

In the past year there have been a number of Councillor changes on LPC.

- *Mark Harris* was elected Chairman of the PC to carry on the excellent work done by his immediate predecessor, *Rachel Range*. *Andrew Bushell* is Vice-Chairman.
- After more than 20 years service, *Jenny Pitkin* decided in February to step down. Langford Parish Council truly appreciates her many contributions over the years and especially for often being a 'non-nonsense' voice of common sense.
- *Sharon Emery* also stood down at about the same time. We are grateful to Sharon for her efforts on behalf of Langford and anticipate that she may return to the PC at some time in the future.
- In March, the PC sought to fill the two vacancies (to bring the full complement to five) and was delighted to receive applications from three excellent candidates. The intention was to co-opt two additional members. An election could have been held but since this incurs costs in the region of £500-600, we felt that co-opting represented a much more cost-effective approach. After brief interviews we were delighted to appoint *Jim Johnson* and *Catherine Jones*. *Richard Kemp* was also an outstanding candidate but we felt that Catherine and Jim brought additional qualities that were not at that time well-represented on the Council and so would give the Council a better balance.

Clerk

- In February, *Lynda Scott* who had taken over as our Clerk also announced that she would have to stand down. Lynda was also Clerk to two other, much larger parishes and found that the addition of a third made the task too great. We are delighted to welcome *Ann Tyldesley* the post of Clerk to Langford parish Council with a reminder that without any shadow of doubt, clerk is by far the most important post.
- Finally, we would like to remember the excellent work done by our former Clerk *Neil Ray* who died two weeks ago. Neil was a perfect Clerk - combining great efficiency with effortless good humour and patience. We will miss him.

Precept increase

Langford Parish Council has agreed to continue with the precept at £3000 per annum for the financial year 2012-2013. The precept is a small charge levied upon each household in the parish and collected via West Oxfordshire District Council. Whilst the Parish Council appreciates that in the current economic climate, any increase should not be taken lightly, we hope to convince parishioners that we are spending the money wisely, both on existing projects and on exciting new ventures. Previous precepts are indicated below:

2012/13	4.5%	£3000
2011/12	17.2%	£3000
2010/11	1.5%	£2500
2009/10	5.6%	£2500
2008/9		£2000

During the financial year ending 31.3.12 the Parish Council has committed funds to:-

- Hire of the village hall for Parish Council meetings
- Audit fees for Parish Council accounts (independent audits are a legal requirement)
- Insurance (a legal requirement)
- Payments to Parish Council clerk
- 'office charges' - stationary, stamps etc.
- Legal fees in relation to the lease of the playground from WODC
- Consultant and design fees for the village playground
- Development of the Langford website
- Churchyard maintenance
- Parish News

War Memorial Restoration

During the last few months, the Langford War Memorial has been refurbished by an English Heritage accredited stone mason, Richard Noviss. The stones were cleaned and the memorial re-pointed. A grant of £642 was obtained from The War Memorial Trust towards the total cost of £1285. The remainder of the costs were met from Langford Parish Council funds.

Gravel Extraction

Early in 2010, Oxfordshire County Council first issued draft proposals for mineral extraction to cover the next 15 - 20 years. The proposals suggested extraction of approximately 2.1 million tonnes per annum and one proposed extraction area -so-called Option 2 - had Langford more or less at the centre. During the few months that followed, 12 local parishes, including Langford, joined together in an umbrella organization which became known as AGGROW. This was led by John Bowler from Clanfield. Lynda Scott was the Secretary and Neil Ray the Treasurer. Langford Parish Council was closely involved at AGGROW policy meetings and in fund raising and leafleting. AGGROW amassed considerable funds and recruited professional planning consultants to oppose the extraction plans.

After a long process, in April this year, Oxfordshire County Council announced that it had accepted the recommendations of the OCC Cabinet and minerals strategy group and that a decision had been taken to *continue sand and gravel extraction in existing areas*. Of course, residents in these areas are deeply opposed to further workings and the proposals will be subject to a Public Consultation followed by Public Enquiry involving national Government - but - it would appear that sand and gravel extraction is unlikely to take place in the Langford areawithin the near future.

However a note of caution may be appropriate at this point. AGGROW understands that Option 2 contains ~ 200M tonnes of sand and gravel. It is unlikely that such a valuable resource will be ignored indefinitely.

Affordable Housing

From the time that suggestions were first made, Langford Parish Council has actively supported the project to build a small number of affordable homes between the end of The Elms and the cricket field and is delighted that these have now been completed. We are further delighted to see that these homes have been offered to people with close local connections.

Playground

For many years, Langford Parish Council has had funds earmarked for refurbishing/re-establishing a children's playground on its original site beside the cricket field. Mike Simpson was one of the original parish councillors most committed to the project, but when he stepped

down, the intention of LPC to bring this project to completion remained and Mark Harris has taken on the responsibility for driving this forward. The inextricable link between the building of the affordable houses and the playground meant that work on the playground could not begin until the houses were completed, but during the past nine months Mark has done a lot of background work with obtain support for the playground, research design ideas and more importantly has been seeking additional funding support for the project. Funding applications have been remarkably successful. To date, secured funding is as follows:-

Langford Parish Council	£6500
West Oxfordshire Community Facilities	25% grant up to £9727
Cottsway Welcommunity Fund	£1000
Oxfordshire Community Fund	£2000
Lottery - Awards For All	£8188 (due to be announced early May 2012)

Our designs have been hugely influenced by the ideas from St Christopher's School and the School Council have been fully involved. They have even been to undertake the final inspection of the vintage tractor. We would like to thanks Mrs Phillips (acting School Headmistress) for her support. Our designs have been pulled together by Landscape Architect Carolyn Place from Anthony Stiff Associates, who will help oversee the construction.

In the past two months, stage one works have begun. The Parish Council contracted Mike Simpson to remove old concrete posts and chain-link fencing and roughly level the site. Large climbing boulders have been delivered with transport organised by Leadbitter, the contractor building the affordable houses. Stage One involves the construction of the Zipwire, Nest Swing and the arrival of our vintage tractor, supplied by Patrick Edwards. Weather and the prospect of funding from the lottery delayed the completion of this stage. With the Lottery fund now secure and announced we are now able to push on with the construction of all the play equipment. We have instructed the contractor TS Play to proceed. The equipment has been ordered and as long as the rain is not too heavy, the digger should start on Thursday 10th May.

It is hoped (weather dependant) that the playground will be formally opened to coincide with the Queen's Jubilee celebrations.

We will still need to raise further money to landscape the wider area and we would love to add benches, bins etc.

Village Website www.langfordGL7.co.uk

This has been live for some months and looks to be a great success - though putting in simply Langford Parish Council may take you to an unexpected location! We recommend **langfordGL7**.

The website has many features including details of the Parish Council, a Langford picture gallery, a diary of events and galleries of particular events - such as the recent Duck Race. The intention is that groups within the village - for example the Cricket Club - will have their own area and that people can up-load information and news. We would love to hear your feedback.