

Launton Annual Parish Meeting 2017

Minutes of the meeting
held on Thursday 20th April 2017
at 7.30 pm in Launton Parish Hall

Chairman: Councillor Simon Turner (Chairman Launton PC)
In attendance: Caroline Dunn (Parish Clerk)

Present: Celia Evans & Martin Evans (The Village Players), Lesley Thompson & Ed Sanders (Launton Parish Council), John Stephens (Launton Watercolour Group), Sarah Kidney (Cancer Research UK), Pat Mitchell (Launton Friends of Cancer Research), Maureen Roberts (Friends of Island Pond Wood), Bob Roberts (Friends of Island Pond Wood), Pat Tucker (Launton Lines and Launton Historical Society), Pat Court (Launton Over 60s Club), Celia Manderson (Launton WI), Jackie Hackett (Launton Plotters), Catherine Fulljames (Oxfordshire County Council), Robert Cornford (Launton Website & Launton Lines), Brian Tegg (Oxfordshire Home Guard Living History Group), Sarah Turner (Parish Transport Representative), Gwen Skinner (Friends of Island Pond Wood), Steve Webber (Launton Gavray Association, Launton Rock Chorus & Launton Website), Niall Campbell (PHIP & Launton Website) and Ken Babington (Over 60's & Historical Society).

1. To accept apologies for absence

Apologies were received from PC Shaun Sullivan (Thames Valley Police), Jeanne Walker & Lizzie Chisholm (Launton Parish Council), John Boulton (Parish Path Warden), Michael & Kathy House (Launton Congregational Church) and Mechelle Harris (Hummingbird Centre).

2. To confirm minutes of the previous meeting on 21st April 2016

Proposed: Maureen Roberts

Seconded: Celia Evans

All in favour

Minutes were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman

3. Matters arising from these minutes

There were none

4. Report from the Chairman of Launton Parish Council for the past year

The Parish Council usually meets on the first Thursday of the month in the Parish Hall, with a public participation session from 7:00 p.m. (at which councillors are available to talk to parishioners about any subject they wish, and any planning applications for the meeting may be viewed), prior to the council meeting starting at 7:30 p.m. Part of the meeting itself is set aside for members of the public to address the council about items on the agenda, subject to individual and overall time limits.

The agenda for the forthcoming meeting, and minutes of the previous meeting, are displayed on the two Parish Council notice boards outside the Post Office and near the War Memorial, and are also available from the council's web site at www.launton-pc.gov.uk.

The council has again met 13 times in the past year: our 12 regular monthly meetings, plus one extraordinary meeting to deal with our response to Oxfordshire County Council's consultation about their desire to become the unitary authority for the whole of Oxfordshire. We have commented on 37 planning applications – a slight decrease from the previous year's 40, but still well above the average for recent years – and, again, only a handful of consultation documents. As

I reported last year, we still await the consultation on the draft Local Plan Part 2, in which housing targets for the villages will be stated.

After the Parish Council elections last May, we were joined by a new councillor, Bobby Clements, but were left with two vacancies, which we were pleased to be able to fill quite quickly by co-opting Mrs Lizzie Chisholm and Mrs Jeanne Walker; all three have already proven their value as councillors, and are most welcome. I remain indebted to our clerk, Caroline Dunn, whose good humour, indefatigable nature and “go-getting” attitude are a boon to both the council and myself personally.

The saga of the pedestrian footway and traffic calming on Station Road seems, perhaps, finally to be at an end after more years than I can recall: after many months of hearing nothing from OCC, the persistence of our clerk and our County Councillor, Catherine Fulljames, paid off with a sudden announcement in January that work was due to start in February! Inevitably the timetable slipped somewhat, but you can all see the progress being made: I shouldn’t have to cross my fingers for a successful outcome, but am doing so nonetheless.

On the subject of persistence by Caroline and Catherine, you may also note that between them they were finally able to get the County Council to accept their responsibility for maintaining their part of the roadway past the Parish Hall and repair the potholes, which had become a serious problem. Our collective thanks are due to both of them.

Our Spring Clean this year took place on 4th March, and was again very well supported by over 30 adults, six children and one dog; and I must make special mention of the wonderful tea and cakes provided by the W.I., which made for a very convivial ending to the day’s work.

