



**You are summoned to attend Cassington Annual Parish Meeting at 7.30pm on
Thursday 6th June 2024 in the Village Hall, The Green.**

Minutes

1) Welcome and Introduction by chairman

This is a meeting of and for the public and not a Parish Council meeting! Anyone can contribute; the Parish Council is required to provide its chairman to oversee proceedings

2) Apologies – Cllr S Thompson, Cllr A Goodwin

3) Chairman of the Parish Council – Report

Cassington Parish Council Annual Report Year 2023-24

We have had another busy year within the Parish Council. We would like to thank our District Councillors and County Councillor, Cllr Dan Levy, Cllr Carl; Rylett and Cllr Andy Goodwin who has recently been re-elected as our Councillor as well as members of the Parish who have attended Parish Council Meetings over this year.

Just under 12 months ago the Referendum for the Cassington Neighbourhood Plan took place on June 22nd 2023. There was a good turn out for the Referendum and 98% of the voters voted to accept the plan. See: [Cassington Neighbourhood Plan - West Oxfordshire District Council \(westoxon.gov.uk\)](https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/cassington-neighbourhood-plan). The Parish Council has since applied the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan to planning recommendations. A huge thanks to all who were involved in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan including our previous Parish Council Chair, Hugh Thomas.

The Parish Council continue to respond to the Botley West Solar Farm utility-scale solar power station development. This has taken up considerable time and effort during the year including:

- Response to Scoping Report for Botley West Solar Farm, June 2023
- Response to the Botley West Proposal Phase Two Public Consultation to West Oxfordshire District Council Development Control Meeting 5th February 2024

These reports have required extensive research with the Phase Two Public Consultation coming with the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) comprising more than 7,000 pages alone. One of the consultation events was held in Cassington just after the New Year and was well attended by villagers who asked many questions about the proposed development to the representatives of the developers. We thank the residents of Cassington who continue to show interest in this proposed solar power station and will work to keep them informed of progress throughout the coming year. At present we are awaiting the official submission of the proposal to the Planning Inspectorate.

As a declared interest Parish Councillor Alex Rogers has also become Chair of the Stop Botley West local community group in his own capacity.

Salt Cross remains ongoing with the planning inspectorate. This development will likely take place alongside further modification of the A40 to accommodate a bus lane as well as a Park and Ride at Eynsham. These plans have been delayed because of the challenging financial situation. Parish Councillors are responding to these plans when the opportunity arises for comment. It is likely that the village will suffer from increased traffic as a result of these plans although thankfully Horsemere Lane will be shut to traffic as part of the A40 development.

This year the Speed Watch Team have been busier than ever we have had new Speed Watch Signs erected in the village and we are in talks with OCC to have the 2 VAS machines replaced to indicate the new 20mph. Our Speed Watch team have observed a slowdown in traffic through the village, so this seems to be having a positive effect, but some drivers are still speeding. We thank the Speed Watch team for continuing to monitor traffic through Cassington and reporting speeders to Thames Valley Police. If anyone would like to volunteer to be on the speedwatch team, please email cassington.speedwatch@gmail.com

Flood risk arising from surface-water runoff from the fields to the north of Cassington remains a concern with several households threatened during this winter. The Parish Council is in communication with the landowners, Blenheim Estates with respect to clearing of overgrown ditches on their land.

We are also pleased to see Cassington Bike Night taking place again on the 24th June this year. This is a famous village spectacle and again is only possible through the help of the organising committee and volunteers.

After many years of work within the village Adrian Tyler sadly had to cease working for the Parish Council due to ill health. The Parish Council would like to thank Adrian for all his hard work over the years making sure that the burial ground and other parts of the village were taken care of. We would like to advise that Jake Boardman has now taken over.

The Parish Council are now looking forward to raising money with the Sports and Social and members of the village to replace the play area. Unfortunately, this is a very expensive task with quotes in the region of £85k

The Parish Council would like to thank Cllr Thompson so looking into relevant grants to help with this cost.

In the next year we are looking at purchasing a portable VAS machine, and also to take another look at traffic calming

within the village. We have been asked to install 3 new accessibility gates (these are subject to the approval from the landowner). The other big project is for the Parish Council to find out which of the walls are under their responsibility and to look how we can repair them, and the costs associated with it.

