

## Harbury Parish Council News Summer 2021

Despite all the lockdown restrictions over the last 18 months, the parish council has been just as busy as ever. Here is a round- up of what has been happening in the first quarter of this financial year:

### **Cemetery**

Renovations on the chapel have continued apace. It now has a new roof, and all the stonework has been re-pointed. The scaffolding should be removed by the end of July. We are now waiting for new shelving to be installed so we can store the village Christmas lights safely, and generally keep the chapel in a much more orderly state. We are very grateful to all the organisations who helped by promptly removing their 'stuff' from the chapel before the works began.



We have recently come across some unsafe memorials. These were discovered during a training session for testing memorials. All the memorials are tested every few years and another full inspection is now due. Please look out for more information about this in due course. In the meantime, we have posted a list of current unsafe memorials on the cemetery gates and village noticeboards. If you are the owner of one of these memorials, please contact us as soon as possible. If you are visiting the cemetery, please keep clear of any memorials that are cordoned off, and please, never lean on any memorial.

As well as a couple more jobs to complete the work on the chapel, and the memorials inspection, we are now beginning to think about planting some new trees in the cemetery. Many of the older trees, especially the conifers, are approaching the end of their life span and some will soon have to be removed because of disease. We are therefore considering a new planting scheme to replace the trees that will be lost. This forms part of a wider scheme for the whole village – more information on this, and how you can help, coming soon!

### **Harbury Future Energy Project**

We have been working closely with members of the project team to agree suitable locations on the playing field and car park for a wind turbine and energy store along with electric vehicle charging points. The parish council fully supports this project and has agreed that the infrastructure can be installed at the playing fields subject to consent from Fields in Trust (the playing field was dedicated as a Queen Elizabeth II Field in 2012) and planning permission.

## **Councillors**

In April, we were sorry to hear that Tony Mancell had decided to step down after many years' service during which he had chaired the council's finance group. Tony was held in great esteem by his fellow councillors and his contribution to the work of the council will be missed. The vacancy created by Tony's resignation was filled by Stacey Boyd who was co-opted to the council in May. We are very pleased to welcome Stacey who has quickly got involved and has joined the play areas inspection team and the Christmas lights working party. Cllr Sam Allen has taken on the role of chairing the finance group. Finally, we were delighted to hear that our chairman, Cllr Tim Lockley, had been awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for services to our community, especially during the pandemic. Amongst many other things, Tim was a driving force behind setting up Harbury Community Library when it was threatened with closure a few years ago, and he was instrumental in setting up the Covid support network in the village last year.

## **Playing Fields**

We are currently investigating ways to improve the drainage at the far end of the field. In wet winters, this area can be underwater for several weeks making the perimeter path unusable and the football pitch unplayable! We have budgeted for drainage work during this financial year so we hope to have some good news to report soon.

During the last few months, we have been very grateful to receive donations of two new benches. The first was donated by Peggie Middleton, in memory of her husband Bill, and the second was donated by Sue Crum, in memory of her husband Ted. Bill's bench is near the tennis courts while Ted's is between the entrance to Ridgley Way and the far end of the playing field. We hope they will be well used by villagers of all ages for many years to come.



At the June parish council meeting, members were asked to consider a proposal from a member of the public for renewing the BMX track and skatepark. These facilities are beginning to show their age and could do with a complete re-design. The council has spent several thousand pounds on repairs to the skatepark over the last couple of years while the last major refurbishment to the BMX track was in 2013/14 at a cost of £5,500. Councillors were supportive of the proposal but noted that young people had helped to design and raise funds for the existing skate park and their involvement will be key once again if this is to be successful. Members of the council's properties group will be discussing this further.

## **Deppers Bridge**

With the help of resident Tina Gilbert, the council has recently run a public consultation about the provision of a defibrillator (to be installed in the old phone box) and new seating for the playing field. Residents were very supportive, and their responses will be used to evidence an application to the HS2 Community Fund. Deppers Bridge residents have

suffered from exceptionally heavy traffic while the A425 has been closed between Southam and Ufton. This was borne out by the results of the recent traffic survey which showed a seven day average of 7656 vehicle movements with a peak of 9167 on the Friday.



### **Planning Matters**

There are currently two proposed solar farms on the horizon. One is at Eastfields Farm in Deppers Bridge and the other is at Middle Road Farm. Members of the parish council have met with the developers to find out more about the proposals ahead of any formal planning application. We have learnt from experience that early engagement with developers can be helpful in terms of having an input to design and layout but also in ensuring appropriate planning gains for the community and a good working relationship in the future if planning permission is granted and the development goes ahead. This does not, however, prevent the parish council from raising objections to the planning application when it comes forward if there are concerns about the development.

### **Community Grants**

We have been pleased to support several local clubs and organisations over the last year. Recent grants have included funding for the Earthworms project to renovate the school pond, a contribution towards the roof repairs at Harbury Village Club, and support for Harbury Pre-school for new IT and specialist Covid cleaning.

### **Council Meetings**

In June, we saw a return to face to face meetings for the first time since February 2020. Although some people were never keen on Zoom, it was a lifeline and enabled us to operate almost normally, despite all the restrictions. There were definite advantages too, especially on cold, dark winter nights when we were all able to attend the meeting while sitting in our own homes. We also found that more people than ever before joined us, and it was easy to hear and see everyone. We are hoping that the government can be persuaded to change the law so that councils will have the option to meet remotely again in the future if they decide that is best for their community and circumstances.

Council meetings are held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month except for August and December when we are in recess. Members of the public are welcome to attend and there is a short public forum where you may raise any matter on the agenda. If you have an issue which is not on the current agenda, please contact the parish clerk who will advise you on the best way forward. It may be that the issue can be resolved without the need to refer it to the council but if this is not the case, the clerk will ensure that it is included on the next agenda.

### **Contacting the Parish Council**

The office is usually open between 10.00am and 12 noon Monday to Thursday. Tel 01926 614646 or [clerk@harbury-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@harbury-pc.gov.uk) Casual callers are welcome, but if you are making a special trip, please phone first to make sure the parish clerk is available to see you, just in case she has another appointment, or has had to go out somewhere.