

Minutes of Kidlington Annual Parish Meeting held at Exeter Hall and on Zoom on Thursday 26 May 2022

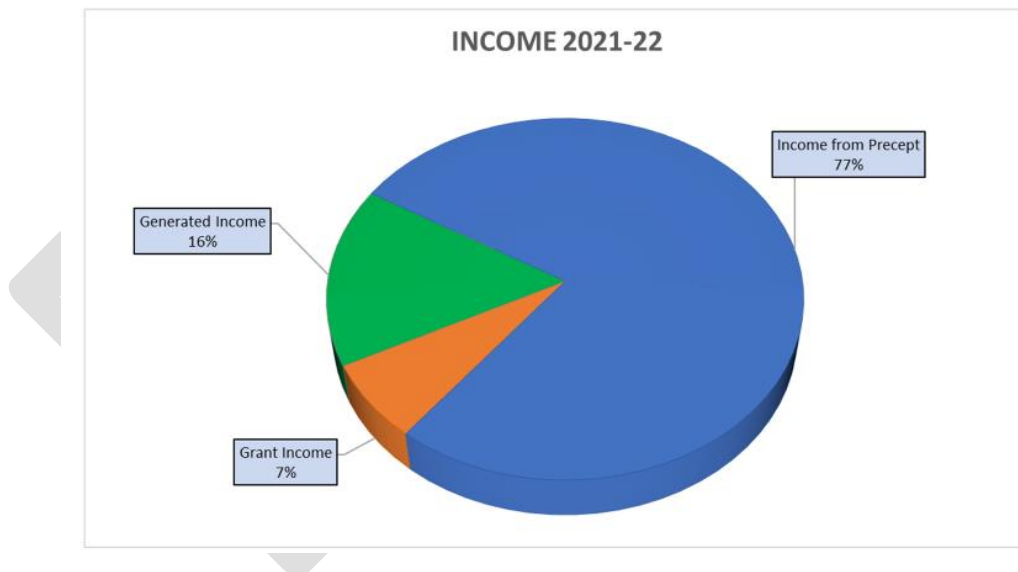
In attendance were 12 members of the Parish Council and 98 local residents.

Welcome by the Chairman of the Council – Cllr David Robey.

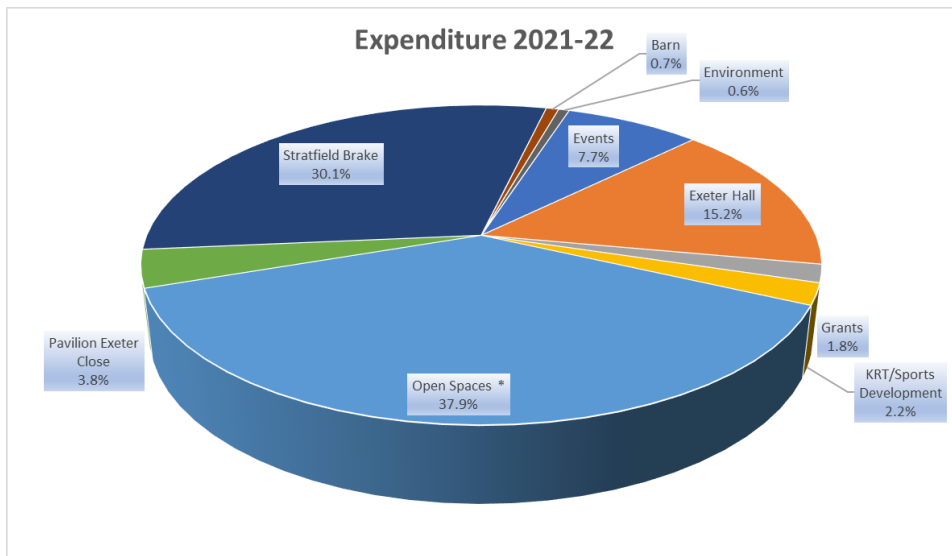
Cllr Robey thanked members of the public for attending the first physical Annual Parish Meeting since 2019. He explained that the Parish Meeting was an opportunity for the Council to report on its activities over the previous year and for residents to ask questions. He explained that Parish and Town Councils are the third level of local government and, as such, have limited powers regarding major planning issues but they do have a role representing resident's view. Cllr Robey explained that in the case of Stratfield Brake because the Parish Council, in conjunction with Gosford and Water Eaton Parish Council, held the lease for the land, the Council did have some control about what could happen there in as much as it could prevent development if that was what the community wanted.

KPC Financial Report by Cllr David Betts, Chair of Policy and Finance Committee

Cllr Betts explained that the Parish Council's income is made up of money from the precept which is collected through Council Tax as well as income generated from services such as allotments, cemeteries and hall hire and a smaller amount from grants and S106 payments paid by developers.



Cllr Betts showed the breakdown of Parish Council expenditure.



Cllr Betts explained that the largest expenditure was in the maintenance of our open spaces including cemeteries, allotments, playgrounds, greens and verges.

The Council increased its precept by 5.8% for the year 2022-23 which, although higher than in recent years, is still below the current rate of inflation and represented 17p per week per household for a band D property.

Questions from residents:

A number of questions were asked about the cost of running and maintaining Stratfield Brake. Cllr Betts explained that the facility is currently managed by Cherwell District Council and we are working with them to reduce the costs. It was stressed that it is an important and well used facility.