As can be seen from this report the many events that contribute to our sense of community and well-being, depend on willing volunteers. Please continue to support your Parish when you can volunteer some time!

Cassington Parish Council

<u>Payments & Receipts for the year ended</u>	<u>31 March 2024</u>		<u>31 March 2023</u>	
Balance at start of year				
Unity Trust Bank	£	8,868.55	£	10,954.08
Nationwide 90 Day	£	12,625.72	£	12,417.41
TOTAL	£	21,494.27	£	23,371.49
RECEIPTS				
WODC Precept	£	26,806.00	£	22,919.00
Note 1 Other receipts/grants	£	289.20	£	-
Councillor Priority Fund	£	-	£	-
Interest	£	443.06	£	208.34
Burials	£	966.00	£	1,412.00
VAT Reclaim	£	3,276.59	£	1,572.93
TOTAL RECEIPTS	£	31,780.85	£	26,112.27
PAYMENTS				
Grass cutting	£	3,838.00	£	187.26
Clerk's salary	£	11,093.00	£	9,378.10
Recreation Ground/Play Area	£	103.00	£	4,206.45
Note 2 Administration	£	8,277.00	£	5,572.66
Note 3 Grants/GPC payments	£	-	£	-
Subscriptions	£	508.00	£	357.61
Tree maintenance	£	-	£	-
Burial Ground maintenance	£	-	£	1,504.00
VAT paid	£	2,004.42	£	2,328.48
Neighbourhood Plan	£	-	£	4,100.00
Parish maintenance	£	2,674.00	£	720.00
TOTAL PAYMENTS	£	28,497.42	£	28,354.56
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	£	3,283.43	-£	2,242.29

4) Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Councillor – Report

County Council

The administration at County Hall began the year being an alliance of Liberal Democrats, Labour and Greens. It currently comprises Lib Dems and Greens.

In October, the Labour party chose to leave the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance, over the issue of the insistence of the other parties that it was necessary to change the cabinet responsibility for Children after a report highlighting failures in our Special Educational Needs service. We now have a dedicated SEND improvement cabinet member. We are improving both outcomes and communications in this key area. A former headteacher is now acting as Cabinet member for Children.

The new partnership has the same objectives as the old one, with a vision of making the county greener, fairer and healthier. This is set out in the County Council website: [Our strategic plan 2023 - 2025 | Oxfordshire County Council](#).

It is more difficult to make progress as a minority administration, but we passed a budget in February that was true to this vision, with Labour backing, and will deliver additional funding for adult social care, children's service, roads and gulleys.

Since October I have been the Cabinet member with responsibility for finance and property, and it has been challenging.

50% of County Council spending is on Adults and Children's social care, which leaves inadequate funding for other things.

Roads and Railways

Botley Road

The year has seen Botley Road closed to motor traffic at the railway bridge. This work was due to finish in October (and Network Rail say they are now on schedule). We will be left with a much better station, with trains to Milton Keynes as well as the current services.

A40

The A40 improvements are the subject of discussion between the potential funder, Homes England, and the County Council. This is extremely frustrating, but the scheme was built on the commitment of the government to provide the funding. We await developments.

Once the A40 is developed and West Eynsham is built (subject to planning approval of course) vehicle access to the new housing at the Old Nursery will be via West Eynsham and the A40, and not up Old Witney Road.

City

Once Botley Road is reopened, the traffic filters will be installed, making the centre of Oxford a no-cut-through area. Everywhere you can currently drive will remain accessible. You just need to come in on the route closest to the ring road, so for instance if you wanted to drive to Cowley Road, you would go via the ring road to the BMW plant. Exactly as most people currently do.

This will free up buses to move more quickly and encourage people out of their cars as the bus service improves. You may already have seen the electric bus fleet used in central Oxford.

Road maintenance

Road maintenance remains underfunded. It would take c £45m per annum just to preserve a steady state. The government awards Oxfordshire about £20m per annum for the task. Nonetheless, despite this lack of funding, many roads have been resurfaced, including the A40 at Barnard Gate and past Cassington.

