

Kidlington Parish Council 2022 *Newsletter*



Nationally the Covid Pandemic and cost of living increases continue to present huge challenges to the Council and our residents. Closer to home the village faces new major housing developments and the current proposal from Oxford United for Stratfield Brake (see separate articles on these issues further on). More positively we are also working closely with the County Council and the doctors' surgery to consider a complete redevelopment of Exeter Close.

Although we have not always been able to hire Exeter Hall to our regular users, during the pandemic we have been pleased to offer the facility as a Covid Vaccination centre and as the home of the remarkable Cherwell Collective (see further on) which has used the pandemic as a springboard for developing a vital programme of new environmental activities--including the Food Larder, where all residents are welcome to pick up surplus food that would otherwise be disposed of.

A substantial rise in our costs has obliged us to increase our council tax precept for the coming year, but we have kept it well below the expected rate of inflation (see further on). We have exciting plans for the future including the redevelopment of the play area at Orchard Recreation Ground off Evans Lane, which is due to be completed later this year. We are also installing a new outdoor gym at Ron Groves Park, which we hope will prove to be as popular with local residents as the one at Exeter Close behind the Sports Pavilion.

With or without a new stadium at Stratfield Brake, Kidlington and the surrounding villages will look and feel very different in a few years' time. Kidlington is a good place to live, but though it is as big as a great many towns, it lacks many of a town's facilities. This is a good moment, therefore, to think about what may be needed to create a more sustainable community and help people to work, shop and play locally. We are always happy to hear from our residents; you can find the names of your local councillors on the back of this newsletter, so please do get in touch with them with your thoughts.

David Robey,
Chairman of Kidlington Parish Council



**You are invited to attend Kidlington's
Annual Parish Meeting
to be held at Exeter Hall on**

Thursday 26 May 2022 at 7.30pm

This is an opportunity for Kidlington residents to hear what the Parish Council has been doing and its plans for the future.

Speakers

Kidlington Parish Councillors
Thames Valley Police
Cherwell Collective
Oxfordshire County Council

If you have questions related to Parish Council activities that you would like to ask then please contact us by email at clerk@kidlington-pc.gov.uk

This year Her Majesty the Queen celebrates her Platinum Jubilee. There will be celebrations across the country during the long weekend of 2 to 5 June.

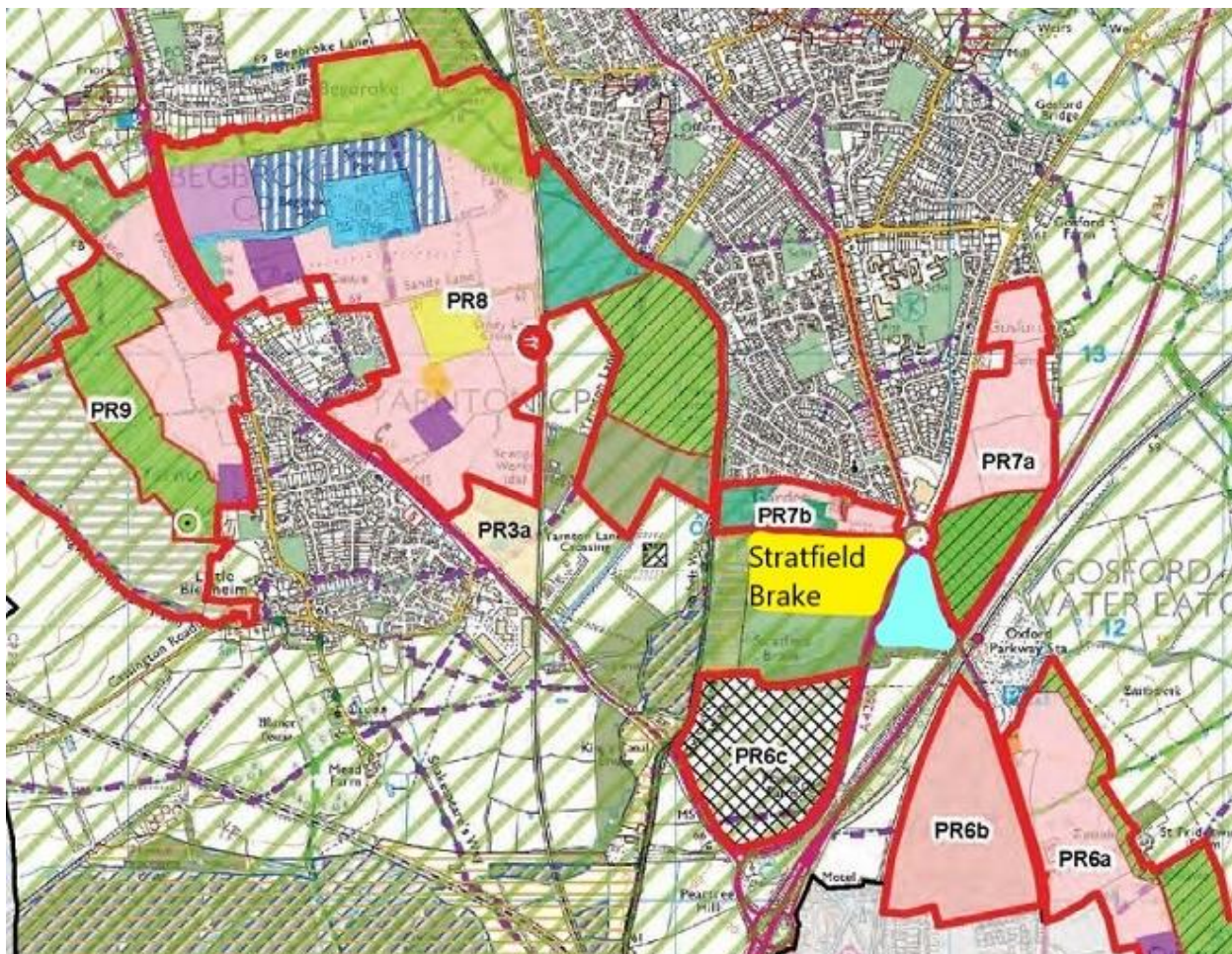
The Parish Council is giving a commemorative mug to pupils at all of our local schools to mark this very special occasion. We are also contributing to the Queen's Green Canopy having planted over 350 trees or hedges with plans for many more. Cherwell Collective and WISH (Waste Innovation Station Headquarters) are organising two exciting events:

