

## **AMPNEY CRUCIS PARISH COUNCIL**

**The Annual Parish Meeting held in the Village Hall at 7.00pm on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2022.**

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Cllrs D Crook (Chair), J Mills, D Fowles, R Leadbeater

**In attendance:** Cllr L Spivey, PCSOs Bulbul and Barker, 3 members of the public

**Clerk:** R Morton

**1. Minutes of the last Parish Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021.**

The Minutes were duly approved and signed by the Chair.

**2. Annual Report of Ampney Crucis Parish Council and general discussion.**

The Chair gave the following report:

The Covid-19 Pandemic continued to cause challenges through the remainder of 2021 with some meetings conducted by Zoom, but the autumn and spring has seen Parish Council meetings returned to using the Village Hall once more.

During the year there have been further changes within the Parish Council. Tim Nicholls and Alan Strutt resigned and more recently Benedict Eccles had to stand down due to work pressures that did not allow him to fulfil his role as he wanted to. I would like to thank each one of them for their hard work and commitment to the Parish Council and the village.

Mrs Jan Mills joined the Parish Council in September and has taken on responsibility to work with the Playground Group who are actively pursuing funds to upgrade the current equipment that is now well past its sell by date. Hence, please do add your support to this fund-raising effort, the more pledges the better even if they are just small ones.

In September Mrs Jayne Webster who had been our clerk since 2009 resigned since she was no longer enjoying the role and I sincerely say thank you to her for all her efforts over the years in keeping us on track and supporting the Parish.

Finding a new Clerk proved a challenge and we were fortunate to have the services of Mrs Caroline Braidwood, who is the Clerk for Preston Parish on a temporary basis from October to February and my thanks go to her for a sterling job while we looked for a new Clerk.

Fortunately, we have been successful in finding Mrs Roz Morton to take on the role and a very warm welcome to her from me and my fellow councillors. Roz also works as the Deputy Town Clerk for Fairford so has plenty of local knowledge and also contacts in both District and County departments.

Until recently we had three vacancies on the Parish Council, and this led to an election for one of the vacancies in April 2022 at which Mr Ross Leadbeater was elected and I welcome him to the Parish Council. I would like to thank Mr Clinton Grimmer for also standing in that election. That still left us with two vacancies which were recently advertised that they could be filled by co-option, and I am pleased to say we have had expressions of interest from two residents who will be interviewed after this meeting.

Throughout the year, the Parish Council has been represented at District and County level by Lisa Spivey. Lisa has been diligent in attending the Parish Council meetings whenever possible, notwithstanding her responsibilities to other parishes and the wider County role

she is getting to grips with. I am sure all members of the Parish Council have welcomed and appreciated Lisa's proactive engagement and contributions to our meetings.

I must also mention Neil Holt who helps with both the Speed Signs and monitoring our 2 defibrillators, Benedict Eccles who has remained on the rota for the speed signs and is continuing to chair the Pleydell Trust and provide updates to the PC on its work.

Sadly, we have lost some long-term servants of the village in the past year with Janet Campbell, our volunteer Tree Warden and Paul Brice, who managed the Village websites and the management of the Village Network Email Alert (Psst) are no longer with us.

I have temporarily taken over the roles Paul carried out, but we are looking at alternative arrangements since my appeals for help in the hope that a young person from the Parish interested in computing may have been able to assist did not result in any offers

We continue to have the support of Gordon Ford who will clear our village street and lanes after heavy snow.

The collapsed wall in the burial ground has now been rebuilt with help from many to shift 6 tons of stone from the entrance to the area adjacent to the repair site and a generous donation from Mr & Mrs Kingsley to help with the costs.

The Notice Board for the Pleydells was refurbished by Harold Stevens who also oversaw the installation of it by Terry Underwood and me early in the year.

Harold Stevens and Dave Broadhurst also refurbished the bench at the War Memorial and will continue a programme for other benches and notice boards around the village over the coming months.

