# **Minutes of CASSINGTON'S ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**Thursday 2nd September 2021 at 7.30pm in The Village Hall**

In attendance: Cllr H Thomas, Cllr B King, Cllr J Perrin, Cllr C Metcalf, Cllr D Butlin, Village representatives, eight members of the public and the Clerk Tracey Cameron.

## **Apologies: Charles Mathew (OCC) Cllr C Rylett (WODC), Cllr E James (WODC), PC H Keen TVPF, Mr Jefferies (St Peters School), Climate Change Group & The WI**

## **The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting 9th May 2019. These were agreed.**

## **Welcome and Introduction by chairman.**

Cllr H Thomas welcomed everyone and explained the meeting was held to give residents of the village an opportunity to have their say on any issue affecting the village and to hear reports from village organisations.

## **Report by Thames Valley Police Officer PC H Keen**

Wow what a year it’s been. Who would have thought a year ago we would end up in the grip of a national pandemic and the country would be put into not one but three national lockdowns? We would like to personally thank members of the public who are doing their bit and staying at home.

The Neighbourhood Policing structure has changed yet again this year. PCSO’s Lucy James has left neighbourhood policing for pastures new, and Helen Keen has returned to the Eynsham area. PCSO Chris Jones is still our schools officer covering the whole of West Oxfordshire. PC Tracy Mills is your community police officer looking after Eynsham & villages which include Cassington, as well as the rural areas in between as part of her ‘beat’. PC Tracy Mills will operate from Witney.

Throughout this year the West Oxfordshire neighbourhood team have continued to patrol Eynsham, and the surrounding villages and I would like to thank them for their dedication and professionalism in what has been a very difficult and challenging year. We continue to use the Thames Valley Alert system which is a great way that the police can communicate with the public as well as receive messages back. We encourage people to sign up for this and they can do so at [www.thamesvalleyalert.co.uk](http://www.thamesvalleyalert.co.uk). You can also follow the team on Facebook and Twitter just search for the TVP West Oxon.

It goes with out saying that we rely on your continued support which means is so much appreciated so if you notice something that is out of the ordinary, or you are concerned about the welfare of a child or adult, there are ways to report it to the police and relevant agencies. Call 101 or report it anonymously via Crime Stoppers on 0800 555111

**Crime Figures for 04/09/2020 – 26/08/2021**

Action Fraud – 3

Theft including from vehicles – 1

Assault – 4

# Road traffic collisions – 7

# Road related incidents – 15

Suspicious Incidents – 20

# Dangerous Driving – 4

Hare Coursing – 3

Drug Incident – 1

ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour) – 2

Theft – 1

Drink Drive Offences – 3

Public Order – 1

Burglary – 2

Criminal Damage – 1

Wildlife Crime – 1

# These figures appear high for the village, but these are A40 offences

Trends across the LPA see a rise in Action Fraud reports – online scams (not just the elderly)

1. **Chair of the Parish Council Report**

* **Finishing off the Pavilion Build** – The Parish Council and The Sports and Social for the past two years have been working together to renovate and refurbish the sports Pavilion with money received from Section 106. We have had a lot of local firms and residents working on the Pavilion which has in turn made it more of a community project.
* **Boiler for the Village Hall** – The Parish Council agreed with the Village Hall Committee to pay for half of a new boiler.
* **Continuing communication with OCC with regards to Horsemere Lane/A40 & The Bus Lane** – The Parish Council have had meetings with OCC and in continuous communication about the Cassington Lights and also to try and get a left turn slip road out of the village when Horsemere Lane is officially closed.
* **Planted Trees on the Recreation Ground** – Village residents were asked if they wanted to sponsor a tree on the recreation ground. We were lucky that 10 members of the village came forward and have each sponsored a tree. They have now been planted and would like the thank the Sports and Social Club for agreeing to keep them watered.
* **Ongoing contribution to CAWN** – CAWN is a wonderful addition to the village and as such the Parish Council help with software costs if they are needed. The Parish Council would also like to mention thanks to the new editor Anne Luttman-Johnson for doing an amazing job.
* **Cleared the piece of land at the corner of Pound Lane** – It was decided that the piece of land on the corner of Pound Lane was looking untidy and overgrown, so it was decided that we would clear it. Plant 2 Cherry Trees and reseed it.
* **Paid Garden Waste Fees for the Churchyard** – A decision was made that the Parish Council would fund the 2 Green Waste Bins in the Churchyard.
* **Had the hedge between the Church and the School tided** – It had got to a point that some people couldn’t tend to their loved ones graves properly as the hedge had grown outward, a contract went out to tender and was given to a local contractor who did a very good job of taking it back and reducing the height.
* **Maintenance of the trees on the Green** – This is an ongoing job to ensure that all the dead wood is taken away and that the trees are safe.
* **Community Shop** – At the start of the pandemic a village shop was set up by members of the village to help people get the shopping that they needed. The Parish Council made a donation at the start to help it get started.
* **Neighbourhood Plan** – With the increase in homes being built around Cassington the Parish Council decided that we should have a Neighbourhood Plan to enable us to have more of a say with developments in and around the village. We have 6 members including one Parish Councillor.
* **Village Website** – We now have a village website which is run by the Parish Council. It is kept up to date by the Clerk.
* **Defib** – It was discovered that the defib in the side of the village hall wasn’t working and that it needed new pads and a new battery. These were purchased and a check list is now in place.
* **Lease on the Playing Field** – The lease between the Parish Council and the Sports and Social Club for the Playing Field came up for renewal. This is a peppercorn rent. But it was discovered that the playing field and recreational ground was not registered to the Parish Council so this has to be done first before the lease can be registered. We are hoping that it will be completed in the new year if not by the end of spring.
* **Dog Fouling Bin** – A new bin has been installed by Williams Court for people who walk their dogs along the track.
* **War Memorial** – The War Memorial was given Grade 2 listed monument status in the middle of 2021

