

OLD WOUGHTON

Summer 2021

News

The Newsletter of Old Woughton Parish Council



Opening Up

PO Box 7575
Milton Keynes
MK11 9GR

E: clerk@oldwoughton.org.uk

T: 01908 465811

W: www.oldwoughton.org.uk

Who's Who in the Parish

OLD WOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish of Old Woughton is divided into 4 small wards.
Details of your local Councillors are listed below.

Woughton on the Green North



Rob Grindley
Planning, Projects,
Green Spaces, Transport

rgrindley@
oldwoughton.org.uk



Roy Kenyon
Allotments, Finance
& Budget, Projects,
Liaison for Transport

rkenyon@
oldwoughton.org.uk



Phil Nash
Allotments,
Communications,
OWIS/IT, Projects

pnash@
oldwoughton.org.uk

Woughton on the Green South



Ray Brown
Allotments,
Planning, Projects.

rbrown@oldwoughton.org.uk



Charlotte Hall
CHAIR

Finance & Budget,
Planning, Projects Lead, Liaison for Parks Trust,
OWPC Representative - Welfare Trust,
Communications

chall@oldwoughton.org.uk

Woughton Park



**Vanessa
Freeman Gwynn**
VICE CHAIR

Projects,
Liaison for MKC Consultation and Parks Trust,
Communications
vgwynn@oldwoughton.org.uk



Geoff Long
glong@oldwoughton.org.uk

Dog & Litter Bins, Projects, Green Spaces,
Liaison for Canal & River Trust

Passmore



Mary Major
Liaison for Parishes Forum,
Projects, Noticeboards, Finance & Budget

mmajor@oldwoughton.org.uk



Vacancy

The Borough of Milton Keynes is divided into larger wards, OWPC is part of the Campbell Park and Old Woughton Ward. Your ward councillors are:

Clerk



Vacancy

Finance & Budget,
Environment, OWIS/IT, Data Protection
Office, Responsible Financial Officer
clerk@oldwoughton.org.uk



Terry Baines

terry.baines@milton-keynes.gov.uk
T. 01908 730314 / 07846 697237



Paul Trendall

paul.trendall@milton-keynes.gov.uk
T. 07793 080425



Charlotte Hall

charlotte.hall@milton-keynes.gov.uk
T. 07885 330797



Our Next Parish Council
Meetings Are On Monday:

12th July 2021
13th September 2021

9th August Annual Parish Meeting

VENUE: St. Mary's Church

CONTACT US

<https://oldwoughton.org.uk>

01908 465811

clerk@oldwoughton.org.uk

OWPC, PO Box 7575,
Milton Keynes, MK11 9GR



Friends of
Old Woughton PC

Editorial

OLD WUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

Hello again from all the team and we really do mean - again! Since the Spring edition, the parish elections postponed from May 2020 have been held and eight of the nine retiring members are back in harness, with a process underway to Co-opt a replacement for Jeremy Morrison for the Passmore ward. All the details are on page 2, including the revised list of responsibilities agreed at May's AGM.

It's also a case of new beginnings for our Chair, as she starts out on her first full year in office. Charlotte talks about a "new pencil case, new notebook and a new horizon" in her column opposite and also shares the very good news of her election to Milton Keynes Council representing the whole Campbell Park and Old Woughton ward – anyone with two photographs in Old Woughton News deserves our gratitude - thank you so much Cllr. Hall!

Our Centrefold feature is also about beginning afresh and, as signalled last time, the new Council is already turning its thoughts to the parish finances. We urge you to spend a little time on the budget survey on page 8 to help inform our discussions about the 2022/23 draft budget and the Precept required to meet parishioners' vision for our local area. In something of a plot spoiler, the investment of the reserves inherited back in 2012 is drawing to a close and we now need collectively to agree whether that's 'job done' or whether to keep up the pace and raise more funds to support a greater range of projects. The graph re-produced on page 4 captures how very economical OWPC is to run even in comparison to our neighbouring parishes, but it's your views that will shape the final decision, so do please respond on-line at <https://oldwoughton.org.uk/survey/> or by using the tear-off survey sheet and posting it through your councillor's door.

