



# **Downley Parish Council - Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish**

**14<sup>th</sup> May 2019 at 7.30pm – 8.45pm**

**Downley Community Centre**

Attendees – Chairing Cllr C Burslem, Cllr Bowden, Cllr Lazenby, Cllr Loadman, Cllr Monroe-West, Cllr Sapsford, Cllr V Srao, Cllr Steneskog

Apologies received from Cllr Chandarana, Cllr Egmore

County Councillor Wendy Mallen and District Councillor Paul Turner in attendance

16 Members of the public present

- 1. Introductions and Welcome.**
- 2. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting minutes 2018-**

Minutes agreed as correct

- 3. Annual Report of the Council by the Chairman**

This past year has again been a busy one for Downley Parish Council. The Council continued in its efforts to support the community and to care for the Parishes beautiful environment. I feel privileged to live in a thriving Community; the Community spirit in Downley is overwhelming. I would like to thank all the volunteers who contribute to the Community and the various groups in the Village.

The Parish council has undertaken many projects during the last year to enhance the environment, residents' lives and the general appearance of our community. We are continuing our review of the parish owned streetlights and in the very near future these will be changed to LED lights and include a new installation at the junction of Narrow Lane and Commonsidge. By changing to our contractor and the switch to LED we will be able to reduce our electricity bill. The pond in Gosling Grove has been improved but this is an ongoing project. I would like to thank Clive and Chiltern Rangers for their hard work on the pond area.

The Parish Council were concerned about the traffic and parking in the village and surrounding areas. To this end the mobile SID's have been and will continue to monitor the speed of traffic through the various roads and areas of the Village. Mine and the Parish Council are very thankful to Councillor David Egmore for his work on this project. We are working with the police and BCC to try and highlight the issue of parking especially around the school area and would like to thank the School for all their co-operation and hard work in highlighting the issues to parents. We have worked closely with the Police this year not only on the parking and speeding issues but also in an effort to reduce crime and disorder in the area. On the whole and compared to other local areas the crime rate in Downley is low and we intend to keep it

that way by continuing to work closely with the Police. The Police will have a stall at Downley Day and welcome visitors to their stand.

We have developed a Resilience Plan for Downley to ensure that in an emergency situation such as being cut off due to snow, we can ensure our community, especially our more senior residents can be looked after and kept safe. Although the plan was presented at a public meeting, it will again be on display at Downley Day if residents have not had an opportunity to look at it. This again is an ongoing and live document that will be kept updated. I would like to thank Councillor Loadman, David Worsdall and Patrick Crotty for their hard work in pulling this document together.

We continue to support our local organisations along with the allotments and we have donated grants to Downley scout and guide Centre towards their building maintenance as well as to Chilterns Dial-a-ride.

Planning applications continue and the Planning committee have worked to ensure any comments reflect resident's concerns and or agreements. We continue to try and ensure the village atmosphere is maintained with any new builds and that they comply with the Village Design Statement, ANOB and Conservation areas. However, the Parish council, although a statutory consultee is not the Planning authority and do not make the final judgements.

I would like to thank the Festival Committee who put on a yet another fabulous festival that attracts thousands of visitors from the village and beyond, the DCPS, the Communications Forum for their work on the Village News, the CIA group and the Downley Day committee. There are too many to mention but all of these groups and others bring something unique to our Village that we all benefit from.

I would like to thank DOSCA, we are all proud of the Community Centre, it's a much sought-after venue and the management team do a wonderful job and have yet again upgraded the building this year. I am sure we all look forward to hearing the Chairman's report later on from David.

The year ahead will be a challenging one for all Councils, especially as we start the transition from a two-tier council service to a unitary authority. We are well aware of funding cuts. Our precept covers the minimum at a time when standards are high. We will continue as a Council to strive for best value for money for all services provided. We are constantly working on, how to keep our Village safe and well maintained on a budget without raising the precept too much.

We will continue to support all local organisations and residents. We encourage members of the public to attend our meetings and give feedback to the Council on issues that are important to them.

Finally, I would like to thank on a personal level the support given, and contributions made by my fellow councillors to the work of the Parish council and for the time that they give to undertake work on behalf of residents and the community. We are all volunteers and the tremendous added value that they bring is invaluable considering that some having demanding day jobs and those that are retired giving up their time when they should be enjoying their freedom and relaxing. I would also like to express on behalf of the Parish Council our gratitude to both our District and County Councillors for their continuing support.

