

**Minutes of Old Marston Parish Annual Meeting
Monday 13th May 2019, 7.00pm at Mortimer Hall**

Present: 23 members of the public, Duncan Hatfield (Chairman of Old Marston Parish Council) and Tim Cann (The Clerk)

19/01 Apologies for absence

Parish Councillors Nils Bartleet, Peter Cox, Michael Cadd, Michael Bates, Patricia Hall, County Councillor Mark Lygo, City Councillors Mary Clarkson & Michael Haines.

19/02 Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 15th May 2018

The minutes of the meeting were approved as a true record.

19/03 Matters Arising (omitting those for which an agenda heading follows)

The new noticeboard opposite the Church in Elsfield Road has been obtained but needs installing.

19/04 Chairman's Report

Welcome to the Annual Parish Meeting for Old Marston. As we reflect on the past year, we can see that Old Marston has faced some considerable challenges and upheavals and continues to do so.

Planning

One of the most debated and at times contentious issues locally are items related to planning in various forms. At the beginning of 2018 we were made aware of a proposal to build at least 750 houses on land owned by Christ Church College below Elsfield, on green belt land, which would have a large impact on the environment and traffic in the parish. The Parish Council has debated this issue and submitted their comments to the planning department, prior to the closing date for submissions. We will be watching to see what happens next.

Concerns have been raised regarding the loss of a community asset, the Jack Russell pub. The building has been demolished and the flats that were to replace it remain unbuilt and the site a dangerous eyesore.

After much opposition and concerns raised locally, planning permission was granted for the building of the Swan School and the demolition and expansion of the Harlow Site. A lot of misunderstanding and conflict of opinion has been expressed throughout the community. Firstly people are asking why Meadowbrook College is consolidating its services on this site rather than at another of their sites, considering the effects on traffic, limited space and being next to a large residential area. Secondly, residents have asked why the Swan School could not be built on the land vacated by the Harlequins Rugby Club, which is larger than the present site, instead of taking the St Nicholas School recreational ground? Also concerns have been raised about traffic crossing the busy cycle track – why not build an underpass instead of putting the lives of the children cycling to school at risk? We have noticed that the local media have not been impartial in their reporting of this development, making out that it is popular with local residents, which various meetings have shown otherwise. Also there have been many instances of construction traffic using Raymond Road and other residential areas as a thoroughfare, causing some damage to trees and hedges. We will continue to monitor this project. The Access to Headington road development scheme has been a part of our lives this past year and is already several months past its completion date. There has been a negative effect on the area with the loss of trees, worsening pot holes in Cherwell Drive and

Marsh Lane, confusing new road layouts, with accidents occurring, damage to houses caused by vibrations from heavy vehicles hitting pot holes. We are pleased that road surfacing work will be carried out later this year and trees will be replanted, including a few extra.

The Oxford Plan 2036 policy document is looking at possible sites around Oxford, including three in the parish (Hill View Farm at Mill Lane, land west of Mill Lane and Marston Paddock in Butts Lane), for development of new housing. The council have expressed concerns regarding development on greenbelt land and traffic.

Parish Council

There was an election for the Parish Council and we welcomed new members Micky Bates, Alistair Morris and Mary James. After thirty-two years Anjie Tiwari stepped down and Tony Greenfield resigned – the Council is thankful for their contributions over the years. The Council also co-opted Louise Millford and Alan Spence. The council is updating its procedures and policies to become GDPR compliant and is working towards obtaining a Local Government Quality Award Scheme and regularly review all its policies and procedures. There is a website, Facebook and Twitter site but the Council is looking at ways at how to communicate with the local community. The Council have been looking for a site for another notice board after losing the site outside the old Jack Russell.

The Parish Council is looking at ways to cut costs and to do its part in protecting the environment. It is investing in electronic tablets to reduce the amount of paper used. Also it has issued a statement of commitment to review the work it does and its impact on the environment.

As the County Council continues to be under financial pressures and reduced central government funding, cuts back what it provides, the Parish Council will in the future look at what it may take on, such as possibly hedge cutting or pruning grass verges. Also we remember Alun Jones, former chairman of the Parish Council who passed away last year. He also contributed a lot of information and documents on the local history of Marston which can be found on the Parish Council website.