## **West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC:**

Cllr Goodwin has been a district Councillor since May 2021. First topic is the Garden Village that is happening north of Eynsham. 2200 new houses have been planned. The impact that this will have is on traffic and the A40. On the positive side it will bring facilities like sports facilities to the area. The other positive is for net carbon zero approved housing which has never been achieved before. However, this is only in plans as they have not yet been approved.

One of the frustrating issues with Thames Water is the sewage plant overflowing into the rivers. WODC has been talking to Thames Water to basically try and get them to look into this and offer solutions.

Cllr Goodwin is on the Environment Committee to look at the carbon footprint that WODC has and including their energy usage, electric vehicles and also all that land that WODC own to try and make it more sustainable. They are also talking to villages to see how they can be more sustainable like cutting the grass in certain places less often, more rewilding and planting trees.

Cllr Levy – There are 3 district Councillors for Cassington himself, Cllr Goodwin, and Cllr Rylett. Cllr Rylett is up for re-election in November 2021. Cllr Levy expects that there maybe an issue with bin collections over the next few months due to the shortage of HGV drivers in the area. He has asked that people be patient but only a little bit and if you do have to complain please remember to include your district councillor into the email.

WODC also deals with Planning, so Cllr Levy has advised that if the planning for the allotments does come back then please expect them to be robustly supporting the villages position within planning law.

## **Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Councillor:**

Cllr Levy was elected OCC Councillor in May 2021. Due to the election the County Council went from being Conservative Led to no party having overall control. Therefore, an alliance has been made between the Lib Dems, Labour, and the Green Party. It is working well and the reason for this is that all 3 parties have a lot in common. And the key things that they have in common are climate issues. They have a definite focus on rewilding, biodiversity, and address climate change. Some of the consequences of that we be quite uncomfortable. Because they are committed that people move to active transport instead of using their cars. The A40 is going ahead. There will be bus lanes going all the way to Oxford and some of the signalling will change.

There is a Councillor Priority Fund so if you feel that you are a community group in need of support, please contact Cllr Levy.

## **Village Organisations - Reports from representatives**

**Village Hall Management Committee - John Hemmingway**

The village has as many have been closed the past 2 years due to the pandemic. However, they are now open for business again. The published their financial report into CAWN. They have a fantastic team who run the Village Hall Committee and it is thanks to Kathryn Teal who is the Bookings Manager who has done all the risk assessments that needed to be done so that when they could open everything was in place for the operation to run smoothly and safely. It was used by the Village Shop during the start of the pandemic. Grants were made to the Village Hall through the Government Incentives thanks to Lorna who is the treasure and was on top of applying for the grants when they became available. They are also starting to run events again. Due to guidance the Village Hall have chosen to reduce their capacity to 80 sitting or standing.

### **Parochial Charities - Mike Linnell**

The residents are all in good health. The flats are all maintained. The legal requirement to carry out tests on the electrical equipment has been done or is due to be carried out. This was delayed due to the pandemic. The garden has been well maintained and the hedge next to the church has been cut back as it had grown a lot over the past few years. The trustees last year lost Ian Waters as he retired on grounds of ill health having been with the charity for over 60 years and he was replaced by Gareth Want. Earlier this year Derek Waters again a trustee of nearly 60 years sadly passed away. They are looking to fill the vacancy.

