Chair's report for the 2024/25 year

Community Shop

KPC has maintained a neutral position on the proposal for a community benefit shop, and, together with the landowner, is progressing the provision of an underlease to allow for the building of the shop on land adjacent to the village hall. This underlease is a necessary pre-requisite for the community benefit committee to progress to the next stage of raising funds for the project.

CDC and MCNP

In February 2025, KPC submitted extensive comments to Cherwell District Council's Regulation 19 Consultation on its revised Local Plan. This was to ensure that the interests of Kirtlington were taken into account. KPC raised a number of issues about the soundness of some areas of CDC's Plan and about specific policies proposed by CDC which could adversely affect Kirtlington if implemented.

Kirtlington has previously voted in a referendum to participate in the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan, or MCNP and, this year, a revision of Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Review became necessary because Heyford Park withdrew from the MCNP Forum in June 2024 and CDC made significant changes to their Local Plan which affected the MCNP area. MCNP reps have recently provided feedback to the current pre-submission consultation of the revised MCNP Review which is now intended to cover the period from 2024-2042. (The consultation is still open for comments, but the deadline is Friday 23rd May at midnight). KPC representatives of the MCNP have also supported the delivery of a Community First Oxfordshire Housing Needs Survey at the start of this year, to gauge the need for affordable housing within the village.

KPC has liaised with Cherwell District Council on the quarry to help protect it as a Sight of Special Scientific Interest by securing essential repairs to the footpaths, steps and fences and ensuring that the areas of ash dieback work are safely closed off. CDC has also agreed at our request to provide more advisory signs for the visiting public about not littering and not lighting fires to protect the quarry as a local nature amenity.

Roads

A meeting was held with Highways who listened to the proposals of the Traffic Calming Group. A map of the village has been provided and the next step is for the KPC Traffic Committee to mark-up the map with potential traffic calming measures and submit this to Highways for review and subsequent discussion. Various repairs have been submitted to 'Fix My Street' and KPC continues to pursue resolution to resident's concerns.

Sports Field

A new storage container has been installed to replace the old one which had come to the end of its life. This will be used by the Fete Committee and various clubs for storing equipment. The field is still maintained by the two long-standing volunteer Groundsmen who do an excellent job of keeping it in immaculate condition. A proposal has been put forward to convert half of the sports wall into a traverse wall which will hopefully be installed in the near future.

Play Areas

Volunteers helped clear the play area at Roman Close of an old shed and equipment that was at the end of its life and KPC arranged for a new fence to be installed to safely separate the grass area from the road.

The play area next to the village hall has received new play bark and will receive more in the next two weeks. We would be grateful for any volunteers to help spread it – please contact the Clerk if you can help.

CORRESPONDENCE

Post Office

Unfortunately, Kirtlington lost its village Post office this year. KPC wrote twice to complain to the Post Office when we were informed that there would be no future service to the village after the local post office closed. Despite their previous assurances that a replacement visiting service would be provided, the Post Office claim that they have to make unavoidable cuts for economic reasons. The Post office was unapologetic and Kirtlington is the victim of one of those cuts.

Thames Water

KPC has raised a number of issues with Thames Water about road closures for their works and the subsequent damage. Thames Water's responses to these have not been satisfactory. KPC has also complained to Thames Water about their lack of transparency about the sourcing of the mains water from Kirtlington to supply the Great Wolf waterpark in Chesterton.

Vexatious correspondence

Following a spate of extremely disruptive correspondence in 2024, KPC established a formal policy for dealing with vexatious correspondence in consultation with the National Association of Local Councils. Thankfully, thus far, there has been no repeat of the problem since.

ENVIRONMENT

Tinkers Ditch

KPC commissioned Oxfordshire Conservation Volunteers to lay the overgrown hedge along Tinkers Ditch and we hope to interest them in doing further hedge work in the village this autumn.

Canal and Rivers Trust

Thanks to reports from a vigilant local walker, KPC has alerted the Canal and Rivers Trust to a number of issues along the towpath, which has enabled the CRT to locate and address issues like failing canal edges and fallen trees.

MISCELLANEOUS

Second village defibrillator

KPC has purchased a second defibrillator for the village. This was to be installed at the Dashwood Arms prior to its closure, but the agreement for this was with the previous lessees and the future of the Dashwood is not yet known. Another location for it is currently being sought [at the Oxford Arms] .

Roadside planters

Two significant collisions with the roadside planters have occurred this year showing how much they are needed to protect pedestrians from vehicles driving on the pavements.

Lamb Ale funfair

After two years of being let down by the previous fair provider, KPC managed to secure a small replacement fair in 2024 on an experimental basis. Unfortunately, this small provider is unable to come again this year.

Gravel Pit Field

The field has been licensed for another year as a horse paddock.

THANKS

I would just like to end with a round of thanks to all the present and past Councillors, advisors and volunteers who have made a positive contribution to the village over the last year. This includes the non-Council members of our Traffic and Planning Advisory Cttees, the Councils representatives on the MCNP Forum on behalf the village, our village hall management team who do such excellent work keeping the Hall in good shape, our volunteer groundsmen who take such good care of the sports field, the Allotments Cttee who keep the allotments shipshape, the KWACS volunteers who look after the pond and other wildlife areas of the village for us and all the volunteers who do things unasked like picking up litter or reporting on any problems with the local footpaths. Thank you all. It may sound from that as if we have a welter of volunteers in the village, but a village of this size needs more. So, in closing I would just like to say please if you are thinking about things that could be done to benefit our village community, please don't hesitate to come forward. The Parish Council and many of the other village societies and groups would welcome more participation from members of the community. I will now hand over to our two advisory Cttees and our MCNP representatives for them to give their own reports on the last year.