had since been replaced by an approved application for 41 houses (subject to legal agreement). The full application was now awaited and the design put forward in the application was purely illustrative of how it could look, and was not the final plan.

Cuckoo Wood Farm had submitted an application for an additional 21 plots for Travelling Show People which had also been approved by WODC.

The new proposed 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. Robert Crocker would speak in more detail about this later in the meeting.

The amount of applications being granted in Hanborough had also caused concern and the Chairman showed residents a map detailing the different areas that had either already been granted or had applications pending/pre-applications going forward. These included 339 houses already given approval, with a further 289 houses at pre-application or application pending stage. The impact on local services and traffic was of huge concern to the Parish Council and although objections had been made, applications were still being granted.

### 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 Open Gardens: (from 2015) £2,273 for the new path across the playing field;

Freeland Teddy Girls: £2,167 for the play park project, £840 for the new bench near Busby Close, £818 for trees and plants in the Garden of Remembrance;

Freeland WI: £840 for the new bench in the Garden of Remembrance;

Play Park Opening Refreshments: £129 for the play park project;

St Georges Day Dinner: £100 for the play park project;

Allotment Association: £350 towards the path from the allotments to the Garden of Remembrance;

Freeland Football Club: £15 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:

The Internal Auditor, Brian Wildblood for his help in auditing the accounts. Brian replaced Peter Gill who had now retired after 7 years of service;

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; Kenny Wylie for editing the very helpful Village Grapevine;

Bill Phillips for constantly picking up litter and making the Village look so much neater;

Ann Kershaw, for serving many years as a Trustee on Eynsham Consolidated Charity on behalf of the Parish Council – Mike Foster, had recently taken over this position;

To the District Councillors (Colin Dingwall and Carol Reynolds) for all their help during the year and the County Councillor (Louise Chapman) for her 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 advice and knowledge in updating the play park and 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 cheerfulness and untiring efforts on the Council's behalf throughout the year.

**4. ANNUAL REPORT BY THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR – LOUISE CHAPMAN**

Unfortunately, Louise Chapman was not present so no report could be given.

**5. ANNUAL REPORT BY THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR – COLIN DINGWALL**

Colin Dingwall gave a brief report regarding progress made during the past year by West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC). Colin had been a district councillor for the past 11 years. He was also a Cabinet Member at WODC with responsibility for 20/20 Vision, Innovation, Broadband and Housing.

He firstly commended the Parish Council in what they had achieved, for all their hard work and for the high turnout of residents who had chosen to attend the Annual Parish Meeting. A neighbouring parish, with a larger population than Freeland, had only had 4 residents attend their recent APM!

Despite austerity measures, the District Council was in a very good position and had produced another balanced budget for 2017/18 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.

After 6 years of the WODC portion of the Council tax being frozen, a small increase of 6% had to be applied for the coming year – this equated to 10 pence per week per household, and WODC were still the second lowest charging shire in the country.

The main issue for WODC currently was the West Oxford Local Plan which had been submitted to the Inspector and was due to be heard on the 9<sup>th</sup> May, with a second hearing in July. Colin apologised on behalf of WODC for the lack of a Local Plan and confirmed that WODC were in a similar position as many other councils. WODC had fought to keep overall numbers low and the new Plan had less than half the houses than neighbouring districts in South, Vale, Cherwell, and Oxford City.

WODC had invested £1.6m to provide high speed broadband to everyone. They were now carrying out the tendering process and hoped to have it all installed by the end of the year.

Refuse collections were now being carried out in-house and new wheelie bins to replace the black recycling boxes were being introduced from October this year.

The new garden waste collections had started from 1<sup>st</sup> April, but unfortunately the lorry broke down on its way to Freeland. However, this was rectified with all collections being made the following day.

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 finished his talk by talking about a couple of local issues, namely the provision of a footbridge over the railway at Hanborough station, and a request for Highways to review their opinion on the proposed development north of the A4095 between Freeland and Hanborough which was originally classed as one site (with the development, now approved on the south side), and which needed to be assessed in terms of traffic movement.

Colin responded to a couple of questions from residents regarding the lack of democracy in terms of local involvement for the proposed Garden Village and ways to improve the toll bridge by Farmoor. He also warned against pushing for major improvements to the A40, as it was felt that if the roads are improved too much, then more housing and development would follow.

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. Copies of the report were also available at the meeting should anyone wish to read it.

During the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016, there were overall 26 crimes and crime related incidents in the Freeland area. This figure had increased slightly to 35 over the past year from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. The report explained that crime related incidents such as domestic incidents, where no criminal offences had occurred but details of those spoken to/seen were recorded in case of future problems. Taking the crime related incidents away to just leave recorded crimes, there was a slight increase in offences. This rise was in part due to a multiple burglary and criminal damages caused on the Wroslyn Road Industrial Estate.

It was agreed to move item 10 to the next item before the refreshment break, then to take the School item before the Garden Village.

#### **10. FREELAND VILLAGE 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 5 years old and this was marked with a birthday party where many organisations from around the County were invited to come along, view the facility and see the books and how it was ran. A great response was received with many visitors giving positive feedback. The Hall was being used every day of the week and it was important to keep on top of the maintenance work that was now

required. Arthur Treherne had joined the Committee back in September, as a paid maintenance person and this was working extremely well.

Robert passed on his thanks to the Freeland Hall Management Committee which was made up of friendly and very hard working volunteers.

He expressed his sincere thanks to Dot Sharpe, the Treasurer, who worked tirelessly and was totally dependable. He also thanked Shelagh Kardos for her hard work as Bookings Secretary up until September last year, with Clare Mullett now taking over this role. James Bugg was also doing a grand job as Secretary.

