



North Leigh Parish

Covering North Leigh, East End, New Yatt and Wilcote

Parish Council Newsletter - January 2022

View from the Chair

It is my sincere wish that you have been able to enjoy the festive season and spend some time with your loved ones, unlike last year when many myself included, were separated from family and friends at Christmas time.

2021 was another challenging year and many activities were affected by the restrictions that have been in place at various times of the year. The Parish Council returned to meeting in person again from June, and this also saw an increase in the number of meetings attended by members of the public.

The council arranged a series of sessions for defibrillator and resuscitation training at the memorial hall, which attracted good interest and participation. The feedback from those that took part was very favourable and if there is further demand the council will arrange more sessions. The council has also been actively working on a number of projects, including the installation of new bus shelters, updating the Parish Council website, upgrading the Children's Playground, and monitoring traffic within the parish. More detail regarding two of those can be read below.

Lastly, I would like to wish you all a very happy and healthy New Year from all of the Parish Council and I hope that 2022 will see a return to some form of normality for all of us.

Greg Matthews

Chair

North Leigh Parish Council

Children's Playground

Over the past year the Parish Council has been working on a plan to refurbish and upgrade the Children's Playground on Park Road.

The playground working group, having identified several companies who could undertake the work, engaged with a number of parents whose children use the facility to establish which play items and pieces of equipment would be most appropriate and the layout of the area such that the space was used to its best advantage. It was a very helpful for the council to have the input from those most likely to be using the playground as it has enabled the council to choose the equipment based on opinions of those in a better position to comment on what would or would not be suitable.

After the design and equipment decisions had been made by the working group and considered by the full council members, the next task was to identify which of the construction companies would be able to deliver the completed project such that it will be in use by the time the better – that is drier – weather arrives.

The final choice came down to two providers. Further discussion took place with these providers as to when they would be able to commence work on the project and the duration of the work. In addition, access to the site must be such that the minimum of disruption is caused by the proposed works to the school and surrounding area. Of the two, the contractor that was chosen by the council was providing a better timeline for the work and a construction plan that meant the work will be able to proceed without having to use any other areas apart from the playground itself, for storage or access.

It is intended that the work will start in the spring of 2022.

Many thanks to those who have assisted the council with this project, and we look forward to the children having the use of an improved facility.

New Website Design

The Parish Council has been collaborating with a new team of website designers over the last three months to create a brighter and improved website. It is expected that the new website will be launched within the next three months.

The remit is to create a website that is more informative, has a better overall appearance, easier to navigate and that the administrator can update and modify quickly and simply.

It is hoped that by creating a website with more frequently updated information relevant to the parish, we will encourage more of the parishioners to engage with the council's activities and in doing so provide more feedback to the council on the matters that are of most concern to the villages.

We believe a new website needs new photographs and pictures of the villages and the surrounding countryside. In order to build a library of images that reflect and capture the character of the parish we will be launching a competition for the keen photographers amongst you to submit images that they believe would show the villages at their best – more to follow on this in the next few months. Another aim to enhance the website is to source more content regarding the villages – history, news etc – if you have any items of interest, please contact the parish clerk.

Speedwatch

Along with many other activities in 2021 the community Speedwatch activity was somewhat curtailed. It wasn't until the restrictions were relaxed in April that the Speedwatch monitoring teams were able to carry out any surveys, with the first taking place in New Yatt Road on 04/05/2021. Added to the restrictions, the safety of the Speedwatch volunteers is of paramount importance and the weather and the dark mornings and afternoons also have an impact on the number of surveys that can be carried out.

Notwithstanding the above the Speedwatch teams carried out 42 surveys over the course of 2021 as detailed below:

12 in Common Road

1 in Park Road

14 in New Yatt Road

14 in East End.

1 in Church Road

The following are the statistics obtained from those surveys:

8810 vehicles had their speeds recorded and of these a total of 1543 vehicles (17.51%) were exceeding the 30MPH speed limit. Registration details of vehicles travelling at an excessive speed are forwarded to Thames Valley Police for further action.

In addition to the above the Parish Council also arranged for the OCC to conduct traffic monitoring in two locations in the parish, Common Road and East End, in June 2021, as mentioned in the last newsletter.

Given the concerns raised by parishioners in the survey and anecdotally with councillors the Speedwatch activity continues to be an ongoing activity. The Parish has signed up to the new Thames Valley Police Speedwatch initiative and has enrolled with communityspeedwatch.org. As a result of doing this we will now be better placed to input the concerns that exist about speeding in the parish villages.

Research is also taking place into the possibility of providing Radar Activated Speed Signs (commonly known as SIDS) at a number of locations in North Leigh and East End with a view to increasing the awareness of the 30-mph limit.

