

CUMNOR PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting of and Annual Parish Meeting for the Cumnor Parish Council
on Tuesday 7 May 2024 at 7.30pm
in Fogwell Road Pavilion, Fogwell Road, Dean Court.

Present.

Tom Christophers, Chairman, Laurence Waters, Vice-Chairman, Basil England, Gary Mason, Paula Lopez, Judy Roberts, Ray Stone, Chris Westcott, Oliver Wright and Tina Brock, Clerk.

01/24 Apologies for Absence.

Alison Jenner (prior commitment). Council resolved to approve this apology.

02/24 Chairman's Report.

Your Parish Council recently held its annual meeting to report back on 2023/24. Over the last 12 months we have seen the parish council start the first year of its current electoral cycle.

We started the council year with eight councillors in post and ended with 10 following co-options in August and December '23 (carrying five vacancies), all ably supported by the clerk to the parish council. We did have an eleventh councillor during the year (co-option in June 2023), but they retired from council in November 2023.

All councillors and the clerk have served the community with distinction bringing with them huge enthusiasm, commitment and great experience to all aspects of parish life. Working to ensure our play parks and facilities remain safe and relevant to the local community, supporting initiatives to improve the safety of our road network, reviewing local planning applications and investigating solar farm proposals are some of the roles that our councillors have fulfilled for our benefit.

Our councillors also provide representatives to the following external parties: Botley traffic advisory committee; Brize Norton local consultative working group; Cumnor church of England school governors; Cumnor conservation group; Closes Field pavilion; Cumnor old school charity trust; Cumnor village hall; Dean Court community centre association; Fogwell Pavilion Management Committee; Farmoor village hall; and the Parish transport group.

Over the course of the year your parish council has been involved with various road safety and improvement initiatives. The campaign to install a signalled crossing, near to the Arnolds Way junction, to safely usher Matthew Arnold pupils and other pedestrians across Cumnor Hill is awaiting installation this coming Summer.

We supported Oxfordshire County Council's proposal to make 20mph the new 30mph for Oxfordshire. Roads past Cumnor CoE School, Matthew Arnold School, High Street Cumnor and Eynsham Road, Dean Court (amongst others) were switched to a safer 20mph limit. We also await the implementation of a reduction in the speed on Cumnor Road / Oxford Road, Farmoor, to 30mph from 40mph, which has been approved and is now on the county waiting list to action.

We responded to resident complaints and concerns about obstructions to the highway, and threats to pedestrian & cyclist safety, from parked car transporters at the top of Cumnor Hill, servicing Weylands car showrooms. The county council undertook enforcement action on our behalf; however, this has not been effective and so we are now investigating implementation of double yellow lines (with restrictions on loading / delivery waiting time) along the front of the forecourt.

Remedial actions were required on our bus shelter assets during the course of the year - a replacement pane in the Grange Court bus shelter, and faulty lighting in the brick bus shelter at Farmoor.

We are in the process of replacing rotten noticeboards at Oxford Road, Farmoor and Pinnocks Way, Dean Court.

We continue to oversee the installation of a pavement by the relevant landowner through current building works, opposite Cumnor Village Hall, to shorten the gap for pedestrians as they approach

the permissive path leading to Denman's Lane. We continue to be indebted to Tony Harker for continuing as our volunteer footpath warden and ensuring that these vital public rights of way are kept in the best condition possible.

Moving to our play parks and open spaces. Remediation works were carried out during the council year to equipment and buildings at our Fogwell Road sports pavilion, Glebe Play Park, Closes Field Play Park, Pinnocks Way Play Park, and Changing Places at the Old Forge Changing Rooms. Our Changing Places facility in the village has unfortunately been out of action for around a year now due to a roof issue. The remedial works are being investigated by the freehold owner and we hope that this will be completed as soon as possible so that the facility can be of service again to some of the more vulnerable members in the wider community. We installed a bench at Arnolds Way in response to resident requests. Last year, Council approved the purchase of a defibrillator case for a defibrillator to be installed at Cumnor Hurst. The defibrillator was donated by a member of the public and connection to a power source is to be covered by Cumnor Dog Lodge, with the unit being placed on the perimeter of the property so that 24/7 access can be made by the community. This installation work by the Lodge is still ongoing as part of private dwelling construction.