He also thanked all of the Committee members for doing their bit.

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. £25K was being held in the bank account and it was hoped at some point to purchase some blinds for the Velux windows so that the cinema could continue in the lighter evenings.

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.

**BREAK FOR REFRESHMENTS: 9.00pm**

**MEETING RECONVENED: 9.20pm**

## **8. FREELAND PRIMARY SCHOOL 5 YEAR SITE PLAN**

Headteacher Sarah Nickelson gave a brief presentation on some plans to develop the school site over the next 5 years. Julian Soanes, Chair of Governors, and Glen Pascoe, a Parent Governor were also in attendance.

Sarah had been appointed as Headteacher in April 2016 and gave a brief overview of the school. Freeland was a Church of England Primary School, with 150 school places for 4-11 year olds. There was also a Pre-school on site. The primary school had 6 classes with mixed year groups in the Key Stage Two classes, with the class sizes varying from approximately 22 children in Key Stage One, and between 25 to 28 in Key Stage Two.

The school had in place a 5-year plan to try and achieve the following:

- Equip children with lifelong skills;
- Develop their self-confidence to achieve their full potential;
- Create rich memorable experiences;
- Prepare children to keep themselves and others safe.

The 5-year plan would be achieved by reviewing the needs of the staff, the children, the School as a member of the community and by improving the school site.

There were 5 major issues with the school site that they hoped to improve – these were:

- There were 2 temporary classrooms that had been in place approximately 15 years and that desperately needed improving;

- The school hall was not a suitable size to accommodate their needs;
- The school did not have a library or an intervention space;
- The school did not have a central reception area;
- There was an ongoing flooding issue on the school playing field.

The school had been in talks with an architect and some plans were on display at the back of the Hall for residents to view and offer their feedback. The school had an ultimate vision which was to:

- Remove the temporary classrooms;
- Construct a new Foundation Stage classroom, new multipurpose hall and new entrance;
- Create a library and intervention/nurture area.

They were looking to form a building committee to support the project with design ideas, fundraising, grant applications and communication and presentations. A great deal of the school's funding had already been considerably cut so there was no pot of money to put towards this project, so fundraising and grants would be key to its success. If anyone was interested in joining the building committee they were asked to speak to the school representatives after the meeting.

Sarah responded to questions about the approximate cost of the project and whether an alternative site had been considered. It was felt that it was better to work with the current site and try and improve what they had rather than starting afresh with a different site.

The Chairman then thanked Sarah, Julian and Glen for attending the meeting.

## **7. GARDEN VILLAGES – WHAT THEY MIGHT MEAN FOR FREELAND (to include plans to develop the A40 and a new park and ride site)**

Robert Crocker gave a brief presentation about the areas being put forward for a new Garden Village in the local vicinity.

A site north of the A40 by the Freeland turn had been identified and was felt to be being pushed through at an alarming rate with very little/no consultation with the local community.

The development was for approximately 2,200 houses, with the potential for considerably more, plus a park and ride site, and a science park.

A map was shown to the residents with various areas highlighted to show which areas of land were being proposed for development.

Robert explained that due to the shortage of housing, and the lack of an approved Local Plan in place, parish communities were very vulnerable to speculative enquiries from developers who were keen to develop many pockets of land. However, much of the land being proposed for the Garden Village was very rich and diverse countryside which had not been intensely farmed so had many, many species of plants and wildlife. The Parish Council had felt that the recently proposed Gladman's site, on the other side of the A40 near the Barnard Gate turn was a much more favourable option in terms of location and impact on the surrounding area, and had written to WODC to inform them of their thoughts, plus Robert had met with Giles Hughes, Head of Planning at WODC to explain his concerns about the proposed Garden Village site. Yet it was still going ahead at an alarming rate and it was difficult to know what could be done to stop it. If it did



go ahead, Robert explained that he would lobby hard to obtain a green space buffer area to the north to prevent further expansion up to the Freeland parish boundary.

Robert responded to a couple of questions from the residents about timings for this development and communicating with other parishes.

## **9. 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 over the past year and the plans for the coming year.

The Garden of Remembrance was located next to the allotments, and would provide an alternative place for the scattering of ashes to the churchyard. Work had commenced on site on 23<sup>rd</sup> January for the 120 square metres of land to be landscaped. The work had been put out to tender and a local horticultural and landscaping company called Nicholson's had been successful with a tender price of £25,812.

Some photographs were shown to the residents detailing the progress of the work from the footpaths being created, to the circle paved seating areas. That phase of the work was completed at the end of February and it now needed planting with trees and shrubs. The trees had been purchased but were being stored as the weather had been too dry recently to plant them. Some donations had already been received so far towards the trees and shrubs from the Teddy Girls, Football Club and WI, and if anyone wished to help then they were asked to speak to Mary Ann after the meeting.

The planting would include thyme and lavender and a new arch and gazebo would also be installed. The bench funded by the WI had been installed and two new benches would also be required for the two smaller seating areas, and a quote would be obtained for these.

Other items that were still required included a new arch and gate for the entrance, a gardener to maintain the grounds, and some guidelines on how the garden would be administered, plus an administrator to deal with the booking of plots etc.

The role of gardener would be advertised in due course.

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.

## **11. AUDITED ANNUAL RETURN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2016, WITH DRAFT UNAUDITED RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2017**

Residents were supplied with copies of the Audited Annual Return for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 and a draft statement the net position by cost centre report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. 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, Guides, Cricket Club, Brownies, Bellringers, 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 10.10pm.