

## AMPNEY CRUCIS PARISH COUNCIL

**The Annual Parish Meeting held in the Village Hall at 7.00pm on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2023.**

### Minutes

**Present:** Cllrs D Crook (Chair), J Mills, R Leadbeater, J Leadbeater, L Courtown, N Wright

**In attendance:** Cllr L Spivey, PCSO Bubul, 1 member of the public

**Clerk:** R Morton

#### **1. Minutes of the last Parish Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022.**

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:

While 2022 still presented issues with Covid-19, much of life had gradually returned to something approaching normality.

Unfortunately, we have seen the war in Ukraine continue and while the initial impacts outside Ukraine itself have somewhat faded, it has left most of us experiencing much higher energy and other costs and I know a much-increased use of local food banks and other support services.

Directly after our last Annual Meeting we interviewed 2 members of the Parish, Lis Courtown and Jacky Leadbeater, who had offered their services as Councillors, and they were duly co-opted onto the Parish Council, which meant we had a full complement of 7 Councillors for the year.

My sincere thanks to the team for all their hard work and valued opinions during the past year, who successfully all stood for re-election at last weeks Parish Council elections, apart from David Fowles, who was no longer eligible to represent us and has moved onto pastures new as a District Councillor for the Coln Ward.

I welcome the addition of Mr Clint Grimmer, who was successfully elected last week and look forward to his input and support in the coming months.

I would like to thank Roz Morton, our Clerk, who has done a sterling job in keeping us on track and improving some of our processes and policies. It can be a thankless task chasing external agencies, suppliers and sometimes residents to respond to requests for information or to do something in a timely manner and she does it all with a cheery voice and a smile.

Lisa Spivey served us in both a District and County capacity during the year and will continue in both roles for the coming year and our thanks to her efforts particularly with Planning and Highways issues and with the changes to the Parish Boundary to align several properties that appeared to be in the Parish but were in fact on the perimeters of neighbouring parishes.

The Children's Playground has seen a massive investment in new equipment that replaced the old and outdated facilities with further improvements planned for this coming year. This would not have been possible without the leadership of Sarah James-Sparrow with both the fund raising and managing the installation along with a team of volunteers and of course the generous support of many villagers.

We all enjoyed a lovely Jubilee Celebration on the Cricket Ground last year, which is why we have a purple Picnic Bench in the Children's Playground, to be followed by the sad loss of Queen Elizabeth II in September and we have now celebrated in style the Coronation of King Charles III in perfect weather for a change last Sunday.

The Defibrillators have been upgraded to new types supplied by Community Heartbeat and we have 2 further ones planned once County Council approve the locations at Dudley Farm and Hilcot End.

There will be a Training Session on how to use these new Defibrillators in the Village Hall on ?? May 2023 at ????

My thanks to Neil Holt for his regular checking of the old Defibrillators, since their original installation, and his offer to help with the new ones, but it would be most helpful if we had a few more volunteers to carry out a weekly visual check and a monthly internal check. If you can help please let me or Roz Morton, our clerk know.

The Village website has been moved onto a new platform which now allows updating a much easier task than previously and I would encourage village clubs and activities to let our Clerk know about their events etc, so that we can publicise up to date and accurate information and we welcome ideas for other subjects etc to be on the website.

The Village Hall website has now been combined with the main Village website for both ease of maintenance and costs, which the Parish Council covers.

Psst has moved from using Mailchimp as the host to MailerLite, due to new limitations on the number of emails that can be sent per month imposed by MailChimp, unless you want to pay hefty monthly fee.

The Parish Council agreed to support the Village Hall in having full broadband connectivity, but so far GigaClear have made a complete hash of surveying and supplying the service, hopefully it may be here before our next meeting in July.

We have had yet another new Noticeboard made by Harold Stevens and Dave Broadhurst, which has been installed at the top of Pound Lane (Pig Lane) and the bench at The Pound is undergoing restoration and the Noticeboard at the Village Hall will be next in line for some rejuvenation.