We kept abreast of the work undertaken by The Cumnor Conservation Group who maintain part of the Hurst on behalf of the parish council (the other part is managed and owned privately). Both sections are part of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designation. We have entered into very early discussions with both landowners about potential acquisition by the council, on behalf of the parish. The Cumnor Conservation Group also maintain the Cumnor pond on behalf of the parish.

Over the year we received a number of grant requests from qualifying organisations and agreed the majority that were submitted. This consisted of: Farmoor Village Hall - £411.48 for replacement defibrillator battery and pads; Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal - £100; Oxfordshire South and Vale Citizens Advice - £600; pledged £200 for the Dean Court Community Association Big Give Match Funding Campaign 2023/2024; Farmoor Village Hall - £900 for purchase and installation of new heaters; Cumnor Village Hall - £500 for bike racks; and Hill End Outdoor Education Centre – £500 on Pond restoration for wildlife and education.

We resolved to approve a s106 funding request from Cumnor Minors Football Club for £18,782.07 towards the purchase of portable wheeled football goals for use at Close Field Play Park.

Planning and development within and neighbouring the parish continues to be a large portion of our activity as a governing body. We relied on the capability, expertise and local knowledge of our plan receivers, Councillors Mason, Waters and Westcott. We continue to integrate the policies from our Neighbourhood Plan in the deliberations we take on all planning applications received. Over the course of the year, we formally processed 84 planning applications. We supported 50, responded with comments and / or questions on 20 and objected to 14. 11 of our 14 objections were upheld, with the remaining three receiving planning consent by the Vale Planning Department. We continue to be extensively involved in investigating and gathering detail on proposed solar power stations in green belt land at the Hurst / Millennium Field / Harcourt Hill area, on green belt land west of Red House Farm, Farmoor, and in the section within our parish of the Botley West scheme (also green belt). All proposals are worrying and have generated a lot of resident and stakeholder concern in this parish, with residents of North Hinksey parish for the first proposal as part of the land is in that region, and with residents in parishes up to and including Woodstock for the third proposal. Whilst North Hinksey parish council have not yet taken a position on that proposal we hope that they support their resident (and our) concerns at the potential loss of green belt and resultant biodiversity in touching distance of our SSSI site. Parishes affected by the Botley West scheme and the neighbouring MP, Robert Courts, have taken a position in opposition to that proposal. We continue to be in talks with our local MP, Layla Moran around gaining her formal support on our position. More details of the solar farm work can be found in other areas of our annual reporting.

When requested, and when appropriate / relevant, we submitted responses to a number of public consultations over the course of the council year: South and Vale Air Quality Action Plan Council; Oxfordshire Councils Charter survey; Oxfordshire County Council Lane Rental Scheme Proposal; Oxfordshire County Council Draft Charter; SODC and VWHDC Joint Local Plan 2024; Oxfordshire County Council Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan; London Oxford Airport airspace change proposal (ACP) 2; and, Botley West Statement of Community Consultation Phase Two.

In all your parish council has delivered a wealth of activity across a breadth of areas. These are volunteers committed to the place in which we live and not willing to sit back and accept the status quo. We push a wide agenda in a number of avenues to respond to the requirements of each part of our community and are hugely grateful for a highly capable and devoted clerk, Tina Brock, who supports and guides us as we as a body work together.

We look forward to continued success in our agenda and are confident that we will be as effective in 2024/25 in delivering an effective provision of services and amenity to the community across our diverse parish.

03/24 Planning Committee Report.

The Planning Committee usually meet on the 3rd Monday of the month to consider planning applications within the Parish of Cumnor.

