



**Minutes of the Annual Downley Parish Meeting
25th May 2022 7:30 p.m.
Downley Community Centre**

Present: Councillor M Lazenby (Chairman presiding), Cllr K Chandarana, Cllr A Lenard, Cllr W Monroe-West, Cllr W Steneskog.

Apologies were received & accepted from Cllr S Biggs, Buckinghamshire Councillor P Turner, C Elliot of Thames Valley Police, Rev H Graham of St James' Church, M & P Baker of Downley Methodist Church, B Thompson from Downley Communications Forum & the Downley Common Preservation Society

In attendance: 1 Buckinghamshire Councillor

Officers: G Tandy (Clerk)

10 members of the public present

1) Introduction & Chairmans Report

Traffic management including speeding and parking

The Council recognised it would be of benefit to the Parish to adopt a Community Speedwatch Group. Set up by Wendy Steneskog and now headed up by Cllr Lenard, w purchased a speed gun and hi-viz vests and are in the process of purchasing official TVP signs which will be fixed to the Parish boundary signs. These signs notify motorists that they are now entering a Community Speedwatch area. We have a dedicated group of volunteers, made up from members of the community and additional help is always welcome.

Post-lockdown, relocation of our Speed Indicator Devices was resumed. We are now rotating the SIDs on a regular basis, giving priority to those roads where members of the public have highlighted a specific need as best we can. Special thanks go to Clive Knapman and David Worsdall for moving the devices for us as well as Johan Steneskog who very kindly analyses the data and Cllr Wendy Steneskog who presents the data in graph form and also foots the ladder for me, in all weathers. We've met some lovely residents while retrieving the data with offers of cups of tea or coffee and cake. We love our job!

Environment and Climate Change

Work on Sandpits Pond (known locally as Gosling Grove Pond), resumed in January this year with an amazing group of volunteers turning up armed with their own tools and bucket loads of enthusiasm as well as coffee, tea, sausage sandwiches and cakes. Working from a Management Plan for Sandpits Pond from 1991, which we discovered in the archives, plus advice from Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), we began by cutting back the willows which were then used to build up the bank around the duck island and the southern perimeter of the pond itself. The "Gosling Grovers" meet regularly, (usually on the first Saturday morning of the month) and it's a pleasure being involved with such a great group of hardworking and dedicated people...we also have loads of fun.

The Queen's Green Canopy

Part of the celebrations for Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee Year saw DPC planting six trees around the Parish on Friday 11th March, all bearing the official commemorative plaque. The seventh tree was planted yesterday (24th May) to replace a deceased Rowan tree. Thanks to Keith Davis (KAD) and his boys for all their hard work digging, planting and erecting the plaques, our Buckinghamshire Councillors and members of the community who attended the planting ceremony and a special mention to the two lovely ladies on Old Farm Close who joined in with the planting and photo shoot.

On the subject of the Jubilee, DPC have organized the Downley Platinum Party on the Common on the evening of Friday 3rd June. Thanks to Bill Thompson who with his experience of the Diamond Jubilee Night ten years ago, plus years of Concerts on the Common, has assisted us hugely with the planning of this momentous event.

The **Allotments** are now fully subscribed and Giles holds a waiting list.

We have obtained permission from West Wycombe Estate on behalf of two residents to place beehives within the Parish.

Grants have been awarded to various village groups and projects including the Downley Albion and Community Orchard as well as the Wycombe Food Hub in the town centre.

We're hoping our new , improved website will go live within the next couple of weeks. In line with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines(WCAG), the site will be compliant making web content more accessible for people with disabilities.

Finally, the replacement of all Parish owned streetlights from sodium to LED's is nearing completion. I stopped for a chat with SparkX, our contractors today in the village. They are confident their work will be finished by the end of this week. Thank you to Giles, our Clerk for picking up the baton on this during the last year... his persistence has eventually paid off.

We're always looking for volunteers to help with the various projects we take on. If you would like to join us, please contact Giles, our Clerk, to register your interest.
clerk@downleyparish council.org

Moyra Lazenby Chairman Downley Parish Council

2) Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** that the **Minutes of the meeting held on 25th May 2021 be received, approved, adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.**

3) **Apologies for Absence** were received from Cllr S Biggs, Buckinghamshire Cllr P Turner, C Elliot of Thames Valley Police, Rev H Graham of St James' Church, M & P Baker of Downley Methodist Church, B Thompson from Downley Communications Forum & the Downley Common Preservation Society.

4) **Downley Old School Association** David Worsdall reported as follows:

As you will know 'Downley Old School Community Association' or DOSCA for short is the charity that runs the Community Centre.