Following on from the success last year with a Spring Village Clean-up we had another one this March with work at the Burial Ground and other areas of the Village. My thanks to all who came along to help or indeed carry out litter picking throughout the year as they walk around our lovely village and again, we had another Duke of Edinburgh volunteer carry out a regular task to pick litter. That obviously helps because the amount of litter was again lower than previously experienced.

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.

The ivy in walls at the main bridge unfortunately continues to fight back and it is going to need some serious work to eradicate and repair the damage, a job for Gloucestershire Highways, though I doubt we will get much support from them to take it on until it becomes dangerous.

Many of you will notice that Allotment Lane has changed because of the road being resurfaced after much chiding of Gloucestershire Highways. Now we move onto Butchers Arms Lane for a repeat exercise.

The Communi-tea get together was restarted by Denise Medley and a few others in late 2022 and proved a success and while now suspended should be back in the autumn under the guidance of Michelle Evans, my thanks to all involved in this activity.

All the volunteer growth in the School Playing Field and the hedges in the Childrens Playground has been cleared or cut back drastically, which was carried out by Cottage Garden Services and Ross and Jacky Leadbeater, many thanks to them all.

The Lych Gate (Old Mortuary) is now undergoing refurbishment and after having all the Headstones assessed for safety those identified as a risk are being repaired today.

The War Memorial has been cleaned and the area also tidied up along with the fencing being fixed by Terry Underwood.

The Vehicle Activated Speed signs continue to provide a useful warning to motorists to slow down when driving along the A417, but we really do need some more volunteers to carry out the battery change overs on a fortnightly basis. We are hoping for an additional pole to be installed at a 3<sup>rd</sup> location, but again we are waiting on Gloucestershire Highways.

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, and it can cause a fatal disease in sheep which do graze some of the areas that our footpaths cross.

The choice and installation of a bus shelter opposite the Crown has continued to prove a bureaucratic nightmare, there is so much more to comply with than just a simple installation, and it has led to much discussion over the wider use of bus shelters within the Parish, that at present we are still assessing locations and whether we have permission at those locations. I'm sorry it has taken so long, and Nick Wright who has been the lead on this, has learnt a great deal about the intricacies of such a task.

We have held 6 Council meetings over the past year covering a wide variety of topics as well as numerous Planning and Tree Applications.

We hope to be able to support more projects in the Village this coming year and would welcome expressions of interest from community groups.

My thanks to all who help to support and care for both our fellow residents and our village infrastructure.

In March 2023 we re-launched The Ampney Times after a 2-year absence in a new format and to a slightly wider audience to now include Driffield and Harnhill Parish. My thanks go to Roz for all her hard work in creating the format and layout and then compiling all the various information and articles. The feedback has been really positive, so please can I ask that all residents of Ampney Crucis, Ampney St Mary, Ampney St Peter and Driffield & Harnhill to submit ideas and articles for inclusion as well as any notices of events being organised to Roz Morton via email to [clerk@ampneycrucis.org.uk](mailto:clerk@ampneycrucis.org.uk).

Doug Crook

Chair – Ampney Crucis P C May 2022 to May 2023.

3. Report from PCSO Zaheer Bulbul.

The presentation given will be filed with these minutes.

**4. 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

Mr Douglas Benham - 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 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 20221**

**Income from investments:**

During 2022, the Charity received investment income as follows:

M&G Charibond	£ 200.28	(2021 - £ 227.58)
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M&G Charifund	£ 6,638.62	(2021 - £5,846.59)
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<b>Total investment income:</b>	<b>£ 6,838.90</b>	<b>(2020 - £6,074.17)</b>
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**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 2022.
- 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 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023, the Charity made a grant of £4,000 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 2022, seven eligible students were awarded grants of £250 each to be applied towards costs incurred in following their course of study.

**Other expenditure:**

From investment income received by the Charity during 2022, £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 2022 represents year 5 of that 10 year commitment.

