

**Minutes of the Combe Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2015 –  
Approved**

Present:

Council Members: - Elena Softley (Chairman), Michael Green (Vice Chairman), Simon Oliver, Rachel Whitehead, Anne-Marie Ferrett. Ian Hudspeth (County Council), Julia Sharpe (Clerk) PCSO Chris Jones (Police), Roger Pursell (Reading Room), Jo Willis-Bund (VH&RG), Celia Adamson (Combe Charities), Malcolm Bromhall (Methodist Church), Vicky Rushton (Pre-school) and 6 members of the public.

No	Item	Report
1/15	Apologies	District Councillor Richard Bishop, Head teacher Wendy Foster, Lee Pearson
2/15	2014 Report	Copies were circulated and available on the web-site
3/15	County Councillor's Report	<p>Cllr Hudspeth presented the following report:</p> <p>The County Council's budget was passed in February with a savings target of £292 million over the period 2010-2018. This savings figure is challenging and some very difficult decisions have had to be taken, with even harder decisions to be taken in future years.</p> <p>Due to a sequence of successful applications the County Council has received significant funding from central government for major road works projects around Oxford. This will have benefits for the whole of the County as some work which would have been paid for out of the maintenance budget will be incorporated in to major works thereby releasing money for maintenance works elsewhere.</p> <p>The recent Ofsted report rated our Children's Services as Good – one of only six counties in the country.</p> <p>The serious case review into child exploitation was published in March. The Kingfisher Unit, a unit made up of Health Professionals, Children's Services, and Police working together. The unit was set up in response to CSE and has proved very successful leading to further prosecutions.</p> <p>High Speed Broadband – the roll-out across the county has been successful with 95% of premises now having access.</p> <p>The General Election resulted in a clear Conservative majority, but with further reductions ahead the next 12 months will be challenging as the easy options have already been made. Greatest emphasis will be placed on trying to protect services and with this in mind Social Care and the NHS will be merged and County Councillor's will be working more closely with the District Council particularly on Housing issues.</p> <p>The Mobile Library service for Combe has been retained.</p> <p>The Volunteer Bus Service into Witney has proved very successful and one of the ways forward will be working with the voluntary sector.</p>
4/14	Police Report	<p>PCSO Chris Jones presented the following report:</p> <p>4 crimes have been reported over the year, a minor on minor assault, arson at the play park, criminal damage at the play park and a seizure of cannabis for personal use. This was down from the 21 crimes or crime related incidents reported in the previous year.</p> <p>Despite many cuts to the policing budget front line policing has not yet been effected but Neighbourhood Policing was no longer ring fenced and reductions will probably occur though natural wastage.</p> <p>Woodstock Police station will be sold however the Neighbourhood team will be stationed there for at least the next 5 months and thereafter there will still be a police presence in the vicinity.</p>

