

Old Marston Parish Council

Annual Report

1st April 2019 - 31st March 2020

Objectives

- To represent the local community's interests
- To support local organisations and activities
- To help provide amenities, such as allotments, burial grounds, recreation grounds etc. and
- To help look after all aspects of the Parish of Old Marston.

Parish Councillors 2019-2020

Duncan Hatfield – (Chairman)

Michael Bates

Nils Bartleet (Retired July 2019)

Michael Cadd

Peter Cox

Patricia Hall

Mary James

Louise Milford (Co-opted January 2019)

Alistair Morris

Michael O'Keefe

Alan Spence (Co-Opted January 2019)

Charlotte Vinnicombe (Co-Opted October 2019)

Peter Williams

Oxford City Councillors

Mary Clarkson

Michael Haines

Oxfordshire County Councillor

Mark Lygo

Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer

Tim Cann

Internal Auditor

Richard James. FMAAT ATT

External Auditor

Moore LLP

Introduction

Over the centuries, poor relief passed from the monasteries to the church vestries and in combined parishes to the Boards of Guardians. Vestries were given power to provide lighting and charge a rate on the householders, another charge was permitted for highway work within the parish, in addition to the poor rate. This was the beginnings of local government as we know it. Boroughs were historically self-governing; the whole country was parished and counties well established.

The demand for services, and the organisation of them, resulted in groups of parishes being joined into Rural District Councils. As a result of the apportionment of services to those councils the parishes were left with no mandatory functions, but parish government was formalised in 1894 in two ways. Parishes with elected councils were created; where councils were not elected the district council could appoint one.

The first Marston Parish meeting, where candidates to be Parish Councillors were nominated, was held on the 4th December 1894, with councillors signing a declaration of acceptance to office at their next meeting on the 31st December 1894.

The first elected chairman was a Rev. Charles Morris, the clerk, which was an unpaid position and one of the councillors, a Richard Lambourn and treasurer was Mr. W. Marycotts.

At their meeting on the 15th January 1895, they elected Mr A. Evans as vice-chairman, agreed unanimously that the public would be let in but "...anyone wilfully interrupting would be excluded from meetings for twelve months.", reporters would also be allowed in and a search for suitable land for allotments started.

However, the first 'elections' as such, which was just a show of hands from those present, did not take place until the 23rd March 1896.

The Council met quarterly, and most of the business, for the next 20 years or so, seem to mainly evolve around obtaining land for allotments and the day-to-day management of them. Although they did agree to pay two shillings a night for the six Winter months and a shilling a night for the six Summer months for lighting and cleaning of the School, the building which now houses the Church Hall.

On the 27th March 1917 it was proposed to obtain a carriage with wheels for funerals in the parish, but this was deferred to a future meeting and never mentioned again.

At their meeting of the 22nd July 1918 Brasenose College proposed to increase the rent for the land being used for allotments from £2 5 shillings per acre to £4 per acre. Councillors were astounded at this increase as many plots were now vacant due to tenants being away on military service. The Clerk wrote to the Agricultural Board to see if the college was within its rights to increase the rent so much especially during war time, the Agricultural Board replied that the college were within its rights. After two public meetings with plot holders, it was agreed to pay rent of £20 but under the

agreement that any termination of the lease could only happen either in September or April.

The Parish of Marston, at that time, covered all of what we now know as Old Marston and New Marston running as far east as St Clements and north up to Elsfield.

As with everything, things have moved on from those days, especially with the passing of the 1972 Local Government Act which is still one of the main legislations for Parish and Town Councils, although added to this is the ever-increasing legislation such as the Localism Acts, Governance & Accountability Regulations and Transparency Regulations, etc.

The Clerk is now a paid officer of the Council, there to advise the council on matters such as law and good practice, as well as providing administrative, financial, and clerical services.

However, it is still the local authority that makes decisions on behalf of the people in the parish. It is the level of government closest to the community, with the district authority (Oxford City Council) above it in the hierarchy.

As it is the authority closest to the people, parish councils are invariably the first people go with concerns or ideas. For this reason, they are a vital part of any community.

