



**Minutes of the Annual Downley Parish Meeting
23rd May 2023 7:30 p.m.
Downley Community Centre**

Present: Councillor M Lazenby (Chairman presiding), Cllr P Brooks, Cllr A Lenard, Cllr W Monroe-West, Cllr W Steneskog.

In attendance: 1 Buckinghamshire Councillors M Smith and P Turner
12 members of the public present

1) Introduction & Welcome

Cllr M Lazenby Chairman of Downley Parish Council introduced and welcomed all to the meeting.

2) Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** that the **Minutes of the meeting held on 25th May 2022 be received, approved, adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.**

3) Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr K Chandarana, M Birkett and G Aitken from Downley Cricket Club, C Elliot of Thames Valley Police and G Tandy Clerk to Downley Parish Council.

4) Downley Parish Council – Chairmans report Moyra Lazenby reported as follows:

New Downley Parish Council Website – the new website went live shortly after last year's Annual Parish Meeting. We rebranded with a new colour scheme and were able to provide much more information than on the previous website. The new website is fully compliant with current web content accessibility guidelines making web content more accessible for people of all abilities. You can view our website at Downley.ParishCouncil.org, it's worth a look.

Environment and Climate Change – following on from my report last year, work on Sandpits Pond at Gosling Grove has continued. During last Summer, the pond was almost dry, which gave us the opportunity to dig out an area of the pond, to build up the bank on the southern side, reinforcing it with logs and branches, this side of the pond was notorious for flooding as far as the fence that borders The Heights and although our work made a huge difference the amount of rain in recent months flooded parts of the duck island and a small area of the Southern bank, so we still have work to do. I would like to thank Councillors Wendy Steneskog, Steve Biggs and Alwen Mann for their support and hard work in helping to restore the pond and of course we wouldn't have achieved so much without our fantastic band of volunteers the Gosling Grovers, who turn out in all weathers with smiles on their faces in eager anticipation of eleven o'clock provided by Jane, Jane and Rachel.

Speeding and traffic management – we purchased the official TVP signs which have been fixed to the Parish boundary signs, warning motorists that they are entering a Community Speedwatch area. Now the longer days are with us, we will be back out with a speedgun and new volunteers are always welcome, just follow the link on the Downley Parish Council website to sign-up. Cllr Wendy Steneskog together with Johann, her husband continue to assess the data from the SID devices and has produced a list of locations where the SIDS are sited. Thank you both, thanks also must go to David Worsdall and Clive Knapman for relocating the devices for us on a monthly basis.

Downley Pedestrian Crossing Feasibility Study – due to resident's concerns in recent years regarding navigating their way around the village, Downley Communications Forum part funded towards a feasibility study to investigate installing a crossing point at one of two proposed sites. As we have now been granted permission to publish the document, we will be highlighting this at Downley Day so please come and see us for more information. Following any feedback we receive on Downley Day, the Parish Council will arrange a community meeting to discuss the pros and cons of this project.

Streetlights – All of the Parish Streetlights have now been converted to LED's. A complete list can be found on our website. Please continue to report any streetlights not working using the Fixmystreet link on our website.

The Queens Platinum Jubilee – leading up to our late Queens Platinum Jubilee, Cllr Steneskog and I decorated the village with bunting and were thrilled to see that so many residents did the same. The parish Council celebrated this huge milestone by hosting the Platinum Party on the Common, a fabulous evening of bands, children's entertainer and a firework finale. Thankfully, great weather was enjoyed by all those who attended. We were of course all saddened at the passing of her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in September. A book of remembrance was made available in the Community Centre foyer for visitors to sign and this will be kept in our archives.

The Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla and the Big Help out – Cllr Steneskog and I again decorated the village with all things Union Flag, bunting, pennants, balloons, the lot. Thank you to all those residents who stopped by Jubilee Green for a chat and offers of help and to the number 30 Downley bus drivers with their thumbs up of encouragement. Thank you to Andy Bass, Bill Thompson and the DCPS team for giving me the honour of lighting the Jubilee beacon on Coronation evening Saturday the 6th May. This was no small feat considering the amount of rain that had fallen during the day but eventually the beacon played ball and the event enjoyed a great turnout and stayed rain free and a toast to our new King and Queen. The Big Help out was held on Monday the 8th of the Coronation weekend, where I together with Cllr Steneskog and Steve Biggs joined volunteers led by the reverend Heather Graham from St James' Church to begin painting the interior of the fence surrounding the Community Centre, to be completed at a later date as the weather got the better of us. We enjoyed meeting new people, had fun and were invited into the Community Centre for tea coffee and biscuits provided by the Downley Simply Walk Group.

Grants – During the past year Downley Parish Council have awarded grants or donations totaling £3995 to the following:

Chalk Cherry's and Chairs
Downley Cricket Club
Downley Sports Association
Downley Guides and Scouts
One Can Trust
The Downley Community Library
Downley War Memorial Hall
& the Third High Wycombe Downley Cubs

I would like to congratulate our very own Downley Ward Councillor Paul Turner on his election to Mayor of High Wycombe Town for the forthcoming year, good luck Paul. We are always grateful to volunteers who offer help to the various projects we take on. If you would like to join us please contact our clerk to register your interest clerk@downleyparishcouncil.org and please spread the word to anybody that you know. Finally, I would like to personally thank Giles Tandy our clerk for his extremely hard work and dedication to the Parish Council.

