

# COMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Report of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024 – Approved

## Present

**Parish Council:** Deborah Phillips– Chair, Peter Sloan– Vice Chair, Elena Softley, Michael Green, Alan Revell, Denise Cripps, Cllr Graham, Cllr Sumner, Julia Sharpe – Clerk

**Village Representatives:** Rachel Joannou – Combe School, James Dench – Church, Madeline – VH&RG, Celia Adamson – Combe Charities, Andrew Hobson –The Hub, Sally Pursell – Combe Pre-School and After School Club,

**Members of the Public:** 0

## 1/24 Apologies

PC Chris Cochrane, Neighbourhood Supervisor for West Oxon and manager of the local police team and PCSOs across the West Oxon area.

## 2/24 Report of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting

The report of the 2023 APM was circulated prior to the meeting and there were no questions arising.

## 3/24 Parish Council Report – Deborah Phillips – Chair

My first year as Chair of the Parish Council seems to have flown by. We started with five councilors after the May 2023 elections, but were lucky to be able to co-opt Peter Sloan to bring us up to our full complement of 6 councilors.

We're conscious that we're a slightly senior bunch, so one of our aspirations is to engage more young people in helping to shape village priorities – we hope we might be able to do this through our biodiversity initiatives.

Looking back over the year, a notable achievement was the adoption of the **Combe Village Design Statement** by WODC in July. It is now a statutory document, appended to the Local Plan, that provides guidelines for any future development, and has implications for sustainability.

Sustainability been a big theme this year, and is likely to remain so - it impacts policies and practices in all things we do. Most importantly in this regard:

**Biodiversity policy:** We have recently adopted a Biodiversity Policy to help conserve and improve biodiversity in the locality. Thanks to all organisations that contributed their action plans. The aim is to raise awareness of what we can all do to enhance biodiversity, and there are several documents on the parish council website to support this.

**Sustainable travel:** The possibility of installing an EV vehicle charging point is under review, as is the potential for introducing other sustainable transport solutions (thanks for Alan and Peter for their work on this). Meanwhile, Denise and Elena continue to be involved in the Village Travel Network, with an emphasis on enabling active travel.

Much of parish council work seems to involve either ongoing monitoring or ongoing challenges.

## On going monitoring

**Planning and development:** We continue to monitor all planning applications in the parish, the most significant of which this year was an application to refurbish the pub. We were very happy to see this application approved, but we are concerned about limited parking provision and will continue to monitor this.

Any proposed development is considered with reference to our Village Design Statement, and we are keeping a careful eye on proposals for two development sites in the village put forward by Blenheim Estates - one north of Alma Grove and one on Stonesfield Road. The 'relative merits' of these sites are now being assessed by WODC for possible inclusion in the Local Plan 2041. The Parish Council has already

registered objections on the grounds of the impact on the landscape and character of the village of any large-scale development, and the lack of infrastructure here.

**Speeding traffic:** We aim to continue to monitor traffic speeds, following the introduction of a 20mph speed limit in the village. We've had to replace the damaged SID on Akeman St, but this is now functioning again. Thanks to Alan for ongoing monitoring and encouraging residents to participate in a Speedwatch team.

**Flight paths over Combe:** Meetings with Kidlington airport representatives (involving Denise and Elena) have resulted in some changes to the flight path map, which should hopefully reduce the volume of air traffic and noise pollution over Combe. Consultation over future flight plans is continuing.

### Ongoing challenges

There are a series of ongoing challenges that we continue to face, most notably:

- flooding and pot-holes – we're pleased to say that we're making some headway on this. Thanks to Michael Green for encouraging Blenheim to clear the ditch by the railway line, and to Councillor Andy Graham for his interventions on this;
- the preservation of our verges, which are integral to the character of the village. They've been badly damaged and eroded over the very wet winter months, so we're seeking to repair and re-instate green areas where we can in the village;
- the maintenance of our S3 bus service is of ongoing concern;
- Botley West solar farm – there are divided opinions on the need for the solar farm in the vicinity, but concern about the large scale of the proposal has been widely expressed; and finally,
- river pollution - we need to keep lobbying Thames Water for cleaner rivers.