Lastly, a very big thank you to our Clerk, Chettina, for her unstinting efforts and ability to get things done and influence principal authorities.

#### **4. To invite County Councillor Mallen and District Council Turner to address the meeting**

##### **Cllr Mallen reported on the following –**

In February the annual budget for Buckinghamshire County Council was presented to full Council. It would be the 150<sup>th</sup> and last to be presented.

In the capital program £190m was earmarked for investment in the roads and leader Martin Tett gave a commitment to the Council to spend £15m each year until 2023 on the strategic road network with an additional 4m in 2019 being spent on the patch and plane system which ensures good bonding with the old road surface during the repair. In addition, 1.5m was promised for footway repairs and £1.5m to replace street lighting columns with £1m allotted for drainage systems to protect roads from damage caused by excess water.

There was £35.2m in 2019 and £140.9m over 4 years to invest in Bucks schools and other educational needs.

There are four County select committees who scrutinise in depth the work of the council and make recommendations for improvements for cabinet to approve and action. Firstly, Health and Social Care Select committee, which investigated eight large topics in the portfolio including winter resilience across the whole system, health and social care and the progress towards integration of these services by 2020. The development of primary care networks and finally the development of services at the community hubs in Marlow and Thame.

The Children Select committee focussed on eleven topics including safeguarding and Autism. Early help went to consultation with changes being implement in September 2019. Finance Resources and Performance select committee examined the Capital investment strategy, technology strategy and customer services review.

The Transport, Environment and Community select committee review 14 areas of work.

Members of the public can attend all meetings; dates are on the Bucks website or residents can view the podcasts.

All five Bucks Councils will cease to exist at the ed of March 2020, the new Unitary Council will go love in April 2020.

**Cllr Paul Turner reported on the following –**

This year will be a year full of lasts – this will be my last report to the annual meeting of the Parish Council as a District Councillor, On Monday Wycombe District Council has its own last AGM. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, Wycombe District Council along with Bucks County Council, Chiltern, South Bucks and Aylesbury Vale District Councils will cease to exist and will be replaced by one single unitary Buckinghamshire Council. In the short term, and certainly for the customer facing services we should not notice an immediate change, except for new branding, in the longer term we will have to wait and see. All Council officers and elected members are working extremely hard to implement the change in what amounts to a new multi-billion-pound organisation with around 15,000 staff (most of the staff are teaching staff). The task is enormous, and we only have a very limited time to accomplish the necessary changes to see the creation of the new legal entity.

The legacy which Wycombe District Council will leave behind will be one of continual inward investment to provide housing, leisure facilities, infrastructure and a strong economy supporting job retention and creation whilst providing the services we all rely on, having an eye on value for money and keeping the council tax low without borrowing - Not everything has been a complete success, and with hindsight I am sure some things would have been done differently, but the positives have hugely outweighed the negatives and there are still some major projects in the pipeline which we are committed to ensuring they are continued under the new authority. Including major plans for the Chiltern Centre and Frogmoor; regeneration of the Easton Quarter between Totteridge Road, Easton street, Amersham Hill and Railway Place car park; Facilitating the completion of the Handy Cross and Cressex Island development plans; The Baker Street renewal area; completion of the town centre masterplan; The Hughenden Quarter which is nearing completion with the upper site due to come to planning committee shortly, and the Star and Garter Home having now taken in its first resident. There is a renewed impetus into improving the quality of the town centre – we are all aware that town centre shopping will never be what it once was, but there are exiting and impressive plans to make visiting the town centre a pleasurable experience offering leisure, residential, food and retail. This has been many years in the planning involving third parties, but now it looks like everything is aligned to make things happen.

What the change to a unitary Council will mean for the parishes, well the devil will be in the detail, and I will feedback with any information I hear as I get it. There is a lot of talk about devolution and localism coming from the County Council – what this means in practise is yet to be seen. There is also a consultation on creating a town council for Wycombe, and although not directly affected, the contiguous parishes including Downley will be indirectly impacted depending on the outcome. I am keeping a close eye on developments and I am doing what I can to ensure we, in Downley and Plomer Hill, are heard and not forgotten.