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions our usual autumn clear up of the burial ground and other parts of the village did not take place.

However, it was replaced with a Spring Clear-Up Weekend in early March and it proved very successful with the Burial Ground getting attention, the verge alongside the School playing Field getting a severe cut back (the internal hedges still need doing), the ivy being removed from the bridge and fence by the Cricket Ground which unfortunately has revealed that more serious repair may be needed, which hopefully County will take on that responsibility. Lesson 1 – Don't let Ivy take hold on walls, it's highly destructive. A good quantity of litter was collected though not as much as in previous years partly because there are many folks who walk around the village that do pick litter up as they go plus, we had another Duke of Edinburgh's candidate carry out Litter Picking as part of her programme.

I would like to thank all residents who have provided help when asked for and for many that carry out activities on behalf of the village without being asked or saying anything.

Unfortunately, we still suffer from several irresponsible dog owners who either do not poo pick or throw the bags into the hedges and I can only reiterate that it is highly antisocial and illegal.

The choice and installation of a bus shelter opposite the Crown has proved a bureaucratic nightmare but we do have the end in sight after such a long journey.

We have held 6 Council meetings over the past year covering a wide variety of topics.

25 planning applications have been considered by the Council over the last 12 months. The Council continues to work hard to ensure that development in the village is carried out with the proper lawful permissions and that once permission is granted, conditions are properly met.

The Council has held regular meetings with Gloucestershire Highways and continues to press for safer roads through the village, better repairs to the roads and to try to combat nuisance parking.

In March we awarded two grants to projects in the Village, £1000 was given to the Petanque Club for restoration work for their court, and the Council pledged £5000 towards the playground fundraising appeal. We hope to be able to support more projects in the Village this year and would welcome expressions of interest from community groups.

Cllr Fowles reported on the hard work that the Village Hall Committee do throughout the year and the Council thanked the Committee for their dedication to the hall.

**3. Report from PCSO Zaheer Bulbul & PCSO Angela Barker.**

The PCSO's gave an overview of the work they do. They are part of the Neighbourhood policing team, and have limited powers of arrest. They patrol 28 parishes and work shifts of either 8.00am – 6.00pm or 1.00pm – 11.00pm and do 3 or 4 shifts a week. The team is currently lacking a PC and recruitment from within the force has so far been unsuccessful. They undertake briefing led patrols so will go where there is most need. At any time they can be called away for other operation reasons.

They are working with Glos Highways with regards to speeding on A417 through the village and have initiated additional signage along A417. Dave Holland (road safety team) is looking for areas to park a speeding van – the van has to be parked on an approved site. Cllr Crook offered to talk to local landowners with regards to the van accessing their land to create a safe parking place.

There are no obvious patterns emerging from the crime statistics. The spate of thefts from vans that happened in 2020-21 seems to have abated. It was discussed as to whether the increased use of the car park at the Crown may have contributed to the reduction as the car park can no longer be used as a place to park up and commit crimes at nearby locations.

The team were asked if they go into schools. They reported that they do and have a good relationship with the primary school. There is a School Beat Officer who liaises with secondary schools.

The team were asked in they have a good relationship with Bromford Housing Association. They reported that they do have a supportive working relationship and find Bromford responsive.

The Police urged residents to sig up the Community Alerts.

Cllr Crook agreed to send out a Psst encouraging people to do so.

**4. Parish Council accounts for the year ending 31 March, 2021.**

The accounts were received without comment.

**5. Accounts of the Village Hall Charity and the Robert Pleydell Educational Charity.**

### **Village Hall Chairs report 2021**

Covid kept us closed until May 2021. We were inspected to check we had appropriate measures in place for reopening, hand sanitisers, posters about wearing masks and windows that opened. Adult ballet and toddler group started first followed by Village organisations and film night in September. Generally, people were still very wary of Covid.