Local Works

In May the Parish Council ordered the building of the path from the cemetery in Elsfeld Road to join the path at the Marsh Lane junction, paid mostly from Community Infrastructure Levy. The council is looking at the possibility of solar powered street lighting in Elsfeld Road as a way to improve safety. The Parish Council contributed towards the cost of the installation of a new street light in Church Lane. The Council is also investigating the possibility of installing another light in School Lane after concerns raised about safety when it is dark.

Boundary Review

The Boundary Commission has conducted a review of the ward and division boundaries of Oxford, which have been implemented, although Marston Ward remains unchanged. Oxford's Parish Councils were invited to a private meeting with the boundary commission for their comments. The Parish Council is looking at the current parish boundaries and have put in a request to expand the parish boundaries. Local residents will be consulted before a decision is made.

Local Groups and Organisations

There are numerous local groups and organisations in the parish and the Parish Council seeks to work with and support them when it is in the interests of the parish, and in some cases has given small grants. Three new groups that have been formed recently are the Oxford Road and Elsfield Road Residents Association who are concerned with the problems of traffic in the village, the Protection of Old Marston and Elsfield who are concerned with the Lower Elsfield development and other threats to the local area, and the Marston Community Garden group who are interested in developing the local environment including the planting of flowers and trees in the parish.

We once again welcomed the Headington Road Runners who annually hold a 5 mile run starting at Boults Lane Recreation Ground, who raised money for Oxsrade.

OxClean

This was our twelfth annual litterpick around the parish. This year there were thirty volunteers and a huge amount of litter and fly tipping collected – thank you to everyone who took part.

Boults Lane Recreational Ground and Pavilion

The pavilion is now complete and in regular use, both as a football pavilion and a meeting room. There are a few issues remaining such as enclosing the meter which is in the old pavilion. When this is done, then the asbestos will be removed from the old pavilion before it is demolished, making way for additional parking.

Since the play equipment was removed to make way for the new pavilion, the parish council has been looking at replacing it. Taking advice from the Football Foundation, the Football Association, Marston Saints, City Council planning officers and Playing Fields Association the Parish Council have delayed the provision of the equipment. However, the Council hope to have it installed soon. The council have consulted local children. Delivering both house to house and at St Nicholas Primary School, a questionnaire to find out what sort of equipment they would like.

Law and Order

The local police have been looking at issues of parking in residential areas and rat running through the village and Elms Drive. There was concern when the police failed to attend a break in at Salford Stores where the staff were threatened and stock damaged. There have been instances of theft and police advised keeping items locked away and not on view.

Fête and Family Fun Day

In June we had a very successful fête and family fun day at the Victoria Arms, supported by the Parish Council and St Nicholas Parish Church, and bringing different local groups together, blessed with superb weather, and we are looking forward to the next one in 2019.

Local Environment

The newly formed Marston Community Garden Group have planted bulbs and trees, including some on Parish Council land. Also the Parish Council are liaising with local residents, Thames Water, Environment Agency and Exeter College in order to remove rubbish, sediment and over-growth in Marston Brook, to improve the flow of the water and reduce the risk of flooding and to keep it maintained. There is concern about parking on the land beside the Orchard Triangle, which has turned the area into mud. The Parish Council are therefore looking at moving the fence and planting trees or shrubs on the land. It was decided to leave the land at the edge of the cemetery as it will be needed in the future when burial space runs out in the current cemetery in the fenced area.

Traffic and Transport

Traffic and parking are an ongoing issue in Old Marston. The council approached the Highways department asking if they would install additional bollards in Raymond Road as cars regularly park on the pavements when children are walking to school, putting lives at risk. They refused saying they wanted to see what happens regarding the Swan School development.

Controlled Parking Zones are being looked at by Highways for Old Marston. Local residents have been consulted and now we are awaiting the findings.

Once again, the Oxford Half Marathon was imposed on the residents of Old Marston regardless of taking into account the views of local residents or the impact on the community. We hope any future events will take more notice of the concerns of the local community.

Marston Remembers

11th November 2018 was the one hundredth anniversary of Armistice Day. The Parish Council obtained four silhouettes and a brass band concert was held to remember those who returned as well as those who didn't in the conflict. The Parish Council gave a donation towards the event.

As we look towards the future, we know there will be challenges facing us but we look forward to seeing what the next year brings.