		<p>Targeted Operations with police flooding areas to deal with crimes such as criminal damage, speeding and anti-social behaviour have proved successful in reducing crime.</p> <p>Some units, such the Dog Unit and Traffic are now being policed by a combined force with Thames Valley and Hampshire and other units with Warwickshire and Gloucestershire. This improved communications between forces is also seen to be leading to lower crime rates.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked PCSO Jones for the speedy response to the recent issues in the play park.</p> <p>PCSO Jones agreed to look into speeding problems on the B4437 and to look at the accident statistics at the Duke of Marlborough junction and request OCC Highways to re-assess the junction.</p> <p>PCSO Jones concluded by requesting people to use the 101 number to report incidents.</p>
5/15	School Report	Not present and no report submitted.
6/15	Chairman's Report	<p>Elena Softley Chairman presented the following report:</p> <p>The last 12 months have been a busy time for the Parish Council. As a council we have participated in and responded to consultations on the WODC local plan, including on housing development in the area.</p> <p>Although we fully support sustainable development and the provision of additional affordable housing in carefully targeted areas, we are concerned that the unique rural character of the district would be threatened by overdevelopment. This threat increases when housing development is not matched by appropriate infrastructure investment. A particular risk for small villages such as ours is a reduction in public safety resulting from the ever increasing amount of traffic speeding through the village in an attempt to avoid the inevitable traffic jams on the A40 and other main roads.</p> <p>One of the highlights of the year was the acceptance by WODC of our application to have The Cock Inn, our village pub, listed as an Asset of Community Value. We are currently applying to have the Methodist Church on Park Road accepted in the same scheme.</p> <p>I reported last year that, as a trial, and in order to protect the village green we had installed small temporary posts around the edge of the green. This year, we were successful in an application to the OCC's area steward's fund to have a small number of permanent posts installed around the Reading Room driveway. Concerning another important issue; our long-running negotiations with the OCC to gain funding for some drainage work was successful. Remedial drainage works will soon be carried out in order to reduce the water running from the school playing field onto Horns Lane. Many thanks to Geoff Miles for his help in obtaining resolution of this matter.</p> <p>We started the year by bidding farewell to Pippa Howells who decided to stand down after three years on the Parish Council. We were fortunate to be able to co-opt a new councillor, Anne-Marie Ferret, who joined us in August. Anne-Marie had already been active in the village in supporting responsible dog ownership and had initiated a poster campaign urging all dog owners to clear up after their dogs and highlighting the dangers of dog mess for young children, and she continues to raise awareness on this important issue.</p> <p>During the past year Parish Councillors have attended a range of meetings and completed training courses, for example Rachel Whitehead went to the parish transport representative meetings, introduction to being a local councillor training and a course run by OALC on village greens, and Anne-Marie attended inspection of play parks training. Both</p>

		<p>Anne-Marie and Simon Oliver are our Play Park inspectors. Councillors also take on the role of Parish Council representatives on various other Combe organisations: for example, Simon on the Village Hall and Recreation Ground Committee, Michael Green on Combe Charities and Paul Williams as a Reading Room Trustee. Paul and Simon along with Michael Green have also been responsible for putting up the respect our verges sign around the village including East End which have had a positive effect on limiting damage caused by traffic.</p> <p>The Parish Council was up for re-election this May. Sadly, however, Paul Williams had decided that he would not stand for re-election. Paul has been a parish councillor for eight years and we thank him very much for all his hard work on behalf of the village – we will miss him. Since it was an uncontested election the remaining five of us were re-elected. This means that we have a vacancy and will co-opting a sixth councillor. If you know anyone who might be interested please urge them to send in a letter of application, details may be found in the Courier.</p> <p>I'd like to close by saying that Combe Parish Council is fortunate to have dedicated councillors who are prepared to work on behalf of the village—and I would like to publicly thank them all for their commitment and hard work. However, we wouldn't be able to carry out our duties as effectively without our wonderfully efficient Parish Clerk, Julia Sharpe. As a statutory body we need to comply with all the relevant statutory legislation, maintaining up to date and compliant records and registers, as well as a fully audited budget and precept setting process, all of which Julia organises in a highly efficient manner. Thank you Julia.</p> <p>On behalf of the Council, we're all looking forward to another active year, serving the residents of Combe.</p>
7/15	Reading Room Report	<p>Roger Pursell presented the following report:</p> <p>The Reading Room continues to thrive largely due to the excellent support that it receives from the community it serves.</p> <p>Each year we try to knock an item or two off our “to do list”. In 2014 we completed the restoration of the barn and the surrounding area including rebuilding the rear wall and opening up the old privy. Most of the work was funded by a 10k grant from the National Lottery, made so effective by the hard work and generosity of our Combie workforce, Bob Days, Jack Merry and Simon Oliver. Our new asset was put to good use particularly during summer cream teas and so too when it allowed us to hold the annual Christmas tree lighting and carol singing within the RR grounds. The other refurbishment we undertook you can see the effects of around you here, namely the complete redecoration of this main room and also the entrance hall. The work including a number of repairs was carried out by Gabriel Skupin and the marvellous blinds are care of the talented Katharine Groves. It may just be coincidence but since carrying out this task income from room hire has shown a marked increase.</p> <p>Financially we have had to dig into our reserves to fund the major expenditure items, but for which we would have generated a surplus of income over expenditure. In any event we still have a very healthy savings account of 14.5K. We are intending to use this to refurbish the long room and in particular the lavatories. It is, of course, hoped that we will be able to secure grant money as a contribution.</p> <p>Although I say this every year it is as pertinent as ever that I offer my personal thanks to that small band of people, my fellow trustees whose diligence and expertise allow the Reading Room to flourish as an asset of which our community can be proud. Day to day we have so much to thank Sue and Gary Golder for, the building and its grounds are kept safe</p>

