

Kidlington Parish Council

Chair's report: August 2022

Two days before the time of writing, we had the sad news of the Queen's death. You don't have to be a fervent royalist (as I am not) to feel deep regret at her passing, and admire the remarkable qualities she displayed throughout her long reign. At a time of conspicuous deterioration in political standards, her unflinching, scrupulous and disinterested devotion to duty has been an invaluable model. This may have led at times to an apparent unwillingness to compromise, for which she has been criticized, but I myself admired it. After the tragic death of Princess Diana, whatever she may have felt herself, she maintained her distance from the flood of public emotion, despite calls from the popular press to join in. It was a storm she rode out easily, as her own popularity steadily increased from year to year thereafter. People came to accept, I think, that it is not always part of the sovereign's purpose to provide instant responses to the public mood.

The Parish Council has, of course, recorded its deep sorrow at the Queen's passing, and as a mark of respect we have postponed our next Council meeting until after the funeral. We have placed a book of condolences which residents may sign in Exeter Hall. Unfortunately we do not have a flagpole, so we cannot fly the flag at half-mast.

On other matters, green policies are receiving considerable support from the Fair Deal Alliance that now runs Oxford County Council. As a result the plans we proposed for a 20-mph limit on all residential roads in the Village now seem to be going ahead. The only exceptions will be the North-South Bicester link road (and that may change with the new housing developments that will take place along it) and the Oxford-Banbury Road. This will change from 40 mph to 30 mph all the way from Sainsburys to Yarnton Road, but will be reduced to 20 mph between Yarnton Road and Benmead Road.

The 20-mph limit on this last stretch of the main road is an integral part of the Parish Council's policy for the enhancement of the Village Centre. Readers will probably agree that while there have been improvements in the present High Street, more could certainly be made. We also believe that the enhanced Village Centre should include the stretch of main road that crosses it, to give it more of a high street and less of a main road character. We see the Village Centre as encompassing both sides of the main road and (we hope) a redeveloped Exeter Close. A 20-mph limit, supplement by traffic-calming measures including a traffic 'platform', is an essential prerequisite for this.

The Parish Council is continuing discussions, among ourselves and with consultants, as to the best way of consulting residents about Oxford United plans for Stratfield Brake once they are sufficiently developed. The decision is extremely difficult. We want to be able to gain as accurate as possible a view of the views of the Village as a whole, and we also want to give every resident a chance to have a say. The trouble is that the two aims may not be compatible: open questionnaires addressed to everyone in the Village may be returned by only a small minority, particularly since three questionnaires have been put out, not by us, already. We still have time to make the decision, as there have been no further developments, at the time of writing, in our discussions with the Club.

DAVID ROBEY