A review of the year wouldn't be complete without mentioning a happy event: the November 5<sup>th</sup> fireworks. Many thanks to Don Slatter and his band of willing helpers. Yet again, it was a fantastic event, enjoyed by all. We're very grateful to Don for his careful planning before the event, and wonderful display on the night.

My thanks go to all parish councillors for their hard work and dedication, and to Councillor Andy Graham and Councillor Tim Sumner, who have not only supported us very well throughout the year, but have also actively participated in our meetings. And very special thanks to our clerk, Julia, who works tirelessly behind the scenes on everything from war memorial repairs, to grass cutting contracts, to litter picking, and budgets. She has also patiently helped me through my first year as Chair. Thanks also to the Deputy Chair, Elena. You have been a hard act to follow.

### 4/24 Report from County Councillor – Cllr Andy Graham

Many monthly reports have covered the work I have been doing to support the community of Combe notwithstanding the flooding issues which were resolved with a collaborative approach involving the parish, county council and Blenheim estates. Indeed, some of this work is ongoing.

Not covered elsewhere is the news of 100 electric buses obtained by OCC for the city centre to improve air quality and less noisy diesel engines. It is hoped this will be rolled out to the more rural areas like Combe in years to come.

I as the county council representative now have been appointed water champion alongside Cllr. Thomas to highlight the issues of flooding, sewerage and river pollution and to use our influence to ensure actions are taken to combat the increasing lack of infrastructure. Whilst recognising that it is government that can make the significant difference it is also important that local authorities play their part in bringing pressure to bear.

My other representative for the county is as the OCC representative on the Cotswold National Landscape Board. Important to ensure there is overview support and joined up thinking through the various agencies to preserve and yet support the rural nature of our environment.

I have and will continue to highlight Finally; it was great to announce that further support for young people through increase funding has doubled by the administration at county hall recently to ensure a youth service is further rolled out. Again, the need for this in particularly rural areas where young people can feel

particularly isolated is being addressed with a partnership working approach with the district council who has also putting funding aside to start addressing this with specific actions which will be further reported throughout the year.

## 5/24 Report from District Councillor – Cllr Tim Sumner

A brief overview because, following the local elections and facing a National Election in the near future, I want to take this moment to re-iterate my total belief and conviction in the power and importance of communities and in this case the work done by the Parish Council's in representing villages and communities. It is so important.

WODC listens to communities and therefore we are committed to becoming a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030. We are pushing green energy policies like solar on rooftops, investigating data centre energy supplies for our leisure centres and pools knowing that since 2010, 400 swimming pools have shut in England because of heating bills and a solution needs to be found. We are introducing ev charging points, engaging with Thames Water over their abysmal record of water management and rolling out our West Oxfordshire plan with the input of Parish Councils and community feedback.

The work you do is important and valuable. I thank you for it.

## 6/24 Combe School Report — Rachel Joannou

There are currently 109 children on role. The children are split across 4 classes (Year R/1, Year 1/2, Year 3/4, Year 5/6).

The staffing is as follows:

<b>Leadership Team</b>		
<b>Headteacher - R Joannou</b>		
<b>Deputy Headteacher- S Legge</b>	<b>Business Manager- C Checksfield</b>	
<b>Staff</b>		
<b>Teacher- Vicky Gehin</b>	<b>Teacher- Jan Page</b>	<b>Teacher- Kate McBride</b>
<b>Teacher – Freyia Smith</b>	<b>Sarah Horner (TA)</b>	<b>Hira Gul (TA)</b>
<b>Jo McKechnie (TA)</b>	<b>Jennifer Walsh- 1:1 TA</b>	<b>Sarah Timms (1:1 TA)</b>
<b>Lucy Martin (TA)</b>	<b>Chris Ball (TA)</b>	<b>Sally-Anne Clavaud (cleaning staff)</b>

In September 2023, we welcomed a new teacher, Miss Freyia Smith, to Combe School.

September 2023 admissions – We welcomed 14 new Reception children to the school this year. 7 children had siblings at Combe and 7 children are from new families to the school.

July 2023 Leavers – Our 17 Year 6 pupils left Combe School at the end of July 2023, moving to a variety of schools including The Marlborough, Bartholomew School, St Helen's and St Katharine's and Abingdon School.