Chairman's Annual Report 2020

As we come to May 2020, we are living in a world very different from this time last year. The work of the Parish Council has changed, especially with the increasing use of technology, holding meetings remotely and the use of social media. We are also reducing the amount of paper used with most councillors using electronic tablets. Also, the parish clerk and councillors regularly attend training sessions as a commitment to increasing quality.

In 2019 Pat Hall was elected as our new Vice-Chairman. We also said farewell to Nils Bartleet who retired after more than thirty years welcomed active local resident Charlotte Vinnicombe to the council.

At our 2019 annual meeting the chairman gave a summary of the previous year's work by the council and listened to local residents raising their concerns. Residents told us that they would like more public meetings so they can raise local concerns and to invite relevant public servants whose role is to deal with these issues. This also helps the council to make more informed decisions. We held a meeting in late 2019 and will be hold more with local environment and traffic being key issues.

In response to concerns regarding the environment, the council formed an environment committee and is supporting tree planting in parish and other local initiatives through grants. Also, we consulted with representatives from Oxford City Council Parks and Naturehood.

We also held our thirteenth annual OxClean event organised by the chairman at the end of February. OxClean is a city-wide event started by and co-ordinated by the Oxford Civic Society with over two thousand volunteers. There were twenty-two local residents who joined us in Old Marston. In addition, we had a team who cleaned the street signs in various parts of the parish. We have positive feedback from the community and are planning future events.

The Roy Garner Pavilion is now in regular use with most technical issues resolved. It is a venue that is available to other groups as well as Marston Saints. However, we were sorry to hear that in April 2020 that Roy Garner himself had passed away. In his fifty years as parish clerk, he had set aside money that enabled us to purchase and install the pavilion debt free. Our thoughts are with his family. The demolition of the old pavilion was delayed due to arson by a rough sleeper, which added to the costs. Because of the large amount of asbestos, a specialist company was contracted to undertake the work.

Due to the competing demands of the Football Foundation, the Football Association, Marston Saints, Oxford City Planning Department and the Playing Field Association, installation of the play equipment was delayed. The choice of equipment was based on feedback of local children but was restricted by limited funds, but we hope to add more at a later date. Fencing will be installed once the ground has dried so the machinery can be supported. Both play areas are officially closed due to government restrictions until further notice.

Traffic, transport, and parking are major issues in the parish, and we are continually looking at ways we can help. A representative from Oxford Safer Streets who suggested that there was option of closing some streets either temporarily or more long term to reduce traffic and pollution, but councillors suggested that this will move the problem to another part of the parish.

The Access to Headington Scheme has still not complete and is already over a year behind, and traffic in parish seems as bad if not worse. The poor state of the roads in Cherwell Drive and Marsh Lane have meant that there is increased heavy traffic hitting the potholes, causing structural damage to some properties along these routes. The siting of the cycle track across Oxford Road has also caused some near accidents. The parish council along with our local city and county councillors are continually raising our concerns with the County Council.

The City Council has proposed controlled parking zones for the whole parish. Some residents welcome this as a way to prevent non-residents parking in residential streets, whereas others are concerned about the cost of the scheme and how this will affect genuine visitors and health care professionals. We will continue to raise any concerns as they arise.

The Swan School and Meadowbrook development is nearing completion and we are grateful for the site manager Tony regular feedback and addressing our concerns.

Initially some heavy plant traffic was getting lost on the Carter Estate, but thankfully this been stopped. Local residents have expressed concerns about a potential increase in traffic and pupils in residential areas. There is an unofficial proposal to make Marston Ferry Road a gated street – we will monitor this and raise concerns if likely.

The parish council are looking into adopting the road that links Oxford Road with St Nicholas School as it is not owned, no one is responsible for maintaining it. We have also installed bollards alongside the fence to prevent parking on the grass verge as well as along the road.

The Boundary Commission has slightly amended the ward and division boundaries in Oxford after a period of consultation. The parish council is also looking at expanding the parish boundaries. We have submitted our proposals to the City Council who are the body legally responsible for making a decision on this. They will in turn be consulting local residents.

