

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 3rd APRIL 2024

HIGHMOOR PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN, CLLR ELAINE MULVANEY

This Annual Report summarises the work of the Parish Council during the year from April 2023 to date.

Administration

Highmoor had a notice of an uncontested election in the most recent parish council elections which were held in May 2023 as there were 5 nominations for 5 places.

Sadly Councillor Jane Stevens who had served on the Parish Council for many years passed away in October 2023 after a long illness. Following this sad event the latest councillor to join us was Co-opted in March 2024.

A bulb planting at the village triangle organised by local residents and supported by the Parish Council took place on 17 December 2023 in memory of Cllr Stevens. We fondly remember Jane and all her work and her valuable contribution to the parish.

Mrs Theresa Goss has served as the council's interim clerk since October 2023 and will be appointed on a permanent basis from April 2024.

In April 2024, the Chairman is Ms Elaine Mulvaney and the parish has a full complement of 5 councillors. The new Parish Councillors started their office on 10th May 2023 and will serve a term of 4 years.

Full details of the clerk and all councillors are available on the Council's new website <https://highmoorparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

Meetings

Public meetings are currently held at Highmoor Memorial Hall. Notices and details of Council and Parish meetings are posted on the parish noticeboard (located in the car park of the Memorial Hall) and also on the Council's website <https://highmoorparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

Work of the parish council

The Parish Council is the first local tier of government, beneath the county council and district council. We have an advisory role on local planning applications and maintain local amenities including the telephone box, the recreation ground and the paddock at The Glebe.

New Highmoor Parish Council gov.uk website

During the past year the new Highmoor Parish Council website has been created and was launched in January 2024.

The website can be found at <https://highmoorparishcouncil.gov.uk/> and has much information regarding the parish council, its minutes, financial reports and planning applications etc.

We are grateful to Cllr Catherine Clarke for her work in establishing this. We encourage all to use it as a point of reference.

Accounts and finances

The Parish Council has set a Precept for the year 2024/25 of £13,963 which is intended to provide a realistic amount to cover expenses which the Parish Council is obliged by law to incur, such as the salary and expenses of a clerk to carry out all the necessary administration for the Parish Council, public and employment liability insurances, the maintenance of our website, the fees for our annual audit and a small amount to fund the maintenance of local amenities belonging to the Parish Council as well as allowing us to set aside a modest amount by way of reserves as recommended as best practice by government guidelines and our own annual audits. We will continue to seek to ensure value for money for the parish.

A successful audit was carried out for 2022/23 and improvements made in systems used. New policies and procedures have been adopted to assist with the Council's administration.

Green spaces and the environment

Over the past year, the Council has been able to fund tree maintenance and surgery at The Glebe, a survey of the trees at the recreation ground with a view also to carrying out any necessary maintenance work there, much needed hedge trimming at the recreation ground, and has also given a grant to support the Conservators of the Nettlebed and District Commons in their maintenance and grass cutting of the triangle/green in the centre of the village which is owned by the Conservators, rather than the Parish Council.

The annual village litter pick organised by the Council took place on 17 March 2024 and was well supported.

Planning, highways and speeding

The Council managed to keep a consistent workload moving, a large part of which was related to planning matters which included making observations on relevant local planning applications.

As well as working to protect the rural nature of Highmoor and its status within the Chiltern's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty by way of planning observations the Council continues to seek ways of reducing the high levels of speeding traffic along the B481 through the village.

Over the last year following the efforts of the Council to work with the Highways Department of Oxfordshire County Council and after consultation with Thames Valley Police, parishioners will have noticed much improved road signage, painted road markings refreshed throughout the village and the introduction of simple bollards and chevrons in locations particularly in need of demarcation, with a consequent reduction in speeding and reported traffic incidents.

The Parish Council continued its monitoring system of reports made through Fix My Street Oxfordshire and this in turn has led to action in many cases by the Oxfordshire County Council in repairs to potholes/damaged road surfaces and overhanging hedges etc.

The Future

The Councillors would welcome a closer working relationship with the community to hear electors' comments on all issues relevant to this beautiful rural area giving a better understanding of how its residents see the future of the village and how best to ensure the retention of its character and peaceful environment.

**For and on behalf of Highmoor Parish Council
By the Chairman, Cllr Elaine Mulvaney**