Following a topsy turvy year last time round I am pleased to report that we are now steadily returning to business as usual with improving revenues and hirers coming back. When you look at the back two pages of the DVN you will see we are already hosting the lion's share of regular community activities.

Our last full financial year reported income at just one third of our pre Covid level. Fortunately our reserves were in good shape (currently £60K) and that allowed us to fund the redecoration of the library.

On our year-to-date figures for this financial year we are now well on our way to where we were. (Income will be about £25K). It did not look that good this time last year. At that point we had got just eight regular hirers back in - we had got used to seeing about three times that number!

Since my last report we have reformed a number of procedures, new hire contracts and a more formalised approach have been put in place. We have produced a trustee's handbook or Operations Manual if you will. This means that if any of us become suddenly unavailable the full detail on how we do things can be made available to others. This applies particularly to our hiring procedures and running the accounts system.

As Covid restrictions were lifted last summer we changed the regime inside the building as you will have seen. Safety signage and sanitizer stations are still in place but it is now a matter of personal choice with the onus now on hirers to be responsible for their own guests.

To ease the workload that comes with new enquiries we have also produced an excellent little video which gives a good introduction to all the facilities within the Centre. You can see this if you look us up on Downley.org. Incidentally, if any of you are asked about how to make contact with the Centre please don't just say 'ring Cathy'. Email or going to the webpage on Downley.org should be the first port of call.

I mentioned that we were not back to where we were. In place of a few hirers who haven't returned we welcome some new ones. (We may never see the Russian Circle again! Emphasis has shifted towards more activities for young children. Hartbeeps and Moo Music are two of our new regulars. (Don't ask, but as Giles sits in the office dealing with the affairs of state he must now put up with a steady banging and crashing and lots of music on some mornings.

As for meeting up we have been able to hold live meetings since last June. Since my last report we welcome Giles and Wendy (MW) who have joined our team as DPC representatives. We were sorry to lose David Egmore as he moved away from the village.

In March we were joined by Caroline and Kimberley who will be concentrating on our well-established, free, Parent and Toddler activity on Monday mornings now renamed 'Monday Minis'. They have breathed new life into this activity which is now flourishing. Both are also active on Facebook and they have rejuvenated our own account which means we now have a much better reach into that part of the local community.

So the year I report on finishes with new policies in place and the building working well. Incidentally I should mention that two years ago we put fixed-price contracts in place with British Gas which will take us through to July 2023 for electricity and November 2024 for gas so some of our major costs are safe for now.

No new projects are planned for the immediate future but we will carry out some redecorating work probably next October in the half-term holiday.

Again I have to say, 'When the time came to deal with exceptional circumstances the team really stepped up'. My thanks to them all.

We are in good shape and our mission remains unchanged. We will continue to develop and maintain the facility to meet the needs of local residents as they evolve.

5) Downley Cricket Club Graeme Aitken reported as follows:

The 2021 season was successful for both the first and reserves teams. The 1st finished runner-up in the BCMBL Championship and the reserves were champions in the Mid Bucks Div 3 league, gaining promotion.

The effects of Covid were less severe than in the previous year but the restrictions on people gathering did have an impact on our ability to fund raise from social events. The net outcome of this was that the club incurred a loss of £292 in the year (less than in the previous year). This has been covered from reserves that we have accumulated over previous years through careful financial planning.

However, running at a loss is not a sustainable position and our situation has been made more difficult due to the club recently reducing from 2 teams down to 1, which affects our matchday fee

income. Due to a change in personal circumstances, the person who has been captain of the 1st team for a few years and has recruited players to perform at the level required was no longer able to commit as much time. A plea to other 1st team players to help out did not bring any offers of assistance and therefore we were left with no option but to fold, 4 weeks prior to the start of the season.

While this does mean that we will not have to prepare a "match ready wicket" every week it doesn't change the amount of work that is required to prepare and maintain the square and outfield (i.e. the common) both pre and during the season. This work is completed by a small group of enthusiastic committee members, players and volunteers. Our biggest concern is the machinery that we use to complete the work including sit-upon gang mowers, a heavy roller and some sports lawn mowers (to cut the grass low), will at some stage pack-up. The cost of replacing these, in particular the roller, is substantially more than the reserves we have left. We have also had vandalism at the net's facility in Mannings Field with the culprits having bonfires on the astroturf wicket, leaving several burnt-out patches. This will need to be replaced.

