

**MILCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - 11 MAY 2021**

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020-2021**

This report covers the activities of Milcombe Parish Council during 2020 up to the present. Due to the Coronavirus, all PC meetings have been held via Zoom. The last physical meeting to be held in the Village Hall was March 2020.

**MILCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL** normally meets 7 times a year including the APM which was not held in 2020, but the Chairman's Report for 2019/20 was circulated to Councillors, published on the PC's website and in the Milcombe Newsletter.

An Extraordinary Meeting was held on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, to discuss the format of PC meetings once the emergency legislation for virtual meetings expired on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Councillors believed it would not be safe to hold physical meetings at the present time partly due to the size of the Hall and the requirement for 2-metre social distancing. This will continue to be reviewed.

7 Councillors were elected in May 2018 which is the requirement for MPC. Alex Honey and Clare Jones had resigned in 2019 and despite advertising for new Councillors to be co-opted to fill the vacancies, no names had been put forward. Sadly, Peter Booth resigned due to ill health in March 2021 and Michael Haynes resigned on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021. This has left the PC with the minimum of 3 Councillors. At the Annual Meeting of the PC on May 4<sup>th</sup>, Marlene Cowell was re-elected as Chairman, Mandie McCullaugh as Vice-Chairman and the 3<sup>rd</sup> remaining Councillor is Myra Peters.

This has put MPC in a crisis with the worst scenario being that if one of the three remaining Councillors resigned, MPC would be no more and would be taken over by CDC. In this case, residents would have no say in how Milcombe village is run. A letter has been drawn up explaining the situation to residents and will be delivered to all houses in the village in the hope that 4 more Councillors can be co-opted. Elections to MPC take place in 2022.

Due to the Covid situation, Councillors and the Clerk have worked to the best of their ability via email and Zoom meetings. The Clerk keeps everybody up to date and items are published on the PC website. Grateful thanks are expressed to the Councillors, County Councillor Kieron Mallon and District Councillor Hugo Brown who provide regular reports and, as always, are a great

support. Particular thanks go to our Clerk, Theresa Goss, who takes on a huge burden of the work and is also our Responsible Financial Officer.

PC meetings are open for the public to attend, but very few do.

Members again opted not to accept any allowances as set out by the CDC Remuneration Panel. The Precept for 2020/2021 was set at £13,500 which is the same as for the previous year.

During the year, the two accounts at the NatWest bank were closed and funds transferred to Unity Bank to allow for online banking.

**PLANNING** – There has been the usual mix of planning applications throughout the year.

Mr. Bertrand Facon of Lessor Grange – Amendments to agricultural stores previously approved and re-siting of agricultural dwelling.

Star Pubs and Bars Ltd. – Extraction unit at the Horse & Groom.

Lisa Durant – Erection of shed at The Roserie.

N. Yeadon and M. Pennington (Sanctuary Housing) – Reserve matters on Oak Farm site Phase 2.

Sanctuary Housing pulled out and was taken over by Living Space who re-submitted with an additional 4 dwellings. (Strong objections from the PC.)

M. Nicholls – Entrance gates, stone piers and walls at Hunters Lodge.

C. Aherne at The Riggings for installation of slimline oil tank.

N. Stanley, Bloxham Road (Bloxham Parish) Erection of agricultural building.

T. Birch/A. Tambini, 33 Newcombe Close – Rear extension.

J. Dunkley, Swerbrook Farm – Indoor horse training arena.

Sophie Wilson, Farnell Fields – Minor internal and external works to listed building.

M. Boardman, Smithy Cottage – Change of use of building to holiday let. (Previously the old Blacksmiths .)

2 Oak Drive – Works to oak tree under tree preservation order.

D. Boddy, 1 Heath Close – Rear extension and various other works.

A. Scott, 15 Heath Close – To extend driveway and drop kerb.

**PLAY AREA** – The Play Area on Bloxham Road is owned and maintained by the PC. Regular checks are carried out by a member of the PC (currently Myra Peters who took over from Peter Booth). There is an annual inspection by RoSPA which is a legal requirement. Mowing is carried out every two weeks by Nigel Prickett during the growing season. It was closed for the earlier part of the pandemic and, since re-opening, notices have been posted requiring parents/guardians to accompany children and to keep to guidelines.