5) Village matters the reports of clubs, societies and organisations serving the village.

Downley Old School Community Association David Worsdall reported as follows:

The Community Centre is still run by volunteers and we have the support of three part-time staff. The main thing to say about the last year is that we have been steadily rebuilding the user base and I'm pleased to report that business is now pretty much back where it was at pre-Covid levels. Nevertheless, we do get busy at times and the team continues to schedule many rooms every day, which is quite something, as I say, they are all volunteers. The income allows us to both improve our reserves and to continue our program of steadily developing the facility. Those of you who come here regularly will have seen a number of improvements since the last meeting of this type; redecoration of both rooms, the Beech Room and Oak next door has been completed. Following emergency repairs we had to carry out to our boiler and heating system, we have now installed a new feature in anticipation of our costs going up, which we hope will now save slightly on our heating costs and that's a device on the wall that times out and deals with all those people who forget to switch it off when they leave. Those bills could get substantial as we go forward, so we've taken steps to reduce that in fact we're already seeing a

reduction. So we continue to do work on the inside of the building, going outside for a moment, special thanks to Bill Thompson and the Downley Common Preservation Society, because we've taken delivery of a set of logs which were left at the top of the Common for us, they are to guard the lawn area, just to keep the parking off the grass and also our thanks to the Parish Council who facilitated the move and got them put in using KAD. That protects our lawn and it allows us to continue the nice look and feel that we have and to finish the job, you'll also notice that we've put in some bright kerb markings. We are trying to get on top of slightly wayward parking on occasions, so we hope all those things will help. In two weeks' time we have another little project going on, we are going to close the building for a couple of days and we have a specialist floor company coming in, to skim, reseal and rebuild the floor in the Beech Room because it's become too difficult to clean with ingrained dirt. So that work will be carried out at the end of next week and I think we've only disrupted one hirer and while we have the building free, we've also got a specialist company coming in who are going to do a very high level deep clean of the building because we very seldom ever get up above the height of the wall here, these ceilings are very high, so we've decided that we should have somebody in, it's the first time we've done it in 20 years, so we don't go up there very often.

Since my last report to you, I'm also pleased to tell you that we now have two young Downley Mums on the committee; Kimberley and Caroline and whilst they primarily focus on the parent and toddler group, which comes in on Monday mornings, they've also brought in fresh thinking and have helped with a small number of the projects that we get up to. They have reinvigorated our social network presence, they are good on Facebook, so we now have a slightly more active Facebook page than we used to and I like to think that will probably reach more people than we would have done in the past, so it's a good step to fill in some of these gaps in our publicity. It's also part of an attempt I'm making to drive the age of the committee downwards because that's important for our future.

Also and I did mention it last year, or very own Dave and Emma Kendall our caretakers and professional musicians have produced a wonderful video which runs for about 3 ½ minutes extolling all the virtues of the facility, which they gave us free of charge and it's extremely well made. For those of you who've not seen it, if I'm allowed to take about 300 watts of power out of the Downley Day, I'll plug it in for anyone who wants to see it.

Like the Parish Council over the last year we've also made a couple of donations; we've made a donation to the One Can Trust, and in October of last year we hosted one of these famous Macmillan coffee mornings and we match funded the Downley Wives who staged that event here which allowed them to donate over £500 to the charity which we are all very, very pleased about.

Those of you who have seen our most recent news will have seen that DOSCA, the charity that runs the Centre has just celebrated its 20th anniversary. The present team was joined by about 50 past and present volunteers to a reception here. We thank the Co-op for sponsorship of the event and those members of the management team for helping with all the arrangements. In fact, it turned out to be a double birthday party because we'd spotted that this year the building itself passes this year, its 150th birthday and it's still going strong.

Finally, with an eye to the future, let me just say that we continue to put emphases onto the aspects that make the place more robust and wherever possible we are going to try to get younger people in, although that's proving difficult, getting younger volunteers so any of you who can make any contribution of any sort to the way we operate here. We meet once a month and we'll take any expertise we can get. That said, we are well placed for the future and the outlook is good. Thank you all for your support.

Downley Cricket Club Moyra Lazenby read the report prepared by Martin Birkett on behalf of the Downley Cricket Club.

1. Review of 2022 Season

Last year we competed with 1 Team for the first time in many years. We came 4th in Div 3 of the Mid Bucks League.

AGM conducted on April 12th 2023

2. Election of Officers

- a. President – Francis Braganza
- b. Chairman – Ray Manka
- c. Secretary – Martin Birkett
- d. Treasurer – Billy Powell
- e. Club Captain – Graham Swales
- f. Team Captain – Ben Hughes
- g. Vice Captain(s) – Rehaan Vats, Graeme Aitken

3. League Logistics for 2023

This year we play in the Mid Bucks Div 2 since Div 2 and 3 have merged due to Teams folding – 13 teams in total in this division (so we only play some teams once); 17 matches (8 Home, 9 Away). Bye week July 29th where we have set up a friendly. First match is May 6th.

