

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BOURTON PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL ASSEMBLY HELD  
WEDNESDAY 24 MAY 2023 AT 1930 HRS IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

**PRESENT**

Cllr Nial Ledingham (Chairman) Cllr David Swann, Cllr Simon French, Cllr Carolyn Francis and Cllr Andy Knapp. County Councillor Yvonne Constance and District Councillor Viral Patel were also in attendance along with 24 parishioners.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from Sue and Russell Hayes and Lisa Machin.

**2 and 3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 30 MAY 2022 AND MATTERS ARISING**

The Minutes of the meeting on 30 May 2022 had been approved and signed on 16 June 2022 and displayed on the noticeboard from end June-September 2022. The Minutes had been published on the website. There were no matters arising.

**4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The biggest success this year has been the installation of the 20 mph which was fully funded by OCC. They also agreed to include in this the consultation on the new 30 mph section which would otherwise have cost the parish £3000. They then accepted our final plea for help in financing the installation of signs and poles for the 30 mph section on the grounds that Bourton is a special case bearing in mind it is the closest village to the Eastern Villages development and we have an urgent need to deter rat-running through the village. The Chairman gave thanks to both Yvonne Constance and the Clerk for their support and help with all this.

We have had various planning applications in the village, mostly uncontentious, including the diversion of Footpath 4 through Pinewood School. In May 2022 comments were submitted on the revised planning for the development at Home Farm where we reiterated our wish to be allocated funds from the development to help with traffic calming and we requested there be a planning condition ensuring that lorries to the site be routed around the village. As we all know, construction traffic has proved to be a problem but our contact with the builder has resulted in an improvement. However, despite constant pleas, there has been no financial contribution to the village from this development.

We continue to monitor housing development on the Shrivenham border and recently objected to the 90 houses on Land off Townsend Road. The Vale's Local Plan to 2041 is now underway and in a Call for Sites landowners put forward a parcel of land between Cleyfields and Grange Farm and several sites between us and Shrivenham. We will have to wait to see if any of these are accepted by the Vale after the screening process. The Eastern Villages development is yet to start having been held up by water supply issues. Swindon Borough Council is now embarking on their Local Plan to 2036 and they will have to find large strategic sites for thousands of houses. A site between Blunsdon and Cricklade is a possibility but we are mindful that the Trustees who manage the land around Bourton may try to get some of their land allocated.

The Parish Council has given various grants over the last year. £100 to the Jubilee Tea, £200 to the Coronation Tea, £50 towards Fred Jefferies' memorial, £110 to the Village Hall towards the maintenance of the defibrillator and £400 to the Village Hall roofing project. In addition the PC was offered a £1000 grant from Yvonne Constance which we re-allocated to the Village Hall and SF put the work in to make this happen.

The Parish Council continues to fund the website on behalf of the whole community and thanks are recorded to David Swann who willingly gives up his time to organise this. Thanks were also extended to David for his help in publishing the candidate statements for the recent parish council election.

Reporting of pot holes and flytipping as well as litter picking are on-going activities for the Parish Council in an attempt to keep the village clean and tidy and the roads safe to use. Parishioners are encouraged to use FixMyStreet to report potholes in their area.

The village and churchyard extension are kept tidy with the help of Jack Webster who does an excellent job and thanks are extended to him. On a sad note, our previous village handyman, Fred, passed away but we are grateful for the efforts he made over many decades to keep the village and churchyard tidy.

The recent election and messages appearing on WhatsApp have encouraged the Parish Council to consider how it communicates with villagers. The website was introduced in 2017 to fulfill the Parish Council's legal requirement for openness and transparency under the Transparency Code. A range of information has to be posted on the website on a regular basis which is accessible to everyone including minutes, agendas, various papers and accounts. Some of this is also reproduced on the noticeboard. As a community website it also includes information about the church, the village hall and the club and all of this is at present managed by David Swann but he would welcome some help and asked for volunteers. Recent analysis shows that of the 254 electors in the village, neither the website nor the WhatsApp group communicates with more than half of the village.

A flyer advertising the Annual Parish Assembly was distributed in the village and included information on how to access the website. It has been agreed to trial a regular printed flyer to households in the village with an update on Parish Council activities and this could possibly also include information from other groups. SF was happy to pull this together and information should be sent to him but again help and assistance was requested with the production and delivery.

DS would endeavour to alert those on the WhatsApp group when something was being posted on the website but those wishing to receive information about the Parish Council should rely on the website. Sarah Howell offered to produce a QR code that could be put on the noticeboard which would direct people to the website.

NL thanked his fellow councillors for giving up their time to serve the community and a special thanks to Maggie for making things happen in her role as Clerk.

