

Kidlington Parish Council

Chair's report: February 2024

An article in the *Oxford Times* of 22 February ("Fear rent hike may shut food bank") wrongly claims that the Parish Council is planning a large increase in the rent it charges the Cherwell Larder and its parent organization, the Cherwell Collective, for the use of our premises at Exeter Hall: "As it stands, the food larder will have its rent increased from £300 to £1,000 a year." This is not true.

Kidlington Parish Council has supported the Larder and Collective for many years. They make extensive use of our premises and facilities, and because we value what they do for Kidlington residents, we have charged them at a highly subsidized rate, approximately one-third of the normal charge.

The Collective is now a relatively large organization that serves residents across Oxfordshire, not just in Kidlington. It has also been in receipt of very substantial grant income from other sources. The Parish Council has to balance the support it gives the Collective against the other needs of Kidlington residents, whose interests we are elected to serve. Contrary to the statement in the article, the Collective's use of our premises has prevented us from accepting a great many bookings from Kidlington residents and other parties.

The Collective knows very well that we are unlikely to make a sudden large increase in the rental we charge. But we have to keep the support we give them under review. A necessary step in this process is to make the amount of subsidy as transparent as possible. That is why we are asking the Collective to apply for support for the coming year in the form of a grant, through our normal grant-awarding procedure.

On a more important matter, readers may have seen that Oxford United's planning application for the new stadium on the "Triangle" site has now been received by Cherwell District Council: see its Planning Register at <https://planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk/Planning/Display/24/00539/E>. If you look there, you will see an enormous array of documents--and you will also have the opportunity to comment on the application.

The Parish Council will be working its way through the documents over the next few weeks. We shall necessarily focus, though not exclusively, on the issues on which we have already objected to the scheme, of which traffic congestion is probably the most important. Worryingly, the application as it stands still envisages the closure of the main Oxford Road before and after matches. Readers may remember that we wrote to the County Council strongly objecting to this proposal, and were reassured by the County Council that they would not allow it. It seems that an application for a pedestrian bridge over the road is expected but has not yet been received. If that is the case, it is hard to see why road closure is still included in the proposal. We must hope that, even if the District planners allow it (or it is allowed on appeal to the Secretary of State), the County Council as landowners will remain true to their commitment and turn it down.

DAVID ROBEY