And those who cycle along the A40 bike path will notice that, after decades of neglect, the path has been restored to the correct width, which makes it much more usable. This is one of a number of improvements to the cycle network, including a path along the road from Witney to Bladon is Hanborough Station. We have developed a plan for a strategic active travel network, linking all the major villages and towns – and it will be built as money becomes available.

20mph

All the parishes in the Eynsham Division chose to apply for 20 mph zones, and I was pleased to support this. Slower speeds make it easier for people to cycle and walk, and much safer to cross the road. Certainly, in Eynsham speeds do seem to have come down, as they have in many other places.

Rail

Included in the budget was a small commitment to support the next stage of development of the Witney Oxford rail project. Rail would make a huge contribution to easing travel from Eynsham. It goes alongside the East-West rail project, the reopening of the Cowley Line and reopening a station near Wantage.

Elections

The next County Council elections are in May 2025. These will be held under new boundaries, being finalised at present by the Electoral Commission. Because of the growth in the number of electors, the Eynsham Division will no longer contain the areas covered by the parishes of Aston and Standlake.

The parliamentary constituency for Eynsham is the new Bicester and Woodstock constituency, stretching in an arc around the north of Oxford. It contains many places with similar characteristics to Eynsham and Cassington.

Could I remind people to register to vote and to ensure that they have the ID now required to do so. Details are on the West Oxfordshire District Council site at www.westoxon.gov.uk

Contact details

Do contact me with comments, queries and concerns. dan.levy@oxfordshire.gov.uk

5) West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) Councillors – Report

Your three District Councillors are, left to right, Andy Goodwin, Carl Rylett and Dan Levy.

WODC West Oxfordshire District Council is run by an Executive comprising an alliance of Liberal Democrats, Labour and Green councillors. This year Dan was appointed to the Cabinet at the County Council and so stepped down from his Finance executive role at WODC. Carl has stepped down from his planning executive role and is Chair of the Audit and Governance committee. Andy has taken on vice-chair of the planning committee. WODC is committed to delivering for residents. One change you may have noticed is that you can now watch all council meetings live online and in playback. It is important to be able to hold your representatives to account. The council had fallen far behind in its investment and maintenance of its infrastructure. This is being addressed in order to improve the services to the community. At the same time, this has reduced the number of buildings being used, and enabled income to be generated from their commercial use and from hosting residents' events. All three councillors are actively involved in working with residents and with the Parish Council and have helped solve housing, education and other issues with them. The best way to get in touch via email – the addresses are below.

Thames Water As is increasingly clear, our clean water and sewage systems are wholly inadequate. Central government and the Environment Agency governance of Thames Water is at the heart of the issue. The Evenlode suffers from sewage discharges from Hanborough and further upstream, and sewage is frequently discharged from Cassington Sewage Treatment Works into the Thames. WODC has continual dialogue with Thames Water and the Environment Agency. In a major breakthrough Thames Water agreed to support Grampian Conditions in planning applications so that new houses cannot be occupied until the sewage treatment plants are upgraded to cope with additional demand. In addition, extra checks are being asked of developers at the early pre-validation stage of an application.

Planning. WODC is developing a new Local Plan, to take the district to 2041. This sets out where housing should be and the infrastructure requirements, including where solar farms might be. This will replace the current inadequate 2031 Local Plan, which among other things led to housing being planned in a small number of strategic sites, none of which have yet been built. These sites include West Eynsham and Salt Cross (just north of the A40 and Eynsham). In both cases the process of developing masterplans has been predictably slow. In Salt Cross, the developer objected to the Area Action Plan constructed by WODC, and a judicial review noted that the Planning Inspectorate's refusal to accept the Net Zero commitments in the AAP was unlawful. A great result – we are committed to combatting climate change and were disappointed that our efforts and those of local campaigners had been blocked. The planning process for Botley West Solar Farm continues. The decision will be taken by Central Government. WODC's role has been to comment on the inadequacies of the plans seen so far and has highlighted the significant impact on communities and the environment. When the process goes to the planning inspectorate, WODC will produce a detailed local impact report. This is the most effective way we can ensure local concerns are heard by central government.

