

Welcome address for APM April 24th 2025

Good evening everyone, I'm Lesley McLean the Chair of Kidlington Parish Council and I am delighted to welcome you to the Annual Parish Meeting of Kidlington Parish Council.

H&S – Fire / Evacuation notice (Graham).

As you will see this year we have taken a different approach to the Annual Parish Meeting, this year we are providing dedicated time for residents to engage directly with Councillors. We have also been joined by organisations that either work within or have an effect on our community and I will come back to introduce these shortly.

Following my introduction, we will be carrying out some meeting formalities, providing an overview of the Council activities this year, and providing answers to some questions already posed to the Council.

Annual Parish meetings are designed to allow questioning of the Parish Council by its residents and tonight will be no different, we have already received some questions from residents, however we have made additional arrangements this year for those who wish to ask questions and remain anonymous. Councillors are available to answer any questions you may have directly and there is also a box on the Councillor stand, and some of the other stands, for any additional questions you would like to ask, and these will be answered and made available on our website.

You will then be free to visit the stands available to find out more about what is happening locally and also ask any questions you may have directly.

I would firstly like to introduce some of our staff and Councillors with specific roles and responsibilities on the Parish Council.

Sarah Kearney – Clerk to the Council.

Alison Bateman – Responsible Financial Officer

Nik Soheili – Chair of the Finance and Assets Committee

Alison Street – Chair of the Community Committee

On to the formalities, agreeing the minutes from last year. These were provided to you this evening, are you happy to agree the minutes.

Thank you.

This year the Council has agreed a set of aims and objectives to ensure that focus and direction is clear and this includes further works to our green spaces, additional community outreach, supporting our village centre and speaking up for our residents.

Projects that we have undertaken this year include: Commencing works on the Coronation Garden which is well used by the community and well supported by local volunteers, some of which we have with us this evening. We have also been supporting St Mary's Fields Nature Reserve who are also with us this evening, and further works are coming forward this year, you can hear more about the ongoing work directly from the volunteer tonight.

Our three years of funding through Cherwell District Council for Wild Oxfordshire has unfortunately come to an end, but we have agreed to continue working with them to harness their expertise and bring forward a strategy for our green spaces. Progress at Lyne Road Green continues with seating now installed, along with the additional green space identified at Axtell Close and further details and information can be found through our Councillors or the Kidlington Environmental Group stand.

Our year end accounts have not yet been closed, so any figures quoted are subject to change and clarification, however, when the accounts are finalised they will be published to provide transparency. In addition details of this years Council Tax has been provided in the Annual Newsletter.

Notable grants this year have included, clean slate, the Volunteer Driver Service, the Big Sing (some of us Councillors spent a very enjoyable morning listening to the music and singing), Cherwell Collective, Kidlington Recreational Trust and Kidlington Football Club.

Our Christmas Lighting contract has been renewed, and we have added some additional lights to the area which will be used throughout the year to celebrate specific events such as Remembrance Day, these have been very warmly received in the community.

Cherwell District Council recently launched the Area Oversight Groups and the Parish Council is actively engaged with this process to ensure that any developer funding is prioritised for the local area. Tonight, we have Tom Darlington with us from Cherwell who is managing the group for our area, please do make contact with him to understand the development that is coming to our wider area.

The events that are held by the Parish Council are organised by our staff, last night we held our inaugural Celebration of Volunteering Event which was a resounding success, and I would like to thank our staff for their hard work, I very much hope this will become an annual event. Our other events are currently in planning and include the Gala Day, Remembrance Sunday, Christmas Lights Switch On and Fireworks Night, this year we entertained over 2000 people and this year will be held on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November.

Many of you will also be aware that the majority of our expenditure is spent on recreation and premises, our parks and facilities including Exeter Hall and Stratfield Brake are expensive to maintain and the Parish Council are looking at ways to mitigate these costs.

We have recently commissioned an architect to review Exeter Hall and provide us with options to future proof the building for generation to come. Stratfield Brake is also under review, the management contract with Cherwell District Council will be coming to an end next year and the Council is currently evaluating the use of the site and the financial impact to the Council and our residents. The site is currently heavily subsidised in order to support pitch based sport in the area and a full review of local recreational needs will be carried out at District level.