The planned refurbishment of the Play Area is currently in abeyance awaiting 3 up to date quotes plus confirmation of s.106 funding from the new owners of the Oak Farm 2 site. The grant promised by CDC is still available.

**DOVECOTE SITE** – 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. CDC continues to maintain the site and carries out the mowing.

The Millennium soft floodlighting of the Dovecote is the responsibility of the Parish Council.

**CUCKOO WALK** – The path through Cuckoo Walk contains the original blue bricks. Although not the responsibility of the PC, it has taken over some of the responsibility over the years of clearing the path twice a year. This work is carried out by Barry Giles who is employed to carry out weed control along the verges and footpaths in the village.

**THE PUMP SITE (Situated on Main Road by the Millennium map)** served the old Council Houses prior to mains water coming into the village. Although not the responsibility of the PC, it is a village feature and we thank Brian French who keeps it tidy. As with Cuckoo Walk, the upkeep of these sites enhances the appearance of the village.

**THE DAFFODIL BULBS** around the village originally donated and planted by Peter Booth and helpers also contribute to the enhancement of the village providing a wealth of colour in the spring. They were certainly a welcome sight in the spring of this year helping to take our minds away from the problems experienced by the pandemic.

**GRASS CUTTING** – Nigel Pricket has again been appointed as the contractor for mowing the grass verges throughout the village on a three/four weekly cut depending on growth. He is also the contractor for the Play Area which is cut every two weeks during the summer and the Churchyard on a three/four weekly cut. The PC is responsible for the Churchyard extension.

**THE CHURCH TOWER CLOCK** is the responsibility of the PC and a new 3-year contract for service and maintenance by Smith of Derby has recently been taken out. (Smith of Derby were the original installers of the clock which was paid for by the PC with the promise of all future servicing and maintenance.)

**DOG BINS** are emptied on a regular basis by CDC and the PC is billed for this. CDC provides the free dog bags which can be picked up from the Church or village shop. These should be dropped in one of the many dog bins around the village or taken home and placed in the green bin. Unfortunately, not everybody cleans up after their dog which could lead to a fine if caught.

**SALT/GRIT BINS** – Two additional bins have been provided by the PC during 2020 at the entrance to the Dovecote site and opposite Heath Close.

**VILLAGE LITTER PICK** – The spring litter pick was postponed in 2020 until the autumn and hopefully will take place at the end of May this year.

**REMEMBRANCE** – Laying of poppy wreath ceremonies and Church Services were cancelled for 2020. It was possible to lay wreaths individually and Myra Peters did this on behalf of MPC at Bloxham War Memorial and in St. Laurence's Church porch.

**REGISTRATION OF COMMUNITY ASSETS** – A village resident has promised to look into this on behalf of the PC.

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUP** – Thanks are extended to Sam Hughes and her group of volunteers who collected shopping and medication for the vulnerable during the worst part of the pandemic.

**SPEEDING/HIGHWAYS** – As always, speeding through the village is an issue despite VAS signs. OCC Highways has repainted the road markings by the H&G.

**MILCOMBE NEWSLETTER** – This is a great asset for those in the village (mainly the elderly) who do not have access to the internet allowing them to catch up on village affairs. The PC funds the cost of paper and print cartridges and we are indebted to Mark Boardman for putting it all together and printing. It has

not been delivered around the village for the past year but copies have been available from the village shop. Hopefully this will resume with delivery to every household in the near future.