Achievement – Statutory assessments took place in Summer 2023. We were pleased that 94% of Year 6 pupils reached the expected standard in maths, 81% in reading and writing and 88% in spelling, punctuation and grammar and maths.

In KS1, 94% of Year 2 pupils reached the expected standard in English reading, 82% in maths and 77% in writing.

In Year 1, 100% of pupils passed the phonics screening check.

In EYFS, 78% reached the expected 'good level of development'.

Friends of Combe School – We are grateful for the ongoing support of FoCS. This year fundraising events included:

- Summer Fete (June 2023), Christmas Lights, including a raffle (Dec 2023), Brazilian Dance Workshop (March 2024)

The money raised by FoCS funded the installation of much needed shade for the school playground. They are now fundraising for 'raised beds' for the school garden.

Visits in and out of school – The following overnight visits out of school have taken place:

- Two-night weekend residential to PGL- Year 5/6, Two-night residential to PGL- Year 3/4, One-night residential to Hill End- Year 2

The following out of school have taken place:

- British Motor Museum- Reception/Year 1/Year 2, Chedworth Roman Villa- Year 3/Year 4, Sailing at Farmoor Reservoir- Year 6, Swallows Class to Hampton Court Palace- Year 5/6, Millets Farm Falconry Centre- Reception/Year 1/Year 2. Story Museum Workshops- whole school, National Space Centre- Year 5/6, Chipping Norton Pantomime- whole school, Legoland- Reception/Year 1/Year 2, Ascension Day at Lincoln College- Year 5, London, including Houses of Parliament- some of KS2, The Lion King Musical- KS2, Autumn Fest at Blenheim- Year 6, Junior Citizens- Year 6, Ashmolean Museum- Year 3/4, Schools Concert at the Sheldonian Theatre- KS2, Churchill Workshop at Blenheim- Year 5/6, Young Voices performance at Birmingham Arena- Year 5/6 and choir, Woodstock Museum- Year 5/6, Oxford School Challenge (part of Oxford Half Marathon)- any children

The following visits into school have taken place:

- Hatching duckling eggs- all children, Science Oxford Workshops- whole school, Virtual Reality workshops- whole school, Greek Day in school- Year 3/4, Viking Day in school- Year 3/4, Evenlode River Project- Year 5/6, Bikeability- Year 5, Seaside workshop- Reception/Year 1/2, Quidditch Day- whole school, Young Shakespeare performance- KS2, Oxford Opera- whole school, Drama Workshop- whole school, Evenlode River Project- Year 5/6, Creation theatre workshops- whole school, Mini archery- whole school.

Community Events – Events have included:

- Services in the church were held at Harvest, Advent, Christmas and Easter, The annual silence at the memorial on Remembrance Day, May Day celebration on the village green, KS2 Performance and KS1 Nativity Performance

Developments to building and site – Installation of replacement feature window, Installation of further new storage heaters in the old building, Installation of LED lighting across both buildings, Installation of shade in playground, Roof repairs

Balancing spend on the building is a challenge. Our school only receive £5000 towards major building works each year. Other works, maintenance and rents come from our delegated budget, which reduces the funds then available to spend more directly on the children's education.

Charity Fundraising – The following fundraising has taken place:

- Young Minds- £179.50, Christmas Jumper Day- Save the Children, Children in Need- over £200, Poppies, Red Nose Day- £366, Food Bank donation at Harvest time, Sobell House (linked to participation in OxTrail)- £1605

After School Clubs – The children have been offered many extra-curricular after-school clubs this year, including:

## 7/24 Reading Room – Deborah Phillips

Roger Pursell provided the following report which was read by Deborah Phillips.

2023 could be described as something of a settled year, the recent past periods having being disrupted by the effects of the pandemic and its aftermath. It was a considerable relief to have most of our activities return to normal. As ever life has had its challenges, some met and others ongoing.

Our financial performance was pleasingly robust. Income was £11700, which, not unexpectedly was a significant improvement on 2022, up by £3300. Our main sources of income remain: hire of premises £4900, coffee mornings £3100, the 100 Club £1200 and Cream Teas £750. There were a couple of smaller events which also contributed; the screening of the Coronation and our first undertaking of an Art event. Overall a healthy improvement on the previous period with hiring income being the star performer with an increase of some £1200. It is undoubtedly true that the rise in the use of electronic payments has played its part in these upturns.