Westhive funding community projects A key innovation this year was the establishment of Westhive, a community crowdsharing platform, for local causes to seek funding from WODC for projects. So, taxpayer support can be magnified. A new Spring 2024 round is open, with a deadline for applications of 24th April. More information at <https://www.spacehive.com/movement/westhive/about> or contact the Community Funding Officer at west.hive@westoxon.gov.uk Separately, we have also made sure that key recipients of local support, such as Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire, are moved onto longer term contracts, and can make longer term plans

Nature Recovery Plan WODC has committed to a nature recovery plan to protect and improve the biodiversity of the land that it owns and to encourage other landowners to commit to biodiversity improvements, not least in planning applications, to help make West Oxfordshire a thriving place for both people and nature **Elections**. A reminder that we are entering a busy period of elections. There will be a general election on 4th July, with Cassington now in the new Bicester and Woodstock constituency. This comprises an arc from the west around the north of Oxford and is full of places with a similar make up to Cassington, though none of them as pleasant! In May's local elections Andy Goodwin was re-elected to the district council. It is important that people ensure that they are registered to vote and have the ID that will be needed. Note also that the rules on postal voting have changed.

All the information is on the WODC website. www.westoxon.gov.uk

Andy andy.goodwin@westoxon.gov.uk

Carl carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk

Dan dan.levy@westoxon.gov.uk

6) Village Organisations - Reports from representatives

Cassington Village Hall Management Committee Trustees' Annual Report - 31 December 2023

The Managing Trustees present their Report for the year ended 31 December 2023 which should be read in conjunction with the attached financial statements for the same period.

Legal Status: The Charity is established by the Conveyance and Trust Deed dated 6 September 1971, whereby, the Cassington Parish Council declared the Trusts on which it holds the freehold land now occupied by the Village Hall and car park. The Charity Commission registered number is 304279.

Objects, Policies and Organization: The Trust is established to provide and maintain the Village Hall for the

benefit of the inhabitants of Cassington without distinction of political, religious, or other opinion with the object of improving the quality of life for the inhabitants. The Hall is available for hire by any individual or organisation in accordance with the standard hiring agreement and scale of charges adopted for the year. It is intended that the scale of charges be sufficient to generate enough income to meet the ordinary expenditure incurred in providing the Hall. Significant improvements are funded by specific appeals, fundraising and grants.

The Committee of Management comprises the trustees elected or appointed on an annual basis, with the officers being elected from the membership of the Committee. The Parish Council is the Custodian Trustee. The Committee met seven times during the year, and between scheduled meetings all committee members were kept fully informed of developments and engaged in discussions through email communications circulated amongst all members. The Annual General Meeting is held in February each year.

Chair's Review of the Year: *"Not just a building, but building a community"*. 2023 was a very eventful year. Over and above the usual, the hall was delighted to support St Peter's Church as Cassington celebrated its 900th year, from the special family lunch for some 200 people on launch day in January, through the community Art Weeks show in May, to the climax venue for the promenade play of scenes from village history in September.

In addition, the hall provided the backdrop for the street party on King Charles III's Coronation, and we also launched a successful children's party at Christmas that looks set to become an annual event. At the end of the 900th, the hall was pleased to display permanently in the lobby the gift of the 1797 map of village farms kindly presented to St Peter's by Christ Church college and cathedral.

We owe massive thanks to all our customers who book the hall, both one-off and regular users, and to those who attend the events we organise. Cinema nights continue to be well supported, and we're constantly on the lookout for live entertainment acts and performers. If you have any suggestions for other types of events, you'd like to see in the village hall please let us know and we'll do our best.

The hall also now has its own system of free-standing display panels for anyone who might like to organise an exhibition. Throughout the year the major project under consideration by the committee was how best to start moving the hall away from using fossil fuels for heating and lighting. We consulted other halls and external experts, in particular Stewart Thompson consulted contacts at Oxford Brookes University, and we looked into ground and air source heat pumps as potential replacements for the gas boiler and solar panels for electricity. Given the likely costs, and the absence of any large-scale grant schemes, our only realistic option was to leave the gas boiler in place for now but to look in detail at solar panels as a sustainable source of electricity.