To help with this we have created a "century club", with the appropriate licence, which will raise funds and also enable participants to win some money. Clearly the more people involved, the better. There will also be other fund-raising events during the season but these will only raise a relatively small amount of capital hence any external financial assistance is always welcomed i.e. from sponsorship, donations or grants

One area that we are keen to (re) develop is having a colt's section to encourage younger people to come along and try out cricket or improve their skills if they have already started playing. However, this does take a lot of organisation and time, albeit with great outcomes (as we experienced when we last had a colt's section around 10 yrs ago) but, at this time, we do not have anyone who is willing to take on this responsibility. If other members from local groups have any suggestions, we would be happy to hear about these.

6) Community Orchard John Wilson reported as follows:

Following some vandalism during the 2020/2021 Corona Virus lockdown, when youths destroyed two orchard heritage trees, a large notice board, lit fires and left much litter, including a tent, mattress, bottles and gas cylinders, it was decided that some preventative work should be carried out. It became apparent that some areas of the orchard could not be seen from the nearby track, due to thick blackthorn and hawthorn bushes, enabling misuse of the orchard to go on unseen. The work so far completed... removing and cutting back the bushes so that the orchard can be clearly seen from the track, installation of a fence by the track to prevent car parking, and on-going negotiation with potential funding organisations to secure a solid future for the orchard. Funding so far has been supplied by the Downley Parish Council, in partnership with Chiltern Rangers, and two parishioners have attended an orchard pruning course, enabling pruning to take place this year. It is planned to plant a hedge alongside the fence, using Chiltern traditional species. A list of the orchard tree varieties is now available. It is hoped that the future of the orchard can be secured through the 'Parks and Greens' work of the Parish Council and currently via negotiation with the Chiltern Conservation Board, in funding possible replacement trees, staking, tools and so on

7) Chiltern Wood School Una-Lynne Mackey reported:

Chiltern Wood School is a special school co-located with Downley School. It has been a couple of years since we have been able to update you and it feels like such a blessing to be able to do so in person. During the pandemic we were able to remain open for the families that needed us and somehow, we all got through. School staff offered and delivered resource boxes to some children who stayed at home. Like many other schools we put some lessons on YouTube and staff and parents of children became very proficient with Zoom and Teams. We spent half the school budget on cleaning products and the other half on heating from leaving all the windows open. We returned to school in September and we were hopeful that the pandemic was behind us and we could get back to open classes with teachers teaching and children learning. We soon realized that Covid was still with us although we managed to keep most of our classes open most of the time, mainly with rigorous hygiene routines, mask wearing and ventilation. The children their parents and staff of the school settled back and we were glad of the certainty and the routine, our children in particular, really respond well to knowing what's going to

happen each day. And we enjoy things like music therapy, forest school, swimming, cooking with chef Michael, sensory stories, lots of physical activities and communication and interaction. I think we'd all missed having a good chat with one and other.

In November, some of the staff were feeling festive and Covid free so they planned a Christmas Fayre, it was really successful and very well attended. We had lots of fairy lights, Christmas gazebo's, lots of multi-sensory experiences. We were lucky enough to raise £4,000, a massive amount of money for a small school like us; that's fantastic. What we've done is set the money aside to be used towards developing our outside play and learning areas.

In December, Bradley Taylor, who was the headteacher for 10 years, left to take on a headship in Aylesbury. So the role of headteacher was awarded to Rachel Chapman and Rachel has previously been the deputy head at the school for girls in Beaconsfield. She was delighted to join the Chiltern Wood team in February and Rachel brings a wealth of experience and is dedicated to ensuring a team that provide the best educational opportunities for children with additional needs. In the spring term, she focused very much on building community links and met with Parish Councillors including Moyra at the front, County Councillors and other head teachers. As she lives nearby, Rachel already has strong links with the local area and has established a firm commitment to fostering further relationships to ensure that the school remains and grows as a contributing partner to the village of Downley and the villages beyond. As a result, later this Summer we hope to contribute to Up! Downley and also the art exhibition, so we are very busy at the moment, creating pieces of art that we hope will show you how talented we are.

The department that Sarah heads up, represented our school at Young Voices at the Royal Albert Hall and that's organized by the Buckinghamshire Music Trust. Our pupils were fantastic and they sang their hearts out and teacher Sarah Androupolis who is our creative inspiration and her team are really proud of that choir, they brought tears to our eyes with their renditions of "Something inside", "So strong" and "True Colours". The pupils conducted themselves brilliantly and were a credit to themselves and to the school. It's quite a big thing for some of our children to go all the way up to London and back and keep themselves regulated for the whole day and they really loved it.

