

OLD WUGHTON

Autumn 2022

News

The Newsletter of Old Woughton Parish Council



The Old School in Autumn

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Who's Who in the Parish

OLD WUGHTON 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

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Phil Nash
Allotments,
Communications,
OWIS/IT, Projects

pnash@
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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

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

glong@oldwoughton.org.uk

Passmore



Mary Major

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

mmajor@oldwoughton.org.uk

**Roshini
Wickramasinghe**
Projects

rwickramasinghe@oldwoughton.org.uk

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



Vicky Mote

CI/LCA QUALIFIED

Finance & Budget, Environment, OWIS/IT, Data
Protection Officer, Responsible Financial Officer

clerk@oldwoughton.org.uk

Charlotte Hall

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Paul Trendall

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Annual Parish Meeting -
2nd November 2022 at 7pm

Our Next Parish Council
Meetings Are On Monday:

14th November 2022,
9th January 2023 and 13th March 2023

7.30pm. VENUE: St. Mary's Church

CONTACT US

<https://oldwoughton.org.uk>

01908 465811

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



Friends of
Old Woughton PC

Editorial

OLD WOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

Welcome to this Halloween edition of the OWPC Newsletter. We bring you a spooky amount of good news, when all about us seems chaotic.

Firstly, we are pleased to confirm the Co-option of Cllr. Wickramasinghe, who joins Cllr. Major in representing the Passmore ward – once again, Old Woughton has a full complement of parish councillors and you can read about Roshini's background at p7.

Also at p7, we are equally pleased to be able to announce the appointment of our new Clerk: Vicky Mote - those of you who have attended parish council meetings in person will recognise Vicky as the locum clerk, who supported OWPC through its transition between previous postholders and it seems that won her over – congratulations to all of us! As you will read, Vicky has a host of senior clerking experience and is available now to take your enquiries: clerk@oldwoughton.org.uk.

A successful spell has also been cast over the local devolved landscape debate, which we've been reporting on over many years recently. OWPC has always been committed to the highest landscape standards, but our colleagues at MK City Council have struggled to meet our requests in the face of constant budget and, consequently, standards reductions. It is with considerable pride, therefore, that we can rehearse with you in the centrefold, that after much lobbying, a breakthrough trial whereby MKCC transfers its landscaping role not to OWPC, which is ill-equipped to respond due to its 'relatively small size, but directly to The Parks Trust – the nationally award-winning charity. Do please give us your reaction to these important developments: Communications@oldwoughton.org.uk.

Finally, and most deserving of the prize for best pumpkin, we carry a statement from MK Dons Sport & Education Trust (MK Dons SET) about becoming the new management of the Woughton Playing Fields. We hope you will be interested to join the support group welcoming the SET into the ways of Old Woughton.

So, a bumper edition – is it trick or treat? – you decide!

THE COMMS TEAM



VOLUNTEERS GROUP

You may have noticed occasional photos and items in the newsletter over the years, showing various voluntary activities around the parish including litter picking, canal towpath repairs, gardening, etc. To support these activities we use a few email groups. Since all these activities are various forms of volunteering, we thought it better to have a single email group, volunteers@oldwoughton.org.uk. If you'd like to find out more about these activities and how to sign up contact volunteers@oldwoughton.org.uk.

The Chair

OLD WOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

As I sat down to reflect on the last months, I was very struck by the constant uncertainties that have filled our daily lives. Indeed, even the timing of this edition has been a slippery fish!

In my round-up of events since the last Annual Parish Meeting on page 6 we see how we have been on a roller-coaster of highs and lows from living with COVID to the wonderful celebrations of City status, the Platinum Jubilee and the equally heartfelt mourning of her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Further, we cannot ignore the impact of matters across the world and the economic pressures that face our residents - even now we are deciding how best to respond locally.

As a Council we have also been focussed on how to make best use of our resources and have put together a draft budget (page 5), which not only addresses how we can deliver a new landscaping model but that sets out a framework that is sustainable and as responsive as we can be in a changeable time.

However, what we DO know is that we have other resources and that is the amazing energy and skills of our own residents. With this in mind, we hope that you will come and talk with us at our Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 2nd November to see how we can move forward with creating some Community Volunteering Groups (Speed Watch; Events Group; Community Support groups etc). We would love to hear your ideas!