We invited three firms to give us costed proposals for the installation of solar panels, and the best value for money and ongoing service was offered by Lumos PV Power Systems Limited, based here in the village. We also had to liaise with WODC to make sure that our proposed scheme fitted their requirements, and after a number of options were explored, we decided on a 23-panel system with 3 batteries for storage, which should meet most of our needs throughout the year.

We set a target to install the system in spring 2024, after the dark winter months. At that time the installation was liable for VAT which meant the total cost would be upwards of £30,000, so we decided to commit £20,000 from existing funds and endeavor to raise a further £10,000 through fundraising. Very fortunately the decision to defer the installation worked in our favour.

First, on 1st February 2024 the government changed the VAT regulations to make village halls exempt from VAT on solar panel installations. Second, in late January 2024 the Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund re-opened to new applicants, especially for smaller grants to smaller villages, and we understand that our application was successful, and we should receive just over £2,300 to support the project.

We are lucky to have such a great treasurer in Lorna Mills who is so on the ball! As a result, we were able to lower our fundraising target and at the moment of this AGM it looks on course to succeed. Our annual finances continued to show good results.

Total income for 2023 was £2,149 less than the year before, but our underlying operating income was up by over 9%. Income from lettings was up a few hundred pounds at £15,256 (£14,678 last year), with gross revenue from our own events down a few hundred at £3,217 (£3,721 last year). We received donations of £1,043 mostly from Bike Night, plus £1,700 from interest, investments, and Gift Aid, all well up on the year before. That gave us total income of £21,216, down on the previous year's £23,365, but in 2022 we had received a one-off post-pandemic grant of £3,953 - and excluding that grant our underlying operating income was up by over 9%.

It's great to see a return to growth. Our expenditure was broadly in line with the year before, except for the massive rise in gas and electricity bills which went up by 44% as our fixed price tariffs came to an end. Our running costs, repairs and maintenance were much the same as usual, and we also committed to spend money in January 2024 on deep cleaning and re-sealing the hall floor to make it great for another 4-5 years. After depreciation our total costs came in at £21,223 (last year £20,544) which left us with a net deficit of just seven pounds.

We have an amazing team who make it all happen and owe each of them huge thanks. First, for her many years of commitment, a massive thank you to our dedicated booking secretary Kathryn Teal who in May decided to move on to new challenges. In her place we were pleased to appoint Pam Coates, who took on additional duties. Thank you, Pam. At the same time Malcolm Teal also stood down after many years as a volunteer and his skills and expertise are sorely missed. Thank you, Malcolm, and also Penny Burroughs our long-serving Secretary until the start of 2023 who later stood down as a trustee in November. Many sincere thanks Penny. We also thank two new trustees who joined us at the start of the year, Carolyn Hinton (Secretary) and Hannah Farncombe, and all the other hard-working trustees who volunteer their time to serve: Lorna Mills (Treasurer), Adie Gregory (Events), Stewart Thompson (Parish Council), Bridget Sherlock (Sports and Social), and Sheila Nelson who is a regular at committee meetings.

We always welcome new volunteers to join our team, so if you're interested, please do get in touch. The village hall is a registered charity and relies totally on generating its own income to keep the place going. If you value the hall at the heart of our community, small regular donations are a great way to support a great asset that's effectively owned by the village for the benefit of the village.

Finances: The Bankers for the Hall are HSBC, and we are in the process of opening accounts with NatWest which should become operational during the next financial year.

Responsibility for Financial Statements: The Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the Financial Statements and for keeping proper accounting records, which disclose the financial position of the Charity. The Trustees have elected to prepare statements on the Income and Expenditure Account basis.

Trustees and members of the Village Hall Management Committee 2023:

Penny Burroughs Elected (Until November 2023)
Hannah Farncombe Elected
Adrian Gregory (Events) Elected
John Hemingway (Chair)
Nominated, Parochial Church Council Carolyn Hinton (Secretary) Elected
Lorna Mills (Treasurer) Elected
Sheila Nelson Committee volunteer but not a Trustee
Bridget Sherlock Nominated, Sports and Social Club
Malcolm Teal Committee volunteer but not a Trustee (Until May 2023)
Stewart Thomson Nominated, Parish Council (Custodian Trustee)

Approved by the Trustees AGM 27 February 2024 John Hemingway Carolyn Hinton Chair Secretary

a. Parochial Charities - No Report Sent

b. ST PETER'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

We currently have 96 children on roll with an additional 19 nursery children. Our reception intake for September is 9 with potential of 11 (TBC) which is below our normal admission number of 15.