During the Easter break some of our children took part in a holiday club run by Wycombe Wanderers. We had a small group of children taking part in the activities this time but we are looking forward to that growing because it was so successful and parents and children and staff really enjoyed it. Another exciting event that started this spring for our school was weekly visits from Willow the Whippet, who is a "Pets as Therapy Ambassador", Willow comes in to Downley School to meet the children and staff and she helps to reduce anxiety and stress and helps our children to feel positive emotions in her presence so they can become calm and happy. Willow is very delicate in appearance and we were a little worried when we first saw her because she is very fine but our children seem to understand that they need to be really gentle with her and to use kind hands.

The other department in our school is a Woodland Department and these children have more profound needs and we've been working alongside some experts in vision impairment. A lot of our children with more complicated conditions have a vision impairment or they might be registered blind. Some of the things that we've trialing have been to help children with vision impairment use their residual vision and this has included using colour tents, making a small environment for a child to do their work in with an adult. What researchers seem to be finding is that children respond much better and enjoy what their doing by being in say an orange environment or a green environment . At the moment we are investigating that. We've also looked at class environments to ensure that children are able to focus clearly and are not distracted by background displays or the clothing that staff wear and that's really helped some children focus.

This week we are looking forward to celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee with a street party as a culmination of the activities of the spring term with lots of activities on the Friday afternoon culminating with a signed version of "God Save the Queen".

For the Summer term, we take part in something called the "Big Five" rather than a traditional sports day, each class choses five activities to take part in and it's based on what their abilities are. They ask their friends and families to sponsor them and then each class can use some of the money they raise to fund a project of their choice. It's a kind of democratic way of enabling the children to have their own voice to chose something that they would like a class to benefit from and using their voices is a skill that we place a lot of importance on.

We are very proud of the links that we have with the Downley Community and we hope that that continues to flourish.

8) Downley Scouts Paul Baker reported:

Covid was a different situation for us with young people. Scouting is all about being outside and learning skills for life, enjoying the outdoors. The lockdown turned children's worlds upside down, they were inside they're on little TV's staring at other people. Some found it rather difficult, others didn't. Saying that, from a numbers perspective, we maintained a reasonable number of children. Pre-lockdown we were in the 80's, I think during lockdown, we were down to the 60's. We've come back, we've started meeting face to face, enjoying the outdoors again. Numbers are steadily increasing, we're up to 75. They are enjoying such things as Scouts went last Summer on a Summer camp, we've done the Memorial Service back in November, they've recently been to the St Georges Day parade in town with other Groups from the District. There's a District cub camp coming up in July. So children are starting to come back and enjoy themselves. There's children in the cub group, basically it's a brand new group, there's cubs that have never slept away so we're really reaching out.

With regards to the nights, that's a slightly different situation, the numbers are still good. They're in the 60's, the problem we have as a group is for the Wednesday night is volunteers, leaders, people who want to help. We have a few cub leaders, we are just rebuilding the beaver leaders, we're currently looking for scout leaders, we're persevering, hence why I've been put in to look after the group. We are trying to rebuild it so if anyone out there fancies getting involved, we've just recently had a new scout leader join us, a gentleman who was a sea scout, he was involved in scouting for a while and is now looking for something to fill an evening. I've just seen him prior to coming here, thoroughly thrilled that he's back, he said that he'd missed scouting. There's always a role for somebody, you don't have to be good with knots, you don't have to be good with tents, you can do anything you like. If you are interested, please get in touch, the group could do with any help it can get.

Financially we are reasonably well, we managed to go through lockdown without charging, to ease the burden on parents. We offer a full range of activities, it's about teaching the children, teaching them the skills for life & they are now ironing, sewing on badges, they are building fires, eating smores, all the great things that kids should do.

Downley Guide and Scout Centre Mark Starkey reported as follows:

During the past 12 months we have had a variety of challenges to deal with at the centre. From maintaining services for Woodland's pre-school during the latter part of lockdown due to Covid to the eventual back to face-to-face scouting and guiding for all sections.

This required the centre committee led by Margaret Stagg to ensure that the centre was abiding by government and scouting guidelines. Each section had their own risk assessments as did Woodlands. We ensured that all participants adhered to the guidelines and respected the rules in place. I can report that we had no incidents that caused ill health due to breaches in protocols.

The centre recently had its AGM and positions were swapped in the management team. Notably the stepping down of Margaret Stagg as Chairperson and Gill Lawrence as Secretary. These positions were then filled by myself, Mark Starkey as Chairperson and Sally Baker as Secretary.

We aim to make sure that the centre is run in accordance with our constitution and offer the same level of usability we have all come to expect.

During the next few years, we will be making some changes to the centre that will both enhance its usage for current and future users and will enable the centre to continue as a key asset to the village.

This will take the form of a proposed redevelopment that would see a new, accessible and multifunctional building that would increase usable floorspace by 100% while not increasing the height or footprint of the building.