4. Pitch Equipment Update

Roller has been repaired at substantial cost but without it we have no club. We cannot afford even a replacement second-hand one. Other mowers working OK due to work carried out by Den Cox and Colin Emery to maintain them.

5. Safeguarding

All Club Officials and Officers have completed relevant Safeguarding training and are DBS checked. This is now a requirement for all Clubs.

6. Financial Update

Club now has less than £3000 in the bank and therefore fundraising is critical.

7. Fundraising

- a. 100 Club – was launched in May 2022 under appropriate licence from Wycombe DC; only 26 members at present. We need to recruit more. £5 per month per member. 1st/2nd prize each month of varying amounts depending on membership. A full 100 members would bring in £3000 per year for the Club.
- b. Other events – Race Night ? President's Day will be August Bank Holiday weekend

8. 150th Club Anniversary Kit

The club was started in 1873 so this year is our 150 year anniversary. We are looking to get new kit for start of the season with special commemorative logo, and the Le De Spencer Arms have agreed to be our new sponsor.

Community Orchard Anrew Flint Reported as follows:

I have been press ganged, I have to say, into taking the lead on the Community Orchard and I've grandiosely given myself 3 key aims over the next year or so

- There isn't that much awareness of the Orchard in the village, so we'll try to raise awareness locally of what we're actually up to.
- We are desperate for more volunteers to actually help maintain and grow the Orchard and more about that a little bit later on
- We'd like to encourage more active participation in some specific events, which are apple or fruit related, for people to engage with and appreciate what we've been doing up there.

In terms of my aim of greater awareness, we've started a little bit of publicity, we've put an article in the Downley Village News about what we're up to and asking for volunteers. We have been hampered by the fact that vandals have attacked the previous sign that was up there actually stating "Here is the Downley Community Orchard", so we are reinstating that and I have Giles on the case at the moment seeing if he can help us put that signage back up in place. So that at least people will be able to walk past and understand that its actually there. We are also looking at involving local organisations and schools as well.

As far as increasing the number of volunteers is concerned, the appeal that we made for volunteers has actually allowed us to recruit some people, which is great. We are still looking for more but at least 6 people turned up, which was quite incredible really. So we've got an extra six people involved and consequently the maintenance of the orchard has been much improved. I've been involved there for about a year and if you looked at it before and you looked at it now, you'd notice that the trees look in a much better shape and we are now on the major task of improving the staging of the trees as well.

We now have a WhatsApp Group with all of the volunteers on it, we have assigned roles to various volunteers for orchard related activities We are using the resources of part of Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust called Rough Around the Edges, who've given us a grant, which is great. We're using

the resources that they've got to help with maintenance equipment etc. They also run various courses and so one of the things that we want to do with the volunteers is make sure that they are well trained and so we are sending people off onto Root pruning courses so that they can increase their skills around that and also, we are looking at trying to improve generally the wildlife friendliness of the area. So we are looking at putting up nest boxes and that sort of thing. If you looked at the infestation that we currently have of winter mother you'd understand that we are desperate to get more blue tits etc to get rid of the caterpillars etc.

In terms of participation in events, this is very much work in progress at this stage. We are actually in possession of a lovely apple press which isn't used, which seems such a shame. One of the things we are trying to do this autumn is have an apple pressing day, where people can bring their own fruit, there are a lot of good fruit trees around Downley, people can bring their fruit, press their apples etc and take away the juice. We would probably combine that with other apple related or fruit related events as well; a little bit of apple bobbing and all that sort of thing.

We are trying to get the schools involved, there's various things that we're looking at and one of our volunteers is approaching schools to see what they might be interested in and indeed what we can do, allowing for health and safety and all the rest of it. We may consider doing a blossom day next year, so people can come along on a specific day to look at the apple blossom and maybe bring a picnic.

We will probably need a bit more funding if we are going to do anything major in the way of events. I might be going cap in hand to the festival people to see if they would like to give us a little grant.

If you would like to get involved, please do so, we are a very friendly little bunch of people, we'd love it to be bigger. You can improve all of your skills which you can apply to your own fruit trees at home, should you have any.

Chiltern Wood School Rachel Chapman reported as follows:

This is my first time here; I wasn't able to be here last year but it's an absolute pleasure to be able to represent Chiltern Wood School. We are very interested in the fruit press as well, in getting involved with that. So we continue to become more popular both in the county and out of county with places being highly sought after. We are now also starting to make more links with the Downley School, which is wonderful, I'm particularly thinking about them possible using some of our pool time as well. Back in September, we welcomed all our pupils and staff back after the summer holidays. Some of those pupils enjoyed our holiday club which is run alongside Wycombe Wanderers Sports and Education Trust which has been fantastic. We use our own staff as well to support the children so that they feel supported and they've got a friendly environment that they feel welcome in. So we have those now in the summer holidays, the Easter holidays and the Christmas holidays.