During the year, we ran a new traffic survey that updates our results from 2011 and which will be of use when discussing railway works traffic and possible new developments, more of which seem to keep cropping up in these uncertain times with an incomplete Local Plan.

I would like to express our collective thanks to my vice-chairman, Chris Fox, for his sterling work over many months on providing bins and seating in our bus shelters as well as making repairs and improvements to existing seating and our two notice boards. The new bins have been installed, and we are waiting for the installation of the seating; we hope that these will help to make the shelters more pleasant for the village’s bus users.

The Parish Council is working with the Parish Hall Improvement Project group and the Parochial Church Council with a view to taking a reasonably long lease on the Parish Hall, which would provide a stable future for the Hall and a firm footing for raising funds for refurbishment, while also enabling the PCC to concentrate on their most pressing issues, notably the maintenance of the Grade I listed St Mary’s church. To this end, a working group has been set up including representatives from the relevant bodies to try to drive this forward; so far progress has been slow, but some recent developments have renewed our hope that this can be brought to fruition in a reasonable timescale.

We have continued to maintain the areas of public space in Sherwood Close and The Glades, and to have the pedestrian refuge on Station Road cleared; further to my report last year, we have now formally taken over responsibility for some additional highway duties (including cutting back the vegetation on highway verges) from Oxfordshire County Council under their “Oxfordshire Together” scheme. After a modest increase last year to fund this extra work, our precept for this year was set at the same level as last year.

We continue to represent the village at meetings with external bodies, notably Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council, but also including joint meetings with representatives from other local parish councils.

The council has continued to provide financial support to Launton Lines, St Mary’s Church and Launton Congregational Church, as well as making contributions to the Friends of Island Pond Wood, to assist with grass-cutting in the woodland, and making other charitable donations. We were also successful in applying for a grant from Cherwell District Council, as part of the Queen’s

birthday celebrations, to help with the costs of last year's Right Royal Fête, organised at rather short notice by an enthusiastic band of villagers and a great success.

5. Financial Report of Launton Parish Council for the year ended 31st March 2015

The Clerk described the Parish Council's finances, which included a profit for the year ending April 2017, as well as having a healthy reserve in all three bank accounts. The Clerk went on to explain that income and expenditure are roughly £20,000 although this year expenditure has come in just under this amount, but precept will remain the same for 2017-18 as there is expected to be greater demands on the Parish Council finances in the coming year. Over and above the usual expenses these will include; the new benches and bins in the bus shelters, the legal fees for the taking on the lease of the Parish Hall and all grass cutting responsibilities for the whole Parish and not just within the 30mph limit, to name a few. One unexpected cost incurred this year was a replacement laptop for the Clerk – the previous one having “died” before Christmas!

6. Parish Hall Improvement Project – Report from Martin Evans

We formally named the group last April as PHIP, the Parish Hall Improvement Project. I would like to thank all of the committee for their support over the last year, from helping run events to coming to meetings. It is good to have different village groups represented on the committee and we would like to increase this even further. We have been working towards trying to get clarification on how to set about facilitating the Parish Council to lease the Parish hall. This has involved sorting through historical legal documents, writing a vision statement to show why the PCC would benefit from this lease and meeting with Revd Becky who has talked with the diocese about moving this forward. The Parish Council has written to the Parochial Church Council about the lease and has had a positive response. We have now begun to move the process forward and some first positive steps have been taken. To improve the hall in the short term last August a group of willing villagers painted the main part of the hall and we were very grateful for paint which was donated from Brewers decorators. Our village survey about how the parishioners felt about the hall was completed last Spring and a good majority agreed that it was a worthwhile and necessary venue for the village and wanted to see it improved. We have a list of villagers that would like to be kept informed of developments. Fund Raising has been very successful and we are grateful to all the individuals and groups who have fund-raised for PHIP. Events have ranged from the Home Guard days to a Grand quiz in the Tythe Barn and also a Race Night and a tombola! Donations have been made by The Village Players and individuals. We have reached just over £7000.00. So, a good first year for PHIP. Thank you.