It has been another busy year for planning applications within the Parish. In the period between January 2023 until April 2024 the Planning Committee received 74 planning applications plus a further 10 amendments. Of the planning applications and amendments, fifty were supported by the Parish Council, we objected to a further fourteen and had a planning response to twenty. Eleven of our fourteen objections were upheld, with the remaining three receiving planning consent by the Vale Planning Department.

Interestingly the applications range from permission to erect a small wooden garden building through to the proposed demolition of existing dwellings and replacement with larger structures.

Over the past year we have seen an increase in applications for 'backland development'. However both single and two storey extensions to existing dwellings still comprise a large percentage of planning applications within the Parish.

With the recent Government change in planning regulations, particularly in a relaxation of permitted development rights, the Parish has in recent months seen a rise in this type of application. I would imagine that this will continue.

The Planning Committee/Parish Council are aware of a small number of unlawful developments within the Parish. I can report that these are all currently under investigation by the Vale Planning Department Enforcement team.

I am sure that all of my fellow Councillors will agree that planning decisions within the Cumnor Parish have been made clearer (and I would suggest somewhat easier) with the adoption in recent years of the Cumnor Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan covers a wide range of planning and other considerations that should be taken into account when considering many of the applications. The Plan sets out a clear criteria as to what are, and are not , acceptable developments within our Parish.

Three Power Stations and Counting....

The reporting year opened with the Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC) requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for a proposed solar power station spanning this parish and N Hinksey on green belt farmland near the Hurst (Cumnor Solar Farm Ltd), and closed with a decision by VWHDC awaited on a full planning application for the proposed 'Red House Farm' power station in the Farmoor valley Green Belt, to the east of the B4017 and south of the B4044 (and requiring a trench for high voltage cables from the site, passing through Dean Court and Botley, en-route down the Botley Road to Osney Mead).

Both of these applications have required Parish Councillors to rapidly assess large volumes of detailed technical material – some 77 documents in the case of Red House Farm – in order to provide the Parish Council with sufficient confidence to make an evidence-based decision on the applications, often within very short periods of time. Council has been helped immensely in this by local residents who have provided technical expertise, photos, environmental information etc.

Sandwiched between these two applications has been work on the proposed 'BotleyWest' scheme that would cover 1300 hectares (more than 3,200 football pitches) stretching from this parish north to Tackley, complete with a permanent National Grid 'substation' covering an area equivalent to 5 football pitches on Green Belt farmland south of Farmoor reservoir, west of 'Tumbledown' on the B4017.

This proposal has in turn presented Council with a number of new challenges. Due to its size, it's classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) which means the final decision will not be taken by VWHDC but by a Government Minister, following a recommendation by the UK's Planning Inspectorate.

But that doesn't mean there's no role for the Parish Council or VWHDC. Quite the contrary, as West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) has demonstrated with its active encouragement of dialogue with its Parish Councils.

In the absence of a similar response from VWHDC - which early in the year required your Parish Council to apply to it for information under the Freedom of Information legislation - the Parish Council has continued to engage with WODC, Layla Moran MP and the Stop Botley West group amongst others, including facilitating a Parish wide meeting in September, attended by over 100 residents.

Thankfully as the reporting year concludes we have been invited to a virtual meeting by VWHDC to discuss the Botley West NSIP process. Council welcomes this development and looks forward to being able to report as positively in future updates.

In the interim the Parish Council has formally responded on the adequacy of the consultation process the Botley West developer ran across the Christmas period (coincidentally – or not - the same time frame as the consultation period for the Red House Farm planning application). Long story short – we judged that the Botley West consultation was inadequate, and that Council would oppose the Red House Farm planning application.

On Botley West, Council will shortly begin to draft what is called a 'Relevant Representation' (RR) to include a summary of what Council agrees/disagrees with in the application and its impact on the community, and to register with the Planning Inspectorate as an 'interested party' in order to participate in the examination of the application by the Planning Inspectorate. A busy year ahead!