Drawings are being designed with the guidance of Paul Baker and these will be presented to the Parish Council along with a more robust presentation.

I only draw this to your attention tonight as this will form the cornerstone of our next 2 years with regards to funding, fundraising and drive of every user of the centre at present.

Budgets are not set in stone at this point but the sum of £500,000, was flagged as a possible starting point. We have ringfenced £30,000 for the project to start. This leaves us enough capital to allow maintenance, services and expenditures to be consistent.

9) Downley Albion Football Club Sally Baker reported:

At the end of last season we had a very topsy-turvy season with, lockdowns, matches postponed, people not being able to play etc. So we started off in September with a fresh start but we were financially in trouble. It's a similar story to all these organisations, luckily I applied for grants through DOSCA, Downley Parish Council and the Downley Communications Forum and they were able to help us out and set us off on the right foot for the season.

We've had a fantastic season, winning 16 out of 18 games and we have topped the league and we were champions of division 3. We've got a great group of lads, who love playing football on Sunday morning and it's a pleasure to look after them. They are really really good fun and we've got a golf day happening this Friday which some of them are attending to try to raise a little bit more money.

We are always on the lookout for new players and any type of fundraising, funding, sponsorship that is available.

We are having a race night with the Cricket Club to raise some money. Like other organisations, we haven't been able to do any fundraising because of restrictions.

10) One Can Trust Jo Belshaw reported:

I'm sure everyone knows about One Can, we're a food bank based down in High Wycombe by the train station. We provide weekly food parcels to anyone who needs our help in High Wycombe and South Buckinghamshire. We have a referral system so people come to us through DWP, Citizens Advice, Housing Associations, Bucks Council. In fact 54% of clients in April came through from Bucks Council. We pride ourselves on working with the referrers because it means that we find the people who really need the help and also because some of the referrers are pretty good giving extra support, providing for example debt management, helping reducing clients debts which is quite important in trying to get people back on their feet.

We don't want to be there, I like my job, I really love my job but I wish we weren't there but demand is huge right now. Before Covid we were looking after about 225 people a week. We hit a week in April where we looked after 789. Sadly, we expect those numbers to go up, it has dipped a little bit. I'd like to think that everyone's got a job, I'm not really that naïve I think perhaps people have turned their heating down. I don't know if the bills have come in since the cap came off but I expect fully that come October that the number of people is going to go up again. We are bracing ourselves for what's going to come. I think we all feel the pinch a little bit, I know the price of petrol in my car is quite expensive these days and I think the cost of food etc. There's a lot of people out there who are really struggling and we are here to help.

Everyone seems to be talking about volunteers and I'm going to jump on that one as well. One thing that we are finding particularly successful at the moment are the food drives to get extra food in to meet demand. The food drives are where we go to supermarkets of a weekend and we hand out flyers to customers coming into the stores, just asking if they could put an extra few tins into their shopping for us. They've been phenomenal, about 20% of our donations have come from the food drives, some of the big one's have provided about £2,000 of food. It's a little bit of work, if anyone wants to spare a couple of hours to help us that would be absolutely awesome. It does make a huge difference to a lot of people.

Although donations are superb we still can't meet demand and we are spending about £7,000 - £10,000 per month on food just to make sure that everyone keeps up to what they need. We could do more food drives, we could tweak our parcels, we do our best to encourage people to stand on their own feet but for example in April, 69% of clients cited issues with benefits as being the reason they were reaching out for food parcels. There are a lot of people that are really struggling benefits need to increase with inflation basically and there's quite a piece politically and various organisations to do something about that.

On the positive side, something we've introduced since the last time I was here, we've introduced our Insight Program and Marks wife Kim is pivotal to this program. She has a team of volunteers who call our clients and just see where they are and why they need help and if there's anything we can do to help. Whether that be signposting for Bucks Adult learning courses such as CV writing, wellbeing courses. Whether they need a new fridge or cooker. Whether they need any help with their fuel bills, we can try and point people in the right direction, that's been brilliant actually and we've had some great success stories from doing that.

We've also relaunched our cookery program, so this is something I kind of dipped my toe in down at Beechview School and now we've got someone back from maternity leave who's running with this

properly, just to try and help anyone who needs help with basic cookery skills. We've got a class down at the Beechview School on a Thursday and also at The Hive in Micklefield on a Wednesday evening. So please get in touch if you know of anyone who might benefit from this.

Our final bit of news is that we are working in collaboration with Hills café down in Micklefield and we have a drop in café, two Saturdays and two Wednesday afternoons a month. Anyone can come along and have a chat, a free cup of tea and a hot meal if they need it.