We welcomed a new teacher to our Downley site, Izzy who is a big fan of the community and you may or may not have seen some of our youngsters walking around to the Tesco's to do their shopping. They come back and they do their cooking and Izzy and her team have been a wonderful addition to the school which has been fantastic.

In October, November time we welcomed the old mayor, Cllr Arif Hussain came and visited us at the school and he enjoyed some cakes and came to get to know us a bit better. We also had our professional's fayre at the Downley school for our children with special educational needs, that progression onwards beyond school. We invited a whole load of people who came in and Liz, our parent ambassador arranged all of that and that was a big success.

At the end of November, we had our main fund-raising event our Christmas Bazaar organised by "The Friends of Chiltern Wood". We did very well, it was my first time there and I had a lovely time and we welcomed lots of the community in as well.

In December we had a Whiz, Pops Sparkle extravaganza, which was just wonderful, with all of our PMLD children leading on that and our Gemstones Children went to the pantomime at Wycombe Swan and had a wonderful time seeing Vernon and the crew down there.

Into the New Year we had Mental Health Awareness Week, which was led by our school counsellor Kirsty. All the children spent some time thinking and reflecting on their mental health, it's something we value very highly at Chiltern Wood School. We had World Book Day where all the young people and particularly the staff at Downley, love to get dressed up as a favourite book character.

Some of our pupils have taken part in Young Voices at the O2 which was brilliant. The children joined many others from across the country to share an inclusive singing event. They had rehearsed for months under the guidance of another of our talented teachers, Sara.

Later on in the year we had some youngsters take part in "Energise" at the Wycombe Swan and again it was my privilege to be there and see them take part and I was incredibly proud as Head Teacher to be able to witness that.

Later on in the year, some of our Emerald Class have taken part in some brilliant electricity and science projects which they absolutely loved, I think we've got a few scientists in the making.

After Easter we welcomed back Chef Michael who's from "Empower to cook" he comes into the school and does cooking at the Downley site on a Wednesday, one class in the morning, one in the afternoon, they make some amazing food absolutely brilliant.

Also in the Easter holidays we did some fund-raising and we were able to replace our swings, which includes an inclusive bowl swing too, now all of our children can access the swings there. We are continuing to fund-raise for our playground area. You may also have seen the amazing crown, which was in the Ian Rennie Charity shop, which one of our classes made. Izzy and the class team there made some lovely relationships with the charity shop and they go in now and see if there are any books that might be suitable. I felt incredibly proud to see the crown in there and it's wonderful to see our school being represented in the local community.

We also had Garsington opera come in as well, they performed a workshop with the young people and they just had the best time, Una-Lyn was part of that and there is a lovely photograph of the children just enjoying that. They had the workshop in school and then they will be joining the opera in July to go and see a performance of "The Bartered Bride"

For upcoming events, we will be doing refreshments again for Downley Day, which we absolutely loved doing last year. We've also got Chill Fest, the Chiltern Wood Festival, which is going to be very low key this year, we are going to see how it goes, on the 28th June. It will raise some money for our Memorial Garden, since I've been head, which is since January 2022, we have had three young people who have sadly died and over the years we've had many children that have died and we wanted to have somewhere special that we could go where we could remember them. So there's a small green area as you enter the school and we want to open that up to anyone who'd like to go there. We have a wonderful PA whose fiancé is a landscape gardener and he has drawn up all the designs for us. So that's something we are working on as a project, our Memorial Garden.

Finally, I just wanted to say how lucky we are as a school because our wonderful new mayor, Paul Turner, who is also a governor at the school, has chosen us for one of his charities this year, so thank you Paul and thank you the Downley Community.

The Downley Scouts Paul Baker reported as follows:

Good Evening, my name is Paul Baker and I am the GSL for 3rd High Wycombe (Downley) Scout Group.

Since March 2021 the Exec of 3rd High Wycombe had been supporting District by overseeing duties for the 9th High Wycombe who were struggling for leaders and had no executive committee, which is a requirement of Scouting POR (Policy, Organisation and Rules). In September we formerly merged the 9th Members into the 3rd, this was an easy decision for us, as the only other option available to District was to shut the group which would have resulted in the majority of the 70 young people dropping out of scouting as other local groups wouldn't be able to accommodate them. I am proud to say we now have Vancouver and Klondike Beaver Colonies, Apollo and Gemini Cub Packs and Columbia and Scorpion Scout Troops operating out of our HQ at the far end of the common.

This merger has already shown to be the right move as our numbers are continuing to grow and we currently have waiting lists for both Beaver Colonies and the two cub packs and the two scout troops currently are running with close to 30 young people in each. On top of this we also have 9 Young Leaders from Explorers (Aged between 14 and 18), who are working towards the Leader qualifications and 27 Leaders Aged 18+. We have further volunteers on our Exec Committee and we also have a Young Leader on the committee to provide youth input.

Over the last year we have returned to more traditional scouting, meeting face to face and getting around the fire pit to enjoy some backwards cooking and smores, and many other hands on scouting activities.