I would like to thank the members of the Planning Committee, Tina Brock our Parish Clerk and Councillors Chris Westcott and Oliver Wright for their continuing work on the three Solar Farm applications.

04/24 Environment and Amenities Report.

The year began with proposed new lower 20mph and 30mph speed limits in the Parish being postponed following an objection by local bus companies who claimed the longer journey times would adversely impact the financial viability of their services through the Parish.

Following some swift evidence collection by Council, including some elementary math that showed journey times would be impacted, if at all, by a matter of seconds, and following representations by the Parish Council and our County Councillor, the new speed limits finally came into operation.

However, they've not been without their detractors, as a recent spate of graffiti has shown,

with signs defaced and slogans spray painted on fences. The County Council Roads team have been quick to repair the damage, but it's dispiriting – at best – when a safety measure overwhelmingly supported by residents is subject to vandalism.

Other aspects of transport have also loomed large this past year – in particular the closure of the Botley Road to cars and buses. Just as Council was trying to assess the impacts on access to work, education, healthcare etc. for parishioners of two 6 month closures, that was transformed into a closure until October 2024. Even that won't be the end of the issue as there will then be lane restrictions for repairs to a bridge over the Thames and of course, the start of the restrictions due to what we are told is a 'trial' of the new 'bus gates'. Issues for cycle access to the city have also been raised in the light of the proposed Oxford flood alleviation scheme works.

Your Parish Council finds itself as frustrated in all of this as we know many of you do. We've consistently and repeatedly expressed our concerns on your behalf in consultations etc., but to no avail. In reality all we can do is register our concerns and urge better solutions, but ultimately the decisions on these issues rest with Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council.

On things we can influence, Council has begun to think about how to better invest in amenities across the Parish, such as sports facilities, play and exercise equipment. We want to ensure that provision meets the needs of the whole community, drawing on evidence we collected during the development of our Neighbourhood Plan and from any new survey we might commission as part of its refresh.

We're also considering the subject of 'public art' and what the sums of money that developers have had to provide (so-called section 106 money), might be spent on within the Parish. All ideas gratefully received.

05/24 Cumnor Fit for the Future Steering Group Report

Three meetings of the steering group have been held this year: 10 May 2023; 4 October 2023 and 4 April 2024.

The web site is at <https://www.cumnorf4f.org/> and has headings for bigger initiatives, smaller projects, and the Cumnor Conservation Group.

Members of the public can look up projects on the interactive map of the parish and submit new activities to be included <https://www.cumnorf4f.org/fftf-map>

We receive regular reports from members.

Website/Interactive map. Fiona Newton reported that the website needed restructuring to include extra tabs and links to outside bodies. Stuart Newton agreed to update the website and check whether the host fees are due for renewal.

Walking group – literary walks.

Tony Harper had produced a leaflet showing a short walk round the centre of Cumnor, 'Cumnor in Literature.' The group discussed how to produce and advertise the leaflets via social media, Cumnor Fit for the Future website, link to Oxfordshire Walks and Botley Health Walks, Cumnor Parish News. These ideas would be considered in more detail when more leaflets were available. The walking maps are to be uploaded to the website for feedback. The Group discussed using QR codes placed at points of interest.

Cumnor Conservation Group.

Jim Mower reported that a management plan to cover units 1 and 2 was being drafted for Natural England to approve. A separate plan would be drafted for the Community Woodland. Issues were reported of Roe deer and Muntjac eating residents' flowers. Badgers and foxes have been sighted.

Cumnor Hurst unit 1

Mike Packer is managing Unit 1 and the Community Woodland. Cumnor Conservation Group volunteers helped to plant trees in the woodland. A survey by Natural England found that the bryophytes were declining. Tree growth needs to be addressed and the cost to carry this out is

expensive. Natural England have suggested carrying out controlled clearance. A lease between the owner, Simon Fineman, and the Council was being drafted.

Cumnor Hurst unit 2.