In 2018, Christ Church College put forward a proposal to build several hundred houses on land they owned below Elsfeld village. A public meeting was held with the developers and representatives of the college. The development will be built alongside the current Barton Park development. Local residents have expressed concern about the increase in traffic, pollution and parking in an area already suffering considerably from these issues and loss of green space. However, the 2019 local government elections brought a change of leadership in South Oxfordshire Council, the planning authority for the area. They are taking a new look at the plans and it is believed that there may be a significant reduction in the size of the development. We will find out in due course and will continue to raise concerns on behalf of Old Marston residents.

As part of our continuing commitment to the safety and welfare of the local community, the parish council has agreed to fund streetlights in various areas around the parish. These will be along Elsfeld Road, School Lane (between Oxford Road and St Nicholas School), Back Lane (alongside the school) and by the play areas in Mortimer Hall recreational ground and Boults Lane recreational ground. These will be solar power lights the same as the one in Church Lane, and quite cheap. The county highways department have agreed to the installation but have raised concerns about a technical issue with the model. When this has been resolved, they will install the lights.

The council has several committees which help spread to workload of the council, making it easier to cover more business in the main meetings. Committees can be convened at short notice should an urgent matter require a swift response. Members of the public are welcome to attend our committee meetings. In response to the concerns relating to environmental and climatic issues, the council have formed the

Environment Committee to look at how we can take action to alleviate the negative impact locally.

The parish council is a statutory consultee on planning applications. This means that before any planning application can be decided on by the planning department of the district council, the parish council must be given a copy and an opportunity to review and comment in advance – it is illegal to not do so. We have made complaints about the delayed development of the former Jack Russell Public House, and the inadequate and dangerous fencing around the building site.

In January, the highways department closed Oxford Road through the village to allow replacement of gas mains. Unfortunately, they failed to inform residents and local businesses until it was just about to happen. This meant that the 14A bus service was unable to serve the village, leaving a number of vulnerable residents stranded. The first time most found out was when we published it on our website and Facebook and Twitter sites. Thankfully, the work finished a few weeks early.

In addition to managing our properties, the council is also committed to the locally community. We work with local organisations and groups, including Mortimer Hall, who work for the benefit of local people, including the provision of small grants to assist with their activities. We support sixteen local organisations this year. We gave a grant towards the Family Fun Day/Fête that was held at the Victoria Arms in June. The event was organised by the Landlady Ruthie Bowers who has now moved to Newbury – we wish her the best. We also supplied the fireworks for the firework display held at the Red Lion in November. We also brought together Exeter Collage and the Environment Agency to get the Brooke at the back of Arlington Drive cleared.

The Parish Council exists all year round for the benefit of the local community it represents. We are always keen to hear from local residents about any local issues and what we can do for the good of the community.

Old Marston Parish Councils Action Plan for 2019/20

Roy Garner Pavilion Project:

It has been decided the electric meter will remain in the same location but be protected. This is currently being actioned. An asbestos survey has been done and some asbestos found. The intention this year is to:

- Remove any asbestos from the old building,
- Demolish the old building to increase the parking facilities,
- Resurface the parking area and bay,
- Install Cycle Rack(s)

Play Equipment in Boult's Lane:

Background: The old play equipment was removed to make way for the new pavilion. The old equipment was incredibly old, not meeting current safety standards, so once removed could not be re-used. The Council intend to:

- Consult with all respective parties (Oxford City Council Planning, Football Foundation, etc.) to agree a suitable location for the play equipment,
- If possible, endeavour to obtain grants covering at least much of the cost.

The Council to be a quality awarded council:

- To introduce the necessary policies and procedures to meet the criteria and achieve Foundation and/or Quality Award,
- To ensure these standards are the norm,

Ongoing activities:

Background: Old Marston Parish Council is fortunate to own several facilities such as Mortimer Hall Recreation Ground, Boult's Lane Recreation Ground and Mill Lane Allotments, although the allotments are managed on a day-to-day basis by the allotment association on behalf of the Council. However, with this fortitude is also the burden of upkeep and maintenance. The intention this year is to:

- Ensure the recreation grounds and cemetery are maintained to a high standard, grass cut, and edges strimmed regularly – this is achieved by employing a contractor,
- An annual safety check is performed on all play equipment and any faults actioned – this is achieved by having a contract to ensure done,
- As well as annual safety checks a weekly check is done to ensure ongoing safety of the Council's equipment – the chairman of the appropriate committee checks weekly and gives a report at meetings,
- All trees on Council land are checked at least on a biannual basis and any work needed is actioned – the Clerk gets a tree survey done.