Locally, building control have won an award for the new development on the site of the old post office. Despite some objections to the planning application, at least we can be assured that the quality of the new build has been recognised. The new house proposed for the common was refused by WDC, and is now at appeal, and therefore we are now in the hands of the inspectorate.

So, to wrap up – WDC are not looking at the forthcoming year as a winding down to oblivion – but we are working harder than ever to transition and get the best deal for Wycombe District and our parishes within the District as possible, the fly in the ointment is that under the orders laid before parliament, the County Council have the majority on the Shadow Executive who will be taking the decisions. We are hopeful that we can work together, that is what we want – a fair and level playing field, but time will tell.

I started out by saying this will be a year of last's – on Monday, I take over as the last Chairman of Wycombe District Council and will have the unenviable responsibility of signing the final documents that will see an end of 46 years of the Council. – *in practise I don't have a choice, if I refuse to sign, the chief exec will* - I just hope, that whatever follows, will achieve what we have been promised.

## **5. Reports from the Village Schools**

### **Chiltern Wood School- Una-Lynne Mackey, Deputy Head teacher**

Chiltern Wood School has had a very busy year and the Downley site has played an integral part.

We continue to access the local community for enriching the curriculum and for ensuring that what we teach is firmly rooted in learning that is experiential, functional and life enhancing. For example: Forest School on The Common encourages problem solving skills, development of confidence and self –esteem with opportunities to use social and communication skills. Pupils continue to: go Horse Riding at The Grove, visit the local shops to purchase cooking items and enjoy the footpaths, the play areas and the duck pond. The Downley School hosts Emerald Class who have enjoyed this privilege this year.

An eclectic group of community users are able to hire the Chiltern Wood facilities so that local children can attend Judo, LEAP [performing arts] and swimming sessions. In addition, the hall is available for lettings, for musical groups, family parties or other lawful gatherings! The Christmas Bazaar this year was our most successful yet and we welcomed many of the local residents as well as parents and staff.

### **Enrichment and Experiences**

Once again, CWS participated alongside local Mainstream Schools in two musical events. A group of children from across the school went to The O2 to celebrate 'Young Voices' and another group was part of the 'Echoes' music concert at the Royal Albert Hall. The children had a fantastic time and were able to demonstrate how valuable inclusive opportunities are for all. In addition, arranged 'Crocodiles of the World' to visit us- with snakes, an alligator, an iguana and a very grumpy tortoise. Some children went to the Chiltern Open Air Museum and make fire like their ancestors, learn about how to raid a village and pillage the valuable items.

This term the children with the most profound needs have a 'Music and Mayhem' extravaganza led by the Music therapist and the Speech and Language Therapist which we are all looking forward to.

## **Pupil Voice**

CWS has a Student Council that meet every half term to discuss areas of the school they would like to change or develop. The Council is composed of a cross-section of children and young people from each department. So far, the Council have said they would like more swings, extra Lego sets and that they would like to have bubbles in the swimming pool!

Some pupils requested that the playground was painted with new games and that they would like exercise equipment so that pupils could keep fit. The requests have been sent to Bradley Taylor the Head teacher for consideration.

## **Training for Staff**

Emily Rubin, co-author of SCERTS [which is a world-renowned framework for supporting children with social communication and emotional regulation difficulties, particularly autism], flew over from USA to train all CWS staff over two days in January 2019. This has ensured that teachers and TAs have the skills, knowledge and understanding to provide the highest level of input to enable the pupils to enjoy learning and value their time in school. Emily was able to meet with parents following the training and offer her expertise and advice in an open forum.

## **Ofsted Inspection January 2019**

Chiltern Wood School was confirmed to be a 'Good School' in all areas and there were many positives that were highlighted within the final report. The most repeated message was how warm and beneficial the relationships between the children and staff were observed to be - which had a notable impact on the behaviour of the young people.

Our strapline of, 'Success Through Well-Being' was identified as being interwoven throughout many of our practices which makes us all very proud.

We care deeply about the well-being of the children and young people and know that ensuring that we give the right medical, social, physical and emotional support to each individual is imperative so that children will be enabled to learn and to achieve their very best because their well-being is a school priority. Chiltern Wood School, Downley site, continues to educate about 95 pupils across two departments - one for the children with moderate learning difficulties and one department for children and young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. There are no plans to increase this number of pupils.