We are starting to see development in our young people since returning and hopefully help to develop their personal skills and the ability to interact with each other, skills which have been sadly lost as a result of the pandemic. We have had a week long summer camp for the Scouts, District Camp for the Cubs and back in September the Scouts ventured to Braid Wood for their District Camp, and in July

we will take the full group to a District Camp at Tolmers in Hertfordshire and the scouts have another week camp planned for the first week of the school holidays.

I would also like to take a moment to thank the Downley Parish Council, DOSCA, Downley Day Committee and the Downley Communications Forum for their generous donations which enabled us to take our Cub Packs on a County sleepover for 180 young people at Conkers activity Centre in Leicestershire at the weekend.

The highlight of our year so far was being asked to be part of the flag party for the Mayors Coronation service in the town centre and our young people go the opportunity to meet and chat with the Mayor and some of his guests.

We are always on the lookout for volunteers to help out with the Group, this can be on an adhoc basis or if you want to get more involved with the Group you could become a leader.

We have a number of equipment requirements over the coming year, including a trailer and a whole load of tents due to the increase in our group size and age of our current equipment, so if you know of any local organisations or businesses who would be interested in helping with funding do please get in touch as these two initiatives will most likely cost the group around £4,000.

My final plea is we are currently looking to redevelop the scout and guide centre due to its age and current structural state and for this I need help with raising the required funding from Grants and other sources and so I am looking to put together a small team to help get the applications completed, all the required consents and planning completed and driving this dream to become a reality. The centre we are looking to provide would be of huge benefit not only to local scouting and guiding but the community as a whole as it would provide an array of meeting rooms, parking and activities that the whole community would be able to enjoy. I know parking is a big issue and the proposed plans for the centre would provide adequate off street parking to void congestion during meetings.

Thanks for your time tonight and happy to chat after the meeting or in the coming weeks about anything I have mentioned.

The Downley Guide and Scout Centre Mark Starkey reported as follows

It's been a year of ups and downs, major expenses and some difficult decisions. During the winter months when the winds were blowing a gale across the Chilterns the Centre experienced cross winds that caused a lot of damage to trees at the Centre and a tree by the driveway came down damaging both the perimeter fence and the driveway. It missed the hut by about half a foot. It's taken many months to find and employ the right services to repair the damage and get the centre back to its former self. Although the tree was removed quickly to enable Woodlands Pre-school to continue operations and the Guides and Scouts to have their meetings the disruption to the fence and the subsequent inability to find a reliable driveway specialist these have now been sorted and the services required engaged and should be completed around half term.

We've also had various expenses regarding heating, with the gas heater starting to fail and this had to be decommissioned for safety reasons. This put Woodlands in a difficult position, needing heating in continual cold weather. New infrared heating panels which provide more heat and are energy efficient were fitted at the Centre in May. We also installed new LED lighting which again is more energy efficient.

The Centre is in a good financial position at present even with the additional expenses I've outlined. A sum of money in the bank has been ring fenced for future development. We aim to get presentations ready to enable us to share our vision of the future of the Centre and its users. We are also looking forward to members to help engage in fund raising. We didn't get any response to our last advert and we really do need someone to help us do that, running the Centre and Scouting.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people that actually help; those people who are volunteers and come in and help; those people who just turn up and sweep the drive, we thank you very much.

Downley Albion Football Club Sally Baker reported as follows:

I've got very little to say, basically we are broke and we've not got any players. So after having been in the village for over 100 years, the future of Downley Albion is not looking very rosy at the moment. I have put out please for new players but Downley Dynamos don't have a youth team finishing this year, so there isn't anybody to filter up. Also it's becoming so expensive for players to play; pitch fees have gone up, referees have gone up and league fees have gone up, so the whole process of running

a football club is getting a bit too much at the moment without fund raising. But again, it's finding time to fund raise. We paid off all our debts from 2020 when we were not playing football but now we are back in the same situation because the money that we get in over the year doesn't cover what goes out.

So not much to report, apart from the fact that we played really well, this season, we finished mid-table, with a great group of lads who are amazing but we just need a few more that we can get on a regular basis. So again if you have any family or friends who'd like to join the football club please send them my way, minimum age 16. We are hoping to recruit and be back again in September.

St James' Church Reverend Heather Graham reported as follows:

I am pleased to report that Growing Hope High Wycombe, which runs clinics at St James' for children with additional needs, is going really well. We have a new clinic manager Rosalyn who is a speech and language therapist and also employ a music therapist Louise, one day a week and have a new full time Occupational Therapist starting in June. In 2022 we were able to support 94 children, siblings, parents and carers through therapy and training. In addition to children coming to clinics for assessments and a block of 6 free sessions of therapy, we have also run siblings groups in the Disraeli school and also courses for parents and carers called When Dreams Change, to help them with the journey and impact of parenting a child with additional needs.

Our Thursday Poppin is increasingly popular and it is great to see friendships being formed, and mutual support being given, amongst those coming along on a Thursday to collect their One Can parcels.

On 8th May we had our second LoveD Downley and Disraeli day, where we combined with the other churches in Downley to provide food and activities through the day and also carry out some community action projects including litter picking and painting the fence around this community centre.