It is with great pleasure that we welcome Vicky Mote as our newly appointed Clerk - she brings with her huge experience which will undoubtedly help us to develop as a Parish Council. A big welcome too to Roshini in Passmore Ward who has already been hard at work planting trees, litter picking and championing our community!

I look forward to seeing you on the 2nd November (7.00-8.30pm, St Mary's).

Cllr. Charlotte Hall, Chair OWPC



Responding to yew

It is a sad fact that the most numerous complaints from residents are in the broad category of landscape maintenance, so much so that almost since its inception Old Woughton PC has had a standing item on all its agenda: *Environment Log*.



However, OWPC hasn't just been logging the issues, but has been formulating a plan and trying to open the right doors to seek change. Our analysis is that two things are working in tandem:

that MK Council has had to reduce the funds available for mowing etc., under the weight of overwhelming adult social care pressures (which are not projected to change) whilst, secondly, neighbours can see what is possible, because of the excellent work of The Parks Trust in the majority of our parish.

As regular readers will know, for several years now we have been exploring the potential offered to the PC to affect change under MKC's (now MKCC's) 'Devolved Services' initiative, whereby local councils like us have taken on responsibility for landscape services themselves (e.g. all the larger town and parish councils have gone down this route). This has never been an

attractive route locally, because we're nine volunteers in fixed term roles, with a Clerk who is only funded for 7 hours a week, none of which require landscaping experience.

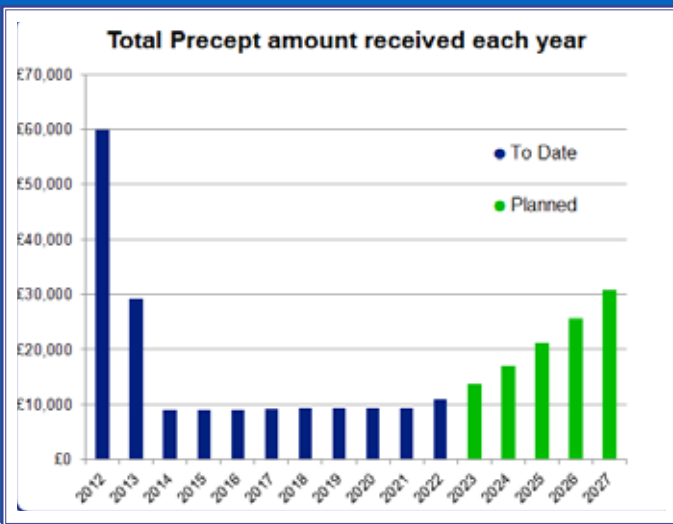
Yet we have not given up in pressing our case for an innovative solution and we have now been heard – MKCC, under a Pilot project, is prepared to support a straight transfer of its landscape activities to The Parks Trust (ie without OWPC acting as intermediary). The new arrangements would come into being in September 2023 when MKCC's re-tendering of the existing contract with SERCO comes into force. The Parks Trust has agreed to accept the transfer for an initial 5 years with a break clause after three years.

So far, so excellent. The crunch point, unsurprisingly, is that with MKCC having had to reduce standards there is now a quantifiable gap with what The Parks Trust would find acceptable to manage and, indeed, what the MK public has come to expect from a national, award-winning charity. Therefore, OWPC is being asked to contribute to the funding gap at a rate currently projected at approx. £5k per annum (or approximately £1per month for a Band D property).

OWPC is unanimously of the view that this is a price worth paying to respond to you and your concerns and wishes to invite feedback. A final decision must be made at our November 14th meeting, so that MKCC knows whether or not to include Old Woughton in its re-tendering exercise.

Please speak to your councillor or reply to the Comms. Team on:
communications@oldwoughton.org.uk

Another year another budget!

