

# Lower Heyford Parish Council

**Annual Parish Meeting held on 18th May 2023 at 7.00pm in the King George's Field  
Community and Sports Centre**

## Minutes

**Present: Ric Fowles (RF), Chris Cox (CC), Stu Fox (SF), Sarah Varney (SV), Paul Wordsworth**

**Public: Cllr Nigel Simpson, James Macnamara, Vicky Stepney, Marc Thielke, Phil Chesser, Chris Adamson**

**1 To receive apologies for absence:**

There were no apologies for absence.

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 19th May 2022 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

**3 Chairman's Report & Financial Report**

As Chair of the Lower Heyford Parish Council, it is my duty to inform you of the key activities, issues and expenditure that has taken place over the last year. For context, the Parish Council is formed of 7 Parish Councillors who are all unpaid volunteers that work in the best interests of the community in their own time. We also have one part-time paid officer, Cathy Fleet who conducts the duties of Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. My thanks to Cathy who drops no plates as the RFO and ensures that we remain compliant with local governance rules through our Standing Orders.

### **Key Issues from the previous year**

#### **Councillors**

We were joined last year by Paul Wordsworth, who has been serving the PC alongside JJ Macnamara, Emily Daly, Chris Cox, Sarah Varney, Stuart Fox and myself. Sadly, both JJ and Emily will be standing down from their roles as councillors.

JJ has been part of the Parish Council for longer than the Parish Clerk's records go back; perhaps we'll have to consult the 125 year anniversary minute book to find the exact timing. His many years of service to the community include 10 as Chair. He has provided a steady steer to the Parish for many years and his expertise in all things local governance has ensured that we have been very well served by him throughout his tenure.

Emily has joined the Parish Council in 2017 and has served as the Vice-Chair over the last year. She has been utterly tireless in her pursuit of a favourable settlement for the Parish from local developments and has dedicated a huge amount of time both liaising with and holding to account Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council on a range of topics. She has been the PC's lead on planning for the last few years and has become such an expert on a range of local government issues, that the councils should be head-hunting her for her expertise! In addition, Emily has represented Lower Heyford in the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Forum and has been active in scrutinising and objecting to several inappropriate planning developments.

The wise council and hard work of both will be very much missed and I would like to extend my huge thanks to both for their dedicated service to the community for many years.

### **Council Liaison and Traffic**

Unsurprisingly, much of the PC's time and energy has been expended on trying to push for a resolution to the Parish's most pressing concern, traffic. Our B-Roads were never designed to take the volume and weight of traffic that we have been seeing as a result of the local housing developments and national infrastructure projects. We have lobbied our County Councillor, the offending companies, the Council officers and ultimately our MP. On the latter, I have been liaising with other local Chairs to find collective solutions to collective problems, with the added weight of a larger number of Parishes. I chaired a meeting between these other Chairs and Victoria Prentis in January. She has since provided updates on how she is liaising with the Chief Executives of both OCC and CDC to increase liaison and proactive communications with rural communities and we are monitoring the agreed outcomes closely.

We have collected significant data on traffic flow and speed through the SIDs, which continue to be moved around the Parish by Chris Cox on a routine basis. Chris also extracts and analyses the data, which shows that over the last year, both speeding and traffic have remained consistently high. We are due the first instalment of s106 money from the Heyford Park developments, which is £32,113. A second instalment of £75,511 will be available once the next 200 houses have been built. The initial instalment is not sufficient to construct buildouts since each one can cost up to £25,000 so we will aim to complete this once the larger instalment is paid. For now, we are looking at:

1. Replacing the village gates, which are heavily rotted and installing 2 pairs in Caulcott, for a total of 5 pairs (10 gates)
2. Implementing the 20mph speed limit on certain parts of Parish roads
3. Lobbying for the resurfacing of Station Road and the removal of centre line markings.
4. Investigate options for the junction between Freehold Street and Station Road.

Once we receive the larger instalment, we are planning to request several buildouts to slow traffic before they reach our villages.

**Rousham Bridge Progress.** You will all be aware of our utter contempt towards the local authorities for allowing the bridge to reach a state of repair that has contributed to a section collapsing. We will continue to liaise closely with Ian Corkin (OCC) and Nigel Simpson (CDC) to unlock the highways/conservation/planning mess and to continue to lobby for the much needed weight limit.