- On Thursday 2 June join us for the lighting up of the Eco Beacon at Exeter Hall. The beacon will be constructed using repurposed materials and lit up using LED lighting to create a visual display showing the way to a more sustainable future. Come and join us from 7.30 to 9.30pm.
- On Saturday 4 June Cherwell Collective will be hosting a Big Commonwealth Picnic at Exeter Hall. There will be food from countries and cultures across the world: bring a picnic blanket and come and enjoy some live music. It all takes place between 11am and 2pm – we hope to see you there.

New housing developments

In the next few years 4,400 new dwellings will be built in our area to meet Oxford's housing needs. Kidlington itself will not be directly affected very much as there will only be 120 new houses at Stratfield Farm (PR7b in the map). However, Yarnton, Begbroke and Gosford & Water Eaton will all have huge increases, taking the total population of the four parishes from about 20,000 to about 30,000. The indirect impact on Kidlington, particularly in terms of traffic congestion, will therefore be considerable. The map, where all the new developments (PR6a-9) are marked in pink, illustrates the position dramatically (PR6c is the planned replacement golf course).

The Parish Council resisted these developments to the end, supporting Kidlington Development Watch's unsuccessful application for judicial review. But they are now going to happen, and we have to deal with the consequences. Together with the three adjacent councils, we will be holding discussions with Cherwell and County Council officers in order to clarify the expected infrastructure effects of the new developments: on transport and traffic, schools, medical services, sports and recreational facilities, and shopping provision. Developers' contributions will help to mitigate some of these, but we will be pressing for appropriate further action by Cherwell and the County Council as well.



These new housing developments will clearly be a massive factor in how the Council and residents consider Oxford United's proposals for Stratfield Brake (coloured yellow in the picture; the blue triangle opposite indicates proposed replacement playing fields): see the discussion further on. The proposals would leave a Green Belt ring around the village, but would reduce it further still, and would add to the increased traffic congestion.

The Council organises Community Litter Picks throughout the year which is a great way to get involved and make a difference in your neighbourhood. We also have a number of groups and individuals who volunteer in their spare time – we provide the gloves and bags and lend out litter-picking tools, and will collect the full bags. If you would like to join the next Community Litter Pick join us at Exeter Hall on 16 July at 10am. Or if you would just like to borrow some equipment and organise your own tidy up in your area contact: Les Dent on 01865 372143

Madeline:
helping to litter-
pick for her Duke
of Edinburgh
Award



Archie litter-
picking at
Sainsburys



Thanks to Jacala Cub Pack

KEG: Kidlington Eco Group

Following the impetus created in communities across the country by the COP26 conference, and the acute need for change in our activities and patterns of energy use and consumption, the Parish has continued to support this local action group. It is open to anyone who cares about the effect of climate change and wishes to be involved in local practical projects and discussions to help our community and environment.