Many schools in the county are in a similar situation with some schools having less than half their normal admission number of children starting in September. This inevitably will have an impact on school budgets; however, St Peter's will be largely insulated from this for next academic year as we were able to take 18 children in reception in Sept '23.

Following on from our SIAMS report (graded 'excellent in all areas' in March '23), we have continued to build on this success, as advised by the report. Our next step in the report was '*Build on the school's existing outreach work as a hub of excellence. This will enable the school's exceptional vision and excellent RE to have a wider impact*'. The school has been quick to action this with the headteacher speaking at a spirituality conference to share what spirituality can look like in a primary school. Our Revd Duncan Fraser has been the architect for what our spirituality looks like, and it is wonderful that the work he and the whole school has done has been widely acknowledged in the diocese.

Academically, Key Stage 2 SATs results were exceptional, with 80% of children attaining Age Related Expectation in reading, writing and maths, which compares to 59% nationally. The Eynsham Partnership Academy was the highest achieving Trust in Oxfordshire, and St Peter's was the highest performing school within that Trust.

We are blessed with a talented team of teachers and support staff who are overseen by a strong and committed team of governors. Our children continue to amaze us every day in their ideas, passion for learning, and care for one another. Celebration worship on Fridays is a highlight of the week where families are invited to hear about their children's achievements.

We continue to invest in pupil development through our Pupil Leadership Groups, and our People Who Inspire Us project has been a source of inspiration for children and adults at St Peter's, and also for other schools within the Eynsham Partnership Academy (EPA). We have a newly appointed EPA chaplain, Heather Mogre, who is now with us on Thursday mornings. Heather is a wonderful addition to the team and will be leading on spirituality, creating a dedicated prayer space, and developing even closer links with the church.

c. St Peter's Church

Vicars Report

2023 was a significant anniversary year in the life of St. Peter's Church, Cassington. 900 years is no small landmark and the celebrations began with a service, presided over by Bishop Gavin, for which the community gave tremendous support. Knights on horseback greeted us upon our exit from church and the whole day was foretaste of the carious events, celebration and services which would mark this momentous year.

Hugh thanks are owed to John Hemmingway for his coordinating efforts, alongside the 'Friends of St. Peter's', Jan MacDonald and many, many others. There was a mix of drama, thought provoking art, music, flower displays, festival services, history exhibits, both recent and more distant, community events though which we were reminded of the influential sweep of historic moments and epochs, alongside the routine everyday lives of local residents though the ages.

The church has stood through it all offering hope, meaning, purpose and the comfort of God, directing the residents of the village to the Good News of Jesus Christ. The congregations have ebbed and flowed over those 900 years but those who have gathered, Sunday by Sunday, have offered worship to God and intercession on behalf of the

village, seeking to be salt and light in their lives throughout the week. Our task as we think forward to the next 100 years is to persevere in this ministry that, through simple, speaks to eternal things. The verse on our bookmarks for the year summarise this calling: *So then, just as you receive Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. Colossians 2.6.*

St. Peter's Primary school continues to be a joy and privilege in which to serve. Four of the governors are part of our congregation and their spiritual influence is of great value. The school celebrated the 50th anniversary of the building and it was lovely to meet headteachers from the past. There was also Ofsted and SIAMS (Church School) inspections, after which the school received as a solid 'good' and 'excellent' respectively. Our work in developing the vision and spirituality of the school has been championed across the diocese which is very encouraging.

The wider life of the Church of England has been dominated by the question of same-sex marriages and blessings with some significant sittings of the General Synod in the year. As a Benefice we have sought to engage sensitively and gently with the issue. The 2023 Lent course on the *Five Pastoral Principles* considered healthy and helpful attitudes to adopt in our conversations concerning issues that can be deeply personal. We followed this up in the summer with the *Living in Love and Faith* course which allowed the opportunity to listen to presentations from the Living in Love and Faith team, and more importantly, to listen to one another. This was by no means the end of the process, rather the beginning and one which will be ongoing, for which we ardently seek the wisdom and grace of God.