St James along with the other local churches are looking forward to attending Downley Day in June. Hoping to see everyone there, and come and see us and buy your lunch, as usual we will be having homemade Caribbean food!

Up Downley Festival Committee Fran Lazenby reported as follows:

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. For those of you who don't know me, I'm Fran Lazenby, Chairman of the Up Downley Festival Committee.

As you are aware, Downley Day has been going for many years, but in 2012 it was decided to create an Arts Festival. The original policy statement read 'The Downley Arts Festival is being established to bring a wide variety of artistic talent engaged in every aspect of creative endeavour and to bring it the widest possible audience of local people over the period between Downley Day and Concert on the Common.'

'The Festival Committee will facilitate a calendar of events comprising everything from demonstration days of local craftsmanship, dance, theatre, village choir and music performances and the work of local artists and crafts people.'

Two years later in 2014, the Festival was expanded and became the Up Downley Festival that we know today.

This year, The Art Show will be running from Saturday 1st July through till Friday 7th July and will include all forms of art submitted from the young to more experienced local artists. During the week, there will be a talk by Mark Page, a photographer, on Monday 3rd, and on Wednesday 5th there will be sketch and walk with Jane Peacock. It really is worth popping into the Community Centre and witnessing the talent that exists in the Village.

Staying with the art theme, on Friday 23rd June there will be a lino printing workshop at St James' Church Hall and over the weekend of 1st & 2nd July, you will find an open garden and Art Studio sale at 9 Commonsides (the pink house).

One of the highlights of the Festival is the Comedy Night in the marquee and this year should be no exception. We have Logan Murrey as the M C, comedians Matt Rees and Sally-Anne Hayward followed by the headliner Andy Parsons. The Comedy Night is on 21st June and the tickets are available on-line at festival.downley.org

The Moonrakers, a folk band will be playing the memorial Hall on Friday 23rd June and on Thursday 29th June, the Downley Descants and Wycombe Concert Band will be performing at the Chiltern Wood School.

During the Festival you can also enjoy a Family Restorative Yoga & Gong Bath, plus the History Walk, which is always very interesting and informative. Finally, some of the events are free whilst others are ticketed. The Festival makes a profit each year and the philosophy is to support local groups in the village so if there are any organisations that would benefit from a grant, please get in touch. Thank you for your time and I look forward to seeing you at one of our events this Summer.

Downley Common Preservation Society Andy Bass reported as follows:

As many of you may know, the Downley Common Preservation Society (DCPS) is the registered charity working in partnership with the Downley Parish Council to manage the common. We work to protect and enhance Downley Common both to conserve its natural features and as an amenity for local residents.

The committee meet each month to organise work parties and events and provide liaison with a variety of stakeholders including West Wycombe Estates, local residents and – via the attendance of Councillor Adrian Lenard - the Parish Council.

On the first Sunday of every month - at ten o'clock - volunteers meet to form work parties and undertake a variety of usually pre-arranged projects – though we've been involved in more 'emergency' path clearings and 'making safe' of late due to storms bringing down sometimes quite substantial trees.

We follow an annual pattern of maintenance based upon a rolling ten-year Management Plan that has not been substantially renewed for many years – so we are currently investigating the expertise and funding options for a new management plan. We're looking to create a new strategy document in line with the latest conservation practices and the - sometimes competing – demands on the common as a leisure facility.

Almost all other works are carried out by our volunteer work parties using only a variety of hand tools, garden gloves and water-proof clothing. It's an invigorating way to get to know your neighbours and I heartily recommend any and all of you to join in the fun!

As an aside, we have also reinvigorated our online presence and have a new Facebook page.

We keep woodland paths clear, and fell trees, clear brambles, and collect litter. We also plant trees and maintain the Coppice beside Plomer Green Lane - always with a mind to preserving the unique, semi-open/semi-rural character of the common and maintaining its bio-diversity. For example, every year we clear the choking weeds from Mannings Pond to encourage newts, insects and the like. As another example, you may have noticed that the Community Oak is apparently feeling its age. While keen to maintain the important habitat that a mature tree provides, we've also had to take care to ensure broken branches are managed to maintain public safety.

We also work with the Parish Council to protect the common from unwanted human incursion: that includes checking and maintaining the posts and tree barriers around the Common and we also monitor and comment on any planning applications that might be at odds with long-term preservation, and sustainability objectives.

The most visible highlight of our work has traditionally been the building of the annual Downley Bonfire. The event itself is organised under the auspices of the Parish Council. Every year in October, members of the Preservation Society open an entry to the common adjacent to the Old Dairy / Downley Garage and invite local residents to leave their garden waste and other safe, combustible waste around the bonfire site. We haven't seen very many bathroom suites for a while.

Our volunteers spend a number of weekends gathering the material into shape so that on the 5th of November – always on the actual date – Downley residents can enjoy a traditional bonfire.

It then takes several more work-parties to clear and make-good the site once the final embers have cooled.

The bonfire building is also an important example of our need to maintain our one "capital asset": a Massey Fergusson tractor of nearly 40 years vintage. The tractor moves felled or fallen trees, shifts large obstacles and flails the long grass in the 'top common'/ north end area.