The group aims to promote the sharing of news and information about existing and future events and initiatives, to complement, publicise and support organisations such as Cherwell Larder, and Parish Council green initiatives that focus on, for example, carbon reduction, increasing biodiversity and social wellbeing. To this end it works with local groups such as: Kidlington Abundance, the Gardening Society, Wild Kidlington and St Mary's Fields Management Group

Regular meetings are at Exeter Hall at 1.00pm on the first Thursday of every month, chaired by Rev Phil Durrant. If you would like to get involved contact Phil at phil.j.durrant@gmail.com



Oxfordshire County Council is one of the first counties to consider widespread changes from 30mph to 20mph on most residential roads with a plan to roll them out over the next three years.

Kidlington Parish Council has expressed an interest in joining the scheme as early as possible. We are proposing 20mph limits on all residential roads except the main Oxford and Bicester Roads, but including the stretch of Oxford Road between Yarnton Road and Benmead Road.

Research suggests that lower speed limits reduce crashes and protects our most vulnerable road users.

Vacancy for Administrative Assistant at Kidlington Parish Council

25-30 hours per week – Salary £25,419 (pro rata)

Would you like to make a difference in your local community? Join our friendly team at Exeter Hall.

This is a public-facing role and we are looking for someone who is professional, friendly and a good communicator. You should have excellent IT skills and be willing to get involved in all aspects of the Council's work such as helping to organise events, environmental initiatives and general administration.

The full job description is available on the Parish Council website.

Environmental Projects

Lyne Road Green

In line with the Parish Council's commitment to enhancing biodiversity across the village, we have consulted with Wild Oxfordshire and BBOWT to increase the trees and hedging in our green spaces. The long-term aim is both to increase the potential insect, butterfly and bee populations, and also to add to the tree canopy to provide shade and an enjoyment of natural surroundings for local residents. In Lyne Road Green we planned and planted eleven mature trees, including cherry, mountain ash, crab, hawthorn and whitebeam – all native species, which can offer interesting berries and flowers as well as canopy, and eventually provide a preventive measure against unwelcome incursions. This was followed by a hedge planting day, including a wild flower seed and compost give-away, and stalls on how to support insect life, bees and swifts. We were supported by many volunteers and local residents, one of whom offered to keep the trees watered. The new hedging strengthens the habitat corridor on the west side too, where some broad gaps were left by the felling of several large trees by Network Rail. Our new hedging will extend the existing oak seedlings and clumps of holly and blackthorn, and should also screen noise and lights from the passing trains and the industrial park beyond the train line.

'No-Mow May' and Flower survey

We initiated a policy of 'No-Mow May' to set aside some green areas on Parish Council land in Lyne Road Green, Foxdown Close and north of Chorefields, in order to let seeds flower prior to a flower survey of existing species in June '21 by Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre. The results were published in October and all species can be viewed on the Parish Council website. The photographic evidence and identification in the Greenspace Survey Report informs us where and how to enhance through a planting plan for 2022-23. The detail and colours captured justify our decision to leave some areas wild, to provide habitat connectivity, although the range and abundance of species needs ongoing attention. We aim to create a wild flower meadow in Lyne Road Green and all will be welcome to join in with this project.



Lyne Road Community Day



YOUR COUNCIL TAX - The Parish Council has set its budget for the financial year and has asked for a precept of £770,847, which represents an increase of 5.8% on the previous year. As well as the precept the Parish Council generates income through charges for burials, allotments, facility hire, grants and interest on savings. This is not our money but yours and we hope you feel that we look after it carefully to provide and maintain facilities that the whole village will benefit from. Most of it is spent on:

- Sports Fields and Play areas – this year Orchard Recreational Ground will be having a complete refurbishment.
- Open Spaces and Verges – we are increasingly finding ways to do this so as to support biodiversity and encourage wildlife.
- Buildings and Sports Facilities – including Exeter Hall, Stratfield Brake and the Sports Pavilion.
- Allotments and Burial Grounds – including new drainage and a planned extension at Bicester Road Cemetery and a planned extension.
- Community Events – including Gala Day, Christmas Lights and Switch-On event, Fireworks, Lyne Road Community Day.