7. Parish Path Warden update.

The Clerk reported that the position of Volunteer Parish Path Warden for Launton was filled nearly a year ago by John Boulton, who has taken on his duties extremely diligently and in some cases provided some useful evidence for the Parish Council to object to planning applications. The Clerk referred to an article from this month's Launton Lines written by Mr Boulton which outlines the responsibilities of the Path Warden and took the opportunity to thank Mr Boulton (in his absence) on behalf of the village for the excellent service he is providing.

8. Reports from representatives of village organisations

The Clerk, Caroline Dunn, had contacted 35 people or organisations and 18 had submitted reports or presented them at the meeting. The following organisations responded:

Launton Congregational Church	Report read by Simon Turner
Launton Lines	Report presented by Pat Tucker
Launton Historical Society	Report presented by Pat Tucker
Launton Parish Transport Representative	Report presented by Sarah Turner
Launton Home Guard Living History	Report presented by Brian Tegg
Launton Parish Hall	Report presented by Christine Massey
Launton Over 60s Club	Report presented by Pat Court
Launton Watercolour Art	Report presented by John Stephens
Launton Plotters	Report presented by Jackie Hackett
The Village Players	Report presented by Martin Evans
St Mary's Church Launton	Report read by Simon Turner
Friends of Island Pond Wood	Report presented by Maureen Roberts
Launton WI	Report presented by Katharine Harbison
Launton Friends of Cancer Research	Notice of group closure reported by Pat Mitchell
Launton Village Website	Report presented by Rob Cornford
Launton Village Fete	Report presented by Rob Cornford
Launton Facebook Page	Report presented by Steve Webber
Hummingbird Centre	Not read as not received in time by Clerk

9. Report from the Cherwell District Councillor for Launton

There were none.

10. Report from the Oxfordshire County Councillor for Launton

Councillor Catherine Fulljames reported on the main issues she felt were relevant to Launton. She regretted the need for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to increase Council Tax by 3% but stated that one example of their need for an increase was that only 50% of the adult care costs are met by the Government. Due to the difficulty OCC has with finding funds for all their needs a bid has been put together by OCC called "One Oxfordshire" which has been presented to the Secretary of State, however with the announcement of the General Election Councillor Fulljames was unsure of where things stood at the time.

Launton School expansion plans were denied, an issue which Councillor Fulljames became heavily involved in as she feels that village schools should be for the villagers and that having an increased intake from Bicester would inevitably produce more traffic issues for Launton. With a lack of parking provisions within the proposed school expansion plan Councillor Fulljames felt it was difficult to support.

Councillor Fulljames was delighted to see that the footway on Station Road is finally being created and guessed that this had taken probably 17 years and three Parish Clerks to make it happen! Councillor Fulljames reported that WPC Caroline Brown retiring is a sad loss to Launton as a Community Police Office.

11. Report from Thames Valley Police

PC Shaun Sullivan sent the following report which was read by the Clerk, Caroline Dunn. We have had several complaints about residents parking inappropriately in Sherwood Close and Station Rd. Several vehicles being parked on the path causing pedestrians to negotiate the cars by walking into the road. This is especially inconsiderate to those who have young children and pushchairs and those residents/visitors who are disabled. This is a timely reminder that "Pavements are for Pedestrians" not motorists. The Neighbourhood team will be carrying out spot

checks in the coming weeks those vehicles found parked causing an obstruction of the pavement will be given a fixed penalty ticket.

Also, complaints have been forwarded to the team in relation to vehicles parked inappropriately at school drop off and pick up times. Please park with consideration to other road users and especially pedestrians. Again, the team will be out and about when the school reopens next term. Break-ins to sheds and outbuildings are on the increase with 3 reported thefts in the Bainton area. Please make sure that your outbuildings are secure and that you have adequate security. Please report any suspicious behaviour on 101 or if a crime is being or you perceive one is being committed please dial 999.

12. Any other business

Concerns were raised about the new location for the noticeboard, at present outside the post office, which will need to be relocated once the present post office is closed. Both the Chairman and the Clerk confirmed that this would be discussed at the next Launton Parish Council meeting on the 4th May and that it would be more than likely relocated to the Parish Hall.

13. Date and venue of next meeting

Launton Parish Hall at 7.30 pm on Thursday 19th April 2018

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.