

MILCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – 18 APRIL 2023
CHAIRMAN’S REPORT 2022-2023

This report covers the activities of Milcombe Parish Council during 2022 up to the present April 2023.

MILCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL is funded by public money received via Cherwell District Council through the council tax. It is the Parish Council’s responsibility to use these public funds in a proper manner for the benefit of the village of Milcombe.

The PC meets bimonthly plus the Annual Parish Meeting. The current parish council comprises Myra Peters, Chairman, Nigel Davis Vice Chairman and Councillors Mandie McCullagh, Ruth Dale, Tracey Scott and Chris Hill. There is currently an outstanding vacancy for a councillor. The current complement was elected in the May 2022 elections or co-opted during the course of the year and can serve until re-election in 2026. Councillors do not receive any remuneration but can claim travel expenses.

Our Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer is Mrs Theresa Goss who oversees the efficient running of the council and its finances and undertakes a wide variety of associated meetings and minute taking.

The precept for 2022/23 was set at £14000, the same as the previous year. It was decided to keep it the same during the current national economic climate as costs for all households were rising exponentially.

During the course of 2022/23 Phase 2 of the Oak Farm development was completed, increasing the housing numbers in Milcombe by 44 houses, these being a mix of shared ownership and social housing.

Grateful thanks are expressed to all Councillors, County Councillor Kieron Mallon and District Councillor Hugo Brown who provide regular reports, attend meetings and are a huge support to the Council. The Parish Council’s very best wishes go to Councillor Brown as he is standing down as a local councillor in the forthcoming May elections to pursue other interests. We thank him for all his help and assistance over the past few years.

PC meetings are open to the public, but few seldom attend.

PLANNING

The PC received two major planning applications during the year at the following locations:

Heath Close – an application by Abbey Mill Housing for 35 houses comprising 23 private and 12 social/shared ownership properties. This application is currently awaiting a decision from CDC planning committee.

Bloxham Road - This large proposal is for approx. 100 houses by Neptune Group on land on the eastern approach to Milcombe and abounding Portland Road and Newcombe Close. It is understood that this application is at the development stage and has not yet been formally submitted to CDC Planning Dept.

An application for 3 dwellings at Little Acre (adjacent to the church) was rejected by CDC and an application for 2 dwellings was re-submitted. This has now been withdrawn by the applicant.

Permission for a single storey dwelling within the curtilage of Milcombe Hall, Horton Lane was granted but to date has not been started.

PLAY AREA – The Play Area on Bloxham Road is owned and maintained by the PC. Regular checks were carried out with an annual inspection by RoSPA.

The play park was refurbished during the later part of 2021 at a cost of circa £68K with grants from CDC plus s.106 funding from Living Space.

It has proved very popular with villagers with small children but has suffered vandalism by some of the older youth in the village. The red litter bin has borne the brunt of much vandalism and the gate lock has been replaced twice with a magnetic system now being fitted.

The small footbridge was also subjected to damage and repaired twice, once by the installer Kompan and again by C. Nigel Davis. Damaged to the wooden fencing has not been repaired and the holes have been left to facilitate retrieving balls that go into the trees in the Dovecote.

DEFIBRILLATOR – This project was completed during the year and has been placed on the front wall of the Village Hall. Milcombe Charities were notified of the proposal and no objections were received. Thanks go to Nigel Davis and Mr John Ellison for carrying out this work.

THE CHURCH TOWER CLOCK – The Church Tower clock is the responsibility of the Parish Council who originally had the clock installed by Smith of Derby with the PC undertaking all future servicing and maintenance.

The clock face was re-painted in a deep blue and the numerals and hands were re-gilded with gold leaf. The total cost was £4983.00 ex VAT. The refurbished clock now sits proudly at the top of the church tower.

This project made up the PC's contributions to the village for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN - During May 2022 a decision was undertaken to commence exploratory work on this subject. When C. Chris Hill joined the PC he agreed to assist C. Davis and we are currently awaiting interim reports.