It's not all doom and gloom, there's an awful lot of good stuff but I think it's going to be quite a challenge over the next few months. We would very much like to hear from any of you able to give any time big or small, please get in touch, it would be great to hear from you.

11) Reports from other organisations:

Written reports were received from other organisations unable to attend in person:

St James' Church Reverend Heather Graham

It has been a busy year at St James. We have opened the Growing Hope High Wycombe clinics for children with additional needs. These clinics are free and being run by our lead therapist and clinic manager Estelle, who is a speech and language therapist. Anyone can refer children to our clinics and we have had referrals from parents directly as well as from local schools. To make a referral go to <https://growinghope.org.yk/make-a-referral/>

We would like to thank all those who have been supporting us so far on this journey. We have been really encouraged by the support that this charity has received across Wycombe and especially here in Downley.

Our coffee poppin on a Thursday morning continues to be really popular and St James is now a collection point for One Can on a Thursday morning, so people here in the Downley area who are receiving food parcels from One Can can pick them up from St James between 10:30 and 12 on a Thursday. This is helpful to One Can because they were stretched for drivers and it also means recipients can enjoy a cup of tea and a cake and have people to chat to when they come along for their parcels.

We would love to invite anyone to join us on our annual St James day BBQ on Sunday 24th July at 1pm in the church grounds.

Downley Common Preservation Society Bill Thompson

The Downley Common Preservation Society exists to preserve and maintain Downley Common. It organizes work parties on the first Sunday of each month to undertake management activities such as:

- Cutting back encroaching bracken and brambles.
- Routine removal of weeds from Mannings Pond.
- Keeping paths clear from overgrowing trees and bushes.
- Removal of unwanted molehills and saplings from acid grassland.
- Removing and making safe fallen trees particularly near to public footpaths.

It is organized by a committee that meets monthly comprising:

Andy Bass – Chairman
Bill Thompson – Secretary
Mike Morgan – Treasurer
John Wilson
Krystina Fryberg
Andy Gay
Wayne Snook
Brian Knott
Ross Caldow
Adrian Leonard – Downley Parish Council representative

Member's meetings are held twice yearly in April and October.

Downley Communications Forum Bill Thompson

The "Comms Forum" is responsible for the Downley Village News, The Downley Community website and the Downley Community Facebook page. It is run by a committee consisting of:

Bill Thompson – Chairman
Bob Cook – Treasurer
Peter Loadman – Secretary
Anne Gray – DVN Editor
Geoff Gray – DVN Publisher
Sara Bass – DVN Distribution
Mark Starkey – Webmaster
Paul Homer
David Winterburn
Wendy Steneskog – Downley Parish Council Representative
Vaib Naik – Street association

The Village News continues to be published 4 times per year and is still supported by advertising from local business' and is produced by Anne and Geoff Gray as editor and publisher.

The Downley Street Association was recently formed as a follow-on from the Downley Covid Action Group so as to retain the network of street representatives. The Street Association reports through Vaib Naik to the Comms Forum for administrative purposes.

Buckinghamshire Councillor Melanie Smith was in attendance and reported as follows:

I was asked to give a brief summary of activities over the last 12 months. So obviously the council has changed in the last couple of years because it's now unitary rather than Wycombe District Council and Bucks County Council so councillors are unitary now & I'm one of your 3 councillors here in Downley and also covering the unparished parts of the Downley Ward formerly known as Disraeli but really known as High Wycombe now.

I have attended 30 out of 33 scheduled meetings in the last 12 months which is an attendance record of 91% and to give you a little detail of what that entails I'm on the Standards and General Purposes Committee which is about governance of the whole of the administration and that kind of suits me because I work in risk and governance in my normal job. This Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Buckinghamshire Council, town and parish councillors in the Council area. It also monitors and reviews the Council's Constitution, to ensure that it assists in the delivery of efficient, transparent and accountable decision making. The Committee also deals with electoral arrangements. I have been present for 6 out of the 7 meetings we've had. We have reviewed the social media policy, reviewed complaints data and I'm currently busy on the sub-group which is reviewing the ward boundaries as the council moves to probably reduce the amount of councillors from 146 to 98 at the next election. So, each ward at the moment has got 3 and we are likely to drop to 2 councillors per existing ward arrangements, we will have to make some changes to make that fit because it goes by per thousand registered electors.

I was on the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee although I've now stepped down from that. The Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee holds decision makers to account for improving outcomes and services for Buckinghamshire. The Select Committee covers the portfolio areas of; Planning and Enforcement, Housing and Homelessness, Town Centre regeneration. I'm particularly keen, if you like on housing and homelessness, in particular social housing as I am a Socialist, I also work in the private rented sector so the combination of dealing with the struggles in the social and private rented sector is appealing to me and I went to all 6 of those meetings.

