

Kidlington Parish Council

Chair's report

September 2020

Things have calmed down at the Council since the successful but expensive removal of the travellers on Lyne Road Green last month. The offices remain closed to the public, although most of our staff are back at Exeter Hall or have continued to work around the Parish throughout the pandemic. The recent updates to Covid regulations are somewhat confusing, but do allow us to take bookings of more than six people in Exeter Hall and the Pavilion providing we can guarantee social distancing and other measures to keep people safe. While these premises are considered Covid secure, sadly we are not yet able to accommodate important social events, particularly those for older people such as the Lunch Club. Other Oxfordshire councils are following the same rules.

A significant proportion of the Council's income comes from charges for the hire of facilities, and this has been much reduced as a result of Covid, though the loss has been partly offset by concurrent savings. This will remain a serious concern in the short-to-medium term, and will lead to some difficult choices as we begin the process of setting budgets for next year.

All Council meetings continue to be held on-line, via Zoom, and the main ones remain open to the public as usual: see the Council webpage at <http://www.kidlington-pc.gov.uk/> for details about meetings and instructions about how to attend.

The Cherwell District Council Local Plan has now been approved by the Inspector and formally adopted, though there might still be the possibility of a judicial review. As I have said before, of the 4400 houses allocated to this part of the District to meet Oxford's housing need, only a few will be built in Kidlington proper: 120 at Stratfield Farm, by the Sainsbury's roundabout. However, 430 will be built in Gosford around the Bicester Road cemetery, and the remainder in Begbroke and Yarnton and south of the A34 on either side of the main road into Oxford. This will not only remove most of the Green Belt gap between us and Oxford, but will also create real pressure on transport infrastructure and much else. One specific consequence is likely to be the blocking of vehicle access to Sandy Lane in Yarnton, with Network Rail set to close the two Yarnton level crossings. This will have an impact on the use of Kidlington's shops by Yarnton and Begbroke residents, as well as making access to the Yarnton Garden Centre more difficult for us. On the other hand, if the road is not closed, the added traffic resulting from the new housing developments is likely to make it unsustainable in its present form.

Finally, we have reached the last stage of the programme of work on the Bicester Road cemetery which began shortly after the present Council was elected last year, and well before the waterlogging problems that occurred last winter. We have received planning permission for an extensive new network of drains and paths, we have chosen a contractor, and we expect work to begin by the end of the month and finish by December.

DAVID ROBEY