**St Peter’s Primary School**

We currently have 98 children on roll with an additional 8 nursery children. We are at capacity in KS2 and have a slightly lower number in KS1 due to low birth rate: this is a similar picture for many schools in the County.

Covid provided a significant challenge to us, however the children, staff and wider community responded admirably. Before the first lockdown, the school was very quick to get staff and children trained in the use of Google Classroom as our learning platform. This meant that the learning provision continued as normal with at least four fully planned and differentiated lessons each day. Only 6% of schools in the country achieved this very high standard (UCL study). The children and families responded admirably in very difficult circumstances and together we minimised the potential losses to learning.

During lockdown this year, we continued this high level of educational provision. Although official end of KS2 SATS were not required by government, the Eynsham Partnership Academy (EPA) decided that it was important that we have a measure of the children’s attainment, and all EPA schools took equivalent assessments. St Peter’s CE Primary School achieved fantastic results with 100% of the children achieving the expected level in reading, writing and maths. We were the only school in the academy to achieve this.

COVID has inevitably had an impact on the children and the school has been keen for us to ‘bounce back’ as quickly as possible. Supported but the extremely generous Cassington community, we have now raised over £10k towards our COVID bounce back projects. This will include a new adventure playground for the nursery/reception class, a new outside learning space for KS1, and a new interactive Smart Screen for each of the KS2 classes. We feel very lucky and privileged to have the support of such a wonderful community.

**St Peter’s Church – Roger Aston & John Hemmingway**

In conjunction with St Leonard at Eynsham St Peters has continued with online services and a telephone service. Recorded services have gone to Churchfields Care Home during the pandemic and things are now slowly returning back to normal. The Church is now open for public and private prayer they are also having a single Sunday Service at 9 am. They are hoping to restart the toddler group and also Cassington Café in the near future. Duncan the Vicar has been off on ill health but is expected to return in the next few weeks. The Church wish to give thanks to the Friends of St Peters Cassington Church who have maintained the Grade I listed building by grants and donations and fund-raising activities. It has contributed to the room of the vestry which needed some attention. The Church is hosting a Harvest Supper on 2nd October which has been advertised in CAWN.

On 9th January 2023 St Peters Church will be 900 years old and the Church itself has not changed that much in all that time. What the Church is planning is a yearlong celebration of not just 900 years of the Church but 900 of the village. John Hemmingway would like people to put think about how they would like to celebrate the anniversary and it is open to all the groups in the village and also the residents. It is going to kick off on 8th January 2023 which is the end of advent with a special service.

### **Royal British Legion, Cassington Branch – No Report**

### **Sports and Social Club**

2020/21 was an extremely difficult year for everyone due to the pandemic. However, despite all the difficulties the Sports and Social kept all the facilities in good order and ready for use whenever guidance permitted. When permitted the MUGA has been available for use, for tennis in the summer and other sports in the winter. The cricket and the football team have been able to have some games when the weather her permitted. Summer 2019 we brought free standing football goals for the football teams but also for anyone who wanted to have a kick about. At the end of 2020 we also brough some smaller goals which are easier for the young to use and have a kick about with. Sadly, we have been unable to run any events since March 2020 however we received a grant of £10k from WODC during the first lockdown which enabled us to pay the insurance, electric, water charges and fuel for the mower with some left over. We then received a further grant of £9431 to cover the 2nd & 3rd lockdowns. We also had 13 families take out tennis membership at a cost of £25 per family. At the moment because of the grants, we have a pretty decent bank balance which is helpful as we may need to buy a new mower as the current one is on its last legs. We are holding our first event since the pandemic this weekend which is a picnic on the playing fields with some sports a tombola, raffle and we are going to sell teas and cakes and Pimm’s. During 2020 we renewed our lease to the Playing Fields and the Pavilion with the Parish Council. We are very fortunate that there are people in the village who donate their time and effort to with the running of the Sports and Social. We would like to record our thanks to these people and especially Graham Mills who does a hugh amount.

### **Women’s Institute Report**

We didn’t have any meetings after February 2020 apart from meeting informally for coffee on the Green or at the Bread & Butter Café.

The Oxfordshire Federation of Wis and Denman College have provided speakers or virtual activities by Zoom but have not organised any outings. We have also linked with Walton Manor WI to share their speakers on Zoom.

We started Zooming our own meetings in January 2021 covering topics as varied as ‘Views from the Colonies’ – illustrated with slides from Oxford University Archives. ‘A Country Woman’s Legacy’ – ‘The Faith, Hope and Charity School in Zambia’ and ‘The Proposed Railway Link Carterton to Oxford’.