I also attend full Council meetings which all of the Buckinghamshire Councillors are expected to attend. I've gone to all 7 of those and regularly contribute to discussions and picking up on a theme that Jo mentioned earlier; at the April meeting, I tabled a motion on food poverty which was passed with amendment, quite a big amendment unfortunately, to make the council pay more attention to increased food poverty in Bucks, where a recent study showed that 14% of Wycombe residents were hungry, the highest in the UK. I voted against the introduction of the green bin tax, which we've all been talking about recently and did raise two questions about this in full Council in terms of its introduction which was regrettably not admitted to before they voted it in on the full budget.

I sit on the High Wycombe Town Committee. The unparished parts of Wycombe have a Town Committee in the old WDC offices. I'd prefer to have a Town Council but it is what it is it's a Town Committee, I've been to 5 of the 7 meetings there.

I'm also on, we are split on this ward onto two Community Boards, many of you I'm sure attend some of the Community Boards so we've got the Downley Parish part which is on the North West Chilterns Community Board and I'm also on the unparished part which is the High Wycombe Community Board, which is a much bigger and more active Community Board. I've gone to all of their meetings but I was also on the Health and Wellbeing sub-group of High Wycombe as well, although they seem to clash with more important unfortunately other meetings which means I can't go to them often.

In terms of Downley Parish matters, the Parish part of the ward obviously which is what we are here for hasn't actually really needed much help from me, of course, I'm always on hand to help people as they need them. There's been a few planning matters to deal with and some matters concerning grounds maintenance and dog poo bins however DPC is mainly in charge of most of the matters and with a fairly self-sufficient community, there is not much call on my services.

In the unparished part of Downley ward, actually I know it's not really relevant to here but I do want to be accountable as your Councillor and let you know that the majority of my Councillor time is spent working in this part of the ward, as they have the most needs, as its quite deprived in that part of the ward unfortunately. They are the least represented because they are not parished because they don't have a Parish Council. So the Town Committee that I attend looks after a wider area of Wycombe so its nice to be able to focus on there as one of the Councillors here.

I'm presently organizing a community event for the Imbies Estate in conjunction with the council, Red Kite, TVP and various other stakeholders, to take place in July. The event is important to establish a community where there has been little attempt at this before and the estate has no community space or facilities to call their own.

The other huge part of my work has been spent holding Red Kite to account in their failure to properly maintain this estate. Red Kite have a guidance document which outlines standards we should expect of how their estates should look. Graded A-D, D is totally unacceptable and the Imbies is currently worse than a D. While that might sound funny it's actually really not when you walk round it, seriously if anyone ever walks round that estate it's absolutely horrific.

One part of this project is to make good the myriad of back-alley junctions which were probably landscaped at one point it's a lot of pathways and they join and the point that they join which is on a corner normally on a hill, there's some green spaces and they are just massively overgrown with brambles and it's just really unattractive. There's a lot of anti-social behaviour, drug dealing a lot of litter, Fly-tipping, all sorts of bad behaviour goes on there and it's really, really appalling that they've not been looking after it, the housing association, previously the Council. So, I'm holding them to account and I'm trying to get all of the brambles taken down and to make these little spaces and there's loads of them, into different mini-projects so we might have some wild-floweres, we might have a little tiny community garden, loads of different things that we can do . I'm working with Red Kite to try and achieve that at the moment.

And finally, along with, predominantly Maz, one of our other Councillors I attend any Red Kite inspections that I can get to. So that's what I've been up to, if anyone's got any questions feel free to ask.

Buckinghamshire Councillor Paul Turner provided his written report:

The last year has gone by so quickly – and at last we can hopefully start to look forward more positively after the last 2 years of worry, restrictions and different ways of living our lives. So, firstly I would like to thank the Downley Covid Action Group, and all the volunteers who stepped up to ensure our residents were safe and had somewhere to turn for help, it was a huge effort and I look forward to continuing to work with DCAG in whatever format it takes going forward.

Buckinghamshire Council takes climate change extremely seriously and has produced a Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy, which will be continually reviewed and updated. There are also some new initiatives which are being trialled including

- A new request bus service, the trial includes Downley Parish and will be held shortly. The buses will operate on a similar basis as dial-a-ride where the bus can be pre-booked and will collect and drop off at locations to suit the passengers;

- New road surfacing techniques, using recycled materials, reducing the reliance on fossil fuels;

- An electric waste collection lorry is being used in the County. Current technology doesn't yet allow for a complete new fleet of electric waste collection vehicles, they were trialled but they just cannot cope with hills in this area, but it is something that will be kept under review as technology advances;

The e-scooter trial continues and comments can be made to Buckinghamshire Council until November.

