



## **Parish Council Newsletter - September 2022**

**The Parish Council was deeply saddened to learn of the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the 8th of September.**

**On behalf of North Leigh Parish Council and our parishioners, we offer our heart-felt condolences and sympathy to all members of The Royal Family.**

**Books of Condolence were placed in the Memorial Hall and Church for parishioners to sign.**

**North Leigh Parish Council**





## **View from the Chair**

Doesn't time fly? The summer holidays are over, and the children are back at school.

The playground has now been open for a few months and a new mural painted on the pump building. Many thanks to the scouts and councillors who helped get it all done. It is great to see the site being enjoyed by the children.

The council is looking at new opportunities to improve the parish environment using S106 money from the various housing developments. There is also a nascent Neighbourhood Plan group starting out with a community event on the 16th of October. If you wish to have a say in any future development of North Leigh, I urge you to get involved. See later in the newsletter for details.

Difficult times may lie ahead as we go into the winter with rising energy prices and living costs. The Parish Council will be looking at actions it can take to support people through this period.

North Leigh is a great community filled with caring people as has been amply demonstrated over the last couple of years, and I have been proud to work on your behalf as chairman of the Parish Council.

Greg Matthews

**Chair**

**North Leigh Parish Council**



## Parish Council Website

The redesigned Parish Council Website is now fully operational. Some of the changes that have been made will not be noticeable when viewing the site. These are changes to the operation of the site which is making it easier for the website manager to update and add extra content in a timelier manner. Hopefully, you have noticed that the website is providing more current content.

The website is a major resource for the parish as it is the main source of information regarding activities that are taking place in the parish, from road closures that may affect the traffic running through the villages and impact on your journey to work, to information regarding the services that are offered by both West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) that may be of use to many of those in the parish. It is also where the minutes and agendas of the Parish Council are available.

The QR code below will take you straight to the website:



If you are a member of a society or group that operates in the parish similar to those which currently have information on the website and the Parish Council is not aware of your group, please contact the Parish Clerk if you wish to have content about your society on the website.

The website also provides the facility to subscribe to both the online version of the Newsletter and to receive emails regarding road closures as well as other relevant information.

The website will also be the main source of news and updates on the Neighbourhood Plan.

For more information about the Neighbourhood Plan see the item below.

## **North Leigh Parish Neighbourhood Plan – Your Vision for the Parish**

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) has met a few times since the last newsletter. The group has been fortunate to have had meetings with the chair of the Oxfordshire Alliance of Neighbourhood Plans and the West Oxfordshire District Council Strategic Policy and Partnerships Officer, Astrid Harvey, both of whom were highly informative.

It has become apparent that the building of a Neighbourhood Plan is not a small task. The advice from other groups in the county is that the time taken to put a Neighbourhood Plan together is in the order of two years from start to adoption if the plan is reasonably simple as seems it is likely to be for the North Leigh Parish.

In North Leigh, the focus could be similar to that taken by Woodstock, and our focus could be our open spaces and not on development, thus keeping the process simpler and potentially shorter.

With this in mind it is paramount that the participation is from many parishioners and will require both energy and stamina! The NPSG will have its terms of reference determined by the Parish Council at the September Parish Council meeting.

The demographic of the village is such that there are many differing age groups, interests, and views within the community. This is likely to lead to many differing opinions as to how the Neighbourhood Plan should develop and on what it should focus. In order to obtain as many views and opinions as to what would be beneficial to be included in the Neighbourhood Plan, and also to provide the Parish Council with the potential to create a strategic set of goals for the parish going forward, the Parish Council is intending to hold a Community Event in the Memorial Hall on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October. The intention is that parishioners and the parish societies/groups will be able put forward their ideas and suggestions for the future of the parish.

Further information will be published regarding this event in due course. Please use the Parish Website and mailing list to obtain regular updates on the event and progress of the Neighbourhood Plan.

