

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE AGM – MAY 2015

Council personnel

Jim Johnston stood down from the council a year ago, and we were delighted that Andrew Clemons agreed to be co-opted to fill his place. At the recent election Catherine Jones decided not to stand. I would like to record our thanks to Jim and Catherine for their work on the council over past years.

At the election Ian Corrigan joined the council. Due to circumstances beyond his control Andrew Bushell, as an existing councillor, was unable to place his nominations papers in the time allowed, and thus as there was a space available we have co-opted Andrew back onto the council.

Planning issues

The major issue affecting us has been the potential **Carterton West** housing development, located in the Shill valley on Alvescot Down between Kencot and Carterton. This site is not part of the Carterton Town Council masterplan which was recently approved by the council. The masterplan proposals accept the sites for housing development identified by West Oxfordshire District Council in its Local Plan – Carterton East and sites to the north and in the town itself. However, it does seem likely that Carterton West may come back into consideration from about 2031. Whilst Langford is not directly affected the council does feel strongly that the Shill Valley and Alvescot Down are not appropriate areas for major development. At the same time we do accept there is a need nationally to provide more housing and to allow retail centres such as Carterton to thrive.

Within the village there have been a number of individual plot planning applications, to which the council has responded in accordance with the planning guidelines we adopted two years ago.

In village matters

Promoting **road safety** remains a prime concern of the Parish Council. After placing a first flashing speed sign on the Filkins Road entrance to the village, we felt that its success justified investment in a further sign. Thus we have placed a second flashing speed sign at The Leys end of the village. We will continue to review whether we should work towards additional signs. We are grateful to Councillor Peter Handley for his support in obtaining funding towards the cost of the speed sign.

We have made use of a WODC grant to reserve a **defibrillator**. We are finalising where it would best be placed. The council's view is that the Village Hall is on balance the best location, and we hope that the Village Hall Committee will agree to this proposal. Once the defibrillator is placed we plan to organise some training sessions in its use, though prior training is not a requirement in its use as voice-activated guidance is in-built with the device. Our thanks to Ian Burton for offering to install the defibrillator and to oversee its maintenance.

We are about to replace the **signboards** at the Village Hall, and accept that the signboard at The Elms may need replacing before too long.

We put up a village **Christmas tree** at the War Memorial for the second year – many thanks to Andrew Bushell for again taking the lead on this. We feel that the tree will now become a regular annual feature.

Those who were involved in our annual **litter pick** in March felt that this year there was less litter to collect than in some previous years, which is a good sign. There are still some concerns about **dog fouling** although the non scooping of poop is limited a very small minority of owners – our thanks to the majority who do the right thing. We have previously put up signs to remind people, and if necessary could consider dog bins though this would incur costs which we are reluctant to incur just because a small minority seem unprepared to their bit.

The Council has recently given its support to trialling a **community mailing list** to which any parishioners can voluntarily subscribe. Community mailing lists have been shown to work well in villages and we hope that our scheme will become established with time – currently about 35 households are signed up. The community mailing list will provide a forum for a range of communications – village notices, alerts about possible suspicious activities, lost and found, wanted and for sale notices etc. As always with such things this may take a bit of time to get established and to settle down into a practical mode of operation and the Council will keep its progress under review.

The council is delighted that the **Cricket Club** continues to flourish – it is a great to see one of Langford's long standing institutions in such good health. There were a few concerns raised about parking at The Wickets and the council has worked closely with the cricket club to minimise any problems.

Council finances

The Parish Council's aim has always been to go about its business supporting the village and its activities in a way that is both unobtrusively efficient and cost effective. After last year making a small increase in the **precept** (the money we raise through the local rates), this year we have reduced our precept to its previous level. The Langford precept is below the average for West Oxfordshire.

We recognise that cuts mean that the District and County Councils may not be able to provide quite the level of service to village communities that they have done in the past, and that we should be able to step in if necessary. We believe we have the necessary small reserve to achieve this, and should a particular project arise which requires some additional funding we would be in a position to make a one-off increase in the precept whilst still keeping it cost efficiently low.

Richard Kemp
Chairman - May 2015