For example, without the tractor we wouldn't have been able to help the Old School Community Association when – earlier this year - David Wordsall requested replacement logs around the lawn. So, some good came of those storms.

Operation and maintenance of the Tractor - and our other tools - is an expensive endeavour that sometimes cannot be met by membership fees alone. We are most grateful that the Parish Council has on occasion helped provide funds for specific tools and projects of critical maintenance. Again, thank you, Council for that.

Finally – and this is to all present – it would be great to have some more of you along for our monthly work parties. As I said, just stout shoes and a pair of gardening gloves - and a world of light exercise, a strong sense of satisfaction and rambling chitter-chat awaits!

Downley Day – Bill Thompson reported as follows:

This is the report up to last August really. Last Downley Day was notable for the headline event which was provided by the falconry display from the Falcon Centre. We don't seem to ever have a falconry display without losing at least one of the birds. And for those that were prepared to brave the weather and actually hang on to the bitter end, the Ukrainian Dance Ensemble was quite spectacular. It was everything that you would expect from a group of Cossack dancers. So that was much appreciated and I think it was opportune considering the news at the time. So just to briefly go over the accounts for the year, we run the family disco and Downley Day for which the profits were just over £870. We donate grants to various village and local organisations, that came to a total of £710 plus the £500 to the cubs. We also organise Concert on the Common, which is the other bookend to the Festival, we hold a charity collection there which last year collected £816 on the night. We donated to Scan appeal, one innovation last year which I think surprised a number of people, when told "I'm sorry we don't have any cash", I smartly whipped out a card reader.

The other main thing that we do throughout the year, is to provide the Christmas Tree on Jubilee Green and invite children from the village to come along and decorate it.

Comms Forum – Bill Thompson continued:

This is a group that came out of the Community Plan 2010, it was decided then that there really needed to be a better way of coordinating communications in the village and so we formed a committee to look after the Village News, the community website and anything else that was deemed relevant at the time. The Village News got revamped, which I'm sure everyone is familiar with and something like 2200 copies are distributed free of charge and it currently contains about 54 advertisers. Fortunately they have been quite generous so far, we have been able to support various requests with grants etc however the number of advertisers is gradually reducing, it may be that we have to put our prices up to match everybody else really and to match the increased costs that we are seeing. The Downley Community website is something that the Comms Forum set up, there was an existing one but we decided that that really needed both a revamp and really a much more professional look and a new website was constructed thanks to Mark over there and we host a number of pages describing the various societies and clubs within the village. Some of them actually use the page as their main web page. The Community centre is one for example that uses that rather than have their own website. It's quite well used, we can have as many as 9000 visits per quarter, particularly in the Summer months around the Festival period. It will drop dramatically during the middle of Winter when there's not much happening. As part of that whole process, we also publish Downley e-News which gives information about what's currently going on in the village we try to make that once a month, it's not terribly reliable, we need to both remember to do it and find something interesting to talk about but we have about 440 subscribers. If you are interested, you can sign up on the website. We also have the Downley Committee Festival page about 2600 followers on that. It's one of the main news sources within the Parish, together with the Downley Residents page. So, very briefly, the accounts to March of this year, we made an operating surplus of £1081 and we also made a donation of £500 to the cubs.

Buckinghamshire Council – Paul Turner reported:

After listening to all the reports from the organisations in Downley this evening, it really is encouraging and uplifting and highlights what a fantastic community Downley is. As a resident I would just like to say thank you.

<https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s60670/GD001449%20Policy%20Annual%20report%202023%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

I have attached a link in my report to the annual report of Buckinghamshire Council. This can either be downloaded, or watched as a webcast by logging into the BC website.

It covers the four priorities of Strengthening our Communities, Protecting the Vulnerable, Improving the environment and Increasing prosperity.

It is 26 pages, so not too long, but would still take far more time to cover in detail at this meeting.

I decided therefore, as there is no point re-inventing the wheel, or indeed regurgitating it I will confine my report to say a few words about what the day to day life of a local councillor is like.

Many conversations start with 'I represent you'. Very often we are seen as 'the council', but my ethos has always been I am not elected to represent the council to the residents, I am elected to represent the residents. I am here to represent you. I often wish I had that magic wand that could solve every issue or concern, but I do strive to get things done. The 50 plus emails, (sometimes up to 100), which I am sure my fellow councillors can relate to which I get daily need sorting through. Many can be disregarded or at least do not need a reply such as those containing just information from 'the council', or more meetings going into the diary, but I appreciate all the emails from residents are about what is important to them. Whether it is a missed bin collection, or an email letting me know of a concern for a vulnerable adult, or a child, and asking for help. I do have to prioritise, and hopefully that is understood. A report of a vulnerable adult needs immediate attention, a missed bin can wait until tomorrow.

As well as the emails there are the phone calls. I do try and answer, but always respond to a voice message left asking for a callback.