## **Platinum Jubilee**

A number of the parish councillors were involved in the Jubilee celebrations in the villages and the Parish Council made a contribution to the North Leigh Parochial Church Council to assist with refreshments at the event in North Leigh. Although the village layouts mean that it is difficult to hold traditional street parties, a number of Jubilee Big Lunches took place and were well attended, and the St Mary's Church bell ringers rang a quarter peal to celebrate the Jubilee.

## **North Leigh Library**

### **Friends of North Leigh Library**

Oxfordshire County Council Library Service (OCCLS) has a strong record of encouraging local communities to participate and become involved in the work of their local libraries. The resulting groups often operate as "Library Friends". In 2018 OCCLS helped establish the Friends of North Leigh Library (FONLL). The various Library Friends' groups help support their local libraries in a number of ways and no two Friends' groups work in the same way as each community is unique.

As many residents will be aware North Leigh Library is a popular, modern branch library and it is well supported by the community, the local school, and the Parish Council. As well as the traditional book lending services our library also offers free WI-FI as well as computer and internet facilities. In addition, it hosts a number of activity groups for both children and adults. The aim of FONLL is to help the library build on its existing success by holding fund raising events, developing new services, and generally increasing engagement with the community. It would also like to provide volunteers to work in the library to further enhance the available amenities. The existing FONLL are a small but enthusiastic group who are always keen to recruit and welcome new members.

Following the resignation of their original chairperson due to his moving away from the area they are now looking to recruit a replacement. If you are interested in this role or if you would just like to join the Friends, then please contact the library either in person or by calling 01993 882935

## **North Leigh Library Continued**

The library has advised of a number of new free events for Autumn 2022.

These are as follows:

“Every Monday during term time starting 5<sup>th</sup> of September at 2.30-2.45, ‘Under 5 Rhyme time’, join us in singing and playing musical instruments! Please ring if you are coming a long way as this is volunteer led.

Other activities are available like Knit and Natter, Reading Group, Creative Writing Group, Lego Club and much, much more!”

Call in or phone 01993 882935 for details.

Finally, the library has an author evening planned for Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> November at 19:00. For those of you not familiar with this kind of event it usually involves a local author giving a talk on, or a reading of, one of their recent works. Because of the limited capacity of the library this event is ticketed, however the tickets are free, although donations to FONLL would be appreciated. The tickets may be obtained from the library.

## **Children’s Playground**

The Parish Council is delighted to announce that Proludic completed the refurbishment of the children's playground on Park Road. The playground was formally re-opened on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2022 and from the number of children who attended the opening, and then tried out the new equipment it was obvious that this opening was eagerly awaited!

The new equipment has been chosen with inclusivity in mind, providing a basket swing, playhouse, springers, playboards, talk tubes and a wheelchair accessible roundabout amongst other exciting equipment suitable for children from ages 1 - 12 years old.

In addition, the North Leigh Scout Group did a brilliant job of painting the brick building on the site white, providing a base for the amazing cartoon murals designed and painted by Chaz Muircroft, a local North Leigh artist. Our thanks to both.

We very much hope this refurbishment and upgrade will provide a stimulating and creative, but most of all, fun environment to be enjoyed by the children of North Leigh for many years to come.

The Parish Council is now hoping to undertake a similar project for the Adventure Playground and will soon be seeking ideas from the residents of North Leigh particularly teenagers and parents as to the best way to use the space in this area or in an alternative site if one can be found.

## **Community Speedwatch and Village Traffic Surveys.**

### **Village Surveys**

In our April newsletter we mentioned that Oxfordshire County Council had set aside £8 million of funding to promote the roll out of their 20 MPH project across Oxfordshire. In order to determine the level of support in the villages within his ward, our local county councillor, Liam Walker, invited the village residents of his ward to contribute to a survey in order to try and determine the level of support for the introduction of the 20MPH zones.

Although the result of this survey indicated that the majority of those responding from North Leigh Parish were in favour, the number of replies to the survey was extremely low at less than 5% of parishioners. The Parish Council therefore decided that, while it would apply to be included in the project, it would also conduct further separate surveys in North Leigh and East End in order to obtain a larger number of responses from the parishioners such that the Parish Council may gain a fuller understanding of the views of the wider village populations.

