

Parish Council Newsletter - Spring 2024

View From the Chair

Welcome to the first Parish Council Newsletter of 2024 and hopefully the beginning of a fair-weather spring.

The Parish Council (PC) is pleased to report that the trend of more parishioners attending Council meetings has continued. In addition to the regular Parish Council meetings the PC has also been involved in parishioner meetings regarding the latest West Oxfordshire Local Plan. We would encourage residents to participate in the West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) consultation process regarding the next Local Plan when WODC re-opens the consultation.

There is more information below in the Newsletter regarding the Local Plan.

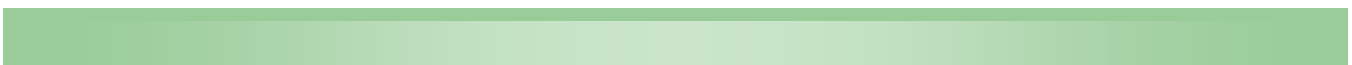
Over the next year the Council is intending to hold other events in which parishioners are encouraged to participate, and a “Drop in and Have Your Say” event has already been held by the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan Committee on the 17th of February. I hope that those of you who attended found it interesting and helpful.

We are also interested in hearing your views regarding possible additions to the village street furniture, again there is more information on this below.

The Parish Council will continue to encourage engagement with parishioners throughout the coming year and look forward to hearing your views

Andy Clements

Chair



Speedwatch

The Speedwatch volunteer group completed a total of 41 surveys during 2023. The combined results from the monitoring sites in Common Road, New Yatt Road and East End are given below.

			Total Vehicles Recorded at + 30 MPH		Total Vehicles Recorded at + 36 MPH		Max Recorded Speed
Location	No. of Surveys	Total Vehi- cles	No.	%	No.	%	MPH
Common Road	7	431	34	8%	7	2%	43
New Yatt Road	7	687	53	8%	7	1%	42
East End	27	1072	331	31%	117	11%	49
Total	41	2190	418	19%	131	6%	49

When the year started it was hoped that group would be able to complete 70 or 80 surveys but unfortunately, due to a shortage of trained operators, we have only been able to achieve 50% of this target. The team would welcome and benefit from an increase in volunteers as this would enable more surveys to be carried out. So, if you are concerned about the speed of vehicles travelling through our villages, please consider joining us. If you would like more information contact Councillor Andy Clements via the Parish Clerk at:

parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

or directly by email to:

andy.clements@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

As mentioned in previous newsletters, based on the data gathered by the team during these surveys, the PC decided to purchase a number of Speed Indicator Devices for use at key locations in the parish. The orders for these have now been placed and is hoped that they will be installed in the next two months.

Update from the North Leigh Parish Council Planning Committee

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 (WOLP 2041).

At the time of writing, WODC has made public an update on the WOLP 2041 consultation, which includes a list of all land parcels put forward across West Oxfordshire for potential development in response to an invitation by WODC. This includes at least 12 sites (primarily residential but also business, sport, and solar sites) within the North Leigh Parish boundary.

It is important to emphasise that this is just a list of sites put forward by landowners and developers with currently no filter applied. It is NOT a list of accepted development sites, and it is NOT a list of planning applications put forward. However, we must remain vigilant.

The progress of the Local Plan, including the outcome of the second public consultation phase in 2023 and the revised timetable for taking the plan through to adoption was discussed at a meeting of the WODC Executive at 2pm on 14th February 2024 in Chipping Norton Town Hall, it was livestreamed on the following link:

https://westoxon.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/844227

This link has remained available for viewing, and a link to the papers can be seen here:

<https://meetings.westoxon.gov.uk/documents/g2258/Public%20reports%20pack%2014th-Feb-2024%2014.00%20Executive.pdf?T=10>.

(Summary p.13 to p.84 and Full List of Sites p. 84 to 98).

Update from the North Leigh Parish Council Planning Committee - continued

Now that the “long list” of sites for West Oxfordshire has been published, the next step is a consultation phase which commences in mid-February 2024 for a period of several months during which the Town and Parish Councils (but not individual residents) can give feedback on each of the sites to WODC. As a village that has experienced housing growth of nearly 40% in the last 6 years, North Leigh Parish Council strongly opposes more development in North Leigh Parish and will endeavour to give a robust defence against each site put forward on behalf of the residents.

To provide as much detailed information as possible in our response to WODC, the North Leigh Parish Council Planning Committee will be inviting residents to come and make their views known, on the North Leigh Parish sites put forward, at several meetings of the Planning Committee in February/March.

We will also be inviting residents to write to us to express their views via email to the Parish Clerk, Allison Leigh, at:

parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

and we will incorporate these comments into our response.