A survey was carried out of current hedgerows around Hurst, Youlbury and Hinksey Heights. It gathered data on how best to restore them to form wildlife corridors.

The Oak Tree survey, including the Dog Lodge, found 1,362 Oak Trees, many of which were very mature and in good condition. A beetle survey carried out over the summer found that the Hurst was one of the top 3 sites for the variety of dung beetles found. This is believed to be because the Dexter cows eat a natural diet. Gareth Morgan was grazing 3 Dexters with calves at the Hurst. However, these cows had to be removed after repeated escapes.

Clearance of gorse was to be carried out after bird nesting season in October, but the specialist machine was broken. A work party of volunteers cleared the pathways of gorse. The Group has 16 members, and 30 volunteers and Jim has been meeting residents of the Kimmeridge development to make an Outreach plan. Much of the Ragwort was left to flower over the summer, which encouraged an extraordinary number of pollinators. The feature of this SSSI is its acid grassland. Ragwort now has to be cleared to protect the grassland, along with gorse cleared with equipment lent by Natural England to preserve the acid grassland area and volunteers are needed to help with the clearance.

The grazing agreement was sent to the farmer. The date that grazing can commence is under discussion as stock fencing needs to be repaired. The field up to the entrance to the Hurst was very muddy by April, which may cause problems getting the Dexters to the Hurst.

The lease between Council and All Souls College is under review; it runs out in February 2025 and the Council will ask for an extension of the lease to 99, rather than 21 years. The Parish Council would prefer to buy the Hurst.

A tree planting session in the Community Woodland was successful with assistance from volunteers.

Village Pond.

Lorraine had handed over a huge amount of information to Ben Grady. It was agreed to create a page on the website for the Village Pond to upload the documents.

By October 23 the pond was very green, but this is not a bad thing. By April 24, volunteers had assisted Ben with clearing the pond of weed.