The small size and limited geography (essentially a single road) of East End made the preparation of this survey fairly straight forward and it has already taken place.

The East End Survey closed on the 14th of August and the result was that only 25% of the village supported a 20mph speed limit being introduced. There was also considerable support for the installation of Speed Indication Devices.

The North Leigh Survey poses a more complex challenge given the number of roads to be included and the overall scope of a 20 MPH zone requiring the drafting of a more detailed survey. This document is being prepared, and the council aim to have it ready for circulation by the end of October.

### **Community Speedwatch.**

The Parish Council has always been conscious of residents concerned by the excessive speeds of some vehicles on our village roads. To monitor this and to try and promote better driver behaviour it has supported the activities of the Parish Speedwatch group. The Speedwatch group now operates as part of the national Community Speedwatch Online.

## **Community Speedwatch and Village Traffic Surveys Continued**

This organisation allows members of local communities to join with, and receive support and supervision from, their local police force when conducting roadside surveys. The process for carrying out the surveys is strictly controlled by the police and the details of speeding vehicles can only be recorded when using approved devices. The registered keepers of vehicles exceeding the speed limit are contacted, initially with a letter explaining the potential risks and consequences of their dangerous practices. Repeat offenders will receive a visit from their local police force, irrespective of where they live. Beyond these friendly gestures, focused enforcement by the local police may follow based on the data provided by the Speedwatch surveys.

Contrary to the views of a small number of residents and drivers Speedwatch activity is not about interfering with the actions of drivers; it is a participatory solution designed to improve the safety and quality of life for everyone who uses our local roads. The data and statistics that the Speedwatch activity produces are also used to provide evidence for the need of traffic calming measures in the parish such as Speed Indication Devices similar to the one recently installed on the A4095 at Long Hanborough.

Each survey requires a minimum of three volunteers, and we are always looking to recruit additional members to enable more sessions to be carried out. If you would like to take part, then please go to the [communityspeedwatch.org](http://communityspeedwatch.org) website and follow the joining instructions. Alternatively, if you would like further information, contact Councillor Andy Clements via the Parish Clerk or directly by email to [andyc.nlpc@gmail.com](mailto:andyc.nlpc@gmail.com)

## **The Post Office and Shop**

The Parish Council would like to say goodbye and many thanks to Anna and Chris who have run the Post Office and shop for some years. A special mention goes to Anna who throughout the various Lockdowns in 2020/21 kept the show on the road and helped so many people in the community, the shop was a lifeline to many. What a great contribution to North Leigh Anna made during these times. Well done and many thanks, Anna. Welcome to the new owners. Parishioners, please do not forget to support the shop and PO. Use it - don't lose it!



## **District Councillor Report**

The West Oxfordshire Plan is due to be reviewed and the process is likely to start soon. The Council is undertaking a District wide consultation inviting people's views on what they would like to see covered in the revised Local Plan which would cover the period to 2041, and what additions or changes, if any, to the current Local Plan which runs to 2031. The WODC website will direct you to this consultation.

For North Leigh, the most immediate planning issue is what happens at Witney North and the potential impact on traffic on the A4095.

Naturally, what happens in the Local Plan will have a direct bearing on the Neighbourhood Plan - if of course North Leigh residents decide they want to prepare and adopt one.

The District Council is now run by the Fair Deal Alliance which is a coalition of Liberal Democrats, Labour and the Green Party. The new Cabinet has opened a consultation on a revised Council Plan and the residents of West Oxfordshire will be invited to comment and make suggestions.

See the WODC website and link.

<http://yourvoicecounts.commonplace.is/>

At a County level, the new administration run by the Fair Deal Alliance, has dropped the further progression in the preparing of the County Wide Strategy Plan for Oxfordshire 2050 on which much time had been spent with a cost of almost £2.5m. Whether this strategy plan will be revived remains to be seen but without one, the danger is each District may lean toward its own agenda, rather than approaching the task more strategically at a County level.

The opening of new play areas on the Gough Close (Bellways) and Marlborough Gardens (Bewley) is still awaited as both developers have been woefully slow in completing these facilities.