Then there are the meetings - oh yes the meetings! I have limited the meetings I attend mainly to those where I can make a difference - Children's and Education Select Committee, a particular interest of mine for personal reasons, but real lived experience counts for a lot when contributing to the effectiveness of a scrutiny committee. Planning (I've been on that one for 11 years, so my experience is valued. I did try and leave that one this year, but was persuaded at the last minute to stay. I did however step down as vice-chairman to free up time for other things). The two Community Boards and the Town Committee all of your Downley Councillors are on, are appointments due to the location of the wards we represent.

In addition there are the outside bodies I am appointed to including the Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme, a homelessness charity which links into my day job - yes I have a day job too. However, everything I do is about contacts and collaboration, and bringing the right people together to have the right conversations at the right time. I have been able to house, through my day job, many of those who would have been homeless after coming into contact with them initially through the homelessness charity. My day job has also taught me a lot about the complexity of Adult Social Care and the benefits system, again helping me to help residents when they need help themselves, either navigating the social care system or getting the benefits they should be claiming. If I don't know the answers, I know someone who does and can get things done.

I haven't gone into any detail about any individuals or individual cases for reasons I hope you understand. The majority of what I do, is, and will always remain, confidential. It doesn't get put on Facebook - or any other social media, why should it, why would it? This once a year report is done, hopefully as a brief behind the scenes look at what is being done day in day out. After today, I will go back to just quietly getting on with the job.

80% of the budget of BC and therefore where our council tax goes is absorbed by ASC and children's services. That's about the same level as I find in my casework - it's not all about potholes.

I will end with a plea, but for a good reason. You may have heard that on Saturday I had the honour of being elected as The Mayor of High Wycombe (while I am in Downley I most definitely defer to the Parish Council Chairman, we uphold a strict protocol). I simply mention it, so I can ask you to support the Mayors charities during the coming year. The Mayors Appeal will be supporting HW breast cancer unit located in Wycombe Hospital, and also Chiltern Wood School. Chiltern Wood have two sites, one in Cressex and the other here in Downley, so it is apt that I should mention it now. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at future events organised by the Mayors Appeal 2023/24.

Downley Methodist Church -Dilys Knapman reported

Thank you for the opportunity to present ourselves before the Downley Parish Council.

Some of you may be aware that tomorrow Methodists throughout the world will celebrate "Aldersgate Day" in recognition of John Wesley's conversion on 24th May 1738. Wesley was the founder of Methodism and between 1739 and 1789 he visited Wycombe many times. At least one of these visits was to Downley Common where he preached to a large crowd, and recorded in his journal that "The Lord is truly at work in this place".

And we hope He is today. Methodists have been meeting in Downley for well over 200 years – at first in homes and halls and then, from 1824, in the sanctuary of our chapel in Moor Lane. 100 years later, the halls were added. And here we still are.

Our current fellowship is small, with 14 regular attenders mainly from the village itself. Apart from our regular Sunday worship we hold a Bible Study group twice a month and an afternoon fellowship who share in a varied programme with guest speakers. Together with St James, Grace Baptist and Vibe Church (renamed from the Pastures) we belong to the All Churches Together group. With them, we have organised Lent Lunches, Egg Hunts, and a Sunrise Service this Easter which attracted forty people to the common at 6.00am on a cold Easter Sunday morning. We were also on the common at Christmas to sing carols and share a warming glass of mulled wine. In early May taking a lead from "Love Wycombe" the group had a celebration day called "Love-D" sharing the Christian message of Love for the people in Downley by offering breakfast, games, and family activities. We have been a joint presence at Downley Day for the last few years – and mean to be there again this year.

Our hope is always to reach out and serve our community. We help to run monthly services at The Heights care home and give financial support to Wycombe Youth for Christ, Wycombe Homeless Connection and The One Can Trust. Our income is derived from the personal giving of members and from our lettings. These are Downley Descants Community Choir and Chiltern Hills Montessori Nursery which opened in our downstairs rooms last September. We share our building and have also been delighted to share services with the children and their parents at Christmas and Easter.

In the past months we have been considering how to celebrate, next year, the 200 year anniversary of our chapel. Our planning is in its early stages but we very much hope that the village will feel part of our celebrations and join with us as we honour the past and look forward to our future as an active presence in the life of Downley village.

6) Reports from Buckinghamshire Councillors

Covered previously in Cllr Paul Turners report above.

7) Questions from the public on matters affecting the village.

A member of the public advised that on the 18th June the Memorial Hall would be hosting a celebration to commemorate its one hundredth anniversary and invited the public to attend and enjoy tea and cakes and to find out more about the Memorial Hall.

She also commented that streetlamp 64 in Gray's Lane has yet to be converted from sodium to LED while streetlamp 69 in Gray's Lane was not working. And requested that the minutes of the meeting be made available in advance of the next meeting.

A member of the public asked for an update on potholes in the village and it was explained that these are the responsibility of Buckinghamshire Council and not the Parish Council. It was explained in connection with this the work had commenced on repairs to the Pastures.

A member of the public asked if progress had been made with the proposed zebra crossing for the village. The Chairman explained that the idea would form part of the Parish Council's presentation for Downley Day.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 09:14 p.m.

DRAFT