After this consultation phase, WODC will be narrowing down the list of sites to a shortlist. A substantial number of sites around West Oxfordshire have been put forward but not all of them are needed to demonstrate a housing land supply to 2041 nor are all of the sites suitable. WODC will be determining suitable sites based on whichever of the 8 development options from Phase 2 is chosen, they will also be looking at an update of the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Report (SHELAA) (2016) and also taking into account the comments from Town and Parish Councils.

We understand that residents will then have the opportunity to comment directly on the shortlist of sites in Summer 2024.

North Leigh Parish Council Planning Committee has already made it clear to WODC that our Parish has taken substantial planning relative to other villages.

<https://northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk/2023/11/30/timing-and-process-for-commenting-on-the-west-oxfordshire-local-plan-wolp-2041/>.

Update from the North Leigh Parish Council Planning Committee - continued

Please know that your Parish Council will strongly oppose these sites at every stage, and we aim to minimize the eventual number of sites adopted in the WOLP 2041 by WODC for North Leigh Parish.

For the dates of Planning Committee meetings for residents to discuss land sites, for comment deadline dates and for further updates on WOLP 2041, please sign up to the Parish Council's mailing list on the North Leigh Parish Council Website:

www.northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

or follow the North Leigh Parish Council Facebook Page.

North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan – Your Vision for the Parish

Work on the Neighbourhood Plan is progressing well and the “Drop in and Have Your Say” event saw over 140 parishioners attend.

Many thanks to those of you that took the time to come along and give your feedback. The Neighbourhood Plan Committee will be using that feedback to assist in the consultation process.

Overall, there are number of items to celebrate. We have secured a Locality Grant to assist with the funding of the Neighbourhood Plan process, the number of committee members has increased to ten, and the Committee has engaged a consultant to assist with the process Committee.

In order to speed up the process the Committee is meeting more frequently, and we intend to keep you up to date with the progress at each stage.

If you are interested in taking part in any of the activities that will be a necessary part of the creating the Neighbourhood Plan, such as leaflet and questionnaire distribution, please contact the Parish Clerk:

parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

or the Neighbourhood Plan Committee directly:

neighbourhoodplan@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

Parish Council Funding – the Precept – What is it?

The Precept is a tax, included within the local Council Tax, which enables the Parish Council to perform its functions. Parish Councils can apply for some other funding such as grants and funding awards, generally for specific projects, but they do not receive funds directly from central government.

The Parish Council is legally required to agree a budget before it can set its Precept, and both must be agreed by the full Parish Council.

Once the Parish Council has forecast its budget requirements for the following financial year, it requests this funding from its 'local billing authority' – in our case, WODC – in the form of the Precept.

WODC then converts the Precept into an amount per property subject to the council tax that is added to the Council Tax bill (according to the property band) for all the dwellings within the Parish area.

North Leigh Parish Council's precept for the past 5 years has been:

2019/2020: £34,504

2020/2021: £40,781

2021/2022: £30,000

2022/2023: £50,000

2023/2024: £50,000

At the December meeting of the Parish Council, the Council resolved a budget for 2024/2025 of £69,758 and a precept of £67,558. Whilst the Council has reduced and/or held the precept for the past few years, keeping it below the projected spend for the year, the Council needs to raise the precept for 2024/2025 to account for its budgeted running costs and inflation.

Parish Council Funding – the Precept – continued

The services the Parish Council provides within the budget include:

Management of North Leigh Cemetery

Management of the Children's Playground on Park Road and the Adventure Playground off of Windmill Road

Grounds maintenance

Village communication via the website, the Parish Council Facebook page, mailing list and newsletter

Maintenance of its assets which are listed on the Asset Register on the website (these include bus shelters and 2 defibrillators)

Bin emptying at the Children's Playground, Adventure Playground and Cuckamus Green

Donations, including those for North Leigh Youth Project and North Leigh Library

Publicly available and dedicated email addresses for the Clerk and Councillors

The Clerk who manages the Council's finances and operations

In addition to the above the Council has budgeted for a number of new projects for 2024/25 including:

Essential Tree Maintenance Works

North Leigh Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Information on the Council's finances can be found on the website in the Finance section of the Parish Council section:

<https://northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk/parish-council/finance-insurance-policies/>

If you have any questions as to the finances of the Council, feel free to contact the Parish Clerk Allison Leigh, via email at:

parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

or via phone on 07796 039 496.

Parish Council Elections

Every four years, Parish Councils are required to hold an election and in May 2024, there will be an election for North Leigh Parish Council.

This is the parish's opportunity to make changes, should they wish, to how the Parish Council is run.

The Council is a constantly changing body of people. Once elected, Parish Councillors can usually sit on the Council for a maximum of four years. If they then want to stay in the post, they must stand for re-election.

Residents are actively encouraged to join the Parish Council and it is always good to welcome new members.

Ideally, all age groups and a wide demographic should be represented on a Council. There are 9 seats on the Council, so if more than 9 people stand, there will be a ballot and the 9 candidates with the most votes are elected.

