

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – MAY 2019

Council Membership

As there were no new nominations to stand for the Parish Council at the recent local elections, and all five existing councillors agreed to stand again, I can report that the composition of the Council has remains unchanged from my report last year. My thanks to all of my colleagues on the council, and to our Clerk Ann Tyldersley, for their work over the year.

Activities Fund

The Parish Council is always keen to support village initiatives, and so I am very pleased to report that the Council has now established an Activities Fund specially designed to help fulfil this aim. Full details of the Activities Fund, and an application proforma, can be found on the village website. The sorts of things we would like to support include:

- Activities and projects for young people in the village to do in the village
- Activities which support older people continuing to live independently
- Transport or local car share schemes
- Anything that benefits the local environment
- Anything that helps a rural community build a more sustainable future

This is not an exhaustive list, but aims to offer some examples. We would be keen to hear of anything that aligns with these examples and creates local good. The Fund's first grant has been to support the first Langford Arts Festival, of which more below.

We envisage that the Activities Fund can be co-ordinated with the Langford Charity. The Charity has slightly more restriction on what it can support, but between the two we hope to be able to foster local initiatives and to help where there is need.

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**, mostly uncontentious. Where villagers have been concerned about planning proposals the council has tried to consult both applicants and anyone concerned so that that all views are reflected in the council's responses to West Oxfordshire. 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 continued **parking** issues linked to the school. The Council has tried to broker a couple of options to provide some off road car parking space near St Christopher's but to date without success. We will continue to explore options and do our best to find ways of mitigating parishioners' concerns, while recognising that this is not an easy issue to solve satisfactorily.

In village matters

Superfast **broadband** has finally arrived in Langford, with two options available to households and businesses – superfast from BT and ultrafast fibre broadband from Gigaclear. Gigaclear is very kindly providing an ultrafast broadband connection to the Village Hall at no cost, for which we are grateful. The laying of the fibre cabling was largely troublefree, but there are a few snagging issues outstanding which the Council is following up – not least the damage to the drainage and road opposite the bungalows by the church.

We have revamped the **village website** (www.langfordgl7.co.uk), so that it is much more interactive and informative about local news and events. Our hope is that the website (alongside the googlegroups email) will become a main means of communication for Langford residents. Very many thanks to Dom Potter for all the time and effort he put into developing the new website

We have continued our focus on **maintenance work** around the village, as reductions in funding from central government to local councils mean that both OCC and WODC have had less to spend on maintenance work they have traditionally carried out. For example the Parish 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. Our major piece of work has been to replace the ageing posts around the War Memorial; the “new” posts are made of seasoned oak so should last well. We hope that people like the innovation of some directional carvings on the new posts. Many thanks to Tom Marshall for kindly putting the posts into place so effectively. As the grass around the War memorial was getting rather ragged we are now about to reseed the whole area. The Memorial itself needs some maintenance work and we are exploring how best this can be done and funded.

As is our responsibility we continue to monitor the **playground** for safety factors, and we have carried out some maintenance work and minor safety improvements as suggested in the latest ROSPA report.

Once again for the sixth 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. This November saw the centenary anniversary of the end of the Great War, and this occasion was marked with a very well attended special service and photo exhibition. We also for the first time spotlighted the War Memorial in the lead up to Remembrance Day – something we think we might do again each year.

The **Village Social** on the first Saturday of each month has continued this year – everyone from the village is very welcome to come along for tea and biscuits and a chat. Our thanks go to Penny and Andy for their organisation of this activity.

While not directly involved the Parish Council is fully supportive of **fund raising activities** within the village, for example the work of the Village Hall Committee and the PCC. This year there are two new village events to raise money jointly for the church and the hall. The first **Langford Arts Festival** will be held on the weekend of June 8/9, with a selling exhibition in the church, and refreshments in the Village Hall. Full details on the LAF website (langfordartsfestival.co.uk). The hope is that the Festival can build up a reputation and become a regular event for Langford. Many thanks to Ginny Bushell and her team for all

their organisation work, and to Dom for setting up the website. On Saturday September 7 we will hold a **Village Day**, a modern reincarnation of our old village fete. There will be lots happening in the field opposite the church, including a dog show, and produce show. In the evening there will be a celidh band and barbeque. We hope very much that this will be a delightful occasion for everyone in Langford to get together and enjoy, all in a good cause.

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.

The Parish Council raises its funding from what is called the **parish precept**, which is collected through each household's local rates. We are currently looking at our procedures for setting the precept so that we can achieve the twin aims of having as modest a precept as possible consistent with holding a prudent level of reserves in case of any major expenditure requirements.

A main reason for building up a reasonable reserve fund is that at some stage we will need a rolling programme to replace the equipment at the playground.

Looking Ahead

As a Parish Council we see one of our roles as encouraging social interaction and participation within and across all parts of the village. Our hope is that the Activities Fund will contribute to this aim, as will events such as the Arts Festival, Gardens Open and the Village Day. We are very receptive to all other ideas about how more social interaction and participation in village life might be achieved.

The Council recognises that limited local government funding is now a fact of life, and that we will need to be increasingly self-sufficient in terms of maintenance actions in and around the village.

Richard Kemp
Chairman - May 2019