As a consultee by statute, the Parish Council will continue to view planning applications in the Parish and comment accordingly with the best interest of the Community as a whole.

It will also monitor neighbouring developments to ensure the infrastructure, integrity, and quality of life within the Community of the Parish of Old Marston is not compromised.

To act as guardians of the Conservation area.

To seek where possible the opinions of Parishioners concerning issues relating to the Parish.

Administration Report (including finances)

Budget & Precept

General

The budget is a financial plan that the Council is responsible for and should reflect anticipated items of income and expenditure. The income for the Council includes the precept levied on residents as part of their overall Council tax. The level of precept levied should reflect the income and expenditure as well as any adjustment to the level of reserves that the Council wishes to hold at the end of its financial year.

Level of Reserves

This is an important part of the budget setting process. The reserves are held for three main purposes:

- A working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing. This forms part of general reserves
- Reserves to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies and expenditure that the timing or amount is unknown. This also forms part of general reserves,
- Earmarked reserves, to meet project liabilities, this currently includes the Boults Lane Pavilion.

Precept: This is the actual figure which is collected from every household through the Council tax.

Grant: The Oxford City Council gives the Parish Council a grant to assist in the maintenance of public areas owned by the Parish Council which are open to everyone, regardless of whether they are parishioners or not. This includes the two recreation grounds, allotments, and cemetery.

CiL Money: For every new build within the parish the developers pay a Community Infrastructure Levy, of which a percentage goes to the Parish Council.

Cemetery Income: Self-explanatory really, this is the fee collected for burials, headstones, etc.

VAT Returns: The Parish Council can reclaim the VAT paid on non-business activities such as maintaining the recreation grounds.

Wayleaves: Is the consent in writing that allows utility companies to carry out work on privately-owned land. It is a written legal agreement between the company and the land/property owner that grants access to install, maintain or repair network equipment.

Rent: A charge for use of Parish Council land or building.

Others: This was £115 donated from the Victoria Arms as part of the Family Fun Day which the Council donated to local causes, and a refund from the insurance company.

Income

	Actual
Precept	£58,571.56
Grant	£10,000.00
CIL Money	£19,117.28
Cemetery Income	£15,085.00
VAT Returns	£10,295.85
Wayleaves	£43.28
Rents	£510.05
Others	£3,239.00
Interest Received	£1,396.14
TOTAL INCOME	£118,258.16

Expenditure v Budget

	Budget	Actual
Allotments	1,000.00	00.00
Cemetery	500.00	236.67
RoSPA (Play Equipment Safety Check)	300.00	124.20
Roy Garner Pavilion (Maintenance)	1,500.00	1,886.52
Roy Garner Pavilion (Capital)	2,500.00	2,733.00
Grants (s.137)	7,500.00	7,440.00
Administration (Salary, Pension, Tax Etc.)	19,550.00	22,631.34
Stationery		650.05
Software/Hardware	1,300.00	562.55
Legal Advice	250.00	00.00
Council Training	1,500.00	834.00
Insurance	3,500.00	2,899.14
Contractors		
Recreation Grounds	3,750.00	1,152.00
Cemetery	3,500.00	1,596.00
Pest Control	2,500.00	2,270.40
Verti-draining	4,750.00	2,857.20
Tree Maintenance	500.00	4,627.14
Audit Fees (External & Internal)	1,125.00	937.00
Memberships (OALC, SLCC, ICCM, etc.)	1,225.00	1,215.82
General Maintenance	4,000.00	
New Projects (Boults Lane Play Area) Capital	5,000.00	44,677.88
(School Lane Bollards)		1,694.00
Chairman's Expenses	1,000.00	240.60
Miscellaneous		4,341.25
TOTAL	£70,950.00	£105,606.76

Overview

Allotments: The Parish Council owns the allotment site in Mill Lane, it is run on a day-to-day basis by the Old Marston Mill Lane Allotments Association (OMMLAA)

Cemetery: This covers Land Rates, Waste Collection and water usage which is metered.