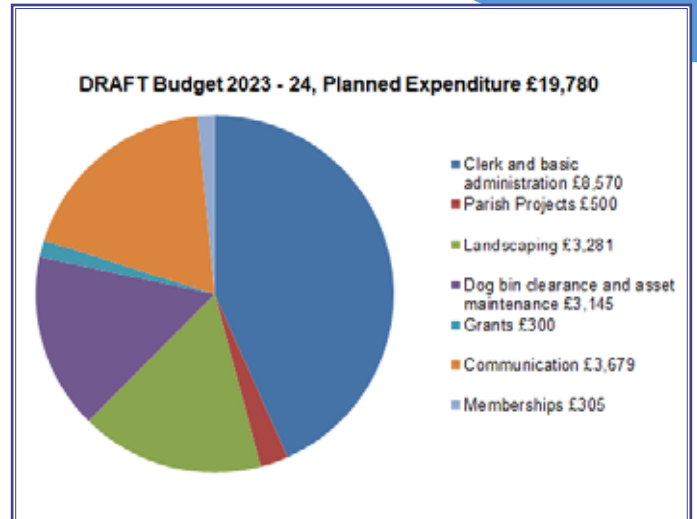


Further to the completion of the planned reduction of OWPC's reserves over the decade since our creation, this time last year we demonstrated the need for the first increase in the Precept. The reduction in reserves had largely been achieved by providing a subsidy to OWPC operating costs and now it was necessary to ensure that the Precept provided fully for those costs.

To that end, for 2022/23, we adopted a strategy to increase the precept by 20% each year for the next four years through to 2025-26. Since then the issue of devolved landscaping to parish councils within Milton Keynes, which has been under discussion for a number of years, is finally coming to a conclusion. We have been in detailed discussions with Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC) and the Parks Trust about a particular course of action for our Parish (see the article opposite). As we go to press, these discussions are being finalised with information from MKCC.

Whatever solution is adopted for landscape maintenance, for those areas of the parish that are currently maintained by MKCC, there will be an increase in costs, as there has been for all parishes in Milton Keynes. Until the landscaping maintenance arrangements are finalised we cannot be absolutely certain of the budget implications for next year, but we do have an idea of what the impact on the budget might be. We currently understand that impact may be in the order of an additional £5,000 increase in our operational costs.

In order to reflect this reality, we can reduce the amount allocated to Capital Expenditure, specifically to Parish Projects, since most of these are aimed at addressing landscape issues. We anticipate that we will spend less in this financial year, than has been budgeted for. We are, therefore, able to propose a budget that would increase the precept by 25%, only 5% higher than the 20% we had already planned for next year. We will, however, need to



extend the period of at least 20% per annum increases for a further two years through to 2027-28.

We have maintained our original ethos of efficiency and economy. We have protected the existing Communications activities (Noticeboards; Newsletters; the OWPC email Notification service and Website; and targeted leaflet drops), which so many of you clearly value). A range of other voluntary works are also supported including litter-picking and towpath repairs. We are looking at migrating OWIS, the PC's current IT platform from Google to Microsoft 365 to reduce on-going costs, whilst the Clerk's hours are retained at 7 per week.

The key areas of expenditure are shown in the pie chart and the planned precept amounts for the next five years are shown in the histogram.

Please do come along to the Annual Parish Meeting on 2nd November to discuss or take a few moments to provide your feedback to the Communications Team:
communications@oldwoughton.org.uk

250 scones -

1 marmalade sandwich and 100 degrees in the shade!



MARCH 2022 – MAY 2022

DEC 2021 – FEB 2022

In January 2022 the budget for 2022/23 was agreed giving rise to the first precept increase for the Parish in 10 yrs. Whilst the ethos of the Council remains firmly rooted in efficiency and economy, we have reached a point where we need to financially ensure that we are best placed to maintain appropriate reserves, have the ability to respond to opportunities and deliver activities that benefit and meet the needs of our residents and communities. Indeed, discussions continued with MKC and The Parks Trust to look at alternative landscaping opportunities.

With the Queen's Platinum Jubilee year the Council signed up to the Queen's Canopy project – whereby parishes across the whole of MK could have access to trees to plant in celebration of this historic event.

During this period an appeal was lodged against the refusal decision by MKC (now we are a City! MKCC) for the 5G Mast application opposite Baskerfield Grove. The Inspector, however, dismissed the appeal recognising the inappropriateness of the location.

In May we said farewell to Emma Wilson –Councillor for Passmore and welcomed Roshini to the team! We are hugely privileged to have a full complement of Councillors (x 9) and I for one must thank them for their hard work and commitment.

Our trees finally arrived and in urgent need of planting, as so late in the season. We are most grateful to our residents that have 'adopted' these trees and taken care of them – with many watering cans of water and a quiet reserve hoping none of them fail to thrive.