The trustees also made an exceptional grant of £100 to the Ampney Crucis Children's Playground Appeal.

After payment of the Grants and other expenditure as above, the charity entered 2023 with an available credit balance of £235.86.

The Charity's Trustees welcome applications from eligible students seeking grants in the 2023 year.

Neil Holt  
Trustee & Treasurer, April 2023

**Village Hall Chairs report 2023**

Ampney Crucis Village Hall continues to be a valued amenity for the village. It is a regular meeting place for the Parish Council, Gardening Club, Bridge club, W.I. Toddlers, Pilates, Yoga, adult ballet, Art class and sewing group in addition to numerous childrens parties, and social events for the school and local villages. Film nights gain in popularity. Thanks go to John and Hazel for mastering the intricacies of the projector and to Lara who continues to maintain a high standard of cleanliness throughout the hall.

The thrill of finally replacing our inefficient heating with infra red panels has been slightly tempered by a national hike in electricity prices. The Committee is very aware that further price increases are promised. We have been trying to work out how to heat the Hall with hirers being sufficiently warm but not being wasteful. The general fabric of the Hall is

responding well, and damp areas previously found in the cloakrooms and kitchen no longer are a problem.

The Committee has been very active during the year raising money to support the Hall whilst we realistically assess a fair rental charge to cover our increased costs. A successful carboot sale in May, a Xmas Bingo evening run by Mrs L. Devine and Mrs R. Jones, and individual money raising schemes involving jam, marmalade, aprons, plants and bird boxes, courtesy of Mrs L. Benham and Mr H. Stevens has all helped to add to our coffers.

Our next project is to seriously consider installing solar panels with batteries to at least defray some of the costs of electricity used by the Hall. Crowdfunding may be a possible solution with villagers pledging their support and the CDC also backing the project.

The Hall website had been proving difficult to update and thanks to the Parish Council this has all been solved. The Hall now features on the Ampney Crucis website and the Clerk to the Council happily updates and advertises Hall events for us. Through them we are also embarking on having Wi fi installed. The Hall will pay for the installation and the Parish Council will pay the monthly cost for 2 years. This may lead to more bookings from people who need this facility.

My thanks go to all the committee for their support during the year. Mr M. Gluning who took over from Mrs L. Devine as Treasurer and Mrs L. Benham who replaced Mrs E. Toby as the Gardening Club rep. are both proving to be very useful members of the team. Thank you all of you!

Anne Bridges Chair of Hall Trustees

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

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

The last year just when we thought we'd moved away from Covid and everything that had wrought on our communities, we slipped straight into the consequences of Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine, out of control inflation and a period of extreme political turmoil culminating in Liz Truss's disastrous "fiscal event", and the deepening of the cost of living crisis.

All of these external, national and international factors had very real impacts on Local Government at all levels as the cost of delivering essential services rose dramatically and residents have felt that acutely with rises in costs and council tax as well as at the supermarket checkout and fuel pumps in particular.

Despite that background, CDC has tried to keep its portion of council tax low and has the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest in the South West.

However, unpopular decisions have had to be made and it was with a heavy heart that I supported the removal of the "free after 3" parking scheme and rises in council tax.

We have tried to continue to support local residents most in need by extending our council tax relief schemes, and by setting aside money to set up a Community Food Network with the first one opening last month in Cirencester. This scheme has the added benefit of reducing food wastage.

In amongst the gloom and uncertainty, there have also been several notable high points.

These include:

- the launch of the first Climate Bond which saw £500,000 raised to invest in decarbonising the Council's buildings and investing in electric vehicle charging points
- the introduction of the flood warden scheme which has already recruited 17 flood wardens

- the successful bidding for £1.3million to decarbonise our leisure centres which has meant they have stayed open, including our swimming pool, even as energy costs spiralled
- the introduction of our community Fit Kit
- securing £50,000 from the Safer Streets fund to make our streets safer especially for women and girls
- Crowdfund Cotswold raising nearly £600,000 for community backed projects

The “Clean and Green” initiative has continued to be a huge success with Millie and Joe 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 all year round to pick litter and keep the area looking good.