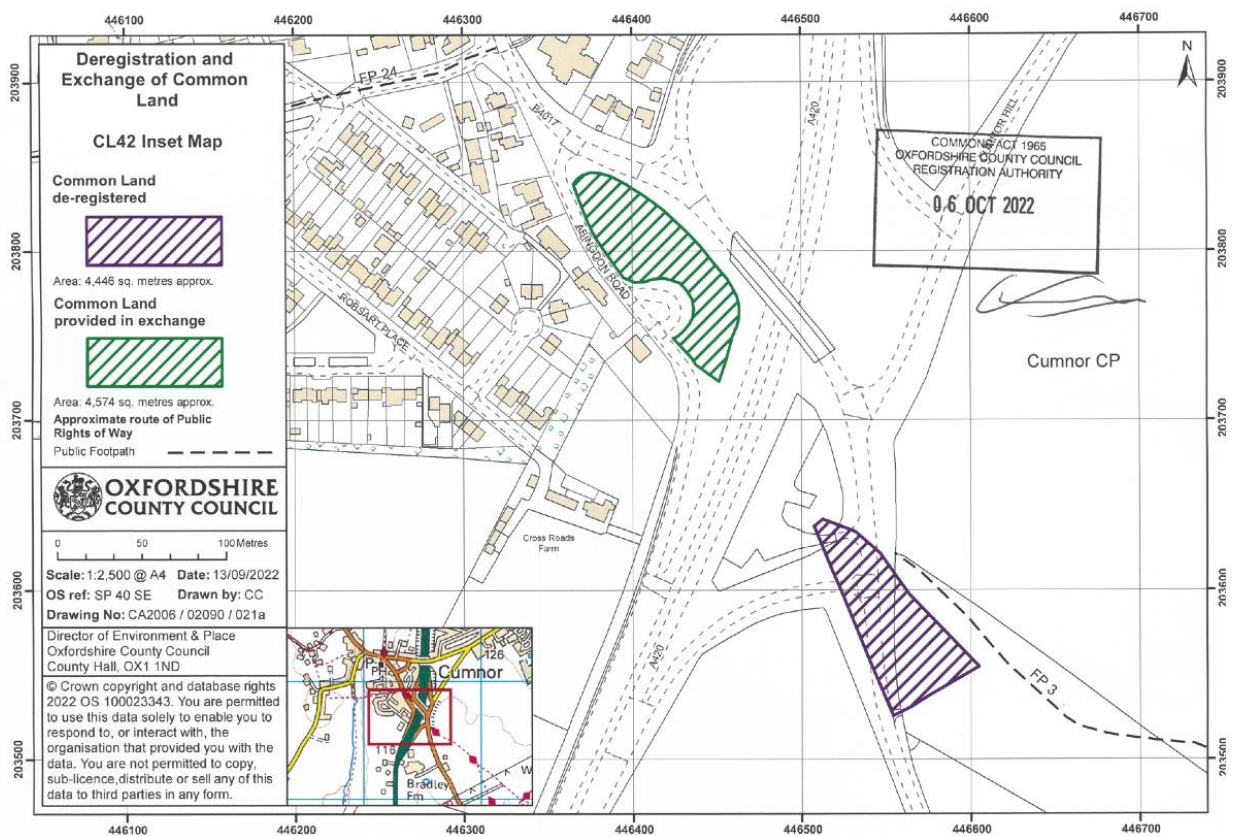
Hill End

Lucy Crittenden reported that the centre held a very successful Ffennell Festival in June 2023. There was an Autumn Adventure Day on 7 October 2023. Hill End was shut at half term as the swimming pool was being filled in. In the early months of 2024, a drop in visitor numbers was reported, probably because of the recent heavy rain. A Dawn Chorus event took place in Bean Wood, part of Wytham Woods (which is not open to the public) on Saturday 4 May 2024, 5am. Hill End is looking for funding to restore the large barn ponds.

Thames Valley Wildflower and Meadow Recovery Project

Kevan Martin reported that the project had joined up with Green Appleton and arranged a meadow walk at Long Mead in June 23. CPRE Oxfordshire members had been invited to find out more about the meadow restoration project including the planting of hedgerows on 31 May. Surveys were carried out of water voles and of bugs in water courses around Eynsham; results can be seen at <http://www.longmeadwildlifesite.org.uk/>

The project negotiated a 1-year lease of an OCC meadow at Neyotts, at Eynsham Lock; and ten-year leases on two meadows downstream, while a willow copse at Neyotts is under negotiation. The Nature Recovery Network planted half a kilometre of hedgerow for Oxfordshire Hedgerow Heroes, a Wild Oxfordshire and CPRE partnership. Future events and workshops are listed on the Nature Recovery website: <https://nature-recovery-network.org>



Jubilee Memorial Copse.

The steering group is seeking to make a Memorial Copse. Two plots are suggested as possible sites: OCC Common Land CL42, land adjacent to Abingdon Road and the A420 Cumnor, OS Grid Ref SP 464 038; and a piece of common land near to the Cricket Ground, vested in VWHDC, grid ref., SP 459 039. A small group is making a site visit.

Sensible energy education.

The group has discussed how to inform and encourage residents to reduce their energy demand, ie installing smart meters, car sharing. Suggestions are welcome from residents interested in this topic, to be discussed at a future meeting. We also have the prospect of working out a Public Art plan and will report initial possibilities and suggestions to the June Council meeting.

Cumnor Parish Council welcomes contributions to our efforts from any resident with subject specialist knowledge as well as from residents with the enthusiasm to learn and help carry out projects. Please contact the Parish Clerk for information about forthcoming meetings or project activities.

06/24 County Councillor Report.

CC Judy Roberts reported.

The parish applied to be on the first tranche of the 20 mph schemes and that was rolled out this year as was the Farmoor speed reduction to 30 mph. I am trying to get the VAS 30 mph sign from the Eynsham Road moved to outside the Farmoor Stores site using my councillor priority fund, but it is proving to be slow.