During the summer we started looking in earnest at replacing the heating. We paid a deposit in September and new Thermal infra-red panels were fitted throughout in November. To offset some of the costs, fundraising included a stall at the Driveway sale, a share of the proceeds from the Xmas bazaar and a Bingo night. Mrs L. Devine was the driving force for all these events. A villager sold plants and donated the money, we received a share from the Driveway sale, and we were pleased to receive some personal donations. On the subject of donations, we were given 40 padded chairs no longer needed from The Crown of Crucis and china from a villager leaving the area.

Before and after installing the heaters a working party was made up of Mr H. Stevens, Mr J. Fullick and Mr D. Broadhurst. The partition that held the Stage Curtains needed to be removed. Scaffolding was hired and they set to work with a very large crowbar and hammer. Now the heating is installed we are trying to learn how to run it as efficiently as possible. The coin operated meters are no longer appropriate, so rental charges were increased from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022. Electricity charges are set to rise so charges will be reviewed again in December 2022. We hope the fabric of the Hall benefits from general background heat and redecoration due to damp walls may be a thing of the past.

I should like to thank all the members of the committee for their support throughout the year. We avoided employing a cleaner by cleaning the hall ourselves until October when we were pleased to pass on the job to Mrs L. Thompson.

At the end of my report last year, I expressed the sentiment that 2021 might be a more positive year. Well, we have got new heating, the Hall is ready and available as soon as people are confident to make bookings again, and we are solvent!!

Anne Bridges, Chair of Hall Trustees

The accounts are stored with the Minutes.

Cllr Fowles reported on the very successful car boot sale held recently to raise funds for the Hall. Almost £800 was raised. He also reported that the Committee has a new treasurer and that the entire committee work incredibly hard for the Hall and thanked them for their efforts.

### **ROBERT PLEYDELL EDUCATIONAL CHARITY**

#### **CURRENT TRUSTEES**

Rev John Swanton – (ex Officio)

Ian Smith – appointed by the Governors of Ampney Crucis C of E School

Mrs Rebecca Jones – appointed by the Governors of Ampney Crucis C of E School

Mrs Eleanor Toby - appointed by Ampney Crucis Parochial Church Council

Neil Holt – appointed by Ampney Crucis Parochial Church Council

Shaun Parsons – appointed by the Local Education Authority

Benedict Eccles – appointed by Ampney Crucis Parish Council

The aims and organisation of the Charity are defined in the Trust Deed dated 19 December 1977 as amended in April 2002.

## ACTIVITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2021

### Income from investments:

During 2021, the Charity received investment income as follows:

M&G Charibond	£227.58	(2020 - £256.38)
M&G Charifund	£5,846.59	(2020 - £5,280.22)
Total investment income:	£6,074.17	(2020 - £5,536.60)

### Expenditure:

The Trust Deed allows for three categories of expenditure:

Funding any expenses incurred in managing the Charity. No expenses were claimed by Trustees in 2021.

Providing support to Ampney Crucis C of E School towards essential maintenance of the school and provision of special benefits not normally provided by the Local Education Authority.

On 16th February 2021 and from the balance carried forward at 31st December 2020, the Charity made a grant of £3,800 and a further grant of £3,500 was paid on 30th December 2021 from investment income to Ampney Crucis School towards the provision of educational aids and maintenance not funded by the Local Education Authority.

Providing support to students in Further or Higher Education who are under 25 years old and are, or whose parents are resident in Ampney Crucis. During 2021, seven eligible students were awarded grants of £200 each to be applied towards costs incurred in following their course of study.

### Other expenditure:

From investment income received by the Charity during 2021, £1,000 was reinvested in the M&G Charifund.

As background to the above, in 2017 the Charity applied to the Charity Commission for permission to withdraw £10,000 from its endowment invested with M&G Charities to help the village school fund the construction of a new classroom.

The Charity Commission exceptionally permitted that withdrawal on the basis that the endowment fund would receive replacement of the withdrawn £10,000 over a period of 10 years. The payment of £1,000 in 2021 represents year 4 of that 10-year commitment.