Our expenditure increased, fuelled amongst other things by higher energy costs. With a more stable income we were able to undertake a number of improvements to enhance the effectiveness of our offer and at a total cost of £2200. The principal component being £1800 in preparation for the installation of improved sound absorption in the main room. Prudent financial management, notably by our hard working treasurer Jean Richards, has kept outgoings at a sustainable level.

As a consequence of the above we were able to improve our balance sheet to the tune of some £3700. We now have funds of a little over £26k. Whilst this may seem a very healthy amount it does little to meet our outstanding challenge of the roof refurbishment, which might well cost in the region of £115k. We are finding it particularly difficult to meet the qualifying requirements of grant funders. At present we are continuing to make do with make do and mend.

The trustees are at the heart of all that happens with the Reading Room. We, and particularly myself as Chair, are deeply indebted to them for their staunch support and great commitment to the cause. The year enjoyed a full complement of board members with the newer ones getting their feet under the table and the more established ones continuing to serve with enthusiasm and exemplary professionalism. As a group we are only able to operate as effectively as we do with the backing of our wonderfully reliable caretaker Sue Golder. We are, of course, forever grateful for the support we receive from our community without whom we simply couldn't function.

Finally, we are looking forward to meeting the challenges which lie ahead. The roof of course, but some which have already been met in 2024; soundproofing in the main room and the replacement of the diseased tree in the garden.

## 8/24 Village Hall and Recreation Ground (VHRGC) Report – Madeline Laxton

The playing fields continue to be used for a variety of football teams with training during the week and matches at the weekend – from the adult team, to youth teams which span from Under 18s down to Under 6s. Cricket are finding it challenging to form a full adult cricket team but the junior 'All Stars' beginner sessions introducing cricket to the next generation is planned to take place once again next month. In the hall we've had regular exercise classes, the baby and toddler group and a number of family events throughout the year.

Balancing the books continues to be a concern and whilst we have broadened the scope of our fund raising activities, we still struggle to raise enough surplus to address increasingly essential repairs required to the fabric of the building. We ran a number of Friday evening Barbecues last summer, pop-up bars to support

the Coronation and November 5<sup>th</sup> fireworks celebrations and more recently we held a number of pop up bar and hot dog events to support the Rugby Six Nations tournament.

Although our mower continues to be ageing, we feel that we have to shift priorities to the pavilion building and look at renewing the insulation materials well as replacing the expensive and inefficient convector heaters, possibly for storage heaters, in order to benefit from cheaper night time tariff rates. We await an EPC report which will help advise us. As the PC is aware, we received £1,100 from Oxford County Council towards the cost of a new mower and we intend to request that we can re purpose that towards improved heating solutions so as to help reduce our energy costs. We did apply for a grant from the VCSE Energy Efficiency Scheme but were unsuccessful as it was felt we did not meet the criteria which required the charity to directly support individuals and communities with critical needs.

We also very much appreciate the donation of £800 from the Parish Council for 2023/2024.

Our trustee base is small but stable (hopefully) and continues to consist of Madeline Laxton (admin), Dave Lee (maintenance, projects and general support), Nadine Wyatt (treasurer), Ian Ashcroft (lettings), Danny Maher (village rep, also the coach for the U6 football team) and Alan Revell, who is also Parish Council representative. We continue to benefit from Paul Bowerman's excellent advice and support with all things maintenance when he can but are still in search of a mechanically-minded individual who can commit fully to help us maintain the mower ourselves. The mowing burden is also time consuming and currently spread between David Lee, Ian Ashcroft, Tim Morton and Chris Drinkwater, Simon Oliver, Paul Bowerman and Ian Windsor having retired after many years of mowing service. Most of the committee has full time jobs, which makes it very challenging finding time for grounds maintenance, lettings and treasury work, let alone the time required for fund raising and grant applications and the subsequent project work. This has been a precarious position for many years and the fabric of the building is deteriorating rapidly, as is the skate park. To try to address this, we are planning some volunteer days and hope that as many villagers as possible will attend to help with some of the current targets which include re-rendering the external walls, internal decoration, replacing the car park gravel, skate park repairs and strimming.