		and beautifully looked after. Without this input managing the RR would be so much harder a task.										
8/15	Village Hall & Recreation Ground Report	<p>Jo Willis-Bund presented the following report:</p> <p>It has been overall a quiet year on the Committee. We currently have 8 members and at times struggled to get the necessary quorum attending meetings, which was a reflection of busy family lives. However all members are brilliant at events when needed and we have held a couple of successful fund-raising events, with a repeat of an old favourite Mexican supper evening on the 24th April that was very successful. We also have our summer event planned for the 20th June that will consist of a summer evening in our marquee of music and BBQ food with early evening fun for children.</p> <p>Lettings are still going steady and just about cover our running costs. Along with the school fete on the 28th June, we have the Kidlington runners twice this year, and the bike Oxford event which we were a welcome refreshment stop last year for all of the cyclists delight.</p> <p>We have been informed by the Cricket Club Chair that this year, after getting back on their feet financially for the last couple of years, they are severely struggling for numbers, and are only fielding one team in league 8 this season. This unfortunately limits the amount of games they will be playing at the recreation ground and hence will affect revenues.</p> <p>Finances</p> <p>Our account details are as follows,</p> <table> <tr> <td>Village Hall &amp; Recreation Ground Current Account</td> <td>£2,973.75</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Village Hall &amp; Recreation Ground Deposit Account</td> <td>£2,443.16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Redevelopment Current Account</td> <td>£76.13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Redevelopment Deposit Account</td> <td>£8,880.77</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sinking Fund</td> <td>£1,297.81</td> </tr> </table> <p>The fields has needed a little more TLC this year with a mole invasion on the bank threatening the cricket outfield, so we have employed a pest control company who have now successfully dealt with them. We are also getting the weeds treated in the field in the next few weeks.</p> <p>Our new mower purchase last year, with our windfall from the late Dan McNabb, has been extremely successful and has been running very well. We have 3 volunteers that mow the playing field so this works well and with this mower it's considerably quicker than the old one and makes a much better job.</p> <p>The inside of the pavilion and toilets were decorated just before the cricket season last year, and we have purchased new lightweight tables to replace our old aging tables, put up shelves in the store room. A white stripe has also been commissioned along the front of the slabs at the front of the pavilion after a member of the public requested this following a fall at the school fete last year. We would like to refurbish the changing room facilities next but cannot proceed until we secure what is happening with the skate bowl.</p> <p>On to the skate bowl; over the last 4 years we have had ongoing plans to repair or replace the skate bowl and it has been on the agenda of every single meeting. Over the last year we have endeavored to get three quotations for repair of the structure with four parties looking in total, but only one quote forthcoming. The committee are extremely frustrated with this and pay each year a massive premium on our insurance for a skate bowl that cannot legally be used. We are even considering a one off cost of filling in the site, and saving on our insurance and any future maintenance.</p> <p>The recent vandalism at the play park has also affected the pavilion with</p>	Village Hall & Recreation Ground Current Account	£2,973.75	Village Hall & Recreation Ground Deposit Account	£2,443.16	Redevelopment Current Account	£76.13	Redevelopment Deposit Account	£8,880.77	Sinking Fund	£1,297.81
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		<p>mud smeared over the walls, football impressions left on the windows, and a rock was repeatedly used to pierce our front garage door through the metal casing.</p> <p>We still have an ongoing problem with loose dogs and dog poo in the field and as we are now at saturation point with signs we feel powerless to do anything else.</p> <p>The play park has weathered in very well and we are pleased to see the addition of a few trees as a start to the landscaping. We look forward to the summer of 2015 where the recreation ground looks it's best and comes into its own.</p> <p>We would like to end the report by thanking the Parish Council for their kind continued financial support to our sinking fund.</p> <p>A member of the public asked for the bench to be re-instated under the tree by the Church yard. The VH&amp;RG Chairman agreed to raise the matter at the next meeting.</p> <p>Concern about the filling in of the skate bowl was discussed but the VH&amp;RG Chairman re-stated that without support from the village the VH&amp;RG committee had little option.</p>
9/15	Combe Charities Report	<p>Celia Adamson presented the following report:</p> <p>The Trustees Rev. Roy Turner. Michael Green and I remain the same, which is good for continuity and their input.</p> <p>Roy is happy to deliver the payments and enjoys meeting and talking to the recipients.</p> <p>We have received individual donations to the Charity this year of £160. In addition we had £118 from the proceeds of the Church coffee morning last April and a further £100 from the sale of cards for the Charity produced by Sue Goodman and Mary Denham . In August we were given the proceeds of the Combe Feast collection which amounted to £88.50. This makes the total amount paid into the Charity this year £466.58 since the last Annual Parish Report. We are very grateful for all donations great and small and would like to thank individuals and groups for their support and those given anonymously.</p> <p>We have only made one payment this year, on this occasion to a student for books and requirements for the course .We were pleased to help a young person in this way.</p> <p>As of 6th March the most recent statement the Business Account was £3,325.46 and the Business Savings Account was £286.32.</p> <p>Combe Charities is very small but we feel it serves a purpose and shows concern at a time of personal need or hardship.</p> <p>We are always happy to hear from anyone needing a little help or to be alerted to someone who could benefit from a small financial gift.</p>
10/15	Play Park Report	<p>Anne-Marie Ferrett presented the following report:</p> <p>The play park continues to be a popular attraction for children and families from within the village and from outside.</p> <p>There seems to be fewer dogs within the play park area with most people now tying dogs to the designated dog parking posts.</p> <p>Litter is being kept to a minimum.</p> <p>Since the initial two acts of vandalism there have been no further occurrences. The youths involved have been dealt with by the Police under the Youth Restorative System.</p> <p>In accordance with insurance requirements the play park is inspected on a weekly basis by either myself or Simon Oliver, both of us have attended a RoSPA training course.</p> <p>Five cherry trees have now been planted and we thank Paul Williams for this.</p>