## Communications

We will continue to ensure that the PC's activities are communicated to you all in a timely and effective manner, providing you all with the opportunity to be informed and to have your say. We continue to keep the Parish's website updated and all of the agendas, minutes and financial documents are available to you at any point. We have also upgraded the Caulcott Noticeboard so we can publish paper copies of notices. We continue to utilise the Valley News publication to communicate with you and there will be another Village Bulletin released shortly.

## Village events

It has been great to see the Parish emerging into the post-COVID world with a new zest for village events. The Events Committee have laboured to deliver us a Jubilee Party, Fireworks and a recent Coronation Party, for which they have our sincere thanks. The KGF are also working to expand the range of events on offer and you will start seeing more diverse offerings being held at the KGF over the coming year.

## Financial Report

A summary of accounts has been provided with the meeting papers, which have been audited for completeness and will be presented to the next PC meeting. For the thirds year running, the PC decided against a rise in the Precept due to the current economic climate. However, with the steep rise in inflation, it is inevitable that this will need to rise next year so that we can maintain a healthy reserve and to deliver improvements to the Parish. Obtaining funding from local authorities has been challenging so we must continue to seek support from them and to self-help where we can.

Some of the balance is ringfenced for upcoming projects or held in reserve for future maintenance of assets, these are:

Reserves: £3602.51 for the maintenance and repair of the Playground. Much of this will need to be used to replace the fencing around the Playground, which is showing signs of rot.

£1500 ringfenced for SpeedwatchProject, for which we have no current lead.

£1000 ringfenced for LHPC Tree Project (grant from Councillor Priority Fund), some of which has been spent on purchasing fruit trees for a Parish plot at the allotments.

## Focus for this year:

I would propose that our priorities for the coming year are:

- Continue to liaise with OCC and CDC to rectify the damage being done to the fabric of our community by the local developments and, moving forward, protect it from further damage. This will include traffic calming, road surfaces, bridge repairs and HGV limits.
- Develop a Parish Plan to replace the 2010 plan to help us deliver services to the Parish that are based on majority needs.

As always, I would implore everyone to consider volunteering for a few hours throughout the year to keep the Parish clean and tidy. The KGF hold regular tidy-up days that have not

received enough support, leaving the burden to the few. If you are able to spare a few minutes, hours or days throughout the year to support the community in any capacity, or have a skill set to offer, please let us know. Without that support, we cannot achieve everything that is needed or we will need to raise the precept further to pay for someone else to do it.

#### 4 Reports from local groups

##### **Lower Heyford and Caulcott Community Fund**

The Annual Report and Accounts had been submitted and circulated ahead of the meeting.

During the year under review there were a modest number of grants and reliefs which, in total, amounted to £3,213.69, (2022 - £5,686.31). Included in the grants the Trustees approved the payment of £500.00

(2022 - £500.00) to the Lower Heyford Sports and Social Club to fund membership for all residents of the villages for 2023.

Overall the results were that, with an income of £14,314.42 (2022 - £13,982.60) and expenditures of

£5,519.06 (2022 - £7,418.51), total reserves were increased by £8,795.36 (2022 – £6,564.09) to

£62,654.63 (2022 - £53,859.27) at the end of the year under review.

At the 28 February 2023 the Trustees have allocated some £9,916.22 (2022- £8,391.84) of the total

reserves to meet the anticipated future costs of re-thatching the roof of the Reading Room as and when

that is required.

Therefore, at 28 February 2023 the available charitable reserves stood at £52,738.41 (2022 - £45,467.43).

##### **King George's Field Committee of Management**

The Annual report and Accounts had been received and were circulated ahead of the meeting.

During the period under review receipts totalled £12,190 (2021 - £3,922) whilst payments totalled £9,675 (2021 - £5,371). The net surplus for the period was £2,515 (2021 deficit - £1,450).

In line with the policy on reserves the Trustees are of the view that the net reserves as at 30 September 2022 of £8,935 (2021- £6,420) should be retained to meet the costs of future maintenance and repairs costs as and when they arise.