JUNE 2022 – AUG 2022

Celebration and a Community Together: OWPC had listened and responded to the question of hosting a Jubilee event in Old Woughton – and what an event it was! Wheelbarrows full of picnics; dancing and live music echoed through the grounds of Woughton House Hotel whilst residents enjoyed a cream tea and a chance to say hello to neighbours and come together - something that had not happened in a very long time.

* The Summer brought with it extreme heat and the lowest rainfall since 1976. It was extraordinary and alarming to see our lakes dry .. and our own thoughts turning to ways in which we could reduce the risk of fires.



SEPT 2022 – NOV 2022

We welcomed back, and have been thrilled, formally to appoint Vicky Mote as our part-time Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer for the parish council.

Little did we know that we would find ourselves having to ensure that we implement 'Operation London Bridge' on the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. This requires Councils to follow protocols in a strict time frame. A Book of Condolence was made available in St Mary's Church throughout the period of mourning and the Tower Team rang the church bells, again meeting their own 'London Bridge' schedules and timetables. We paused for a minute's silence at the War Memorial on the eve of the State Funeral - to pay our respects.

Work and 'walk and talks' continues with MKCC and The Parks Trust to develop a detailed landscaping model for the parish and, once more, we turn our focus on the process of preparing budgets and planning for the year ahead and beyond (as presented on page 5). Further, also building on the wonderful community spirit and resource, as so evident over the year we plan to work on creating a 'volunteers group' from which we can implement community activities such as 'Speed Watch'; event working groups; and more! This comes at a time when we need to be here in every way for each of our neighbours and communities

JOIN US!

So with this in mind – **please do come and join us on the 2nd November at the Annual Parish Meeting** and see if there might be a group that you would like to join or set up or have ideas that you would like to share.

Roshini Co-opted for Passmore Ward

I was born in Sri Lanka and started my career as a social compliance auditor in April 2002 and worked in different countries in Asia, the Middle East and Europe. I moved to the UK with the family in 2008 and have lived in Milton Keynes since 2009 with my husband and two boys.



I currently work as a senior registered Certified Social Compliance Auditor (CSCA) for a private company and conduct these audits in the UK and Europe to ensure suppliers' compliance in various sectors including food / non-food / jewellery / diamonds and services. I am passionate about my job as it helps to improve the living standards of the employees, society and, eventually, the countries where these audits happen.

I love to help people and have done charitable activities to raise funds for the local primary school / football teams / Ampthill rugby team, as well as for a local church: Christ the King, Kents Hill. I was a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Milton Keynes until 2021.

I look forward to working with you all in my new capacity.

Progress at the Playing Fields

The Milton Keynes Dons Sport and Education Trust is pleased to announce that it has entered into a 25-year lease for the operation of Woughton-on-the-Green Sports Ground and Pavilion.

As with any new operator, we will, with users and stakeholders, be taking some time to evaluate the facility over the course of the next 6-12 months in order to develop a plan that reflects the needs and aspirations of partners as well as fulfilling our own objectives. As a first step we are pleased to say that, with some re-organisation of pitches, we have been able to release additional pitches for community use and we are talking to some potential users currently.

We will be busy getting to grips with the challenges ahead but here are some of the highlights of what we hope to achieve

- We will develop a local steering group to ensure that feedback is sourced from facility users and non-users to ensure that we are clear about what is requested and improvements that can be made to all aspects of the facility.
- follow up on both positive and any negative feedback received and respond accordingly in a timely manner.
- A dedicated email address will be created for facility users and community members to make contact with centre management

Clerk Profile

The Clerk to the Council is the Proper Officer of the Council and as such is under a statutory duty to carry out all the functions of a council's Proper Officer and in particular to serve or issue all the notifications required by law.



The parish council Clerk is the 'engine' of an effective parish council. They are the principal executive and adviser and, for the majority of smaller parish councils, is the Officer responsible for the administration of its financial affairs.

ABOUT VICKY

Originally from Rhodesia, I spent most of my growing up in South Africa and have been living in the UK for nearly 26 years, of which 20 of those have been in Milton Keynes.