2023 was a very good year for staffing in the Benefice. Louise, for whom I regularly give thanks to God, continues to be invaluable to the Benefice as Church Administrator. We are also able to appoint Rabea Meango in January as Children's and Families Worker, initially for 6 hours, increasing to 12 hours in September. And by the end of the year Laura Churchyard joined as Lay Ministry Assistant with responsibility for Youthwork. Margaret Thornton has continued as Parish Worker at St. Leonard's with many responsibilities and roles that support and work of St. Peter's. I am tremendously encouraged by this team and together we are able to support one another in our ministries as well as to prayerfully consider the direction God may be leading us in the life of the Benefice.

Roger retired from licensed ministry within the Benefice just before 2023 but continued to invest in kingdom work, alongside Jane, through Tinies and Toddlers and their precious ministry at Churchfields care Home, as well providing pastoral support cover. Other clergy, lay preachers and service leaders, have also supported the worshipping life of St. Peter's, including Keith Jones, who continues to bless us with his ministry in one form or another most weeks.

I would like to thank the PCC for their commitment to the mission and ministry of St. Peter's, for Joan and Jan as deeply committed wardens, and for Keith Turner as Treasurer and tower captain. Many serve in our church in so many different ways: cleaners, sacristans, flower arrangers, caterers, musicians, and we are so grateful to God for each other. In all things we continue to trust God for the future of St. Peter's Church and our witness to the Lord Jesus Christ and his Good News in our lives and in our community.

Churchwardens Report

2023 was a very full and active year of celebrations for the 900th, and so partly as a consequence it was another quiet year for the church fabric. In March as spring arrived, we installed temporarily in the churchyard and the garden bench generously donated in memory of David Chamberlain; in April in time for Easter Sunday we installed the new festal altar frontal produced by the Cathedral Embroidery Centre Oxford and generously donated in memory of Mrs F E Perfect; and in December we replaced all twelve LED spotlights in the nave with new ones.

Also, during the year, we had a Smart Meter fitted for the electricity supply, and the annual safety checks on the lightning conductors, fire extinguishers and electrical equipment (PAT testing) were carried out by our professional supplies. Many thanks to Roger Aston for overseeing the PAT inspection.

Towards the end of the year, we opened discussions with the DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee) on our two major proposed projects: to install a toilet and to improve the drainage and paths, especially in the area below and church tower. The discussions proved more complex than anticipated and we need to do further initial development and work on both projects, now ongoing in 2024. In addition, in October 2023 we received the Quinquennial Inspection Report on our regulatory five-year survey, and this will require us to carry out a range of smaller repairs mostly on the external walls, roof and windows between now and 2027. So, work will go on, and we continue to be extremely grateful to The Friends of St Peter's for their help and support in funding our maintenance costs.

We owe sincere thanks to all our volunteers for their ongoing commitment: Keith Turner for maintaining the church clock and bells, Shelia Nelson for putting out the bins, Liz Henman and Ninon Linnell for providing a constant supply of beautiful flower arrangements, Margaret Partridge as sacristan with support from Jane Aston, our sidesman Keith Jones and Adrian Tyler who took good care of the churchyard grass throughout 2023. Sadly, Adrian has recently had to take a step down from his gardening work as a result of health issues, so we are making new arrangements for churchyard maintenance in 2024. We wish him well.

d. Sports and Social Club

Annual report 2023 (April 2023-March 2024)

2023/24 has been a challenging year for Sports and Social as we have had to deal with a number of significant floods on the playing fields and the MUGA. Sadly, this led to some cancellations of bookings, which was very unfortunate and may lead to a loss in future bookings and therefore income!

Cassington Rangers hired the field for their football matches, as well as training sessions and in the summer West Bladon Cricket team hired the field for cricket matches. The MUGA was hired by the following youth football teams: Combe Juniors, Witney Vikings, Eynsham Football Club and Kidlington Garden City Football Club for their training over the winter months, however at least 6 weeks' worth of bookings were lost due to the MUGA being flooded.