GRASS CUTTING – The PC has again awarded the contract for mowing the grass verges throughout the village, the Play Area (when the grass has grown enough to require cutting) and the Churchyard to Nigel Prickett. The PC is responsible for the Churchyard extension.

DOG BINS are emptied on a regular basis by CDC and the PC is billed for this.

VILLAGE LITTER PICK took place on 25 March 2023 organised by Mandie McCullagh and Myra Peters aided by an enthusiastic brigade for volunteers to whom the PC give their thanks for their contributions to keeping the village clean.

WHITE GATE - a new gate was erected on the Bloxham Road by the play park to replace the vandalised one. This was supplied and fitted during December 2022 by Nigel Prickett.

SPEEDING/HIGHWAYS – Speeding continues to be a problem through the village as is the issue of on road parking. There is also a marked increase in the number of HGV's using Milcombe as a rat run to

avoid South Newington bends. A request to OCC for 20mph speed limit and a weight restriction in New Road has been made.

THE MILCOMBE NEWSLETTER – during the course of the year the sad decision was taken to close the newsletter due to lack of interest and news items. For the last few years Mark Boardman undertook the layout and printing of the newsletter and our sincere thanks go to him for carrying out this on behalf of Milcombe village.

MILCOMBE CHARITIES – THE VILLAGE HALL

After a difficult few months a new committee was appointed with Nigel Davis taking the position of Chairman and Warwick Nash being Treasurer. New bank accounts and signatories were set up after the accounts were found to be in some dis-array due to the previous treasurer leaving the village.

The coffee mornings on the first Friday of each month are proving to be very successful and are well attended, partly due to the lovely cakes made by Doreen Wyatt and bacon baps provided by Raychel Pomroy.

Bookings for the hall do though remain low and it is hoped that in the future a programme of refurbishment can gradually be undertaken to encourage more use of the hall.

Some discussion also took place with regard to providing internet capability in the village hall to improve its viability.

THE DOVECOTE SITE is in the ownership of CDC who received commuted sums of around £66,000 from Tay Homes, the original developers of the Dovecote development in 1999. This was for the future maintenance of the Dovecote and surrounding site.

The Millennium soft floodlighting of the Dovecote is the responsibility of the PC.

CUCKOO WALK path contains the original blue bricks which made up the village footpaths in years gone by. Although not the responsibility of the PC, it has taken over some of the responsibility of clearing the path twice a year.

THE PUMP SITE situated on Main Road by the Millennium map served the old Council houses prior to mains water coming into the village. Again, this is not the responsibility of the PC, but it is a village feature and does enhance the appearance of the village when kept tidy as do all the daffodils around the village at this time of year, which were a vision of previous parish councillor Peter Booth who donated the bulbs.

GIGACLEAR – during 2022/23 a government initiative to provide every village with 5G internet took place with contractors working on behalf of Gigaclear laying cables along the village roads and footpaths. Currently this work seems to have ground to a halt.

TREES – The Mulberry tree outside Mulberry Keytes was found to have a rotten trunk and the decision was made to remove it on safety grounds. A replacement Rowan tree was planted by Cotefield Nurseries in February 2023. At the same time a tree planting initiative by OCC across the county resulted in an Amelanchier sapling being planted alongside the Rowan tree. Both saplings are now thriving.

REMEMBRANCE – Laying of poppy wreath ceremonies and Church Services took place in November 2022. Nigel Davis laid the poppy wreath at the Bloxham War Memorial on behalf of Milcombe villagers and in St. Laurence's Church porch.

FINALLY, this is my first Chairman's report which is of course a snapshot of the year 2022/23 for Milcombe Parish Council. Milcombe is a small thriving community in the north of Oxfordshire which has a well stocked shop, church and village hall. Sadly the local public house, The Horse & Groom, has closed as of 1 April 2023 due mainly to the current financial crises which is befalling many small pubs and businesses. It is hoped that in the not too distant future the brewery, which owns the premises, can reopen it with a new tenant or manager and, following on from the chaos of the coronavirus and national downturn in the economy, our village can go forward towards a bright future.

Myra Peters

Chairman – Milcombe Parish Council

April 2023