What is a Parish Council?

A Parish Council is the local authority that makes decision on behalf of the people in the parish and makes representations on their behalf to other bodies. It is the lowest tier of local government and as such the Parish Council is the level of government that is closest to the community it represents with WODC and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) above it. As it is the authority closest to the people, the Parish Council is often the first place residents will go with concerns or ideas. For this reason, it is a vital part of any community.

Parish Councils make a variety of decisions for the community and make representations to national bodies on issues that affect the local community. These decisions include planning, managing open spaces, managing burial grounds, liaising with the police and other services, campaigning for and delivering better services and facilities and more.

There are limited powers to make decisions, but Parish Councils do have the ability to negotiate with and the power to influence those other organizations that do make the final decisions.

Parish Council Elections—continued

Who can become a Parish Councillor?

To be able to stand as a candidate at a local government election in England you must:

- be at least 18 years old
- be a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of any member state of the European Union,
- meet at least one of the following four qualifications:
 - a. You are, and will continue to be, registered as a local government elector for the local authority area in which you wish to stand from the day of your nomination onwards.
 - b. You have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the local authority area during the whole of the 12 months before the day of your nomination and the day of election.
 - c. Your main or only place of work during the 12 months prior to the day of your nomination and the day of election has been in the local authority area.
 - d. You have lived in the local authority area during the whole of the 12 months before the day of your nomination and the day of election.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact the Clerk, Allison Leigh either via email at:

parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

or on 07706 039 496

S106 Monies – Your Say, Your Choice – Planters, Signposts, Benches

Section 106 (S106) agreements are legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer that provide for specific determined projects for the benefit of a parish to mitigate development. The Parish Council has available funds from the S106 monies received from the various developments that have taken place in the parish over the last few years. Some of these funds have already been used by the Parish Council to pay for the refurbishment and improvements to the Children's Playground.

The Parish Council also has three sets of funds available, and would like your views as to how they are used.

These can be used subject to the following criteria:

- 1) "Public Art" means enhancements to the public realm in the village of North Leigh with the purpose of celebrating its local identity and history for the benefit of new and existing residents, which may include (but not be limited to) unique signage, seating and information created by artists on the Site and in and around public open spaces in the village in consultation with North Leigh Parish Council and involving residents."
- 2) "Public Art Contribution" towards artist-led functional features to aid connectivity of the site to the existing community and aid orientation.
- 3) "Parish Contribution" for the provision of planters.

The Parish Council would like to hear your views and suggestions as to what the appropriate items may be to purchase and install, and then make the decision based on your feedback.

Please send your suggestions to the Parish Clerk Allison Leigh via email at:

parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

Hidden Talents & Community Engagement

The Parish Councillors are a group of elected local residents who serve the parish and represent the community at large. In doing so they draw upon their own knowledge, skills, and expertise and that of others in the parish whom they know of and have contact with. But they also need your help please.

Within the parish there will be many people with a range of knowledge and talents that could be an invaluable resource from which the Parish Council would benefit when considering local issues and which might help them to make better informed decisions on behalf of the community.

The Parish Council would encourage parishioners to share their ideas with the council by attending Parish Council meetings, taking part in the Neighbourhood Plan process, participating in the Annual Parish Meeting, or sharing their views using the North Leigh Parish Council Facebook page.

Whilst making comments and sharing opinions on social media is one way of providing feedback, Facebook comments rarely if ever result in the contributor contacting the Parish Council offering to share any specific knowledge and expertise they might have on a particular subject, but where they do it has proved to be a valuable asset to the Parish Council and the community at large.

If you have and are willing to volunteer your particular knowledge and expertise to the Parish Council, please contact the Parish Clerk Allison Leigh via email at:

parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

with your contact details and the specific knowledge, you may provide.

Hopefully this will enable the council to build a parish resource that will benefit the whole community.

Parish Housekeeping

The Parish Council is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of various items and areas of the village.

These include the Children's Playground, the Adventure Playground, the Cemetery, bus shelters and a number of trees within the parish.

Recently various areas have had an increase in litter and other items that have contributed to harming the appearance of the parish. In both the playgrounds there have been instances of broken glass on the ground which makes the areas unsafe for activities.

The Parish Council does monitor the areas for which it is responsible, and it would be a significant help to all if, when on your trips and walks through the parish you spot something that needs attention, you would contact the Parish Clerk Allison Leigh with the relevant information via email at:

parishclerk@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk

The Clerk will then be able to take action to have the matter resolved.

Litter Pick

In addition to this, there will be a litter pick taking place on Sunday the 24th of March from 10:30am – 1pm.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. If you have any suggestions regarding content that you would wish to see included in future Newsletters from the Council, please contact the Parish Clerk who will forward those suggestions to the Council:

parishclerk@northleighparish.gov.uk