## **5/6. REPORTS FROM THE CLUB AND THE CHURCH**

Reports from the Club and the Church are attached as appendices. Thanks were given to Maurice and Sarah for their presentations which were very much appreciated by the audience.

### **REPORT FROM THE HEADMASTER OF PINWOOD SCHOOL**

Neal Bailey had been in post since September 2020 which had raised challenges because of Covid. The school had 420 pupils between the ages of 3-13, some of whom reside overnight, and 120 staff. It was therefore one of the largest prep schools in the country. Neal recognised the importance of the community aspect and worked hard to minimise the impact of the traffic in the village with their support for traffic calming and addressing parking issues. They were looking at sustainability issues and hoped to grow their bus fleet to cut down on the amount of traffic coming into the village. He had also written to staff from Art/DT to ensure they only parked in the village on the occasions when they had heavy equipment to carry.

Neal felt Pinewood School was fortunate to have such a lovely church to use and they wished to strengthen their links by doubling the number of services. Bourton Club was certainly a hit with his family and it was wonderful to see how it was flourishing and bringing the community together. He would certainly consider using it for social events. Neal had also met with the Village Hall Secretary to discuss how Pinewood School could support them. Neal was involved with the almshouses and had been very pleased to join in with events such as the Jubilee, Coronation and Remembrance Services. Pinewood School had planted a ring of oriental plane trees in the sheep field as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative for the Jubilee and felt this had put Bourton on the map. The school welcomes the opportunity to invite parishioners to the bonfire celebrations and facilitate dog walkers. They are always looking to grow their links with the village and are looking forward to celebrating 150 years in the 2024/25 school year.

Thanks were given to Neal for his update and also for his efforts on traffic management which had made a real difference in the village.

### **Agenda Item 7: Accounts for the year ending March 2022**

The last audited accounts for the year ending March 2022 had been circulated and were presented by the Clerk. There were no questions. She was at present working on the accounts for the year ending March 2023 and these would be on the website at the end of June. Although the bank balance at the end of the year to March 2023 stands at £9535.31 it needed to be borne in mind that there were around £2450.00 of unbudgeted items to be taken into account including election fees, grant to the coronation tea party, upgrade to the website, Fred's memorial and extra work to clear the line of the original public footpath in the graveyard extension. The precept had remained at £3850.00 for the year to March 2024.

### **Agenda Item 8: Report from District and County Councillors**

**Report from Yvonne Constance, County Councillor** – as a long standing County Councillor, Yvonne had worked alongside Nial and Maggie since 2013 and praised the Parish Council for being so independent and hardworking. She had enjoyed the earlier presentations which confirmed her view that Bourton is a capable community and she is vastly impressed that they don't just shout for public money but get on and organise things themselves. Whilst the District Council is responsible for planning and waste collection, the County Council is responsible for everything else. 65% of the budget is taken up with adult and children's social care and only 8% goes to highways so potholes are a real issue. There was an emphasis on resurfacing rather than just filling potholes and Yvonne encouraged parishioners to put all drainage and pothole issues on FixMyStreet with any intractable problems reported to her.

There was a long discussion about the issues on the A420 which is a freight corridor currently serving the huge Amazon warehouse and will be used for the new distribution site at Honda. It will also have to cope with the expansion of Swindon in the Eastern Villages. Having held a previous Cabinet position for Transport, she felt that the situation on the A420 would not improve until the A34 issues had been sorted out and only then could freight be redirected along the M4.

Oxfordshire is of global significance with an estimated 50,000 jobs in the new science industries and therefore housing and infrastructure needs to be provided. The Local Plan will look at growth areas in Oxfordshire. Yvonne also reported that boundary changes mean that this part of Oxfordshire will be in the Witney constituency for the next election.

Yvonne had been pleased to offer her support and help in getting the 20/30 mph speed restrictions in place and providing a £1000 grant to the village hall. There may be further money in future years and she would bear in mind the re-roofing project.

Yvonne was thanked for her report and for all she had done for Bourton over the years.

### **Report from Viral Patel, District Councillor**

Viral introduced himself as our new District Councillor who had just been elected alongside Katherine Foxhall as members of the Green Party. Katherine offered her apologies for not being able to attend but hoped she would have an opportunity to meet with Bourton parishioners on another occasion. Viral offered their help and support with any issues that parishioners might have and were very happy to be contacted directly. He understood the concerns about planning and praised the Parish Council for their excellent letter of opposition to the 90 houses on Land off Townsend Road and urged them to keep this up. The site was against the Local Plan and the Shrivenham Neighbourhood Plan and had already been refused planning permission.