Recreation Grounds: These are the Mortimer Hall Recreation Ground, Boult's Lane Recreation Ground, and the field in Mill Lane, (on the right of the entrance to the Victoria Arms drive) which although not owned by the Council it is maintained by the Council for local children to play.

Roy Garner Pavilion (Maintenance): This is for the intruder and fire alarm annual service. There was also a faulty shutter which needed repairing.

Roy Garner Pavilion (Capital): Most of this expenditure was for skips and security fencing.

Grant (s.137): This covers the Firework display, the Family Fun Day and grants the Council give to local organisations to assist them in carrying out the work they do. This year the recipients were: - OMMLAA, Marston Community Garden Group, St Nicholas Church Junior Choir, St Nicholas Society of Bell Ringers, OXSRAD, St Nicholas Primary School Gardening Club, Old Marston Over 50's Club, Oxfordshire Association for the Blind, Marston Times, Mortimer Hall, Mortimer Hall Preschool, Marston Saints FC, FOSNS, 43rd Scout Group. A grant was also given to Aspire for membership of those unable to use other more easily accessible transport.

Administration: This covers everything which involves the running of the Council, employing the Clerk; his pay, tax, National Insurance, Pension and out of pocket expenses, training etc. and the payroll services.

Software/Hardware: This is not only the laptop and printer used by the Clerk but also renewal of the domain address to keep the website and emails active.

Legal Advice: Although not used regularly there is an amount budgeted should the Council need any advice involving legal matters.

Council Training: A Council and its staff need to be up to date with local administration, good practice, understand correct procedures and the law. This covers new Councillors training as well as any on training for existing Councillors.

Insurance: By law, the Parish Council have certain insurance cover, it would also be very short sighted of the Council if it did not, protect itself and its property from theft or damage.

Contractors: The Council has several contractors who ensure pests such as moles do not infest the recreation grounds or cemetery, as well as keeping mowed the

Mortimer Hall Recreation Ground, Boult's Lane Recreation Ground and Cemetery. To ensure that all the trees on Parish land are healthy and safe, a survey is done every two years.

Audit Fees: By law, the Council have an internal auditor as well as an external auditor, to ensure public money is correctly spent and appropriate records are kept. Although called an 'Internal Auditor' they are not connected to the Council in any way.

Membership: The Council are members of various organisations to assist them in the running of the Council by providing the latest information, training courses etc. These include the OALC (Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils), ICCM (Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management), Oxfordshire Green Belt, CommunityFirst Oxfordshire. The Clerk is a member of the SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) and ALCC (Association of Local Council Clerks). This also included registering with the Information Commissioners Officer which is essential where GDPR is concerned.

General Maintenance: This is a contingency and used for emergencies such as tree damage etc.

Chairman's Expenses: The Chairman to the Parish Council is the public figure of the Council; he attends functions where they represent the Council. Out of pocket expenses are available, such as travel costs to and from functions, any stationery they may use while carry out the role as chairman.

2019/20 Variations Explained.

Stationery: Expenditure on stationary came down this year since tablets were purchased for Councillors to read the agendas, minutes, and related documents. This resulted in a saving of nearly £300 by the Council not using as many paper, ink, envelopes etc also doing its bit for the environment.

Administration: This increased as the Clerk was given an additional hour a week. The cost of running the office telephone also increased by just over £200.

End of Year Audit

The end of year audit is performed by the external auditor; for 2018-19 a company called Moore Stephen. They have no connection with the Parish Council and in fact have never visited or attended any of their meetings.

There were no issues raised in this year's accounts.

2019-20 Councillors

Duncan Hatfield – Chairman of the Council - Outside Bodies & Committees: Old Marston Charities Trust, Standards & Staffing, Webmaster.