In the summer the MUGA was made available for individuals to play tennis. 10 households took out membership of the MUGA which enabled them to play tennis during the summer. The Pavilion was hired three times for birthday parties, for band practice sessions and Slimming World had a regular four-hour weekly hire.

Most of the events that took place this year were aimed at raising funds for the new playground equipment. We ran one event where the proceeds went to the Sports and Social club, which was the tombola at the King's Coronation celebrations. This also paid for the licence for the Coronation event. Bike Night was very successful this year and we raised £3,513.48. We also received £150 in donations from villagers. As a result of receiving charitable donations, we are able to claim Gift Aid on all donations including sums received on Bike Night.

In order to raise money for the new playground equipment we ran a garage sale in October, we sold burgers, hot dogs and chips at the Red Lion firework evening, we helped put on and run a Burns' Night dinner and we helped with 4 pub quizzes at the Red Lion.

In total our income for the year amounted to £15,599.79. Our expenditure was £13,761.50 of which £8,199.99 was the purchase of a secondhand ride on mower to cut the grass on the playing fields as our old mower finally came to the end of its life! We continue to maintain and build upon our cash reserves. This is to ensure that we can meet large known future capital expenditure. £16,600 (out of a target of £31k) is currently set aside for the replacement of the MUGA surface and £975 is set aside for replacement of the mower.

We are extremely fortunate in that a number of people in the village donate their time, particularly for mowing the playing fields, erecting and removing the tennis nets according to the season and organising the events that help generate funds for the charity. Finally, I would like to formally record thanks to all those members of the committee working so hard to enable the village to enjoy our wonderful facilities.

e. Cassington and Worton News

The newsletter continues to be produced each month, and they are generally ready for distribution by or on the first of the month, to most of the houses in the village. I believe there are occasionally issues with some copies not arriving on time, but generally most people get them on or by the first of the month.

Delivery is now run by Emily Lemaire. During term time the copies are delivered to her at the primary school, and she takes them round to the distribution team. During the holidays alternative arrangements are made on an ad hoc basis.

I try to upload each month's edition to the website on the 1st of each month. Old editions are also available to view on the village website.

We are fortunate to have some loyal advertisers and the cost of printing the newsletter is more or less covered by the revenue from advertisers. That said I have not charged for the Adobe software, as we do not have enough revenue to cover that as well.

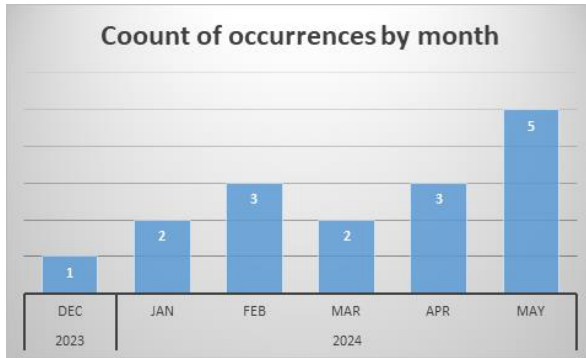
I am extremely grateful to all those who contribute articles, as without them I would not have much to put in it!!!

I am still enjoying being the editor and happy to continue.

f. Thames Valley Police

Very minimal goings on in Cassington over the last 6 months. There has been a total of 15 incidents reported to us, which consist of the below. This equates to a little over 2 incidents per month. I am unable to identify any themes or series from these incidents, however May 2024 has experienced the most incidents being reported over the last 6 months, as seen by the below graph. It is worth noting that, although incidents have increased in May, this is only by 2 occurrences and incidents are still low, so the increase is not significant.

Occurrence Type	No. of Occurrences
Suspicious Vehicle	4
Concern for Safety	4
Theft From Vehicle	1
Stalking	1
Drug Offences	1
Burglary Residential	1
Assault Without Injury	1
ASB	1
Burglary Business	1



7) Any other business/ Questions

An email was read out by a resident with regards to an incident that happened in the village the weekend prior, where a young girl was approached by a van driver wearing a DPD uniform. He made inappropriate comments to the girl which led her to fear for her safety. This has been reported to the police.

Tracey Cameron
Clerk to the Parish Council