We have considered biodiversity actions for the playing fields trying to balance the needs of the playing teams with all the beauty and sustainability the site has to offer. We had already kept a long strip of grass unmown and seeded it and are planning on putting up some bird boxes in the coming year. More details will be shared separately by David Lee.

We would like to ask again that the Parish Council give consideration to leading the formation of one or more combined committees that could work across all the village charities. For example, with more focused and possibly expert resources able to manage the buildings, buildings maintenance and project work could be under the supervision of a dedicated subcommittee which ought to lead to costs efficiency. Lettings could be managed by a central committee which would enable bookings to stay within the village and ensure that the village charities don't compete with each other for bookings. Fund raising could be planned for the year across all charities with all resources then available and all charities could benefit then on a shared basis as per the cream teas. Bringing the various charities together to promote greater collaboration and pooling of resources, especially if there is a surfeit of volunteers on any one committee, would surely be to the greater good in a village the size of Combe.

In the year ending 31 March 2024 we look to have improved our income to circa £12,800, less expenses of £10,868.<sup>1</sup> The current balances reported to our April meeting were at £1248 with £14119 in the deposit account. We made a pleasing surplus of £800 for the Rugby pop up bars and are planning to do the same again for the Euros. Fortunately, we were able to switch to Octopus Electricity in February and our electricity costs have reduced from £350 pcm to £150-200pcm which should remain at the lower levels over the summer. Cleaning costs are our second largest area of expense. We continue to need the funds on deposit to help fund our 10 year maintenance plan which we now estimate to cost approximately £50,000, depending upon building materials costs at the time the work needs doing.

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We have planned an AGM for 15 May at which our year end accounts will be reviewed and approved, as well as the 10 year maintenance plan for the year. We would welcome any Parish Council member to attend as well as any villagers.

The committee is in good heart and we are really pleased about the success of recent fund raisers. We also hope to raise more money with additional pop up bars and summer BBQs before the pub re opens. The issue isn't just about funding, as we just about manage to cover costs whilst the pub is closed. What we really need is more people on the committee with available time and some skill to help with the essential grounds and building maintenance and to plan for and project manage sustainable improvements to the facilities.

## 9/24 Combe Charities Report – Celia Adamson

Combe Charities exists to help those in our community in financial need. It is an historic charity with reference to a bequest in 1636 and the interest from the fund was distributed by the church wardens. It is connected to the Church in so far as the incumbent or rector is a trustee, but the recipients of the fund do not have to have any connection with the Church.

We have made nine donations from the fund since the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting, several of which were for helping to pay the fees for children at the Pre-School and the After-School Club. At Christmas time we made three donations and another to help with medical costs. A contribution was given to help towards the excellent village voluntary Transport Scheme and another to help with a family's financial problems. We work closely with the Pre-School and the School who alert us to any children who need financial support and we thank them for this close cooperation.

This year we did not hold our usual fundraising tea, but are planning one in the autumn which will help with our finances and also advertise the Charity. We received funds from the sale of cards produced by Sue Goodman and Mary Denham which raised £61 and a tremendous sum of £502 from the collection at the Combe Feast open air service, following an address from Rector Ralph who explained the importance of the charity working in our community, which is currently so needed. We received £162 from a funeral collection and a donation of £60. As always, we are very grateful for generous and usually anonymous donations amounting this year to £275. We also get interest from the two smaller charities invested in COIF, this year £90. The current account stands at £3,824, although this will soon be reduced by another bequest which is pending. We are a small charity, too small to be eligible for donations to be gift-aided.

## 10/24 Parochial Church Council Report – Andrew Hobson and James Dench

2023 saw for St Lawrence making progress on a number of fronts.

Attendance at services remains strong as ever. The growth of family attendance previously reported has been consolidated with maintained regular attendance. These services are led by an enthusiastic team from the village which has been infused with new blood and who continue to create novel ideas to explain our faith to the children. To this we have added Sunday School once a month during a communion service, where a team of volunteers teaches elements of faith to the children. This takes place in the house of a congregant or when weather permits in a tent pitched in the Churchyard.