**MILCOMBE CHARITIES – THE VILLAGE HALL** – The Committee members are Trustees responsible to the Charity Commissioners. The Hall has been closed since March 2020. It was re-opened after a thorough clean for local elections on May 6<sup>th</sup>, but remains closed again for the present. The AGM postponed from March was held on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, via Zoom set up by Richard Hazel. Caroline Willoughby as Chairman stood down from the Committee. Richard Hazel, as Treasurer, presented the 2019/2020 Accounts for approval. He stood down as he was moving from the village. Both were thanked for their contributions towards the running of the Hall. A Committee meeting was held via Zoom on September 1<sup>st</sup> kindly set up by the Parish Clerk. Rev. Dale Gingrich was elected as Chairman and Marlene Cowell agreed to act as Minute Secretary. Amy Jackson is bookings clerk and liaised with CDC over use of the Hall for local elections. Unfortunately, nobody was willing to take over as Treasurer and this has been advertised but nobody from the village has come forward. Consequently bank signatories have not been changed and the Hall cannot move forward without a Treasurer.

Before he left Richard Hazel had ordered a closed Noticeboard from Greenbarnes at Brackley. Nigel Davis and John Ellison are thanked for kindly removing the old one and installing the new one.

Raychel Pomroy is thanked for her weekly checks on the Hall during the time it has been closed. Her monthly Coffee Mornings have had to be put on hold.

**CLOSURE OF MILCOMBE SENIORS CLUB** – Tony and Joan Stickings have regrettably retired from running the Seniors Club after nearly 20 years. They thanked all their volunteer helpers and members through the Newsletter and, in return, they were thanked for providing a very enjoyable afternoon for those who attended.

**BOOK OF CONDOLENCE** – As reported last year PC's were advised that they should have in their possession a Book of Condolence and arrangements in hand for the death of a senior Royal or other national figure such as the Prime Minister.

This was purchased along with three framed photographs of the Queen, Prince Philip and Prince Charles and are held in the metal filing cabinet in the Church Vestry.

Information was also received explaining what needed to be done if/when the occasion arises.

## **TRIBUTES**

**DEATH OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE PHILIP, DUKE OF EDINBURGH.** Sadly, Prince Philip died on April 9<sup>th</sup> just weeks short of his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Due to Covid it was not possible to have a Book of Condolence in the Church as planned but a framed portrait was on display. Those who wished could send their condolences online. We give thanks for a long life, well lived, for his devotion to duty and to Her Majesty, and for his love of our country and commonwealth.

**KEITH R. MITCHELL** – We were sorry to hear of the death of Keith Mitchell who died in April 2020. He was our District Councillor for many years and Leader of the County Council. He regularly attended MPC meetings, was very supportive and approachable and could always be relied upon for help and advice when requested. He held a monthly Surgery at the Horse & Groom on Saturday mornings and was the PC's internal auditor for many years which he did free of charge. As a small PC, we were privileged to have him as our Councillor who always found time for us.

**BERYL WHING** – Villagers were saddened to hear of the passing of Beryl Whing. She had been working as Housing officer when she came to Milcombe at the time the Council houses were built. She had been a stalwart of the village throughout the years. She was one of the first Trustees of Milcombe Charities when the old village school was turned into the present Village Hall and remained on that Committee for many years. She was a Parish Councillor and became an excellent Chairman. She helped just about every organisation in the village and all who worked with her will acknowledge her friendly and helpful attitude. Milcombe has lost a great asset.

**FINALLY**, this report is mainly concerned with the affairs of Milcombe village but the PC has responded to a number of Consultations from CDC and OCC which is all part of a PC's remit.

It should not go unnoticed that the proprietors have kept the village shop open throughout lockdown and have helped residents wherever they can.

The Horse & Groom did a pop-up shop earlier in lockdown and hope to fully re-open on May 17<sup>th</sup> when we trust that residents will give them their support.

For most of the year we have been in lockdown with the vulnerable needing to shield for months on end. We show our gratitude for the keyworkers from the NHS and emergency workers to the refuse collectors who have worked throughout and especially to those with the knowledge to produce the various vaccines.

Covid rules are gradually being relaxed, but this will only work if everybody keeps to the rules. Please wear your mask, keep to the 2m distancing and **STAY SAFE.**

Marlene Cowell

Chairman – Milcombe Parish Council

May 2021