

## **The chairman reported on activities during the year**

**Miriam Tebbs land:** the land has been cleared and the hedge laid very expertly by Nigel Prickett has been trimmed this winter. Seven fruit tree were planted by Mr Wyatt. We are awaiting the felling of the holly tree under the electricity cable, after which we shall consider the siting of a new bench in the orchard. We are very grateful to TOE2 for their grant to cover the costs of this work.

**The new bus service** appears to be working well, thanks to a continuing subsidy from Warwickshire CC (no thanks to Oxfordshire).

**The services** now provided by OCC are now minimal. Since they are now only prepared to pay for one verge cutting a year, the PC has agreed with Nigel Prickett to pay for a further two cuts at appropriate times out of the village precept.

**The Millennium Field:** we are very grateful to the Town Estate Charity and Margaret Hobson for ensuring that the Millennium Field is preserved for the enjoyment of villagers. The PC has agreed to arrange for and undertake half the cost of its maintenance. Hedge trimming and dog bins have already been arranged. This is a wonderful asset for the future.

### **Two successful events:**

The Queens 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations and the Elizabethan Feast in February: thanks to all who organised them.

### **Two items of considerable concern have come to our attention:**

**Horton Hospital:** the determination of the NHS to run down and ultimately close the Horton is the subject of a campaign ably run by Save the Horton campaign, supported by our local doctor and Roseanne Edwards of the Banbury Guardian.

### **One Oxfordshire:**

The proposal by Oxfordshire County Council to create a unitary council, and abolish District Councils, has been opposed by Cherwell DC and our local MP. This appears to be an attempt to take over the assets of North Oxfordshire and will result in less local participation.

There is a common pattern to both of these alleged public consultations. A professional firm is employed at the cost of tens of thousands. They produce a flashy brochure that contains no information at all and invite locals to reply within less than a month. They conduct biased surveys and claim intimidation if anyone challenges them. They then ignore the results. This is what localism means in the modern British democracy. We do our best.

## **Planning**

There have been 20 planning applications this year, mostly for things like extensions or tree work. But two perhaps warrant specific mention:

**Muddle Barn Farm:** The plans for a large Georgian mansion with Victorian extensions were twice submitted to Cherwell: on both occasions the PC offered detailed objections. Two of your parish councillors attended the Planning meeting of Cherwell at which it was to be discussed, but half an hour before the meeting the proposal was withdrawn. However the Planning department had already recommended refusal on the grounds that the proposal conflicted with Policies H17 and H18 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996, policies ESD13 and ESD15 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 and paragraphs 17 and 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

A third submission of revised plans did not address any of these issues but was inexplicably recommended for approval by the planning officers, who paid no attention to our comments. However at our request Cllr George Reynolds spoke eloquently against the clear breach of planning rules involved, and Cherwell councillors voted to refuse this new application. We fully expect the owners to lodge an appeal with the Planning Inspectorate, where we will repeat our objections. In the meantime the owners have applied for permitted development rights to expand the existing small house for the purposes of providing changing rooms for an intended swimming pool. The PC was not asked to give an opinion, but it is clear that the owners still intend major development.

**Bishop Blaize:** The saga continues.

The designation of the former public house as an Asset of Community Value was upheld by Cherwell despite being challenged by the owners. This means that the property must function as a public house rather than a private dwelling.

The owners therefore opened it as a public house on an occasional basis and offered it for sale as such, However all applications to view by prospective

purchasers were evaded, and there is no real evidence that the pub continues to function. The owners have applied to erect b&b facilities on the carpark, but (again thanks to Cllr George Reynolds) have been refused: this is currently under appeal. There appears to be continuing infrastructure development in the car park, without planning permission.

Having ascertained from the Enforcement Officer that in her opinion the current usage was illegal, the PC wrote to Cherwell asking whether they were intending any enforcement action. Six months later they replied that they did not. We replied inviting Cherwell officers to come to the present meeting to explain their position. Despite having plenty of time Cherwell DC has not replied. At this point the meeting unanimously passed **a motion of dissatisfaction with the situation and asking for urgent consultation at the highest level between the PC and the officers of Cherwell DC to provide detailed responses to the questions raised by the PC.**