		The parking of vehicles by visitors to the play park continues to be an issue; this causes problems for larger delivery vehicles and farm machinery. We urge visitors to park in the designated car park.
11/15	Church of England Report	Not present and no report submitted.
12/15	Methodist Church Report	<p>Malcolm Bromhall presented the following report:</p> <p>I am sure that most, if not all, of you here tonight will be aware that the Northampton District Synod of the Methodist Church, which has responsibility for Combe Chapel, has agreed that the property should be put up for sale.</p> <p>From a personal point of view, this is not a decision that I was able to endorse lightly. Nonetheless, earlier this year I was asked whether Combe Methodist Church was a viable, sustainable, worshipping community and – hand on heart -- I had to say ‘no’.</p> <p>Nationally, the Methodist Church has too many properties. The difficulty is in deciding which of those properties should be sacrificed in order that others might flourish.</p> <p>Of course, that’s easier to address when talking about the ‘big picture’ but much harder when you are talking about specific communities and the role the Methodist Church has played in enhancing those communities. Here in Combe, for example, the Methodist Church has been host to the village pre-school for around 45 years. Last year, the Methodist Church was the only venue in the village willing and able to provide a home for a much-needed after school club. And I am personally very proud that we ‘stood up to the plate’ on that occasion even if it did mean selling off one or two pews!</p> <p>My personal hope is that the Methodist premises will continue to provide a much-needed community resource. And, if I had my way, I would hand it over to the village with that in mind.</p> <p>However, the Methodist Church is a registered charity and charity law dictates that when we dispose of a property we should achieve the best possible price.</p> <p>Later this week, a representative from Cluttons (our appointed agents) will evaluate the property and the sale process will commence.</p> <p>My hope and my prayer is that this process will have an outcome that will be of benefit to the people of this village and in particular to those families who are seeking to give the best possible start to future generations.</p> <p>The Chairman informed the meeting that the Parish Council is in the process of applying for the Methodist Chapel to registered as an Asset of Community Value.</p>
13/15	Pre-School Report	<p>Vicky Rushton presented the following report:</p> <p><b>Pre-School</b> - To date, it has been a fantastic year for the Pre-School. It is in its 46<sup>th</sup> year and has seen more children on role than ever, a new After-School Club (ASC) and a great Ofsted report. We are now officially GOOD which we have felt for some time but it is great to have it formally recognised to reflect the hard work and dedication of the staff and the committee.</p> <p>We have recently accommodated a number of children from Kiddington Kindergarten which closed before Easter and have also extended our hours so we now provide care from 9.15am until 2.30pm 5 days per week and for the 3 and 4 year olds 9.15am until 6pm. We currently have 32 children attending the Preschool and 15 regular users of the ASC and 12 ad-hoc users.</p> <p>We estimate the surplus to be in excess of £4,000 which is a testament to</p>