NL welcomed Viral Patel as our new District Councillor and thanked him for his report. He also wanted to record the thanks of the Parish Council for the excellent service over 12 years of Elaine Ware and Simon Howell, our outgoing District Councillors. We look forward to working with Viral and Katherine in the future.

### **Agenda Item 9:**

Neighbourhood Watch are advertising for volunteers to come forward to serve their communities. Some in the village may remember that John Bean undertook this role for many years. Details are on the website if anyone would like to resurrect this in the village and this may be an item for a future flyer.

## **10. QUESTION FROM PARISHIONERS**

There was a question querying the position of the 30 mph signage on the road past Fern Farm and whether there was any flexibility with requesting for it to be moved.

There were comments about the messages on WhatsApp regarding the election and NL apologised for any upset that this had caused.

The Chairman thanked parishioners for attending.

Signed:

Date:

## **Presentation About the Club for the Annual Parish Assembly**

As many of you are aware the Club was founded in the 1950's being originally set up in the long room of Pinewood school before moving to a larger room in the Old Forge, in the 1960's enough cash was raised by members to build the existing club on land donated by a local farmer. Originally it was a working men's club but this has changed over the years and is now run as a social club.

The Club is run by a committee being chaired by Yvonne Machin and some 10 committee members who are all volunteers.

Covid and the lockdown nearly saw the Club's demise and after lockdown things were looking very bleak for the Club with less than 100 members on the books. The committee decided that we needed to take the Club forward and someone was needed full time to promote, improve and generally spend time on the place bringing it back to the thriving business it once was. The committee appointed Lisa Machin, who is not only passionate about the Club but also about the village and bringing the community together.

We currently offer a monthly food pop up event with the most popular being the Sol luna pizza nights, and more recently Farris fish and chip van. In the future we aim to host more of our popular quiz nights, skittles nights and maybe even bingo, and with live music evenings also planned we aim to have something for everyone. We host a fortnightly mini market which at the moment is small but Lisa hopes this will grow over the summer months. A summer fete is planned for Saturday 24th June from 11am-4pm with a craft fair, bbq, pimm's bar and lots more! We have a pool table and hope to rejoin the local league very soon, we are always looking for new players.

We also have darts and dominoes teams who play in the local leagues.

The club has a function room which has a capacity of 120 standing or 70 seated. This is available for private hire for almost any event with its own private bar, use of kitchen and car park. We have several functions booked already for this year.

During lockdown we repurposed the waste and to the side of the main bar and now have a tranquil and relaxing beer garden that benefits from the evening sun.

This time two years ago the Club had fewer than 100 members. Lisa set herself a target to reach 200 by the end of the year and, 5 months in, she's managed to get that number to 198.

We at the Club pride ourselves for being entirely self sufficient, we get no grants and we ask for none. The Club relies on profits from the bar, function room and revenue from the flat rental to survive. Without the support of the local community there would be no Club. The old adage 'use it, or lose it' applies. If you have not visited the Club, please give us the opportunity to show you what we have to offer. We welcome new members for just £5 a year which enables you to use all the facilities on offer.

Over the next year it is Lisa's aim to provide more events, more entertainment and to extend the current opening hours. She strives to make the club an enjoyable, family orientated venue where the local community are able to come together.

Current opening times are:

Monday and Wednesday closed

Tuesday 7.30-11.30pm

Thursday 6.30-11.30pm

Friday 7-11.30pm

Saturday 1.30-3.30pm

7-11.30pm

Sunday 12-3.30pm

We are open bank holidays 1.30-3.30pm and happy hour is Thursday 6.30-7.30pm

Sarah Howell  
Church Warden  
24 May 2023

# Bourton St James

## Bourton Parish Assembly 2023

For those of you who don't know much about St James Church. It was built in 1867. This Village Hall was originally a methodist chapel I believe, and then St James was built as a Church of England chapel. Bourton was obviously very religious then! The vicar lived nearby in the Old Vicarage, which is just next door. Now St James is what we call a Chapel of Ease. This means it is no longer an official parish church, and is rather an extension of the parish churches in Shrivenham and Watchfield. A Chapel of Ease is a church building other than the parish church built within the confines of the parish for those who cannot reach the parish church conveniently. St James became a chapel of ease following a near closure about 25 years ago, when the village rallied to keep it open.