An altogether more joyous beginning, however, is the ability to socialise again with friends and neighbours and in the warmer summer months a host of outdoor activities beckon (see page 6 for some new initiatives). Frustratingly, litter-picking is a perennial commitment and new dates are published for each of the four wards, but even this can lift spirits and we hear from one of our young people on the sense of achievement a good clear-up can bring. Maybe we can tempt you to join us?

Whatever you decide, here's to a great Summer!

THE COMMS TEAM - Charlotte, Phil & Vanessa

The Chair

OLD WUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

Well here we are! You have a new parish council team who have been formally elected - seven of us unopposed. We are so very, very lucky to have such committed volunteers stepping forward to take on the responsibilities of Parish Councillors - the first tier of local government. We say goodbye (and huge thanks) to Jeremy Morrison, who is moving away, but we are already working with a resident from Passmore with a view to Co-option, which would make us complete again – to the envy of many of our neighbouring councils (eg Simpson & Ashland have 50% vacancy).

As we start our new 3-year terms of 'office', it somehow feels like the start of a new school year: new pencil case, new notebook and a new horizon! In our last edition, we reflected on how we had evolved as a completely new Parish Council and the financial mechanics of the Precept and the details of how we function. We now look to you, our residents, to help us shape the next era of your parish council.

It seems that the themes of the day are about involvement, engagement and strategy and how we bring those together in the further interests of Old Woughton. Co-incidentally, I took the personal decision to get even more involved by running a campaign for MKC Ward Councillor and now I find have two pictures on page 2 having also been elected on the 6th May for Campbell Park and Old Woughton - a rich reward indeed and a huge privilege! I believe this will come to be recognised as yet more tools in our box, as I will be able to get closer to gaining information and finding solutions from the higher tier of local government.

Crucially, I remain very much rooted in local issues and would like to know what matters to YOU? So, it is most fitting that this Newsletter carries our first survey on OWPC's financial approach going forward. I would encourage you to complete our survey on pages 7 and 8 so we can truly hear and understand your local voice.

Survey results in the autumn edition – thanks in advance for your attention.

Charlotte Hall

THE ALL NEW ELECTRIC MILTON KEYNES BOAT,

Electra, which bears the OWPC logo, undergoing "sea trials" after being launched on the Grand Union canal at Campbell Wharf. In the picture, erstwhile OWPC councillor Jeremy Morrison is at the helm. If you want to find out more about Electra and how to book a trip go to <https://www.bmkwaterway.org/mkcommunityboatelectra>.



In the Spring edition, we looked at how OWPC fits into the arrangements for local government nationally and, specifically, how it is financed to deliver its role as a first tier authority. We also reported that there were upcoming elections to the PC on the 6th May and the newly-elected councillors are now looking to their programme of work leading up to setting the draft budget for public consultation in the Autumn.

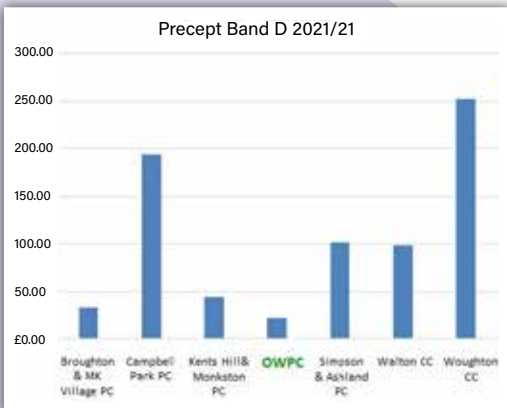
Your feedback is very important in helping shape that debate, but we realise that local government finance isn't for everyone and so we thought we should scope out some alternative models about what sort of parish council we want to fund going forward. So please read on, then go to our **website** and **fill in the survey online here** <https://oldwoughton.org.uk/survey/>, or **fill in survey on pages 7 and 8**.

In the very beginning...