It is interesting to note that the Local Authority are going to be less likely to place children with more moderate learning disabilities into schools like Chiltern Wood as the demand for places for children with more complex needs increases.

The Downley site and the Cressex site share facilities and visit each other regularly- the school pool is used by all the children over the year and we ensure that friends are made and maintained between sites by linking with 'Buddy classes. We enjoy shared Sports Days, celebratory events like Eid and Christmas and participate in a range of fund-raising events for Children in Need, Comic Relief, Jeans for Genes, MacMillan and many others.

Although we are a Chiltern Wood School community, we are also members of the Downley community and value our place in such a welcoming village.

## **The Downley School- Roxi Sapsford on behalf of the Head Teacher.**

The Downley School continues to be a thriving hub for learning. As a school we have been making great strides to keep up with the demands of a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum and equip the children with the skills and attributes that will take them through life.

We are immensely proud of everyone that is associated with the school as they all contribute to making it the great place it is to work and learn. Having been through a time of change and challenge we are now seeing green shoots emerging and the fruits of our labours. The school team including our Governors, who are of course volunteers and give generously of their time, have stood by our principles and realigned our vision which is now;

To equip the children with the knowledge and self-belief to be happy.

This is not as simple as it may at first seem as it requires many elements to be truly happy. We continue to have a strong and supportive PA who are also local volunteers and who have provided us this year with valuable IT equipment, all weather clothing for the children amongst other things. Not only do they support us financially, but they provide opportunities for us to work with and integrate with the local community with events such as the summer fayre which is this Saturday.

We have dedicated volunteers within the school that attend visits, support events and also read with the children on a regular basis. One of our volunteers also brings us a reading dog for the children which they love.

We work with both Chiltern Wood and Sunshine Montessori which brings further strength to our community. Sharing the amazing site, we have provided us with the opportunity to enhance and extend the educational experiences of all of our children. Also, the sharing of expertise rewards us all.

Within the school we continue to look at what it is our children need and how we can best meet these. Our chickens are much loved and well looked after by the children. They will have a new addition soon as well as a new coupe provided by volunteers and paid for by the PA. The children report that they enjoy looking after them and collecting their eggs.

Our recent surveys of parent/carers, children and staff were overwhelmingly positive and a very different picture to a year ago. Our hardworking and dedicated stakeholders have been able to demonstrate the impact they are having on the school and the community which is reflected within this.

We have started working with the Parish Council, especially with the ongoing issue that surrounds the traffic. We will be starting a campaign to support this and have grater child involvement in stopping the dangerous habits of some individuals.

We have noticed that there are still some local people that are negative about our school. Our advice is to this is to come and see us, meet everyone and then see if you still feel this way. We do not claim to get everything right, but we are working hard. I am thrilled that I have now been appointed the permanent Headteacher of the school and look forward to working with you all in the future.

## **6. Reports from Sports and Social Clubs**

Paul Baker thanked the Council for the grant that was awarded to the Scouts Centre this year. The Centre is in need of major refurbishment. The Centre is currently in use everyday with various community groups hiring the venue. Downley is a thriving hub of community groups for children including guides, scouts, brownies, beavers, rainbows and soon to be hedgehogs.

The sports association will this year be focusing on Manning's Field as it is in need of drainage work. There is concern regarding the cricket pitch as it is sinking in parts, a meeting will take place to decide if the cricket pitch needs moving.

## **7. Report from the Downley Historical Group – Brian Knott**

The group is newly established with the first meeting being held in February 2016. A website is being put together to share the work being done. Topics that are currently being researched are Plomer Hill House, the Methodist church and Church of England, those who died in WW1 and early education in Downley. Photos are being collected and older residents are being interviewed. The group will be represented on Downy Day. The group were recently successful in obtaining a grant from the Festival Committee.

An open day will be held at the Village Hall on the 26<sup>th</sup> June as part of the Downley Festival.

## **8. Report from the DCPS**

### **Downley Common Preservation Society: Report to Annual Parish Meeting**

As many of you will know, the Downley Common Preservation Society, is a registered charity that, in partnership with the Downley Parish Council, undertake work to protect and enhance the Common both as an amenity for local residents and to conserve its natural features.