After payment of the Grants and other expenditure as above, the charity enters 2022 with an available credit balance of £246.96.

The Charity's Trustees welcome applications from eligible students seeking grants in the 2022 year.

Neil Holt, Trustee & Treasurer, March 2022

Cllr Mills commented that the Trust has contributed to the playground fund.

Questions were asked regarding the source of the endowed fund and the value of the fund?

Answer: The fund originated from the sale of a house next to the school.

**6. Reports, if any, from other Village organisations and District and County Councillors.**

A request was made to have reports from other organisations in the Village such as WI, Gardening Club, the Church. It was agreed to request the reports for next year.

**Report from District Councillor:**

Cllr Spivey reported the following:

The last year has again been dominated by Covid and the consequences of dealing with lockdowns, restrictions, supporting businesses, families and individuals.

The pandemic changed working patterns with staff at the District Council mostly continuing to work from home, increased work-load and pressures on the system when staff had to take leave when struck down with the virus. As many of you will have found through your own experiences, illness can range from nothing (asymptomatic), through a mild cold, to dangerously ill. Until the end of this year, any illness or positive test meant a period of absence which had knock on effects, especially for those juggling isolation due to children's illness.

We are now heading towards something more akin to "normal" although it is important to note that the virus is still very prevalent in our communities and a 4<sup>th</sup> wave/lockdown cannot be ruled out.

For the Council, this was an opportunity to re-evaluate the use of the Council buildings in the District and following a thorough staff consultation and review made of the Trinity Road office, 40% of the current office space will be allocated for rental, with the remaining 60% used in a more agile way by current staff. The building will undergo some renovations, including fixing the leaking atrium roof and, using the grant funding we won last year, work to decarbonise the building will happen.

Following the somewhat unfathomable decision by the government to insist that all decision making meetings of the council must be held in person after May 7<sup>th</sup> 2021, the council (like your PC) moved back to in person meetings, although the new technology installed in the council chamber has meant that it is possible to access meetings online, allowing residents to watch from home (not always seamlessly!), but improvements to the system will continue to be made. I note that there have been comments on the audibility levels when attending the chamber in person and will ensure that that is looked at so that everyone can hear what is being said. Perhaps some councillors need to speak up!

We held some Parish and Town Councils forums in order to establish better communications with towns and parishes and to explain the financial situation the council finds itself in after 10 years of cuts from central government and the looming Fairer Funding Review which could see CDC lose up to a quarter of its budget. This has meant that some tough financial decisions have had to be made including losing the "free after 3" parking in some car parks in order to generate more income. Evening, overnight and Sunday parking remains free and we are beginning the roll out of Electric vehicle charging points in 4 carparks in the District which will offer EV charging to visitors and residents who don't have their own charging points. It is hoped that over time, we can implement an overnight rate so as to help those who don't have their own off street parking and encourage the transition away from petrol and diesel engines.

Work has progressed on making the Local Plan "green to the core" with a consultation running earlier this year which saw over 500 responses. I'd like to thank those parish councils and individuals who took the time to respond. The consultation was run using a new platform, commonplace, which we received grant funding to set up and use.

The “Clean and Green” initiative has got off to a very good start with the creation of 2 new enviro-crime officers who have been out and about helping to tackle fly-tipping, supporting litter picking and generally working on making our District the clean and green place we would like it to be. Thank you in your communities for all the efforts you make year round to pick litter and keep the area looking good.

Crowdfund Cotswold has been an incredible success, leveraging over £300,000 in funding for a range of community led projects from playground resurfacing, to statue installation, to a zip-wire flying through Avening. This has meant that there has been 3 times the amount of money used on community driven projects than we could ever have supported.

This coming year will see a revamp of the council owned gyms in Cirencester, Bourton and Chipping Camden and work continues on implementing the Leisure Strategy with its focus on the health and wellbeing of residents to achieve and maintain a healthy way of life.