In June we visited Sezincote Gardens with a guided tour of the house and in August a Garden Party at the Lakeside House of a fellow member.

For our monthly meeting in September, we plan to return to the Village Hall.

### **Cassington and Worton News**

Anne took over as editor in September 2020 so her first edition was the October 2020. Since then, I have produced a newsletter each month which has always been distributed by or on 1st of the month to most of the residents of Cassington and Worton. During the year the village website was set up and now copies are now uploaded on 1st of the month for people to view. Old editions are also available to view. We are fortunate to have some very loyal advertisers for the newsletter and the printing is covered by the revenue from the advertisers. I am extremely grateful to all the people who contribute each month to the newsletter as without them I wouldn’t have anything to put in it. If anyone does have anything to put in it please let me know. Learning to use the software was a steep learning curve and I am very grateful to Kevin Hinton who helped me a lot in the early stages and he is responsible for us using that software. I am enjoying being the editor and am happy to continue to do so.

**Climate Change Group**

It was agreed the school land encompasses the central location of the village and as such working together we have great opportunities to make sustainable improvements to the overall biodiversity, with far reaching positive effects.

* School Pond – improving the biodiversity through management & clearance and creating an educational facility for the school and pupils. No mean feat… much work, but the ambition and effort is shared. We will start work on the investigation of the newt habitat and necessary timings. Plus, costings and timings for overall projects, in terms of a suggested viewing platform, willow coppicing etc. Work on the initial site clearance and profiling project started last weekend being managed by Stew Thompson, helped by Mark Finch and Alex Rogers.
* Vicky to restart up School Eco award work and Eco Group to obtain bronze status for 21/22 academic year. More info to follow on this project as this develops within the school. Opportunities for increasing habitat e.g., bird/hedgehogs, plus nature counts, mist nets and litter pickers
* Looking to work with the school to engage pupils and community on project with an Autumn Green fundraiser event. More info to follow once agreed with school. Hoping to tie on 26th September with Eynsham Green Weekend.

Allotment Wildlife – Assessing the habitat and making community aware with Nature noticeboard. Working with the Allotment Association to improve natural relationship with wildlife.

Spring weed treasure hunt/litter pick event for March/April 2022

Long term projects also to be investigated:

* Pathway maintenance – Lynton Lane and Worton can be difficult to use
* Investigate bird watching opportunities – Worton/Marlborough Pool
* Lots of interest in the concept of a new cycle track/access for all pathways from Cassington to Long Hanborough using the Purwell track/pathway.

**Allotment Association – Chairperson Alex Rogers**

The Cassington Allotments currently fully occupied, and this year has been notable by a flurry of activity in the construction of raised beds, building of sheds and poly tunnels. The allotments remain highly productive and late August/September is harvest time for many crops such as courgettes, sweetcorn, potatoes, beetroot, and many other vegetables. This last 18 months has been especially important to the allotment gardeners because of the COVID pandemic. During this period, it has not just provided fresh food but also social contact and a useful source of outdoors time with the benefits of physical exercise.

The Annual General Meeting of the Cassington Allotments Association was held on the 1st April, 2021 via Zoom and included the election of the following officers:

Chairperson: Alex Rogers

Vice Chairperson: Steve Day

Treasurer: Julie Stuart-Thompson

Secretary: Samuel Serra

Save Cassington Allotments Campaign Manager: Jamie Johnson

Technical Support (zoom): Samuel Serra

Wildlife Officer: Carolyn Serra

During the meeting new initiatives were discussed including the provision of a new community bed for people who don’t want a full or half size plot to try their hand at growing. Efforts were also organised to try and remove some of the historic legacy of rubbish that has built up on the allotment over the years through fly tipping and other sources. We also made plans to enhance the wildlife value of the allotments and considered whether or not to make the allotments fully organic. On the latter it was decided that allotment gardeners should make this decision on an individual basis.

A pressing matter on the allotments is the lack of a water supply. Increasingly erratic weather patterns seem to include prolonged periods of drought lasting many weeks and transporting water to the allotments by hand or vehicles is neither pleasant or sustainable. A priority for 2012/2022 will therefore be the raising of funds to bore a well in the allotments to provide water on site. Blenheim Estates, the current landlords of the allotments have agreed in principle for this to happen although at present the siting of such a borehole is still to be determined.