The Pelican crossing on Cumnor Hill, just above Arnold's Way is booked to be constructed in July and this should make a much safer pedestrian route for Matthew Arnold pupils. Once it has been installed, I am aiming to get the pedestrian crossing of the Eynsham road monitored as we may well see an increase of pedestrians along this road where there have already been two fatal accidents recently.

Network Rail changed its position on the of closure of the Botley Road back to a full closure for 18months so that is it now planned to re-open in November 2024. . This has caused great upset for

Cumnor residents, especially as there were also several closures on the A34 and a one lane closure on the Botley roundabout for 6 months. This has severely restricted people's access to the City, especially the station and Westgate Centre. Thames Water have now closed one lane over Osney bridge until April 2025, to repair the main water main for Oxford City. Because of all these sequential problems, Network Rail has set up a weekly email newsletter that has been able to inform people as each part of the construction has progressed. They have also funded a Botley flyer bus that goes to the centre of the City on 3 days a week.

The Kennington Rail bridge replacement is now due in November, but they are hoping to be able to have 4 lanes open as they repair each side.

The Oxford City traffic filters are planned to start at the beginning of November 2024. There is now a new website:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/connecting-oxfordshire/oxford-traffic-filters>

There is also a website produced by the liveable streets group:

<https://oxfordtrafficfilters.co.uk>

The residents of Cumnor up to the A420 will be able to have 100 day permits /year, the rest of Oxfordshire's residents will be able to have 25 day permits/year.

The Eynsham to Botley Community Path project now has a feasibility study finished from Eynsham Road junction with Westway to where Salt Cross will be built. It has gone into the bid for the Active Travel 5 round of funding as an "oven ready" project but after the elections, it seems that this government is coming to an end, and we don't know what will be coming down the line. The two pilot schemes on HGV management have been funded in this year's budget where through route analysis is being undertaken. There are no restriction's available for local traffic (approx. 40%), so other physical restrictions, besides weight, are being investigated.

The Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme,

<https://myeplanning.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Planning/Display/MW.0027/22/>

has had further biodiversity information submitted from the Environment Agency and has been out to further consultation. This is still a very controversial plan as it balances 150 homes from flood damage against damage to irreplaceable, rare grassland. It will also cause major local disruption to many cycle and footpaths, removes 2000 willow trees and replaces them with 2800 new willow trees and will take 4 years to construct using the A34 ,and possibly Network Rail, as a spoil removal routes.

The amount of severe flooding that Oxfordshire has experienced this year has increased local support for the scheme but there is still much opposition as was demonstrated at the public CPO inquiry held this year. It is due to go to the planning committee this year but has had several delays because of requiring more information from the applicant, the Environment Agency.

If the next General Election produces a Labour Administration, there is a strong message that the Sure Start (Children's Centres) program will be a priority. This will certainly be good news for all the charitable groups that have kept this service functioning since the funds were cut from Children's Centres.

07/24 District Councillors Reports.

DC Scott Houghton reported.

My first year as a district councillor has certainly been an interesting one. I am grateful to have been chosen to represent the residents of Cumnor and will continue to do my best for the next three years.

I have spent this year serving on the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, which makes recommendations to the cabinet on how best to reduce the council's carbon footprint and help to improve ecology through our actions, as well as finding the best ways to monitor progress towards our goals in those areas. This year our activities have been focussed on decarbonising the leisure

centres owned by the Council, with a goal of reducing the carbon emissions from our leisure centres by 75% by the end of 2025 (from a 2019 baseline), and retrofitting council owned houses and offices to reduce their energy usage in a similar way. I am pleased to report that the Council is making good progress on both of these matters.