If you are interested in joining the Speedwatch group or would like further information, then please contact Councillor Andy Clements via the Parish Clerk or directly by email to andyc.nlpc@gmail.com

Neighbourhood Plan

The Parish Council has agreed that preparing and eventually adopting a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) would be a beneficial exercise for the Parish. Once a NP is adopted it becomes a relevant Planning document influencing any planning decision taken in the Parish. A NP will comply with the Local Plan for West Oxfordshire (adopted in 2018) which is soon to be subject to a rolling review over the next couple of years so it would be good moment to be working on our NP in parallel.

Our initial thought is to base the NP area on the current North Leigh Parish boundary, which from an administration point of view is much simpler, so we are advised. Rather than focus on more development – of which we have more than our own fair share over the last four years or so – we envisage focusing on our local environment, landscape, and nature habitats and how these could be enhanced, especially in the context of Climate Change. This means assessing what we have got now and what long term objectives we could set for the future.

We have had an initial discussion with WODC officers on what needs doing and how; we have investigated how other parishes in the area have created and implemented their Neighbourhood Plans. It is clear that the maximum engagement / participation of parishioners in the process is essential – a variety of views and ideas are required to build a draft Plan that can be agreed upon by a majority the Parish.

Having prepared a Draft Plan, it must be tested /examined before an Independent Inspector and once he he/she has confirmed the Plan is sound and compliant with Local and National Policies, the Plan is subject finally to a Local Referendum process - all of which will require a fair amount of time and commitment. The objective will be to engage as many people in the Parish as possible in the preparation of the Draft Plan and end with a clear majority vote in support of the final version of the NP – it must be more than 50% of those who vote in the Referendum.

To this end, with the hope that the pandemic will begin to fade by the spring of 2022, we will be contacting shortly those who took part in the Parish Survey and indicated they would be interested in participating in the preparation of the NP.

It is never too late to get involved so if you would like to be part of this, please contact the Parish Clerk:

northleighparishclerk@gmail.com

District Councillor report

Since the pandemic restrictions were eased the WODC have been meeting in person.

The WODC budget for 2022/23 is working its way through the usual draft stages and scrutiny committees and will hopefully be adopted in March. It is hoped that for the last year to March 2021 the final accounts will see only a slight variation from the balanced budget forecast and we are hoping for much the same outcome in the current year to end of March 2022.

However there seems likely to be a number of increases in costs (e.g., fuel and gas) and less funding from Central Government – so a further increase in Council Tax (c £5 on a Band D property); the County and Police precepts seem likely to rise more as well and their charges make up most of the actual Council Tax we all pay.

Apart from attending regular Planning and other scrutiny Committee meetings, I have had a varied amount of local case work – yet more sewer blockages or water main bursts , and I was glad to be able to attend a small ceremony at 11 am on 11th November on the Bellways development, when members of the Gough and Breakspear families came together to dedicate plaques by trees, planted on the new estate, to commemorate the seven family members (out of 16 who served) who died during World War 1.

At my suggestion Bellways have agreed to install similar plaques in memory of every man from the parish killed in both World Wars, to go some way to replace the trees they have felled or damaged during the last four years.

I was able to lay a wreath on Remembrance Sunday on behalf of the District Council, and I have done a number of stewarding sessions either at the Windrush Health centre or the WODC shop in Welch Way when vaccination days were being held.

The Friends of North Leigh Common, which I coordinate, have been out on Friday mornings about twice a month and have been clearing spaces in which to plant trees next winter as part of the Queens Jubilee Green Canopy project being rolled out across the UK. I have grown about 100 oaks from acorns, and they should be ready to plant within a year.

I joined others in the Memorial Hall for a training session on the defibrillator and CPR given by the Volunteers from the Ambulance Service. I recommend anyone to do this training as it makes one realise how important it is and might save someone's life when minutes really count. Earlier I helped remove the cobwebs that had gathered over the years in the Memorial Hall – it is amazing how busy the spiders had been over the years!

Once a month I take and test water samples at various points along the River Evenlode or small tributaries that flow into it either side of Sewage treatment works – and report the results to Earthwatch – who are coordinating an ongoing campaign to force the likes of Thames Water not to release untreated sewage into our rivers as much as they do. I feel it is important to understand what is going on in our Parish and District on this sort of issue and lobby the relevant bodies accordingly, which I have been doing for some years now.

Harry St John

Dec 2021/Jan 2022

Oxfordshire County Council Speed Limit Proposals

Oxfordshire County Councillor Liam Walker is seeking the views of local residents ahead of any planned rollout of 20mph roads. The County Council are now exploring ways to reduce speeding in our communities and are simplifying the process for rolling out 20mph roads for those areas that want them.

Cllr Liam Walker said, "Over the years I have helped set up Community Speedwatch Groups, including more recently in Long Hanborough, in villages within my County Council division to help tackle the issue of speeding. I now want to hear the views of residents about whether they support having a 20mph limit in their village. The results of this consultation will determine if people feel the new speed limit is appropriate so please make sure you add your view whether it's for or against."

People can fill out the survey on 20mph roads by going to www.liam-walker.com/have-your-say by the 31st of January

