

Crowmarsh Annual Parish Meeting – Wednesday 21 April 2021

Welcome to the Annual Parish Meeting

This meeting is for the Parish Council to tell you what it has been doing over the last year and to allow you the electors to have your say on anything you consider important to the people of the Parish.

Any registered elector may ask questions, which will usually be answered by the Chairman, the Parish Clerk or a Councillor.

You are welcome to make suggestions and comment on anything that might be important to the people of Crowmarsh.

Chairman's report

Thank you to all our parish councillors, to our parish clerk Sue Rance and our finance officer Yvonne Peet for their very supportive and professional work and to Chris Strange for looking after the recreation ground so well, particularly the challenges of managing the playground through lockdowns and changing restrictions.

The parish council has moved to online meetings since last April and with the help of technology we continue to work for the community. We still have one vacancy and would particularly like to coopt someone from Mongewell.

The recreation ground is our main asset and I thank Andrew Johnson, David Rowley, Chris Strange and the committee for all their work to maintain and improve the facilities and adapt to changing circumstances.

The council has maintained the precept (the money we get from the council tax) at the same level for another year. The amount each householder pays for parish council services has not increased for many years. Our accounts for 2020 will be published when they have been audited. Income has exceeded expenditure. Reasons include developer contributions under the Community Infrastructure Levy that we have not yet been able to spend on infrastructure improvements. The loss of income from the pavilion was balanced by rate relief and grants during the pandemic and we continued to give grants and donations to a range of local voluntary groups and charities and to fund the maintenance of public areas in the parish.

Traffic volume and speed remain top public concerns, and as well as extending speed monitoring our priorities are for a Toucan crossing on the A4074 Portway, crossings on the Street and Benson Lane and in North Stoke and safe cycling and walking routes, including improving bridleways like Watery Lane.

Planning continues to be a major activity: there are still development pressures far beyond the manageable growth of our community and the scale of our facilities. We comment on all applications in the parish and respond to wider consultations.

Our neighbourhood plan is now in the final stages of examination and our thanks must go to Nick Robins for piloting it towards completion, with a referendum we hope in June or September. If approved there should be a period of consolidation and a pause in major housing schemes for a number of years while infrastructure catches up and the enlarged community comes together.

We welcome all those moving into our parish. CABI's new HQ is now open, if not

busy, and more than 20 of the houses off Nosworthy Way are occupied. The Bloor Hallam development of 150 houses east of Benson Lane is going up fast.

We expect the major application for 100 houses on the Newnham Manor site to come to planning soon. All of this plus hundreds of new houses in Benson and Wallingford will put huge strain on local services and infrastructure.

Drains have again been a major source of concern and river flooding affected the sewers badly at Retreat Gardens and Bridge Villa, while the pumping failure at Newnham Farm caused serious nuisance to residents with tankers and temporary pumps. We and the district council had a meeting with Thames Water to impress upon them that a long-term solution is needed to cope with future demand.

We are continuing discussions with SODC about what we would like to see on the site of the offices on Benson Lane. Thanks to everyone who responded to the survey: we hope to see land uses that benefit the community in the long term.

We always need the help of residents and businesses to look after our environment and keep our villages clean and attractive against threats from anti-social litter, fly tipping and dog fouling. Thanks to everyone who picks up litter and looks after their part of the parish, both day-to-day and when a clean-up event can be held.

Thanks again to councillors and staff and residents for all your work over the year and to all the individuals and voluntary groups who help our community thrive. Let the parish council know what you would like to see happen in Crowmarsh and how we can help each other to achieve it.

John Griffin, April 2021