Despite the change of status, St James continues to hold its own and contribute well to the overall parish of Shrivenham and Watchfield with Bourton. Confusingly the parish that I am referring to here, is parish in the religious sense and the demarcation is that of the Church of England and not of the government. So we are part of the Parish of Shrivenham with Watchfield which is part of a Benefice of 4 parishes, which includes Ashbury, Compton Beauchamp, Fernham and Longcot. This in turn is part of the Vale of the White Horse Deanery within the Diocese of Oxford. England and Wales are split into Dioceses by the Church of England and each Parish needs to contribute to the Diocese in order mainly to fund the salaries of the vicars who preside over them. This often comes as a shock to people, who assume that the Church of England, being a wealthy organisation, would fund this type of thing. The reality is that most of the wealth of the Church of England is tied up in property and long term investments, which mean that it depends on the goodwill of its parishioners to fund a lot of its mission. Just for context. As a Parish - Shrivenham, Watchfield and Bourton, we need to give approximately £50,000 annually to the church to fund our clergy. That is a lot of money considering how small we are as a Parish. We also need to fund our own church buildings, whether that be general upkeep and maintenance, utilities, insurance and

renovations. So having a church isn't cheap. It's a wonderful facility for us to have in the village, and if we want to continue to have it, we do need to recognise this and make the commitment to it.

So what have we been up to and what is on the cards at St James. For such a small village, the church is pretty well used. We have services twice a month on the first Saturday and 3rd Sunday of the month. We have a small but loyal congregation, and sometimes we also welcome members from Shrivenham when there isn't a service there. Services are traditional church of England Services, but we would welcome any feedback on the types of services people would like. We have had the occasional pet service where pets have been brought along and blessed, which was great fun - especially when a dog tried to eat a chicken! Pinewood is a great supporter of St James, and we are hugely grateful to them for that. The church provides some rich history to the village and to school history lessons, for example we are a recognised home of a Commonwealth War Grave - only 1 - Charles Haddon Cozens - Sergeant of the 1st Battalion Wiltshire Regiment, who dies in 1916 aged just 24.

We have undertaken a lot of restoration work on the church over the last 12 months. Fundraising began 5 years ago, when our Quinquennial report (5 yearly report on the church building) flagged a number of issues which needed to be remedied. Actual work was stopped in its tracks due to Covid-19, but Stuart Anger and his team have completed work on the bell tower in the centre of the church, and the external West Wall. Internal wall coverings have been removed from the inside of the West and North walls, and the next step is to get the inside of the church replastered and decorated, as there is extensive damage from Damp. Hopefully the external repairs will mitigate a lot of the damp issues worsening. There should be enough money in the restoration fund to pay for this work, and we must extend our thanks for Pinewood, once again for all their fundraising efforts for us.

In the churchyard, we have also undertaken work to protect original trees and the church building itself. Invasive conifers were planted between the original Yew trees many years ago and had completely consumed them. Earlier this year we had those removed, and we also had the large trees at the front of the churchyard pruned back. This means we are letting a lot more light into the churchyard and now the beautiful views across the fields can be seen and enjoyed. The grass in the churchyard is cut regularly by Jack Webster following the passing of Fred Jeffries who cut the grass for many years. This all costs money, and we would urge the villagers



of Bourton, if they would like to continue to enjoy a church in their village to consider a regular financial contribution. This can be done in 2 ways. Either through regular parish giving which will contribute to our general fund for looking after St James and contributing to our financial commitment to the Church of England or by becoming a Friend of St James and contributing regularly - this goes into a protected fund which is specifically for the upkeep of the Church building Churchyard. If you do feel you could contribute do let me know.

As many of you may be aware, I will be leaving Bourton with my family for a couple of years for an adventure across the Atlantic in the US. This will mean that Bourton will be without a Churchwarden, and so the current plan is to split responsibilities between various members of the congregation who can offer help and support. The church is a welcoming place which everyone in the village can use, regardless of their religion or denomination. The acoustics in the church are also excellent, so if you want to hold a concert, then it's a great place to consider using. It's a peaceful haven to sit in - it's also nice and cool if it gets too hot this summer! The front door is always unlocked, even though you might need to give it a bit of a shove. Please do take the time to go up and have a look around, to sit, to pray or just to enjoy the view from the little bench which overlooks the churchyard.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who comes to church, who contributes and supports us. In my view (and I may be a little biased), a church should sit at the heart of community. The christian values that Jesus preached of 'love thy neighbour' is top of my mind when I think about the kind of community I want to live in. As Church Warden I feel it's my responsibility to try and champion Christian values in the community and specifically the idea that we would treat others as we would have them treat us and most importantly the value of forgiveness - I was dismayed by the recent animosity I witnessed concerning the Parish council election and would like take the opportunity to get us all to reflect that whilst restoring buildings and roofs costs a lot, neighbourliness and kindness costs nothing.

Sarah Howell - Church warden