the hard work of all the staff and committee from the position of a loss of £7,000 for year ended 31/8/14.

**Our staff** - We have had a change of job titles and roles for various permanent staff members and have recruited several temporary staff to meet the ratios required due to our recent influx of children. Our staffing is now as follows:

Supervisor -Andrea Oliver (Also Playleader for ASC), Assistant Supervisor - Vanessa Fisher, Head of Pastoral Care and SENCO – Sarah Timms, Assistant – Fay Dyer, Temporary assistants – Sarah Ilsey, JaneGoffe, Jenny Mckendrick, Playworker ASC – Marketa Bezdecna , Volunteer – Tina Smith, Administrator – Ian Bennett, Bank Staff - Anne-Marie Ferret. All have done a magnificent job, so a massive thank you to them for all their hard work, dedication and passion for making Pre-School the happy and friendly place it is.

**Fundraising** - Our total amount generated through fundraising this year is £2522. In 2014 Pre-School teamed up with the Primary School for their summer fete and our Cream Tea Family Day which worked very well (£1528). Halloween party (£185), Fireworks night (£66) & Christmas fundraiser (£491) were all successful, and much enjoyed as was the annual Easter Egg hunt in April 2015 (£145). We are looking forward to running 2 cream tea events over the summer. We will also be putting in a 'Team Preschool' to run the Oxford Half Marathon in October to raise much needed funds to secure our future.

**Thank You** - We would like to say a special thank you to the organisations and individuals who have donated to us this year. Namely, the Parish council for their donation of £100 from their takings at bonfire night and their recent donation of some much needed replacement outdoor play equipment following a sewage inundation and the refusal by Thames water to accept responsibility.

We would also like to thank Cottesway Housing Association for their donation of £990.

**Toddler group** - Our links with toddler group are stronger than ever with Anne-Marie Ferrett joining the committee. Using her experience working with young children, she has already brought a new lease of life to the group and we look forward to continuing to support her in this into the next academic year.

**Afterschool Club** - Combe ASC opened in September 2014 after much hard work by Ashley Cavers to get the funding from the council and the project off the ground. It has done so well that it has been selected to be used in a case study by OCC as an example of best practice. Well done to Ashley, Andrea and Marketa.