The DCPS currently has 69 paid up members and continues to organise monthly work parties on a Sunday morning and occasional work parties on Wednesday mornings. Open meetings are held twice a year in April and October for the members and guests who are interested in the Common. While these are not usually very well attended, it also means there is not much that people want to complain about.

### **Activities**

Last summer we concentrated on flailing those parts where the bracken and brambles grow high and in removing the many saplings (usually hawthorn) that spring up in grassland area around the bonfire site.

Autumn saw our annual efforts to hold back woodland encroachment where an area adjacent to the grassland is selected in which to remove some trees from the margins of the wood. This encourages a low-level scrub environment and inhibits the gradual creep of woodland into the grassland area. Last summer, and for some years previous, we have concentrated on the border to the east of the bonfire site.

October and November was the time for bonfire preparations and building of the bonfire itself. A team of volunteers also manufactured the torches for the torchlight procession all on the 5<sup>th</sup> November. The Society also takes care to clear up the site afterwards.

In January this year we continued the regular pond weed removal in Manning's pond and in April repaired some of the bridleway (DOW23/1) leading to the north end of the Common.

### **Funding**

During the year the Society has received grants from Downley Day and from Downley Community Centre to fund the purchase of two surveillance cameras to be used to protect against fly-tipping. This is likely to be very timely as the imposition of charges at High Heavens will likely cause an increase in illegal dumping.

The Society continues to raise funds towards the time when we need to replace the tractor. For the moment, the tractor is functioning well with appropriate maintenance, but it is likely to need replacing in a few years' time.

### **Future Plans**

The recent forestry work on Naphill Common and on neighbouring National Trust land has prompted the Society to consider if there are areas on Downley Common that could benefit from a similar approach. One such location is the path (DOW22/2-3) from the gorse bushes near Woodland View down to the hydrant in the woods towards the Manor where trees are starting to encroach on the path. A programme of cutting trees back from the path would bring light into the area and could act as a butterfly corridor between the Common and the Hughenden Estate by linking up to the corridor created from the hydrant to Echo Valley (DOW15/3). Some of this work (removal of smaller trees) could be undertaken by the Society but it would really need the involvement of West Wycombe Estate and probably a forestry contractor.

Bill Thompson, Hon Sec DCPS

## **9. Report from the Chair of DOSCA**

We are very much alive and well. In my report to our 16<sup>th</sup> AGM in March I had to pick just a few key words to sum up our position over the last year.

Simply put it was sustained growth and a time for change.

Our business model remains sound. Income was up again very slightly despite holding the same room hire prices which are now unchanged for a tenth consecutive year. Actually I am guessing our rivals, the other venues like the Memorial Hall, would dearly love us to increase prices but it does mean that we are delivering on our original promise made over 16 years ago to both develop this facility to meet local needs and to ensure that we are positioned to offer a meeting place designed for everyone on a sustainable basis.

Apart from private parties, (mostly children's birthday parties) We have thirty-six regular hirers that now use this facility offering services to all age groups covering a very wide range of interests. Everything from NCT babies' meetings to gong baths. When I was told about that I had to look it up if only to make sure it was legal and didn't interfere with our plumbing. We

get very busy at times and our booking manager (Cathy) has to be very adept to fit everyone in on occasion particularly when there can be four different groups in all four rooms.

As a consequence, I am sure you can all well imagine the footfall through here is now probably 15,000 a year and we do spend time making sure the old building can take it. That said, it holds up well which is as much a tribute to robust Victorian building design 130 years ago as to anything we have done.

The small but regular operating surplus we enjoy every month means that we have been able, not only to develop the facilities for the centre and take care of maintenance but it has given us the luxury of being able to take a few other initiatives in the community which we could never have done in the early days

This last year has seen more emphasis on free to public, community-wide events. More NHS free health check days were held in the library and we staged our first family fun day, run by both DOSCA volunteers and the School Parent members. We continue to sponsor the Art Show, and last year added a series of free family yoga sessions. The regular free Monday morning scheme for our Parents and Toddlers Group continues to operate. Also last year we were also able to launch a grant awards scheme which has already been able to return value to the community by helping fund things like fly-tipping cameras for the common area and some radio equipment for Butterfly House Hospice where a number of Downley residents have gone.

