

COUNCILLORS REPORT TO BLOXHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
ON THURSDAY 19TH APRIL 2018

When I started this report a couple of weeks ago I was just thinking how quiet and normal things had seemed over the past few months, with no major housing developers threatening and all seemed quite peaceful in the village – however, in the last week the report has had to be re-written to include a real problem which took up an enormous amount of time in the following two weeks.

On Thursday 22nd March an email was received from a resident asking for help regarding a very inconspicuous notice she had seen at the garage which was an application for 24hour opening complete with 24 hour alcohol and food licence. Nothing whatsoever was known about this and even the Parish Council had no idea about. Owing to the notice not being seen earlier, the deadline for correspondence on this matter was 3 days later on the Monday. Local residents rallied the troops and notes were put through doors in the area of the garage and by Monday Cherwell District Council had received 27 letters of objection, some of these were discounted for various reasons but it was still a good turnout of objections and because of this a Licensing Hearing had to be arranged, which actually took place on Thursday 5th April. Cllr Chris Heath attended the meeting and spoke to the Licensing Committee regarding all the concerns and objections which the residents had. Unfortunately the Committee decided (with the advice of a council solicitor) that they had no choice but to grant the application. The decision had taken 2 hours which shows that even the Committee were not happy with what they were advised to do. At the time of writing this report, residents are deciding on their next course of action as they do have the right to appeal.

Now for a bit better news, all this kerfuffle on the garage did start off something else – gradually over the past few months there has been more and more “junk advertising” appearing on the grass verge (which does not belong to them) in front of the garage and also local residents had complained to CDC about very bright floodlighting (right into their homes) and the size of the new totem, also very brightly lit, so before the Licensing hearing this matter was taken up with the Enforcement Dept at CDC, which they acted on immediately, the floodlight had to be turned off until planning permission was granted and the garage was told to remove all signage on the grass verge. So far, this has resulted in the floodlight being turned off and some of the signs being removed but this is being pursued on a daily basis.

If it is at all possible, we will attempt to get the planning application for floodlighting refused at a Planning Committee meeting, but this is obviously ongoing at the moment.

Sorry to be so long winded but we did want all the residents to know the problem that has been happening in the village and how we have tried to solve it. This will be an ongoing saga for a while but we hope to give some of the residents some better news later.

Apart from this event, the rest of the year does seem to have been fairly quiet and boring but there have been some successes in planning applications being refused by officers and Inspectors, albeit minor ones, but quite important ones as they were all in open countryside.

At the last CDC full Council meeting in February, the Review of the Local Plan (containing Oxford's Unmet Housing Need) was agreed by the Council and this included 4,400 homes in the Kidlington/Yarnton/Begbroke area. However, because a lot of this proposed development was in Oxford Green Belt, the Review of the Local Plan has had to go to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for his approval. I believe we will get his decision around September/October. If this is not agreed then presumably the Review will have to be re-done and new areas found for these 4,400 homes for Oxford's Unmet Needs – watch this space, hopefully not this area.

There have been many changes at Cherwell District Council since the new Chief Executive took over last year and there are now a lot of new faces trying to get their heads around new jobs, a new area where they live and work and councillors are trying to find officers who know their problems and can help – unfortunately we lost our biggest help, who was Ian Davies who retired after 36 years at the council. However, things can only get better as time goes on! We hope!

As you probably know, Cllr Andrew McHugh has been on the Hospital Overview and Scrutiny Committee almost since he became a councillor and has had a lot of dealings with the “Save the Horton” campaign. His brief report and update is given below as part of this report:-
We are pleased to report that the future of A&E and consultant-led paediatrics at the Horton is now secure although your councillors will continue to fight for the reinstatement of consultant led obstetrics and special care baby unit. Cherwell District Council was united in its opposition to the closure of obstetrics and the proposed downgrades. Your District Councillors supported the seeking of a judicial review, in co-operation with neighbouring councils and KeepThe Horton General, into the Clinical Commissioning Group's plans, at the Royal Courts of Justice in December 2017. Cllr Andrew McHugh was a principal witness in this Judicial Review.

Although the Judicial Review was unsuccessful, comments from the presiding judge provided an almighty nudge, delivered by Victoria Prentis MP, to get Jeremy Hunt to refer the decision to close obstetrics to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel – the body that 'saved The Horton in 2008. The recent report from this panel has prompted the Clinical Commissioning Group to re-evaluate its approach to the Horton with respect to A&E and paediatrics. Be assured your councillors will continue to fight to regain and retain services at this valuable local hospital.

If anyone has any problems or needs help please do not hesitate to contact one of your District Councillors:-

Cllr Chris Heath - cllr.chris.heath@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Cllr Andrew McHugh - cllr. Andrew.McHugh@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Cllr Mike Bishop - cllr.mike.bishop@cherwell-dc.gov.uk