**Future** - Our fantastic year has however been significantly tempered with the recent and very sad news that the Methodist Church intend to sell the building that has been home to Pre-School for all of the 46 years that it has been in operation. We are absolutely determined that this should not be the end of such a valuable community asset, especially as we can now truly say that we support the working families of Combe and neighbouring villages, offering not only excellent AFFORDABLE childcare for Pre-Schoolers but also after school care for the children from the Primary School enabling parents to go back to work and support their families. The toddler group is also subsidised by Pre-School and offers a friendly invaluable service to the parents of babies and small children in Combe. It is a fact that without the Pre-school, the village would undoubtedly suffer. The Pre-School is a feeder to the Primary School, the Primary School is an incredibly important asset to the village, even to

		<p>those with no children or older children as it attracts young families to the village. Without younger families moving to the village, there is no future for it as a long term sustainable community so we ALL need to do what we can to ensure that a way is found to keep Pre-School operating. It is a COMMUNITY issue and the whole village needs to get involved.</p> <p>We are currently exploring all the possible options including a community purchase of the Methodist Church, a brand new multipurpose building or a modular classroom somewhere in the village. The direction we go will undeniably be determined by the price that the Methodist Church ask for the building and until we have that information is it difficult to formulate a definitive plan of action but we are appealing to anyone with any ideas / specialist knowledge / funds / land for modular classroom to come forward and offer their help.</p> <p>Committee Members 2014-2015:Charlie Birkett (Co-Chair), Vicky Rushton (Co-Chair), Ashley Cavers (Chair ASC), Sarah Horner (Secretary), Hannah Allen (Treasurer), Gemma Morgan and Anne-Marie Ferrett.</p>
14/15	District Councillor's Report	<p>In Cllr Richard Bishop's absence the following report was read by the Clerk:</p> <p>An interesting and busy year.</p> <p>Having been placed on the Planning (Uplands) Committee and the Environment Committee, I have been pleased that these have proved to be both interesting and useful. 2014/2015 has been a period of intense housing development applications. Some, perhaps most, have succeeded but there have been notable refusals. Carterton saw one large development succeed whilst a second large proposal was refused. Long Hanborough saw an application from Corpus Christi College succeed (eventually) for a reduced number, 50, of dwellings; whilst the Blenheim Estates application for a much larger number of units fail.</p> <p>WODC has agreed a full draft Local Plan, having achieved a 'five year land supply', which now resides with the Inspectorate for final approval. Both Stonesfield and Combe have, so far, escaped any large scale strategic plan proposals. Stonesfield, however, has welcomed a private development for 37 houses on Charity Farm land. This application is in its final stages prior to official approval.</p> <p>WODC is an active participant in an affiliation of District Councils called The 20-20 Vision. It entails 5 District Councils working hand in hand to achieve greater efficiency and to develop services which can be sustained into the future. This group of District Councils strongly oppose the tentative move by Oxford County Council to establish a Unitary Authority. It is confidently expected that any such move would result in greatly increased costs and a diminution of efficiency and services.</p> <p>I should like to congratulate my colleague on the District Council, Charles Cottrell-Dormer, on his re-election. Charles has served this Ward and the District with great distinction and enthusiasm for many years. The make-up of the new District Council after the recent elections is as follows : Conservatives 40; Labour 4; Liberal Democrats 4; Independent 1.</p> <p>After serving for a number of years on Stonesfield Parish Council, I have submitted my resignation. It is appropriate that new blood and fresh ideas are introduced.</p> <p>My thanks go to all who have given me great support and encouragement over the past year.</p>
15/15	Any Other Business	<p>A member of the public question the reason for the lack of renovation to the tumble down cottage in East End. The Chairman agreed to raise the issue with Blenheim and report back at the next meeting.</p>



The meeting closed at 9.20pm.