19/05 Public Participation

Painting of the village side of the underpass – This was in the process of being turned into a Street Art Facility. There has been a lot of graffiti on the play equipment in the Mortimer Hall Recreation Ground, in fact all across the City. In other areas where a Street Art area has been provided they have seen a dramatic drop in graffiti. The Parish Council has agreed to the project subject to costings, of course it may not work but until tried we do not know. To give some idea of cost the school side project cost approximately £3,000.

How much has been spent on the new pavilion?

The exact figures are unsure but approximately £250,000.

How much rent is collected?

£1.00 however the Council re-claimed the VAT on the building costs. This meant it was classified as a Non-business facility, VAT regulations stipulate the maximum that can be received in income from a non-business activity is £1.00
It was explained that it was a community asset, 50-60 children use the pavilion and recreation ground for football, it has been used by a Yoga class and dog walkers can use the toilets, refreshments and chat.

What comments did the Parish Council make on the Elsfield and Cumberledge Close Developments?

Peter Williams spoke about the Lower Elsfield development, the Council's views and the comments it made. He also said the consultation period for the Elsfield development had passed, however, after the changes from the recent elections the South Oxfordshire District Council's outlook may well change and people need to be ready to lobby any new councillors. Peter Williams also spoke about the threat on the Green Belt land around Old Marston, the increased traffic and effects on the environment.

What is happening with the Access to Headington?

It was explained how the Parish Council had been lobbying for information, however, it had become very difficult to get any information out of the construction company.

Are the Parish Council and Marston Community Garden Group working together on the burial ground?

Duncan Hatfield explained that at this moment in time the Council had decided not to allow any planting in the burial ground. There had been an instance where another Council had allowed the extension to their burial ground to be used as a playground, however, when it was needed for burials they were unable to reclaim it.

Can there be more cycle racks?

Duncan Hatfield said that obviously as the Highways Authority the County Council would make any decision on any cycle racks located on any roads or verges. However, the Parish Council would look at any suggested locations on its land.

What powers do the Parish Council have?

Duncan Hatfield advised that, although the powers of a Parish Council are limited, it is a consultee to all planning applications and helps to bring people together to make change. It needs to look more at how it can connect with the community.
It was suggested that the Parish Council go to some Marston Community Garden Group meetings and get involved.

In future could this meeting be separate and more social.

Duncan Hatfield said that it had been felt for some time that a different format should be tried, so perhaps now is the time.

Other Parish Councils have speed cameras, could Old Marston?

From the Community Forum a speed gun was purchased for Old Marston, Northway and Headington areas but Thames Valley Police HQ advised that it was the wrong sort and could not be used. It gave an accurate reading of a driver's speed when non-police operators can only use ones which give either a smiley face or a sad face! However, it is still on-going.

Parking is a problem in the whole of Old Marston

There are parking issues throughout the parish, police operation in Raymund Road/Arlington Drive and Elms Drive where cars were booked, however, the police do not have the resources to continue monitoring.

Can there be more of these meetings, perhaps 4 – 6 per year?

This would enable people to discuss issues, make the Council aware and bring people together. Duncan Hatfield said this was possible, he could not promise miracles but it was worth a try.

Other areas have newsletters which are delivered to every household. Why can't Old Marston?

Duncan Hatfield said that in the past newsletters had been tried but relied on someone producing it and then volunteers to deliver. It was a very hit and miss situation which fizzled out after a while. It was suggested doing one or two hardcopies to start, delivering to every house, then ask them if they want to continue to sign up to an electronic version.

Everyone criticises the Parish Council but how many come to meetings

A discussion followed where it was felt that many people will only attend a meeting if they feel something is wrong, otherwise they stayed away.

There are two events coming up locally:-

- Court Place Farm Allotments open day Saturday 18th May 2pm until 4pm
- Several Gardens open around the parish in early June.

Bullet points of suggestions:

- **Inform Clerk of local information**
- **Hold more Parish meetings**
- **Disseminate information – leaflets, distribution**
- **More bike racks**
- **Climate change.**

19/06 Finance Report

The budget for 2018/19 was £70,950 but the actual spend was £83,141, of that £20,370 was on the new footpath along the Elsfield Road linking up with Marsh Lane.

Income for the year was £104,379

The accounts have yet to be audited by the internal auditor or external auditors so may change, but only slightly.

The annual report will be available once the accounts have been audited which will be later this year.

19/07 Correspondence No items.

The Annual Parish Meeting ended at 8:50pm