Mick Bates – Committees: Recreation Grounds, Pavilion & Cemetery, Planning

Nils Bartleet – Outside Bodies & Committees: Public Transport, Finance, Internal Reconciliation Review.

Michael Cadd – Outside Bodies & Committees: OXSRAD, Old Marston Charities Trust, Planning (Chairman), Finance, Recreation Grounds, Pavilion & Cemetery.

Peter Cox – Committees: Recreation Grounds, Pavilion & Cemetery (Chairman), Standards & Staffing.

Pat Hall – Committees: Planning, Finance (Chairman), Recreation Grounds, Pavilion & Cemetery, Staffing & Standards.

Mary James – Committees: Planning, Finance, Environment.

Louise Milford – Committees: Finance, Environment.

Alistair Morris – Outside Bodies & Committees: Community & Parish Forum Representative, Environment, Recreation Grounds, Pavilion & Cemetery.

Michael O’Keefe – Outside Bodies & Committees: Mortimer Hall Representative, Pavilion.

Alan Spence – Committees: Pavilion, Recreation Grounds, Pavilion & Cemetery.

Charlotte Vinnicombe – Environment Committee.

Peter Williams – Outside Bodies & Committees: Oxfordshire Green Belt, Planning, Environment, Standards & Staffing (Chairman)

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Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer

Mr Tim Cann

8 Nicholas Avenue, Old Marston, Oxford OX3 0RN

Telephone 01865 203 139 Email clerk@oldmarston-pc.gov.uk

| <u>Council & Committee Meetings 2019/20</u> | | | |
|--|------------|------------|------------|
| Councillor | Attended | Potential | Percentage |
| Michael Bates | 11 | 14 | 79% |
| Michael Cadd | 17 | 19 | 89% |
| Peter Cox | 15 | 15 | 100% |
| Patricia Hall | 17 | 19 | 89% |
| Duncan Hatfield | 11 | 11 | 100% |
| Mary James | 19 | 20 | 95% |
| Louise Milford | 18 | 20 | 90% |
| Alistair Morris | 17 | 18 | 94% |
| Michael O'Keefe | 10 | 13 | 77% |
| Alan Spence | 9 | 14 | 64% |
| Charlotte Vinnicombe | 8 | 10 | 80% |
| Peter Williams | 16 | 17 | 94% |
| TOTALS | 108 | 117 | 92% |

There were 10 Parish Council meetings and 15 Committee meetings.

29 Planning Applications reviewed.

44 members of the public attended Council meetings and 3 Committee meetings.

Old Marston Parish Council

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Michael Bates | Telephone 07789645992 |
| Michael Cadd | Telephone 01865 792 197 |
| Peter Cox | petercox@oldmarston-pc.gov.uk |
| Patricia Hall (Vice-Chair) | pathall@oldmarston-pc.gov.uk |
| Duncan Hatfield (Chairman) | duncan@oldmarston-pc.gov.uk |
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| Louise Milford | louisemilford@oldmarston-pc.gov.uk |
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| Alan Spence | alanspence@oldmarston-pc.gov.uk |
| Charlotte Vinnicombe | charlottevinnicombe@oldmarston-pc.gov.uk |
| Peter Williams | peterwilliams@oldmarston-pc.gov.uk |

COMMITTEES

Staffing & Standards

Chair – Peter Williams
Peter Cox
Pat Hall
Duncan Hatfield

Environment

Chair – Peter Williams
Mary James
Louise Milford
Alistair Morris
Charlotte Vinnicombe

Finance Committee

Chair – Pat Hall
Michael Cadd
Peter Cox
Mary James
Louise Milford

Pavilion, Recreation Grounds & Cemetery

Chair – Peter Cox
Pat Hall
Michael Bates
Michael Cadd
Alistair Morris
Alan Spence

Planning

Chair – Michael Cadd
Michael Bates
Mary James
Louise Milford
Peter Williams

Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer

Tim Cann clerk@oldmarston-pc.gov.uk Telephone 01865 203 139

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Oxford City Councillors

Mary Clarkson cllrmclerkson@oxford.gov.uk

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