This will include modes of active travel and, in the newly created role of Sustainable Transport Manager, Hannah Fountain, has been fantastic this year in liaising with the County Council and other stakeholders to secure funding for improvements for the safety of cyclists and pedestrians and is working on a Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan looking at Cirencester and a 7 mile radius and how connections can be improved.

After a very difficult period in 2020 transitioning to working from home and a huge spike in applications, the planning department saw a return to more normal levels of applications and internal changes have been carried out to help the department get back to pre-pandemic service levels. There continues to be staff vacancies which have been difficult to fill given the national shortage of planners, and indeed the recruitment and retention crisis in general in the public sector, but all efforts are being made to improve the service. In many cases, delays in decisions are because of waiting for 3<sup>rd</sup> party consultees who are also short staffed.

A great proportion of my working time is dedicated to reading through planning applications, assisting residents and parishes to respond to applications, liaising with planning officers and often visiting sites. This year has been no exception, and I have spent a huge amount of time working on various issues within the ward.

In my own portfolio at CDC (Housing and Homelessness), we have continued to work on tackling the housing affordability crisis in the Cotswolds by encouraging Housing Associations to deliver homes for social rent and have invested in making affordable housing schemes low carbon.

We have vastly reduced our use of hotel and B&B accommodation for those needing temporary housing by using the property we lease in Tetbury which has 9 self-contained units. We currently have no official rough sleepers, everyone has been offered a home, although we know that there continues to be some people street begging. Mostly they are from Gloucester or Cheltenham and come to our towns to beg. We do follow up with these individuals to check whether there are safeguarding issues and do what we can do to help.

Over the coming year before the elections in 2023, I will continue to do what I can to help and support residents and remain contactable by phone or email

Q: Did CDC employ outside agencies to manage the COVID grant scheme.

A: CDC managed the grants internally.

Q: there may be some occasions when smaller projects are being put off from applying for grants through the crowd fund scheme – is there any other funding mechanism that can be accessed for smaller projects?

A: Cllr Spivey will find out.

Q: There is still an issue in the planning dept with recruitment – is there a way to recruit & retain planners?

A: the Council is working within a Publica model for recruitment and has a budget to work to with regards to salaries.

### **Report from County Councillor Lisa Spivey:**

Since winning the election a year ago, I have been focussing on 4 main issues which are the local issues residents spoke to me about most frequently during the election campaign and continue to get in touch with me about. They are:

1. Highway Maintenance issues
2. Road safety, especially speeding
3. River pollution
4. Flooding

Most parishes have a very good system of logging highway maintenance issues and have a working relationship with the Local Highways manager, Richard Gray. In the last year, I have had regular meetings with Richard (every few weeks) to keep abreast of these issues and to assist in seeing action on them.

To be very honest, however, I have been left very frustrated by a system which I do not think is delivering for residents, so in December last year, I brought a motion to Full Council asking for a complete overhaul of the Highway Maintenance system which is currently not fit for purpose. Residents email me on a near daily basis, telling me about road repairs either not carried out or shoddy repairs, uncut vegetation which creates safety issues, fallen down signs, abandoned road works signs cluttering the verge, debris filling gullies, potholes wrecking tyres- the list goes on.

It is clear that the Local Highways managers are not able to do all the work they would like to do and are financially constrained each year. This could be eased if the contractor, Ringway was doing a consistently good standard of work and if the maintenance schedule was overhauled.

The Lib Dem motion was not accepted by the Conservative administration, but I will continue to lobby for further change via public questions, meetings with the cabinet member and asking the Environment Scrutiny committee to consider looking at this in more detail.

I have tried to use my Highways Local funding to best effect, doing some patching work on some villages, helping with speed surveys, and contributing towards making walking and cycling safer and easier. I will be doing the same again in this coming year.