In addition to the potholes, speeding vehicles, inconsiderate parking, minibuses, grass cutting and all the usual issues I receive communication about and hear the concerns, and try to resolve within the powers of the Council, I am also receiving an increase in Adult Social Care cases which is worrying. Often, problems facing older people do not come to the attention of those of us who can help soon enough, either because of a lack of a support network or just not knowing where to turn when problems seem too big. The sooner concerns can be raised, the quicker and easier the right help can be organised at the right time. Preserving the dignity of the individual is paramount, so please, if you have any concerns about someone you know, please ask. My background in housing, homelessness, and working with older people to ensure they can lead their lives safely and with choices has given me the knowledge to know that if I can't help personally, I can signpost to someone who can.

A couple of weeks ago I was delighted to be appointed as a Governor of Chiltern Wood School and attended my first Governors meeting. The challenges faced by Chiltern Wood are many, but the care, compassion, teamwork and leadership that is very apparent is a pleasure to witness and I look forward to being part of their continuing journey.

I was extremely pleased to be able to assist Growing Hope in my role as a Councillor. Growing Hope is a newly founded charity offering therapy to children free of charge. Anyone can refer a child and they would be enormously grateful for any support you can give. Growing Hope is based at St James's Church in Downley, and they also run family and sibling sessions at Disraeli School.

My apologies I cannot attend this meeting and be with you in person, but I will be sitting on the West Area Planning Committee on the same evening.

The Methodist Church Martin Baker provided his written report:

Thanks for the opportunity to present ourselves before the Downley Parish Council.

Few of you will be aware that last Sunday Methodist Churches throughout the world celebrated "Aldersgate Sunday" in recognition of John Wesley's conversion on 24th May 1738. The Founder of Methodism. Between March 1739 – October 1789 he visited Wycombe many times so his journal tells us ... at least one of these visits was to Downley Common where he preached to a large crowd, he records that "The Lord is truly at work in this place".

The people called "Methodist" have been meeting in Downley for well over 200 years. Our Sanctuary, worship area, dates from 1824 when the fellowship opened its doors to worship having been in homes and halls around this area and West Wycombe in the previous decades. The "Halls" were added 100 years later in 1924 and were the third extension.

Our current fellowship is small, with 14 regular attenders mainly from the village itself. Apart from our regular Sunday worship we hold a Bible Study group and an afternoon fellowship mainly for ladies who share in a varied programme. We are an active member of ACT (All Churches Together) with St James and The Pastures. With this group we have engaged with Lent Lunches, Egg Hunts, and Sunrise Services at Easter. Have participated as a joint group on Downley Day, held Christmas Fayres and were part of the thirty strong "Carols on the Common" last Christmas. In early May taking a lead from "Love Wycombe" the group had a celebration day called "Love-D" sharing the Christian message of Love for the people in Downley through breakfast, games, and give-aways. It is the intension to be a presence again next month at Downley Day.

Our "Outreach", community work; extends to services at "The Heights", financial support of "Wycombe Youth for Christ", "Wycombe Homeless Connection" and "The OneCan Trust". Our income is derived from the personal giving of members and lettings. These are Downley Descants Community Choir, Natalie Jane Dance School which is soon to relocate here to the community centre; along with Moor Lane Play Group being our main secondary income until it closed in July '21 when Cathy took retirement. God works in mysterious ways, because we were approached by Sunshine Montessori, and are now very excited to be opening a baby nursery in our building. They already have two other nursery settings in Downley, one that cares for children aged 2 and the other that looks after children aged 3-5. Together we have spent quite a lot of time over the last year planning works that will transform the building and the rooms into a baby friendly space and work on this project has got off to a good start. Sunshine are incredibly thankful to the Methodist Community who have supported them on this journey and taken time to understand their needs and requirements. We hope that together we will be able to make not only the new nursery a success but through it also spread awareness of the church and its activities, create some shared events for the local community and perhaps attract more people to our congregation. They nicely say; "We are lucky to be working in partnership with some wonderful, supportive people and we look forward to a long and happy relationship moving forward." That's "Love-

D" in action. In the past year, like many around the village we have had direct interaction with the DPC on issues with "Street Lighting". This took from October '21 until March '22 to resolve with the assistance of Giles to whom we and our hirers and neighbours are very grateful. We look forward to continuing to be an active presence within the life of Downley Village for many years to come.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 08:45 p.m.

At the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting held on 23rd May 2023 Cllr Moyra Lazenby, who was chairing the meeting did not ask for a vote from the attending members of the public to agree to confirm these minutes she just signed them as a true record.