The Queen's Green Canopy

Parishes across the country are being encouraged to plant and count new trees in their public spaces during 2021 and 2022. In Kidlington we have planted 12 mature trees, 220 hedge whips in Lyne Road Green and 110 native fruit and nut whips in Orchard Recreational Ground, with the help of volunteer Sea Scouts organised by Harvest @ Home. By the end of the year we aim to have planted 14 mature native trees in Ron Groves Park including maple, lime, hornbeam and cherry. Like other projects, this involves consulting residents and sports clubs for height and position.

Grow your own

Kidlington Parish Council manages four allotment sites across the village with 140 plots rented to residents. We have recently installed compost bins in the sites and are planning to introduce water butts to reduce the water usage.

We have a new resident in St Mary's Fields; a tawny owl has taken up residence in the box that was put up two years ago.



Standing with Ukraine

Volunteers have been using Exeter Hall as a collection point for accepting and packing essential items to be delivered to people fleeing their homes in the Ukraine.



The Future of Stratfield Brake

Earlier this year Oxfordshire County Council agreed to enter into discussions with Oxford United Football Club on proposals to build a new football stadium with ancillary facilities at Stratfield Brake. The land is owned by the County Council and leased by Cherwell District Council, who subsequently leased it to Kidlington and Gosford & Water Eaton Parish Councils. It has been the home of Gosford All Blacks Rugby Club and Kidlington Cricket Club since it was opened in 1999. It is also used regularly by some of our local football clubs.

The Parish Council has been assured that, were this to go ahead, these clubs would be relocated, and we understand that both the Rugby and Cricket clubs are not opposed to this, provided that suitable sites can be found. Next to the site there are woodlands and wetlands which are managed by The Woodland Trust. The proposals do not include the use of these areas, and all parties involved are clear that these important natural habitats should be protected, preserved and made more accessible.

The Parish Council is committed to the preservation of a Green Belt Ring around the village as an essential part of its identity, and it is clear that whatever form the proposals may eventually take, they will necessarily involve significant Green Belt loss. Nevertheless, we have agreed to enter into discussions with the Club and the other Councils, in order to enable the Club to clarify the potential benefits of its proposals and address councillors' and residents' concerns. These include environmental impact, noise, transport, traffic and parking, and the long-term dependability of any commitments that the Club may make. We shall also be looking for firm evidence that no acceptable alternative site, including the present stadium, can be found.

The Parish Council is in no way committed to approving any proposals that may come out of these discussions. We are entering into them with an open mind, because we believe this is the fairest way to proceed: we do not think it would be right either to reject or to accept the proposals before we know exactly what they are. We are aware that opinion in the village is deeply divided on the issue, though we do not at present know in what proportion. Of the 818 local respondents to the County Council survey, 58% voted against and 38% in favour, but the respondents represent only a small proportion of a population of some 15,000, and we cannot know how representative they are.

Given the importance of the issue we are committed to consulting residents before we decide if we are prepared to relinquish our lease. We believe that this consultation should not take place before we have a firm set of detailed plans from the Club and the County Council. The consultation will have to be only advisory. The Council has been elected to take decisions on behalf of residents, and final responsibility for the decision in this case is ours. But the results of the consultation will clearly weigh very heavily in the decision that we take.

In tandem with the consultation, we plan to mount an exhibition in Exeter Hall where the proposals will be presented and illustrated. The purpose of this will be to help residents make up their minds one way or the other before responding to the consultation. Details remain to be worked out, but the intention is that the exhibition should include the case for the proposals and the case against.

Dates for your diary

Annual Parish Meeting at Exeter Hall – Thursday 26 May at 7.30pm

Lighting of the Jubilee Eco Beacon at Exeter Hall – Thursday 2 June at 7.30pm

Jubilee Big Picnic at Exeter Hall – Saturday 4 June from 11.30am

Gala Day at Exeter Close – Saturday 23 July from 11am to 3pm

Oxfordshire Play Association Play Day at Ron Groves Park – Saturday 6 August

Firework Display – Friday 4 November at Stratfield Brake

Christmas Lights Switch-On – Thursday 1 December from 5pm

Remembrance Sunday
is on 13 November 2022



Your Kidlington Parish Councillors

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This QR code will take you straight to the Kidlington Parish Council Website. Just point your smartphone at it (as if you were taking a photograph) and follow the instructions.

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Clerk to the Council: Rachel Faulkner

www.kidlington-pc.gov.uk