I bring with me a wealth of knowledge and experience in finance, project management, customer service, health & safety, legislation, process improvement and policies to mention a few. I started my career in the UK within the corporate sector, working for Mercedes-Benz Financial Services, predominantly in administrative and operational roles up to mid senior level. After redundancy I took a career change and started my first role within the public sector as a Clerk/RFO in 2013 to date and am qualified at level 3 CILCA.

I am very passionate about what I do and love the variety the role of Clerk/RFO brings. It is very rewarding serving the community, who are at the heart of what we do as a parish council.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to get in contact with me. I do work part-time however, I will endeavour to respond to you within 24 hours during week-days. Email: clerk@oldwoughton.org.uk

to discuss ideas for new activities, provide confidential feedback and discuss any issues and concerns around the facility. Emails and calls will receive feedback within 48 hours.



- Feedback from centre users and partner users will be monitored and reported on to a project steering group biannually to ensure highest quality provision. Serious incidents will be reported to the next possible steering group meeting.
- SET will provide annual meetings for facility users, community organisations and local residents to meet with facility organisers. This will provide the opportunity for centre staff to share the activities and achievements of the centre but also address issues and concerns face to face with the public.

We hope that you will join us on this journey. If you have any queries in the meantime please e-mail Delia.Graves@mkdonsset.com

- WHEELIE BINS! -

As you are probably aware MKCC plan to replace plastic bags and the glass crates used in waste collection next year, with additional wheeled bins. There will be more information coming out from MKCC on the new 'Wheelie bin' programme, but in the meantime we have asked for site visits to the more complex areas in the parish and will be looking to see how we can signpost residents to the latest updates and key information! Do visit MKCC website for the 'frequently asked questions' on this matter. *We will keep you posted!*



Some of you may have noticed that the rickety unsafe old balustrade has now been replaced by a new oak balustrade. The brickwork beneath it has also been replaced. It has yet to be stained.

The Lych gate was originally built to commemorate the villagers who served and died in the First World War. Their names are inscribed in the right hand side.

A big thank you to MKCC Highways for implementing the repairs!

COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

It is a worrying time for many families right now, yet many local agencies are available to provide guidance and support free of charge. Below is a brief extract from MK City Council's Factsheet giving an idea of the types of services available. There are similar services for childcare, energy efficiency and food costs:

CRISIS SUPPORT FROM YOUR CITY COUNCIL

Apply for these current schemes at:

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/cost-living-support

- Emergency funds for essential living costs eg food, repairs, school uniform (apply under Household Support Fund)
- Essential household goods, crisis food vouchers and fuel (apply under Local Welfare Provision)
- Extra help if you're on Housing Benefit and behind on your rent (apply under Discretionary Housing Payments)

If you prefer not to contact the council then why not approach the Citizens Advice Bureau:

If you're in a vulnerable situation, someone at the Citizens Advice Extra Help Unit could take on your case. The Citizens Advice Energy Help Unit will also raise issues with energy suppliers. Call **0808 223 1133** or use online webchat. For textphone, dial **18001** first.

OLD WOUGHTON P.C.

OWPC is carrying the full factsheet on all its noticeboards and you are welcome to contact the Clerk (see page 2) for further signposting if going on-line is not for you.

EVENTS

2nd November 2022

Annual Parish Meeting: 7-8.30pm - St Mary's

13th November 2022

Remembrance Sunday: 10.40am - War Memorial

26th November 2022

'Winter Welcome': 2-4pm - St Mary's Church

4th December 2022

Ouzel Valley Park Run: The Parks Trust

11th December 2022

MK Winter Half Marathon

St Mary's Church – Woughton on the Green - Services:

18th Dec 2022 - 6pm Carol Service

24th Dec 2022 - 11.30pm Christmas Eve Holy Communion Service

25th Dec 2022 - 10am Christmas Day Holy Communion Service

1st Jan 2023 - 10am New Year's Day Holy Communion



UK LAST POSTING DATES – don't be late

Mon 19th Dec	2nd Class, 2nd Class Signed For and Royal Mail 48
Wed 21st Dec	1st Class, 1st Class Signed For, Royal Mail 24 and Royal Mail Tracked 48
Thur 22nd Dec	Special Delivery Guaranteed Royal Mail Tracked 24
Fri 23rd Dec	Special Delivery Guaranteed with Saturday Guarantee

For more info:

<https://royalmail.com/christmas/last-posting-dates>

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