The other matter that has driven much activity this year has been the proposal by Blenheim Estates in October 2020 to build 40+ houses across two thirds of the allotment area. The Allotment Association was not consulted prior to this proposal being posted to the residents of Cassington Village and an immediate response by the allotment gardeners was to initiate the Save Cassington Allotments campaign. At this point we are expecting to have to vacate the allotments, which have been occupied for more than 100 years by gardeners, by the end of 2021. The campaign petition was signed by more than 10,000 people and the Save the Cassington Allotments Campaign was covered in both local and national newspapers (e.g., The Times). Articles were contributed to our written by members of the Allotments Association and Save the Cassington Allotments campaign got magazines such as The Land, Allotment & Leisure Gardener and most recently Juno magazine. Members of the Allotment Association also applied to have the allotments designated as an Asset of Community Value in December 2020 which was granted by West Oxfordshire District Council in February 2021. The Allotment Association also undertook investigations of the wildlife value of the allotments and have discovered an abundance of protected and in some cases rare species thriving on the allotment and the associated wild scrub area. A local student, Zoe Rogers, undertook her Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award project on the land surveying birds and observed 39 species including UK RSPB Red-Listed species.

Alongside the development of the Neighbourhood Plan these efforts have identified the overwhelming value of Cassington Allotments to the community and to local wildlife. Whilst informal plans to develop the land appear to have been put on hold, they have not been withdrawn so the Allotment Association and Save Cassington Allotments remain fully engaged in protecting the allotments in the future. We note that our relationship with Blenheim Estates and their representatives remain amicable and our lease was renewed for 5 years from May 2021 with 6 months’ notice of eviction.

In the coming year our priorities are for the Cassington Allotments include:

* Raising funds for a borehole to provide water on site
* Protecting Cassington Allotments from development
* Maintaining the allotments for growing food, decorative plants and for wildlife
* Further the use of the allotments to benefit the community through activities like the community bed and social events.

It remains for me to thank everyone on the Allotments Association and Save Cassington Allotments for all their hard work and out allotment gardeners as well as members of the Parish Council and village residents who have provided support and encouragement to us through that has been an unusual year.

**Neighbourhood Plan**

In response to proposed developments in the village of Cassington the Parish Council and residents of the village decided to initiate the development of a Neighbourhood Plan in 2020. The Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity for residents of Cassington to have an influence over how the village will change over time. It relies on local knowledge of what needs to change and what needs to be protected to improve the village for the well being of the residents, biodiversity and for climate change mitigation and adaptation. The end product is a document that sets out planning policies for the neighborhood area – planning policies are used to decide whether to approve planning applications. The Neighbourhood Plan feeds into the local planning processes but does not replace them. Following engagement of consultants O’Neill Homer, a Neighbourhood Planning Committee was established comprising Jonty Ashworth, Piers Beeton, Ian Finlay, Barbara King, Anne Luttman-Johnson and Alex David Rogers. These are all residents of Cassington and include a member of the Parish Council, Barbara King.

Throughout the period of November 2020 to the end of August 2021 the Neighbourhood Planning Committee together with O’Neill Homer (represented by Leani Haim) have met periodically to plan and implement the necessary measures to draw up the Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documentation, including consultations with the residents of the village. To date the following has been achieved:

* The completion of a Green Infrastructure Plan for the village of Cassington
* A day of public presentations of the Green Infrastructure Plan and Neighbourhood Plan at the Village Hall to seek feedback.
* The development of a questionnaire to seek the views of the residents of the village on the Neighbourhood Plan.
* Preliminary analysis of responses to the questionnaire.
* Modification of the Green Infrastructure Plan on the basis of the feedback and questionnaires.

Following further consultation with O’Neill Homer the Neighbourhood Plan Committee have a program of work for the Autumn/Winter of 2021 which includes:

* Further distribution of questionnaires to get more representative feedback on the Neighbourhood and Green Infrastructure Plans from the residents of Cassington.
* Once a significant number of questionnaires are returned to reanalyze the questionnaire responses and to revise the Green Infrastructure and Neighbourhood Plan accordingly.
* Update the Green Infrastructure Plan to include the latest revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework.
* Drawing up of a Regulation 14 Consultation note for statutory consultations for the Neighbourhood Plan.
* The drawing up of the draft Neighbourhood Plan, currently scheduled for November 2021.
* Drawing up of a Consultation Statement.
* Final submission of the Neighbourhood Plan by the end of 2021.

We note that the preparation of the Green Infrastructure Plan and Neighbourhood Plan have involved significant effort on behalf of the consultants O’Neill Homer, The Neighbourhood Planning Committee and additional assistance provided by Stewart Thompson (nature conservation) and Matt Britton (Marlborough Pool) so a vote of thanks is due to all concerned. We also note that we are still collecting responses to the Neighbourhood Planning Committee questionnaire and would appreciate as many returns as possible.