This year many of our residents have been affected by flooding, and we are awaiting numerous flood reports across our area. We were hoping that the Section 19 report for Garden City would have been released prior to this evening, however I understand it's release is imminent and tonight we have with us representatives from Oxfordshire County Council Flood team who should be able to answer your questions.

Kidlington Flood Group is also actively engaged with all stakeholders to try and find mitigations for our area.

As I said at the beginning, we have already received some questions from residents, as many of these are on the same subject they have been combined to provide the most complete answers tonight.

### **Question 1: Why are OUFC in the room tonight?**

Firstly, I want to say that OUFC are not here because it suits the Parish Council, in fact it was a very difficult decision to invite the applicants of a planning application that has been so very divisive for our community.

The Parish Council has been trying to provide answers for our community, and has approached a number of stakeholders with questions, however some of those questions unfortunately remain unanswered.

OUFC are not here this evening to make any presentation, and they have not been invited to do so, they are here solely to answer questions directly from our community, in the Parish Councils view it is appropriate for our residents to be able to address unanswered matters that affect them directly to the applicant.

Any questions that cannot be answered this evening will be recorded and answers will be provided in due course.

I would remind you that this application is likely to come before planning committee this summer.

**Question 2: Is this a formal meeting and have you complied with legislation?**

Even though we have changed the format of this evening, this remains a formal meeting, and our Clerk informs me all regulations have been complied with.

**Question 3: Given that the council has declared a climate emergency, and financially supports Wild Oxfordshire, what action is the council taking to understand in detail the impact of Oxford United's plans on biodiversity, habitat loss and wildlife impacts for not only the Triangle, but also the wider Kidlington area?**

The first thing I would say is that KPC does not support Wild Oxfordshire, we pay for services they provide, and as mentioned earlier we plan to continue that next year in order to assist with our green spaces strategy.

The Parish Council has reviewed the evidence provided in the planning application and has responded accordingly. The Parish Council is not the planning authority, that sits with Cherwell District Council and all matters in relation to the application will be dealt with by them. Any biodiversity requirements made on the site will be monitored and enforced by CDC.

**Question 4: Given that the stadium is the most significant potential development in Kidlington for a long time, please can a more detailed update be given regarding the parish council's current questions and status updates? More information in the newsletter was devoted to Botley Solar Farm which the parish council didn't canvas residents' views on. It is also unclear what the council's current position is on the stadium topic - the newsletter states the council was previously neutral, but doesn't actually**

**clarify what its position is now (in contrast to the information given about Botley Solar Farm).**

The Stadium application is significant, and for a long time the Parish Council remained neutral, waiting for further application material to be provided in order to make a balanced judgement.

It is important to remember that KPC can only raise objections and make representations, CDC are the planning authority, and any representations should be made to them directly.

I can confirm that the Parish Council has now submitted a response to the application, this can be found in full on the CDC planning portal. KPC's main objection relates to the proposed road closure which will affect all of our residents.

**Question 5: This area suffers from significant flooding, some gulleys appear to be blocked and badly maintained are Oxfordshire County Council being held to account?**

Oxfordshire County Council are responsible for the roadside gulleys, they are also the Lead Flood Authority and are with us this evening.

I can confirm that our Flood Group has met with OCC and gulley clearances have been agreed, however I would request that if you know of any gulleys which you feel might have been missed please do log it on Fix My Street, it can then be bought forward by our SuperUsers (myself, Melanie, Will and Linda). OCC are engaging with the Parish Council actively on all flooding matters as you can see by their attendance this evening, and the Flood Group will continue to press for responses from the other authorities involved in flooding such as the Environment Agency and Thames Water.

**Question 6: Why do residents pay more to KPC than CDC?**

The difference in charges is primarily due to the fact that KPC provides a broader range of local services and facilities than CDC, tailored specifically to the needs of our community. I hope that some of the details I provided earlier gives an indication of the services we provide. This includes the maintenance of public spaces, local events, and facilities such as Exeter Hall and Stratfield Brake.

**Question 7: When will the full cost implications of Stratfield Brake be addressed?**

As I have already mentioned the financial impact of Stratfield Brake is being carefully reviewed by Kidlington Parish Council and CDC, and we acknowledge the importance of transparency on this matter.

Thank you all, that covers the questions we have received in advance, if you have any further questions, please do ask a fellow Councillor or add it to the box provided on the Councillor station.

I do hope that you enjoy the rest of your evening and take the time to engage with the organisations that have made themselves available this evening.