As far as speeding is concerned, again it has been a rather frustrating year, as the administration decided not to adopt the Stockholm Convention ruling that a default 20mph limit should be implemented “where cars and vulnerable road users such as cyclists and



pedestrians meet” when it was proposed via a Lib Dem motion at the September Full Council meeting

The adoption of a policy on ANPR systems has also been painfully slow, and the Traffic Regulation Order team are way behind on dealing with requests due to staff shortages. In many cases in this rural part of the County, we are just given a flat “no” when asked to look at speed reductions through our villages because we do not tick the boxes by national criteria which would necessitate a speed reduction.

This is disappointing because the speed reduction would not only make our villages safer, it would also improve health and wellbeing for residents.

The new PCC has made tackling speeding a priority and has been very supportive of community speed watch initiatives and the police have been out and about with their speed guns, but they can't be everywhere and so we need to affect a culture change where speeding is seen as unacceptable.

In the coming year, I will be looking at what ways I can lobby for change to the national criteria, so that speed issues can be tackled effectively in our communities.

I will work with you to lobby both the County council and our MP to help with this issue.

I was supposed to be seconding a motion on Highway safety at the Full council meeting in March, but we ran out of time, so I will be speaking on this at the May meeting.

The legal dumping of raw sewage into our local rivers and waterways is a scandal which is gathering national attention. According to recent figures there were over 2000 incidents of raw sewage being poured out into Cotswold rivers in 2020 and there are no rivers deemed to be healthy in the whole of England. This must stop and I have been actively campaigning on this issue, bringing a motion to the Council in May this year, and getting a good amount of media coverage on the issue.

I will continue to campaign for this practise to be disallowed, for water companies to be made to increase infrastructure funding and for the Environment Agency to be built back up to be equipped to deal with this terrible situation.

Flooding in this area was (fortunately) very localised and small scale this year, but it continues to be a risk as we face the effects of climate change and changed weather patterns, including flash storms and large amounts of rainfall.

Clearly, good gully maintenance is required to ensure that the sewers can deal with excessive rainfall and I will continue to lobby that this happens on a yearly basis, without the need for inspection (surely better just to do it rather than see whether it needs doing and then either do it or delay it?), and to work closely with landowners and other stakeholders to ensure that flood defences and mitigation work is happening.

The Council continues to support post pandemic recovery in communities via the Build Back Better fund which is open until 2025, please get in touch if you have a project you think appropriate for funding.

Brexit and the pandemic has had a very big impact on care home staffing, and this remains an issue for concern, with the proposed closure of 4 homes in the County.

Ambulance response times have been alarming at times with unacceptable delays. This is being closely monitored and improvements have been made.

Children's services finally moved out of Special measures after the inspection in February.

There is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that the most vulnerable residents of the county are adequately looked after.

Home to school transport is still not as widely available as it should be in the division and this is another issue I will be looking at more closely in the coming year.

Q: Please can Glos Highways cut back the hedges and the verges along A417 to make them wide enough to walk along safely?

A: Cllr Spivey will bring this up with Hannah Fountain at CDC as well as Highways.

Q: Since some ivy clearance was carried out it would appear that the bridge may be unstable – please can this be raised for a safety inspection.

A: Yes, Cllr Spivey will get it added to the list for inspection.

Q: Social care, adult social care and education are all important to the village. Please could the report at the next Council meeting include information on these topics?

A: Yes.

Cllr Crook thanked Cllr Spivey for all her hard work in both her District & County roles.

#### **7. Questions from the floor.**

Q: why do neighbours not receive notification of successful planning permissions?

A: There is no mechanism by which to do that. CDC inform neighbours of pending applications, and all further information is available online.

It is very helpful when local developers do communicate with the community as it can alleviate concerns when development starts.

The Council is in regular communication with the planning team at CDC and endeavours to pass on relevant information, when possible, with the Village.

#### **AOB:**

Cllr Crook shared an email sent by a resident including a letter from Ukraine. This will be circulated on Psst for interest.

An email from a resident was read out. Issues included highways, speeding and the Crown. Cllr Spivey reported that Deborah Smith has been asked to collate a coordinated response regarding the highways concerns and was waiting for Glos Highways to respond.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.