

The council met six times during the year. Once again it decided there was no need to increase the precept. Since elements of the Community Charge in regard to requirements of the District and County Councils and the Police & Crime Commissioner have all increased, the percentage of the total Community Charge paid by residents as attributable to the Parish Council has fallen.

The PC is not a planning authority but it has a duty to consider all planning applications made to Cherwell District Council (CDC) and certain applications to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). This year, 21 such applications were considered and responses made, including one major objection. That was to the application by Earthline for extension of Wroxton Fields quarry which would have brought its perimeter closer to the village boundary and particularly to the primary school and adjacent properties, with what the PC saw as significant environmental hazards.

The Council reported what it considered might be unauthorised activity in regard to the old sub-station at the junction of Manor Farm Lane and the A422; it regarded the response of CDC's enforcement officer as unsatisfactory and is awaiting their response to a reminder letter.

It expressed concern to OCC about the formal designation of the footpath between Middle Lane and the rear entrance to the churchyard, albeit realising that it had no power to affect the result.

Negotiations continued in regard to its lease to telecoms operators for use of the masts at Stonepit 6. Legislation passed by the previous government to enhance connectivity over the country has resulted in significant disadvantage to bodies such as the PC, as it is no longer in a strong position to negotiate rentals.

An opportunity arose to grant a sublease which could potentially lead to higher rentals for the medium term (but with a corresponding major decrease in long-term income). The PC eventually decided that the aggregator offers were not totally convincing due to the very long leases demanded (25 and 99 years respectively). Although on a discounted cash flow basis the terms offered slightly better value than the existing terms proposed by WIG and the current lease to Airwave Solutions, this advantage would be eliminated if the new WIG lease was not signed by 15 March. In the event, despite the PC acceptance of Heads of Terms for the new lease, no draft had been submitted by the time (15 March) a further year's rent at the old rate fell due, and that rate was duly received. Subsequently wording for the new lease was received, stipulating a start date of 15 March 2025. On enquiry, it was stated that WIG were proposing to treat the payment of the higher rate in March as being paid on account of the reduced rate applicable from that date, implying that no further rent would be payable before 2028.

Mindful of The PC's opinion, expressed at its January meeting, Cllr. Robarts rejected this stance, pointing out that the wording of the existing lease clearly states that the old rent

remains payable until either a new lease has been signed, or until WIG have removed their equipment from the site. Currently, with legal advice and the assistance of Fisher German, the PC is continuing to resist WIG's position..

One significant expense for the PC is the maintenance of verges and other grassed areas within the villages. It is grateful to Nigel Prickett, who has undertaken the mowing for many years. The grass cutting contract was renewed with Nigel after competitive tendering. The PC also continued to contract with Faye Eldridge for leaf clearing. During the year a group of councillors joined a 'village walk' with a representative of OCC Highways Department. She confirmed ownership of verges by OCC, except where individuals had registered them as part of their property, and confirmed OCC would take enforcement action if it had concerns about its verges being misused. In that respect, certain advertising and unauthorised advertising signs were removed from the A422 and elsewhere. OCC was reminded of the PC's concerns about potholes, potential flooding after heavy rain in certain streets in both villages and the failure to repair the steps from Church Street, Wroxton leading to the footpath.

New pads were purchased for the defibrillators and a training day organised in the hope that residents would attend to learn the basic skills needed to operate the devices. The council also sought to obtain names of volunteer drivers who might make themselves available to assist less mobile residents, for example with collection of medical prescriptions.

Complaints were raised with CDC about the state of its car park off Leys Close in Wroxton, blocked by various apparently abandoned vehicles and trailers and some success was achieved in its clearance. Through the liaison committee the PC has with Earthline, Cllr Collins raised the issue of a period of apparent failure to wash lorry wheels with resulting spreading of mud on the A422 through Wroxton. Numerous reports of potholes and of fly tipping were made through the CDC FixMyStreet website. Liaison was also maintained with the owner of the White Horse, who repeatedly assures the Council that he intends to refurbish and reopen it.

For 2025-6 the PC voted to allocate sums towards both village halls, repairs to the Balscote church clock and a contribution to repair of the retaining wall opposite Wroxton Abbey and the steps to the footpath by Wroxton Church (dependent on planning restrictions since they are Listed) and to tree planting. These allocations would need PC approval at a future meeting before any sums are disbursed.

During the year the PC approved new cemetery regulations, including restrictions on the design of gravestones and undertook various procedural matters, required of it by legislation, including a risk assessment of its activities and a review of standing orders.

A letter to the President of Farleigh Dickinson University requesting to be kept informed about possible decisions to sell or lease Wroxtton Abbey and its grounds has gone unanswred.