Let's start with a little context. After its creation on 1st April 2012, OWPC adopted a statement designed to capture its distinctive spirit or ethos, which has guided us ever since:

The early years

As we read in the last issue, OWPC came into being with a precept levied by our previous local authority which meant our first precept amounted to a total of £59,931. The precept amount levied was halved in the following year and by the third year it was reduced to a total of £9,104. Thereafter, in keeping with our ethos, it was decided firstly to keep the precept amount unchanged (i.e. no inflationary uplift); and, secondly, to safeguard these monies in a general reserve whilst we learned how to manage the new parish effectively. The graph on page 8 of the Spring edition shows OWPC spending as one of the very lowest across the whole of the borough of Milton Keynes and noticeably less than our immediate neighbours:



OUR ETHOS: COMMUNITY – SERVICE – ECONOMY

Our ethos is thus strongly embedded in the local community which is evidenced by the large numbers of residents who regularly turn out to PC meetings. We are highly service-orientated, acting promptly and appropriately to ensure our responsibilities are fully discharged in the best interests of its residents. We are passionate about preserving, enhancing and protecting our beautiful, semi-rural environment. In the wider realm we work enthusiastically with Milton Keynes Council, The Parks Trust, neighbouring parishes and other bodies. In addition to doing our business effectively and efficiently, we are also determined to do it economically and overall to give the very best value for money. To this end we maintain the very lowest, operational cost base that we can and our financial affairs are completely transparent and accountable.

Growing more confident

Incredibly, to us at least, OWPC will be 10 years old next April - it has taken all this time to invest those opening Reserves. However, from 2022/23, we have to decide what level of spend we want to make available to facilitate new requests for parish council services. We clearly understand what our operational costs are so this seems a good time to engage in a consultation about what sort of parish council you, our residents, would like.

The Reserves

On its creation, OWPC inherited the equivalent of its annual Precept as a cash Reserve, but the size of this reserve was commented upon by the External Auditor in terms of best practice. Since 2012, OWPC has both reduced the size of its Precept, to a level below that required to cover all operational costs, whilst investing in a series of small, local projects. This has been undertaken in order to reduce the size of the inherited Reserves to a level in keeping with best practice in relation to our operational needs. Our Reserves policy currently requires us to retain £18.5k in Reserves.

The Precept

If the Parish Council continues to operate as now, but with no capital projects, such as the defibrillator in Turpyn Court, planting trees on Baskerfield Grove or landscaping in Woughton Park and Passmore, **there would still be a need to increase the precept, to compensate for the loss of subsidy to running costs**. Currently there are only five parishes of the 48 parishes in Milton Keynes, whose precept for a Band D Council Tax payer, is less than that in Old Woughton. In real terms it would mean a Band D Council Tax payer would pay another £12.91 per year in addition to the current amount of £121.83. That is little more than £1 per month.

Decision Time

Would you like a parish council that does only the minimum required to meet statutory requirements; or would you prefer one that attempts to improve our parish environment and engender a sense of community; or something in between?

In the Spring edition, we set out the four main roles that OWPC currently fulfills on your behalf and whilst Governance is now largely set from our experience, the other three activity areas are completely discretionary viz:



GOVERNANCE (basic model)

This includes all things we must do like employing the Clerk; Audit, IT and Insurance costs; holding public meetings with residents; and responding to the consultations from other public bodies, notably the Planning Authority. **Approx. 70% of annual spend.**

COMMUNICATIONS (optional)

OWPC has styled itself as a very open and communicative council with a physical Noticeboard in each of the four wards; targeted leaf-letting; a quarterly Newsletter; and latterly a parish calendar, but these activities come at a cost - **Approx. 10% of annual spend.**



ENCOURAGING VOLUNTEERING (optional)

All nine of your parish councillors are volunteers and claim no allowances, as we are happy to make our skills and experience work for the benefit of Old Woughton. We also try to facilitate opportunities for other neighbours to become involved (for example litter-picking; towpath repairs; and landscape improvements).

Costs are negligible - 0% in 2021/22.



