**OAKLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

Annual Parish Meeting 2023

Chairman’s report: 2022/23

Welcome to the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) of Oakley. Every parish in England MUST have such a meeting between 1 March and 1 June each year. The APM is the relatively informal meeting where the Parish Council invite the public (and press) to hear reports from the Parish Council Chairman and County Councillors; also reports from any organisations, clubs and charities within the village. There is an opportunity for the public to express their opinions on what the council are doing. No votes taken at this meeting are binding on the Parish Council, although it may wish to consider any comments at the next Parish Council meeting (6th June).

Next month, there was the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council (AMPC). This is a formal meeting of the Parish Council where it elects the chairman and vice chairman, make other annual appointments and review their insurance, risk management policies, etc.

The Parish Council sits on the first Tuesday of each month. Last year the average meeting lasted one hour 37 minutes, and on average there were 56 minuted items per month.

Our annual funding for 2023-2024, called the Parish precept, has been set at £24,110, this is a 5% increase on the previous year. The reason for the hike is cover increases we are seeing in electricity (our largest outgoing), mowing (second largest) and wages (third largest).

Just as an explanation: Parish Councils do not run pubs or shops; we do not have the resources to do those sorts of things. As a result, over the last eighteen months, two Community Benefit Societies (CBS), Oakley Village Pub Limited and Oakley Village Shop Limited have been set up. Both these CBSs will be giving their reports later. This means the Parish Council can concentrate on traditional Parish Council matters.

Our main project has been The Playing Field Development Project (2022). This has utilised S106 money (which is given to the Parish Council by housing developers) and securing a grant from SITA/WREN and a National Lottery grant, also a donation from the Oakley Relief in Need Charity. This project is already delivering: the Children’s Play Area has had a huge addition, which the village children have voted a great hit. Also, the fence has been extended to keep dogs out of the play area. Five new picnic tables, made of recycled plastic, have been bought and will be put together in the next couple of days, each table requiring 84 screws. The final jewel in the crown is the perimeter path, utilising recycled rubber tyres, it has already reach 300 metres around the park. Despite some criticism on social media, the perimeter path has proved a great success, used by young and old. Unfortunately, due to rain and frosts, progress with the path has stalled since November last year. Hopefully with the better weather the final 400 metres can be completed by June.

On top of this, Jo Grey obtained many trees through the Queen’s Green Canopy Scheme and Tree Planting Day in March saw over 100 trees being planted.

With all this happening, the Parish Council have kept on with the day-to-day work of a ‘normal’ parish. Our interaction with Transport for Bucks (Highways) at Bucks Council is one of our main challenges, there have been many potholes, to be reported and then followed up, there have been water leaks and flooding. Since the Unitary authority of Bucks Council came about, Transport for Bucks have not been a reactive as they used to be, are often incommunicative and can be very negative to the village’s needs.

We have also found that since Bucks Council was formed, the Planning department have been slow to turnround of applications and made judgements contrary to earlier decisions. We DO need consistent judgements and planning enforcements that are enforced.

We have also begun to fix-and-replace our 82 sodium streetlights with much more efficient L.E.D.s, whilst this is a large capital outlay, we are already seeing a reduction in our electric usage.

Finally, I’d like to extend thanks to ALL my fellow members of the Parish Council, for all the support and work they have done in the last year. Also, a thanks for the sterling work done by Trish Pointer, the Parish Clerk.

I would like to give special thanks to the Bucks Councillors Michael Rand and Angela MacPherson for all their help and support they have given over the years.