

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE AGM – MAY 2018

Council personnel

I am pleased to report that the composition of the Council has remained unchanged over the past year. My thanks to all of my colleagues on the council, and to our Clerk Ann Tyldesley, for their work over the year.

Planning issues

The past year has been free of major planning issues potentially affecting Langford. Within the village there has been a fairly typical number of **planning applications**, most uncontentious. Where villagers have been concerned about planning proposals the council has tried to consult both applicants and anyone concerned so that all views are reflected in the council's responses to West Oxfordshire, the planning authority. The Parish Council has continued to follow our published planning guidelines when considering new applications. These guidelines can be found on the parish website.

While not strictly a planning matter we remain very conscious of the **parking** issues linked to the school, which remains a matter of considerable concern to residents near St Christopher's. The Council has tried to broker for an option to provide some off-road car parking space but to date without success, as cost continues to be the limiting factor. We will continue to explore options and do our best to find ways to mitigating parishioners' concerns, while recognising that this is not an easy issue to solve satisfactorily.

In village matters

First to report on two causes for some celebration. **The Bell** reopened in December and seems to be thriving (partly with the help Giles Coren and his January review). Having a village pub again is a boon the Langford we wish Pater and Tom and their staff all the best for the Bell's continuing success.

Secondly improved **broadband** is finally arriving – you wait ages for a bus and then two come along together. Superfast from Openreach is due to come online very soon, while Gigaclear and continuing to lay their cabling for ultrafast. Many thanks to Ian Burton who continues to monitor this area for the Council.

We have continued our focus on **maintenance work** around the village, as reductions in funding from central government to local councils mean that both Oxfordshire County Council and West Oxfordshire District Council have had less to spend on maintenance work they have traditionally carried out. For example, the Council now sprays pavements and road edges and cuts the grass on some road verges, as well as doing regular litter collections in and around the village. The Council has arranged the replacement of all the Langford name signs on the entrance roads into the village – thanks to Mark Harris for taking the lead on this.

Giles Coren's review of the Bell was also a column in praise of St Matthew's and its beautiful churchyard, which now looks so well maintained. The Council is very pleased to have contributed to this state of affairs by our annual grant to the Parochial Church Council of £700 towards the cost of **churchyard maintenance**. The PCC continues to do sterling work to raise the very considerable funds needed to keep our magnificent Grade 1 listed church in reasonable repair. The big fund-raising effort this year will be the **Langford Gardens Open** on Sunday June 10 – many thanks to all the people who are opening their gardens or helping at the event.

As is our responsibility we continue to monitor the **playground** for safety factors, and we have carried out a few minor safety improvements as suggested in the latest ROSPA report – thanks to Ian Corrigan for doing this work. We have set aside a modest sum for ongoing maintenance work this year.

Once again for the fifth year we put up our village **Christmas tree**, and organised carol singing with mulled wine and mince pies for the ceremonial turning on of the lights in early December. For the first time we placed a memorial plaque by the tree in fond memory of Andrew Bushell, whose initiative the village Christmas tree had originally been.

This November sees the centenary anniversary of the end of the Great War. We would like to mark anniversary in a number of ways, perhaps by spotlighting our War Memorial in the lead up to November 11, by joining the national bell ring, and by holding a special combined service at the memorial and then the church.

The **Village Hall** continues to be one the village's great assets. The Village Hall Management Committee has been restructured a little to bring its composition back to its original scheme, by increasing its numbers and by inviting representatives from village organisations such as the PCC, Cricket Club and Parish Council – thanks to Mark Harris and Ian Burton for volunteering to our the Council representatives on the management committee (and for taking on the roles of Secretary and Treasurer respectively). Our thanks go to the management committee members of long standing who have stepped down this year, and to Penny and Andy for continuing to organise the monthly Saturday morning social in the hall. Other village social and fundraising activities in the hall, such as quiz nights, Harvest lunch, bingo, jumble sales and Duck Race breakfast are not only valuable fundraisers but also delightful occasions for Langford people to meet up. Thank you to all those who work hard to organise them.

Whilst not within the remit of the Parish Council, there are two councillors on the **Langford Charity** board of trustees. The main role of the Charity is to manage the **village allotments**, and in this task many thanks go to Andrew Clemons for his voluntary work as Allotments Manager.

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.

You may have noticed from your council tax summary that this year the Parish Council has raised the amount it collects (what is called the "**parish precept**") by just over 12%. In reality the sum raised through the parish precept is modest – about £6000 per annum. This represents the only money coming to the Parish Council and we use it to cover a range of small costs, including public liability insurance, and maintaining the defibrillator. The largest amount goes on our maintenance work around the village, including looking after the playground, replacing the village signs, clearing the pavements and road edges, keeping the war memorial area neat and tidy, and contributing to the churchyard maintenance costs. We hope parishioners feel that our efforts to maintain the environment of the village are good value for their contributions to our funding through the annual parish precept.

Richard Kemp
Chairman - May 2018