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.

After struggling during the pandemic with working from home and then a subsequent national shortage of planning officers, the planning department is now fully recruited and beginning to work on the backlog of applications. I think that focus now needs to be directed on Planning enforcement where I believe we could do with extra officers to deliver a good service in such a large district.

Our waste service continues to deliver a good service to residents, especially last summer when we saw temperatures reach over 40, and again in the winter when we have had to cope with extreme cold and then weeks of rain. Over 10million containers were emptied in 43,000 households last year which I think is staggering. We can also be proud of our recycling record which has us as the 10<sup>th</sup> best in the South west. Thank you to all residents who take the time to sort their recycling.

There has been some grumbling about the cost of the garden waste service this year, but at £2.37 per collection (less than a cup of coffee in town), I believe it represents good value for money, and is cost still only cost neutral rather than revenue generating, making it fair for those residents who don't have gardens or use the service.

I have greatly enjoyed representing the ward this last year, and indeed over the last 4 years and I wish you well for 2023/24.

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

In the last year I have attended all Full Council meetings and continued to sit on the Adult Social Care and Communities committee which I also vice-chair, and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee which gives me an excellent insight into the overall performance of the Council and highlights areas of concern. All those committees sit 6 times a year.

I have also been involved in 2 joint scrutiny meetings with ASCC and Health Overview Scrutiny Committee which were looking specifically at the crisis in emergency care over the winter period which saw our category 2 (life threatening or seriously injured) ambulance response times go from the 18minutes guidelines to over 4 hours.

I am also currently sitting on a task and finish working group looking at Bus services in the county and how we could improve them.

As a member of the Corporate scrutiny committee I took part in a whole day scrutiny session in January where we interrogated the Council's proposed budget for this financial year. The budget set this year was £560million. This was presented as a growth budget but in reality a

vast amount of the “growth” was inflationary costs and in year staff pay award costs (due to the fact that the 22/23 staff pay award was budgeted at 2% and the settlement was 6.1%). It made for a sobering day, as over two thirds of the Council’s entire budget is taken up by just 2 directorates – Adult Social care and Children’s Care. This means that everything else the council has to do and deliver all has to be squeezed into a scant one third of the overall budget. Until these demand led services are under control, this means that many of the things that you contact me about, mostly in Highways - the appalling state of our roads, the inability to get speed limits reduced and the clearing of verges etc- are simply not possible to deliver due to lack of resources.

I also feel acutely that for the County Council based in Gloucester, the Cotswolds and this division in particular being on the very southern part of the County doesn’t get the attention it should. This is something that I do my very best to reverse and I ensure that I always bring up questions and issues relevant to our part of the county.

Over the last year, I have continued to focus on the 4 main issues which are the local issues residents contact me about most frequently.

They are:

1. Highway Maintenance issues
2. Road safety, especially speeding
3. River pollution
4. GP waiting times/access to healthcare services

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.

I have actively encouraged residents and PCs to make use of the very easy to use “report it” function of the County Council website. This tool ensures that any road defects are logged in the system and will be dealt with (eventually!).

Despite motions and questions brought to Full Council, I continue to be frustrated by the lack of proper highway maintenance, including pavements and footpaths, which I do not think is delivering for residents. 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, was doing a consistently good standard of work and if the maintenance schedule was overhauled.

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.

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.

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 2021 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.

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.

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 closure of 4 cares homes in the County. This is true of nearly all areas of healthcare, especially dentistry which we brought a motion about in March's Council meeting.

Children's services finally moved out of Special measures after the inspection in February 2022 but continues to Require Improvement and is an enormous drain on the Council's finances largely due to out of county placements and the requirement to use agency staff to fill social worker roles.

As ever, if there are particular issues you would like to discuss, I am available on the phone or email.

**6. Questions from the floor.** None

**7. AOB:** None.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.