The Tuesday morning coffee morning, continues to be popular with all ages and we regularly see new faces. We are indebted to the volunteers who conceived it and run it and we receive a modest grant from the deanery to assist with the cost.

The Rector continues to work with the school attending regularly to take assemblies and in his role as a governor. We are delighted that the school uses the Church for services at Christmas, Easter and Harvest and we welcomed the school choir to other services, where they were a great success. We hope to strengthen ties with the school further over this year.

We were pleased to be able to have once again our Feast Day service on the green (though we need to work on the sound) which was well attended, as later was a more solemn event on Remembrance Sunday.

The Church is pleased to continue its material and financial support for the Witney Foodbank. Donations of food and personal necessities are collected at the Church and delivered to the Foodbank regularly.

## 11/24 Combe Community Hub Report – Andrew Hobson

Since my last report the Hub has had an uneventful year. This is not to say nothing has happened but we are in the process of incremental progress. Since January 2024, we have welcomed a new director on Richard Sherratt and two new volunteers in Amanda Ford and Aidan Coates.

We have run a successful Open Gardens, which generated some £2,700. We have tidied up the South end of the main room with new custom-made cupboards that incorporate the AV equipment and provide more general storage and updated the stage electrical sockets. We have repainted the windows internally as they had already shown signs of wear and tear and we have fitted heater covers throughout the building.

A bin store is planned to tidy up the front of the property and I hope to report it's acquisition and installation at next year's meeting.

Our porch has now been underpinned and the surface drainage to the building repaired as part of this process. Later this year we hope to have the porch renovated inside and out to finish the repairs.

Financially we have continued to show a surplus despite increases in costs all round. This has enabled us to continue to pay off the generous loan that helped us acquire the property back in 2017. We have however had to raise our room hire costs to keep things on an even keel.

Thanks go to volunteers and directors and the many who give their time and expertise to help us run the facility. Thanks also to the grant bodies who have enabled us to undertake the work this year. These include Doris Field; W E Lawrence Trust; the Mid-Counties Co-op; Gigaclear (community broadband provision).

## 12/24 Pre-School and After-School Club Report – Sally Pursell

Combe Preschool and ASC continues to operate 5 days a week, from 8.50 – 6.00pm during school term times in the Combe Hub. We have 37 2- 4-year-old children on Preschool roll (up again on last year), and we employ 8 regular staff working with the children, two extra members of staff this term, as well as a cleaner and an administrator. Afterschool club numbers vary, but we have between 15 – 22 children each day. Preschool has continued to attract children from Woodstock, Long Hanborough and surrounding villages as there is a shortage of early years places in the area. This may change in September when a brand-new facility opens up in Woodstock, and we are mindful that our run of high numbers may be coming to an end.

Finances have improved considerably, with our figures for year ending August 23 showing a surplus of income over expenditure of approx. £10k. As mentioned above though, we are mindful that we may return to lower numbers and a less positive financial outlook come September 24. We continue to face big increases in our wage bill (up 9.8% this year, and 9.2% last year) as well as inflationary pressures on consumables etc.

Combe Charities have continued to provide funding for a number of children. This support has enabled children to take up additional Preschool and Afterschool club places, and / or funded a hot lunch where there is an identified need which would not have been affordable for the families. We, and the families, are extremely grateful for this continuing support.

We really are very fortunate, and grateful, that our staff team has remained stable over many years now. This is unusual in our sector and the benefit is felt by the families and children alike. Recruitment in the early years sector continues to be a national problem, so it is important that we continue to value and reward our staff as much as possible.

Ofsted paid us a visit in June 2023. This is always a stressful time for us all at Preschool, but we were delighted to receive extremely positive feedback. Judgements are given in 4 categories, and we were graded Outstanding in two of the four – 'The quality of education' and 'Behaviour and attitudes'. The other two areas, Personal development and Leadership and management were judged good.

I have included some statements from the report to give you a flavour of the report:

Children are eager and enthusiastic to learn. Staff introduce new ideas and experiences to encourage children to question and be intrigued.



Children develop close friendships. Staff sensitively help children to learn how to deal with frustrations in their play.