As for future projects, as many of you know already, the DOSCA trustees have agreed to fund work to refurbish the Ash room which holds the library. This is still at the specification stage at the moment but is hopefully now nearing its conclusion. We are seeing growing pressure to fit more people in there. Next week for example it will be a polling station and as I said earlier, we also turned it into a small health clinic. Yesterday I was asked if it can be used during the festival art show as a venue for an evening talk by a visiting artist. We need to see how to best accommodate all these needs as we adapt the room for the future.

My second descriptor was a time for change. At the end of our last financial year we lost both our Treasurer and our bookkeeper. They had both made significant contributions over the years. As I am sure you can imagine, with DOSCA now writing over 400 invoices a year, on old home-based accounting systems and scant care for the new GDPR rules this did present us with a problem. GDPR is now fully implemented I hasten to add.

It was Albert Einstein who said, “in the midst of every crisis, lies great opportunity.”

Our opportunity was to make changes to the character of the DOSCA team to be better positioned for the future. In the early days we were all hands on trying to make the building work with little or no money and the makeup of our team reflected this. We were now presented with an opportunity to make the management team better suited to serving the community in the context we now find ourselves in.

So, in early October we welcomed Rachel to the team as our new Treasurer. A highly qualified bookkeeper, she has gone very quickly up to speed on our all aspects of our accounting procedures and, partly driven by the new GDPR regulations, we have taken the opportunity to have a big clean up all round. Her presence, together with Liza Mediratta who also joined us last year and who is currently chair of the school Parent Association means we are strengthening our links with parts of the community we did not enjoy before. Not only that we are lowering the average age of the trustees, always a good thing! The emphasis now must shift from just making the building work to focussing more on how we can develop the community activities that local people are looking for.

Alongside the time and energy, given generously by all the DOSCA management team we are supported as ever by 4 loyal part-time staff who continue to take care of all the cleaning and caretaking. As I said at our AGM, they are never in the news which speaks to the quality of the work that they do every day. The complaints book looks pretty thin! Now, I believe it is sound management to measure performance in some way and in my report last year I gave a brief analysis on who uses the community centre based on the income from hirers over a twelve-month period.

I am pleased to report again that we continue to offer our services across the full spectrum of the community. Measured by hire income during the year some 46 percent went to local private parties and clubs, up slightly on the previous year, fourteen percent was health-related, down slightly, nine percent had an education theme and if you consider private children's parties, along with the group on Saturdays who provide extra GCSE tuition for local children and most of the library traffic a third of our activities involve young people. This figure is up slightly as Brownies and Rainbows have joined us from the school and are with us regularly now every week during term time. I must tell you that they have already made their mark. Many of you will have seen their Festival winning scarecrow that sat on our front bench last year and their touching display of poppies by the side wall, planted as part of Remembrance Sunday events. This was followed up in January by their unique tribute to the Chinese New Year. How many venues can boast that they have flying pigs in their garden trees!! Can't wait to see what comes up next. Needless to say, DOSCA continues to give emphasis to local groups and activities in all age groups wherever possible.

For many years now nobody no member of the public has attended our AGM. This used to disappoint me but what it does mean is that the team must be getting most things right! And finally, in the last Countywide 'Best Kept Village' competition – the judges scored your Community Centre 10/10 It's coming up again very shortly, so we have just had a big clean up, so I am expecting nothing less than another set of full marks this year.

#### **10. To invite members of the public to raise matters of interest**

A member of the public enquired about whether the Council held a map that details the location of the fire hydrants in the Village, the Clerk does not but will action this.

A member of the public enquired about recent works on Moor Lane and the drainage, this is being managed by TFB and the Clerk.

Cllr Mallen stated that there were a few days in May where a member of the public had contacted her to complain about the Clerk as phone messages left on the Parish phone were not returned immediately. The Clerk stated that she had to take leave at very short notice in May due to circumstances beyond her control and those people had since been contacted. Cllr Mallen requested that should this happen again a message be left on the Parish Council phone with details of the Clerks return. The Clerk said that if leave was taken at short notice again then it is unlikely a message would be left on the phone; other matters would take priority and Council matters will be dealt with on her return.

#### **11. Meeting Close - The meeting finished at 9.30pm.**