KPC Environment and Community Report by Cllr Alison Street

Cllr Street updated residents on the various community and environmental projects the Council has undertaken over the past year. The Council maintains two cemeteries, four sites with 140 allotments, 6 play parks, community buildings and a number of green open spaces across the village

The Council has worked closely with Wild Oxfordshire, Cherwell Collective and Kidlington Eco Group on various projects including Lyne Road Green and Orchard Recreation Ground. Cllr Street told residents about the events programme for 2022 including Jubilee celebrations, Gala Day and Bonfire Night Fireworks.

Questions from residents:

A resident asked if the council thought Stratfield Brake was the best venue for the annual firework display – Cllr Street explained that the Council would be trialling low noise fireworks in 2022 which should be less problematic for local wildlife and domestic pets.

A resident asked, as the Council has a lot of plans for tree planting, who maintains the trees – Cllr Street explained that KPC uses the services of the Cherwell DC Tree Officer who completes regular surveys and safety checks.

A resident asked about water provision at Bicester Road Cemetery – Cllr Street explained that the Council was attempting to reduce its water consumption and water butts would be installed at the cemetery.

Report by Emily Connally, Cherwell Collective

Emily explained the services provided by the Cherwell Collective and thanked the Parish Council for their support since it began at the beginning of the pandemic in April 2020.

Cherwell Collective consists of three connected enrichment programmes:

- Harvest@Home which helps people to produce their own food by providing seeds, equipment and advice on growing. The Parish Council have provided H@H with an allotment site.
- Cherwell Larder which saves food from going to waste and uses Exeter Hall twice a week to allow people to collect surplus food. It was emphasised that this is not a food bank but a food enrichment programme.
- Climatarian Kitchen is a café based at Exeter Hall which uses surplus or locally sourced food to provide meals and help people understand how to use fresh ingredients.

Since its beginning CC have welcomed over 6000 people through the doors at Exeter Hall. The programme was recognised with a European award.

Stratfield Brake:

Cllr Robey reiterated the Council's position regarding the proposal to relocate the Oxford United stadium to Stratfield Brake in Kidlington. He explained that the Council had no previous knowledge of the proposal although there had been talks in recent years about moving the training ground to SB.

The Council holds a 100 year lease on the land and unless the Council relinquishes that lease the proposal could not go ahead. Cllr Robey said that the Council realised the community is divided on the proposal but could not know in what proportion. The Council had concerns that this comes at a difficult time for the village as it is already faced with 4,400 new dwellings in and around the area with approximately 10,000 new residents. KPC's position on the proposal is to remain neutral while the club is in the early stages of its proposal and the plan lacks detail.

The Council did not want to say no without knowing the details and the possible benefits to the community but could not agree without understanding the plans in more detail. He agreed that given the importance of the decision it would be important to consult residents.

Cllr Robey explained the six questions that would need to be answered by the club and the county council which are:

1. Does the club really have to move?
2. What benefits would there be for Kidlington residents?
3. How would any negative impacts of the development be mitigated?
4. What will the site look like and how green will it be?
5. How can we be sure that any commitment entered into by the club will be reliable in the long term?
6. How will the loss of Green Belt be mitigated?

Cllr Miller from Oxfordshire County Council explained that OUFC had approached officers to ask about the possibility of relocating the stadium. He stressed that OCC were not advocating the scheme and were keen to understand the views of local people and to be clear on the details of the plan. He agreed that there are a number of factors that need to be discussed before any agreements could be made.

Questions from residents:

As part of the negotiations will residents have any input into what they would like to see provided on the site in addition to the stadium?

A: There will be opportunities for residents to say what facilities they would like to see provided.

The impact on local wildlife should be considered.

A: These issues are being raised with the club although the proposal does not include the Woodland Trust area which would remain as it is.

Why have Oxford United not considered other sites?

A: The Club say they have completed an exhaustive search of alternative sites.

Will KPC and OCC be getting professional advice about the environmental impact?

A: The club have been asked to provide all necessary evidence which will be assessed by OCC officers.

Why did the council continue when there was clear local opposition?

A: Many residents wanted more details about the scheme.

How can the proposal ever be compatible with preserving the Green Belt?

A: It is important to establish all of the facts and gather all the information before deciding whether the exceptional circumstances that would allow building on the Green Belt have been met.

Concerns about light and noise pollution.

A: This is one of the key questions being asked of the club as well as questions about the ancillary use of the facilities and how that may impact on residents. It is possible that covenants could be put in place to ensure appropriate uses.

Concerns that the existing sports clubs that use SB would be displaced and use more of our open spaces.

A: The current users would have to be moved elsewhere and locations were being considered. The existing users are broadly supportive of the proposal with some concerns.

How does KPC intend to continue to fund SB if it stays as it is?

A: KPC has been considering alternative ways to reduce the costs of running the facility.

Parking is already a problem during big games at Yarnton Road – what are the plans to mitigate this?

A: OUFC are being asked to provide detailed plans regarding traffic management. The site was considered good because of its proximity to the A34 and the train station.

Why can't the problems at Kassam stadium be resolved and how will OCC safeguard the position if the club runs into financial difficulties?

A: OCC have asked for confirmation on why OUFC can't stay as they are. OCC will ensure tax payers are protected and lessons have been learned from other cities.

How will OCC separate the impact of the new developments from the potential impact of the new stadium?

A: Traffic modelling is taking place on the existing developments.

Do you intend to get the land valued?

A: OCC will scrutinise the proposal and ensure the tax payer gets a fair return. OCC will seek independent advice.

Can the council publish info about the costs of running SB including income and expenditure?

A: This information will be available from CDC who are now running the facility.

The chairman thanked residents for their questions and the manner in which they were raised.

Other questions:

What is the pipeline for improving cycling routes, in particular the junction outside Exeter Hall?

A: KPC is working with OCC on a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and introducing 20 mph limits which should make cycling safer.