I have also spent a substantial amount of time as a member of the planning committee, having been co-opted to it in November. The training I received to be on this committee, my experiences on it, have been highly enlightening as to the intricacies of the planning process and all of the considerations which must be made by the officers across multiple departments. It has also given me great confidence in this Parish Council, as any planning applications which I call in to the committee on their behalf always have a good reason to be decided by the committee, and are not simply down to minor neighbourly disagreements, even if the final decision is not the one hoped for by this Parish Council. I am also immensely grateful for all the hard work that has been put in to the Cumnor Neighbourhood Plan by those who came before me, as it has proven to be a major factor in several of these decisions.

On the subject of planning applications, a lot of my time has been spent this year on the various solar farm proposals in the local area. I have attended the consultation events held by both the Red House Farm and the Botley West developers so that I could try and speak to them face to face. Sadly while the people at these meetings were generally very personable, I found their answers to questions to be somewhat lacking. To update everyone on the Red House Farm proposal, at time of writing it is still under consideration, with a target decision date of the end of July, although I will note that this date has already been pushed back several times.

On the topic of Botley West, I asked the leader of the Council in the December public meeting to clarify the Council's position on the Botley West Scheme, after the Parish Council had trouble getting an answer. She clarified the current policy per the local plan and laid out what responses had already been made to the Planning inspectorate, and what responses were still to be made. I was pleased to see the Council's pre-application response which said that it could not support the scheme due to it being inappropriate development in the green belt, along with the loss of agricultural land and harm to the local landscape. The council have also agreed to set up regular meetings with Cumnor Parish Council on the topic of Botley West, since we are the only parish in the Vale which the project covers. I would like to make it clear to anyone not already aware, that as this scheme is large enough to count as a piece of national infrastructure, it will ultimately be decided by the Planning Inspectorate, not by the District Council.

Another highlight of my year was the motion at the February public meeting to oppose Thames Water's proposed price increases, which I gave my vociferous support. While the council has no direct power on this matter, it is a subject on which I care deeply, and the council resolved unanimously to communicate our views on the matter to Ofwat. With recent news of further proposed price increases and a default on their debt, it is clear that this situation is far from over, and I shall continue to do what I can to hold Thames Water to account.

Closer to home, I spent a fair amount of time assisting residents on Hurst Lane when an adjacent field was advertised for sale. There was concern that this field was being sold for development despite poor access and its location adjacent to a SSSI. After much delving through different council documents, it was found that this site is listed as not being suitable for large scale development in the current local plan, and further that the same conclusion has been reached in the documentation for the next local plan which is currently being finalised. I am confident that this will protect this, and other similar green spaces, for many years to come.

DC Judy Robers reported.

The Oxfordshire Community Land Trust is now successfully running the 8 dwellings, that are now Crofts Court behind 89a, Eynsham Road. I have talked to some of the residents who were all grateful to be part of such a low cost, affordable flat in Cumnor.

The Dean Court Community Centre is now benefiting from the solar power generated by the PV

cells on the roof and being stored in the battery. It now powers 2 EV chargers in the car park for general use and at a cheaper rate for local residents. DCCA also won a Community Grant for Thames Valley police and have now installed the CCTV cameras purchased with the money.

I have been a member of Scrutiny, Joint Scrutiny and Audit and Governance for the last year where it is clear the Vale has two major contracts that will have to be renewed by 2026 in the Waste services and the running of the Leisure Centres. The waste services need a steer from government as to their revised policy on recycling which has been put on hold until after the general election. The aim is for an electric vehicle fleet providing an excellent roadside collection but not knowing what is to be collected is causing delays in what the commercial companies are offering across the industry.

The council has been able to provide refugee housing using the government grant and this will revert into local housing stock in the long term. The council is hoping to be able to expand this area into being able to provide their own affordable housing stock.

Two of the three solar farm applications are continuing to cause major concerns, but Scott has been involved on the planning side as he is now a member of the planning committee.

08/24 Questions from Electorate.

None in attendance.

09/24 Next meeting.

The next Annual Parish Meeting will take place on **Tuesday 6 May 2025** at **7.30pm** in the **Old School, High Street, Cumnor.**

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.

Signed..... Date.....2024