CAPITAL WORKS (optional)

These are the lasting investments that OWPC makes in the area such as the improvements at the Patch allotments. In more recent years, delegated budgets of £2k per ward have been established and these have supported additional landscape maintenance and tree-planting; fairy lights at Christmas; bat boxes; and a defibrillator. **Approx 20% of annual spend.**

Over to you

Please do complete our short survey on-line here, <https://oldwoughton.org.uk/survey/> or use the QR code with your mobile phone. It will take but a few moments of your time, but will be enormously helpful to your newly-elected council. Alternatively, fill in pages 7 and 8 and pop it through the letterbox of your local councillor.



Thank you!

DID YOU KNOW....

For each £1,000 increase to the total £9,104 parish precept there would be an increase of £2.40 p.a. for a Band D property.

Allotment News

The growing season is well underway now after rather a slow start through a cold dry early Spring. The Patch allotments have proved to be a great outlet from the pandemic over the last year. So much so that there is currently a significant waiting list for plots, although OWPC parishioners have preference.

The Patch Allotment Association, who manage the allotments on a day to day basis on behalf of OWPC, have just created a website to support the community of tenants at the Patch. You can find their website here, <https://www.patchallotments.com/>.



Scan here for the website



Treebilee

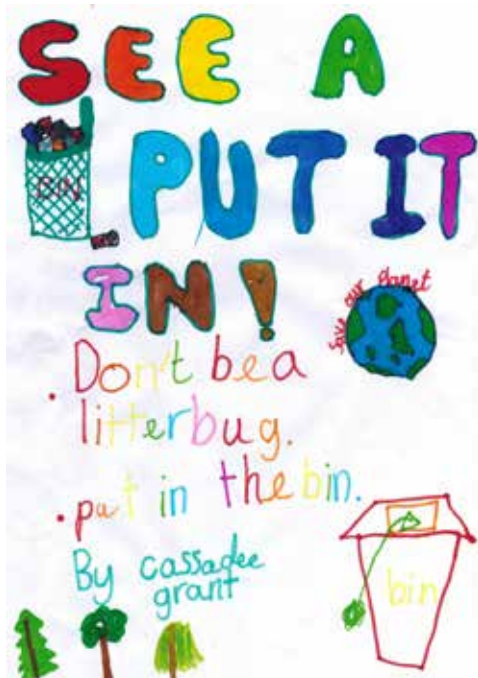
To mark the occasion of the platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II there is an opportunity to plant a number of trees in support of the Queen's Green Canopy project. In partnership with the Woodland Trust, a range of 'tree packs' from 15 to 400 saplings are being made available for free to Parish Councils and community groups. OWPC is exploring possible sites and has identified Lucas Place in Woughton on the Green and the replacement of the missing Rowan Trees as one option. The trees would compliment our existing Jubilee trees including Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Oak tree planted in 1887 between the church and pub (pictured circa 1939) and the Coronation Cherry trees along The Green planted in the 1950s.

If you have any thoughts on this proposal or other possible sites for groups of trees please contact:



rgrindley@oldwoughton.org.uk

A Young Reader Writes



Upcoming Parish Litter Picking dates for your diary

- 10:30am July 10th Woughton South, meet at the seat
- 10:30am August 14th Woughton North, meet at the north car park
- 10:30am September 11th Passmore, meet at the noticeboard
- 10:30am October 16th Woughton Park, meet at the noticeboard

Environmental Round-Up

As we all begin to enjoy the summer months, a number of our partner bodies have launched initiatives to help our local spaces, so why not get involved yourself?

Buglife's 'B-lines' (insect superhighways)

B-Lines is a network of insect pathways connecting the best remaining wildflower-rich habitats across the country. This network will support the recovery of threatened species and restore abundant populations of insects that are essential for pollinating our crops and wildflowers. B-Lines are designed to help pollinators, they will help a huge range of other wildlife too.

See more information about Buglife and B Lines here <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/>



Canal & River Trust's # plastics challenge

The Canal & River Trust have a campaign to reduce the amount of plastic waste in our waterways supported by Deborah Meaden.

For more details go to their website

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/features/plastic-and-litter-in-our-canal>.



MK Park's Trust – talk – 19th August @ 19.15pm, Howe Park Wood 'Water, water everywhere – the balancing lakes of Milton Keynes'

Have you ever wondered why Milton Keynes experiences very little residential flooding compared to other parts of the UK despite the prevalence of waterways across the city?