The committee consists of 13 members and is in a stable financial position. Usage of facility is improving. The Football club is a big user of the field, hall and the bar. New events are being arranged including a craft morning and regular themed evenings. The Events Committee are represented on the KGF Committee and they arrange fireworks, may day etc. The committee is looking for new things to do and additional hirers.

### **FoHS - report from Chris Adamson, Chair**

Our focus over the last year has been to continue to work with the station operator (GWR) to make small improvements to the station and its surrounding environment. Strong relationships with GWR continue to be maintained.

Work undertaken has included mundane items such as repainting car parking spaces and platform weedkilling to the pruning of the shrubs on the Oxford bound platform. GWR did a splendid job with the latter, with the small hedge at the far end of the platform now manicured to spell “Heyford”, greeting arrivals at the station.

The highlight of the year in terms station works, was the repair of the stone wall between the platform and the canal tow path. It only took two years, reached the email account of GWR’s Managing Director but at least it’s done!

On the station planter front, we thought we would recognize the Jubilee celebrations last summer. Lynn established a display of red, white and blue flowers. All was proceeding well until the heatwave struck which dented our plans somewhat. To support the tending of the planters, we now have water butts on both platforms which collect rain from fixed structures at the station...or the Banbury bound one will when GWR’s contractor unblocks the downpipe from the overbridge from which it is fed.

Our major project for this year is the repair of the raised flowerbed on the side of the footpath leading down to the canal tow path and the Oxford bound platform. Although a simple structure – a raised flower bed held back by timber sleepers, regular users of the footpath will have noticed that many of the sleepers, and their supports are in an advanced stage of decay and some collapse onto the footpath has now started.

A lengthy exercise determined the landowner of the flowerbed to be Canal and River Trust (CRT). Following discussion with CRT, it was agreed that FoHS would support them in getting repairs completed. Bruce E developed a scheme design for which indicative costs for labour and materials were obtained.

We decided a multi stakeholder approach to obtaining contribution commitment was most likely to succeed which has included stakeholders including local Parish Councils, CRT and GWR. Significant contributions have been obtained from both CRT and GWR, however at the time of writing insufficient funding commitments have been received to allow us to proceed to the next stage of obtaining firm quotations for the works. We continue to work with stakeholders yet to contribute to the project.

As far as numbers are concerned, despite a plea for new blood, our numbers remain at 3. We would welcome new members, even if only to support Lynn with the stewardship of the planters on the station platforms.

Chris Adamson  
Chairman, FoHS  
May 2023

### **Lower Heyford Women’s Institute**

The Heyford’s WI branch is affiliated to both the National WI and also Oxfordshire federation, members are free to choose their degree of participation. Some may wish to get involved in the national campaigns, others are content to just be active in the village branch.

We are now back into the swing of having monthly meetings in The Reading Room, Upper Heyford, we meet regularly on the third Wednesday of each month except August. There has been a variety of events scheduled throughout the year; having enjoyed varied subjects. Have hosted a Group walk and lunch from King George's Field, also a Carol service at St Mary's Lower Heyford and a group meeting where we had Chrissie Gaines who brought along her rescue owls. There have been trips to the theatre, card group, craft group, workshops and walking netball to name a few activities. And at every event, there is plenty of time to socialise, catch up with old friends and make new ones. We are always ready to accept new members, if you are interested in joining please do get in touch.

Lynn Humberstone - President

01869 340596 email: [lynnhumberstone@btinternet.co.uk](mailto:lynnhumberstone@btinternet.co.uk)

**Lower Heyford Parochial Church Council**

James Macnamara reported that he has now retired as Church Warden and that Phil Boxall and Denise Ball have been recruited. Helen Barnes is the Rector. There have been many christenings and funerals throughout the year, but only 1 wedding. The church is being used for other functions, including concerts and a flower show in a bid to encourage people to make more use of the building.

**Public Participation**

Cllr Nigel Simpson discussed the bridge and the impact of HGVs to the village and will arrange to meet with Ric Fowles to discuss.

Marc Thielke representing Heyford Park spoke of his involvement with lots of things there and is particularly interested in the canal and has formed a group to carry out improvements to the towpath etc. and wondered if residents of Lower Heyford would be interested in being involved with this. He is also forming groups with other parishes to form groups for getting grants etc. Marc will send information to Ric Fowles and RF will put comms out to the village.

Signed ..... Chair

Date .....