Children are extremely confident in their play environment. Staff are well deployed and successfully engage children in their choice of play.

Children learn to be self-sufficient through routine experiences.

Staff have a strong understanding of how children's language develops. They use simplified words for younger children and extend older children's vocabulary by using complex words and questions. Staff effectively manage group discussions to challenge children's listening skills, understanding and confidence to share their knowledge.

I could go on! Needless to say, we are very proud of this report!

Significant changes to the government funding for two-year-olds began this term, with most working Parents being eligible for the funding. Like most early years' settings, we are struggling with the fact that the level of government funding does not cover the cost of providing a place for a 2-year-old, but we are still optimistic that we can make ends meet by being flexible with our sessions, and meeting the needs of our families and children.

Our committee and staff continue to work closely with the Combe Hub, Combe Charities, the Primary School, Combe Mutual Aid and the VHRGC all of whom are very supportive of Preschool and ASC. We are very grateful to have the support of these and other village organisations.

The continued support of Parents and the Village is much appreciated and the committee will continue to work together with our dedicated staff to continue to provide the very best early education for the young people of Combe and local villages.

### 13/24 Combe Mutual Aid Group Report – Julia Sharpe

COMAG was formed by volunteers in March 2020 and subsequently formalised as a voluntary society with membership open to all residents of Combe and nearby areas.

The principal activity was to establish a network of communication in the village by which residents could ask for, and offer, support during the Covid-19 crisis.

Although prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the objectives of the society were framed in more general terms to enable it to be a forum for mutual aid between residents with the potential for wider purposes and longevity. The objectives are to provide support and relief during any time of general emergency to individuals or households in the Combe parish or nearby. It is specifically for those who are in need, by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or any other disadvantage.

Membership is open residents of Combe parish or nearby areas who are over 18. To become a member a resident need only join the Facebook or WhatsApp group.

**Activities and Expenditure** – At the COMAG Annual Meeting on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023 the balance of accounts was £392.22. The committee agreed to donate £390 to the Pre-School leaving £2.55 in the account. It was agreed to continue with COMAG in its current form and to review the situation at the June 2024 Annual General Meeting. It was also agreed, subject to securing funding, to run the Winter Warmer Sessions in 2024.

From January to the end of March 2024 the Winter Warmer initiative, which provides warmth, companionship, refreshments and lunch in a welcoming community space, met weekly. It had an average attendance of 30 people, representing a cross section of the village community.

Grants were received from Oxfordshire Community First, West Oxfordshire District Council, and Combe Cinema Group, Church Choir and Combe Celebrations. Each gave generous donations. These monies, together with funds from a coffee morning and further donations raised an amazing £2,859.62. The total expenditure was £1,165.14. The bank balance currently stands at £1,694.48 which will be used to fund Winter Warmer sessions again in 2025.

The committee would like to thank the many volunteers (too many to mention by name) who hosted the Winter Warmers sessions and made cakes and endless cups of tea, Tilia for providing the soup lunch every week and the members of the community who came along to the sessions whatever the weather.

## 14/24 Police Report – Report provided by Helen Duffield who was unable to attend

There have been 7 incidents reported to have occurred in Combe in the last 6 months. This equates to approximately 1 incident per month. Although March and April 2024 saw the most incidents reported, there was only 2 incidents per month. There are also no incidents of concern.

Row Labels	Count of Case File Number
Concern For Safety / Collapse / Injury / Illness / Trapped	2
Rail / Air / Marine Incident	1
Road Related Incident	1
Suspicious - Person	2
Suspicious - Vehicle	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7</b>

Also, we are still having vehicles stolen ranging from Range Rovers, Land rovers to High performance cars. Advice for owners is to put keys in a Faraday pouch (this can be bought cheaply from the internet) and keep keys in a metal tin indoors.

With the weather becoming warmer, we need to remind people to make sure their windows are closed when they leave their homes.

Finally, a survey is being carried out for the Woodstock and surrounding villages to see which are our priorities. Please following the link: <https://forms.office.com/e/MirdyhMBXa?origin=lprLink>

## 15/24 Any Other Business

There was no AOB and the meeting ended at 21.15.