In this talk you will find out about the intricate system of balancing lakes and urban drainage systems that help protect MK.

There will also be an opportunity to discover some of the problems that these bodies of water can bring and how The Parks Trust surveys for these. If conditions on the day permit, there will be a demonstration of a Blue Green Algae survey and an opportunity to find out what impact this can have on the waterbodies.

Booking required:

<https://theparkstrust.digitickets.co.uk/event-tickets/31741>

What are your views?

We are seeking your views and ideas.

Building on the article in the centre pages of the Spring edition on parish precepts and the follow up article on pages 4 & 5 of this edition explaining the current state of the Parish reserves, we are seeking your input to guide us in how we shape the budget for the next and subsequent financial years. We would appreciate it, therefore, if you, and other members of your household, could spend a little time to complete the survey below **by July 31st 2021** – you do not have to reply to every question, just those issues you feel most strongly about living locally.

Please go to the OWPC website: oldwoughton.org.uk/Survey where you can complete the survey online or use the adjacent **QR code** on your mobile phone. Alternatively fill in the **paper survey** here, tear off the page and fold it; then either deliver to your nearest councillor or ring the Parish telephone no. **(01908 465811)** and arrange with the clerk for it to be collected. *We'd be delighted to hear back from you.*



Questions	Answers
Q1 – Does OWPC's ethos (on page 4) remain valid or what changes would better reflect how you think about your local community here in Old Woughton?	
Q2 – What are your views on the work of OWPC's Communications Team?	
Q3 - Do you think it is difficult to contact your parish council?	
Q4 – Are you aware of OWPC's Notification email service to keep residents informed about imminent events (waste collection changes; marathon routes etc.)? Are there other topics we should address with them? (If you wish to receive these notifications please go to the Contacts page on the Website and provide your details.)	
Q5 – Is the content of the Newsletters informative? Are there topics that we should or shouldn't cover? Is the quarterly publication frequency about right?	
Q6 - Do you think the Newsletter provides a positive image of our parish?	
Q7 – Would you like to write an article and/or submit photographs for use in the Newsletter, Website or other OWPC publications?	
Q8 – Would you buy an OWPC 2022 calendar? If so, please indicate how many copies and how much you would be prepared to pay for your order.	
Q9 – How often do you use OWPC's Website and do you find it informative? Is there material that we should or shouldn't include?	

Continue overleaf...



<p>Q10 – Do you think the Website conveys a positive image of our parish?</p>	
<p>Q11 – Are you aware that OWPC holds towpath repair working parties to assist the Canal & River Trust? Would you like to join one - they usually take about two hours at the weekend?</p>	
<p>Q12 – Are you aware that OWPC owns litter picking equipment and organises regular sessions to help keep the parish environment clean? The dates for the next sessions are listed on page 6 and if you would like to join in please provide your details here:</p>	
<p>Q13 – Please suggest other voluntary activities for OWPC’s consideration here:</p>	
<p>Q14 – Are you aware of the ward projects undertaken by the parish in the last two years, such as the provision of a defibrillator in Turpyn Court and landscape management in Woughton Park and Passmore? Do you think these were worthwhile? Are there other projects that you think OWPC should undertake?</p>	
<p>Q15 – Are you aware that in 2021/22 the OWPC Precept for a Band D property is £21.83? Of all 48 parishes in Milton Keynes only 6 pay less (see table reproduced on page 4 for nearest neighbours)?</p>	
<p>Q16 – Please suggest ideas for how OWPC might reduce its costs here:</p>	
<p>Q17 – How much, if at all, would you be prepared to increase the Parish precept to enable the Parish Council to undertake specific projects?</p>	

If you have said yes to joining any of our working parties or would like us to respond to any comments you have made, please fill in your contact details below.

Name :

Address 1 :

Address 2 :

Address 3 :

Postcode :

Email :

Thank you for your time in completing this survey, which provides important information to OWPC to shape its activities



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t 01234 720105 m 07879 403 538 www.bespokemedia.org