

## **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**Venue: Memorial Hall**

**7PM, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

### **Agenda**

**2301 Welcome from the Chairman of the meeting**

**2302 Minutes of March 2022**

**2303 Chairman of the Parish Council's report**

**2304 Reports from Middleton Cheney organisations**

**2305 Questions from the public and any other business**

Local Government electors of Middleton Cheney who have the right to attend are invited to speak on any matter of relevance to the parish.



Alan Youel

Chairman of Middleton Cheney Parish Council

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# MIDDLETON CHENEY

## Parish Council



Parish Meeting Room  
Main Road  
Middleton Cheney  
Banbury  
Oxon  
OX17 2LR

### ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Venue: Village Hall, 7:30pm

24th March 2022

#### Minutes

#### **24/1001 Welcome and apologies**

The Vice-Chair, having stepped in for the Chair due to illness, welcomed residents to the meeting and passed on apologies from the Chair (Cllr. Allan).

#### **24/1002 Report from Parish Council Chairman**

The Chair opened with a report on the state of the council and discussed the improvements the parish had made to ensure that council operations continue to run in an efficient way.

The report also elaborated on the history of the council and the previous challenges Middleton Cheney Parish Council had faced over the last year, outlining covid and other factors as great challenges to the village.

Further, the chair discussed that spending reserves was a priority to the council, and that the council had actively been looking into improving the street lighting across the parish. The Chair concluded the report and mentioned that council will actively seek to co-opt more members throughout the year, welcoming further applicants.

#### **24/1003 Cllr Rebecca Breese – Planning advice and WNC update**

Cllr. Breese introduced herself to residents and explained the new council arrangements, detailing that South Northants Council and Northamptonshire County Council, would now be replaced by West Northants Unitary Authority (WNC).

Cllr. Breese updated residents on the joint court strategy, suggesting that WNC officers were investigating where to position strategic planning sites across West Northamptonshire. Cllr. Breese outlined that there had been a planned development on the A4 22, with a proposal of a new roundabout in Brackley.

Clerk: 01295 713500 - Email: [clerk@middletoncheney.org.uk](mailto:clerk@middletoncheney.org.uk)

**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - Venue: Village Hall, 7:30pm, 24th March 2022**

Cllr. Breese also discussed the recent West Northants Council (WNC) green bin charge, outlining that the local government ombudsman recommended the charge. Cllr. Breese suggested that central government had been looking at making green bins free, and indicated that if this was to happen, then West Northamptonshire residents may be reimbursed.

A resident asked Cllr. Breese what they could do to prevent the A4 22 roundabout development and how they can help fight against the proposal.

Cllr. Breese stated that she had already rejected to the plan, however the application had once again been submitted. Cllr. Breese referred to current WNC planning policies, highlighting that the development does not reflect WNC's vision and policy provisions. She indicated that WNC officers would conduct an active consultation on this development and urged residents wanting to object, to object to unique material issues, while also ensuring that each resident writes their own individual objection.

The Farthinghoe By-Pass was discussed, and residents asked Cllr. Breese for an update on this matter.

Cllr. Breese responded by highlighting that big infrastructure projects such as this, must have a good business case, and with regards to this specific application Cllr. Breese does not believe that a sensible business case had been proposed, casting her doubt on this specific application. Cllr. Breese outlined how WNC had received 1.5m of Levelling Up Funds from central Govt to fund this project, but due to the immense work on the developments it is expected that WNC would have to contribute a further 5m towards the development, a fee which WNC would be reluctant to spend without a 'sound' business plan.

Another resident raised the issue of rural road taking a lot of the impact from A43 overflow traffic, and asked Cllr. Breese how this could be controlled.

Cllr. Breese recommended that the resident proposes alternative suggestions/mitigations, deriving that this input is indeed very valuable when considering the application .

Residents also discussed the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, which took place in 2019 and was halted due to the pandemic. Raising the question if a Neighbourhood Plan would make a difference with planning applications.

The Chair responded that there had been no new developments on the neighbourhood plan and suggested that the neighbourhood plan carries very little weight over strategic developments, essentially no longer having the power to fight against developers. The Chair highlighted that even if the development was paused, it would only go on to win in appeal – much like past developments across the parish. The Chair reiterated his remarks that if residents wanted to continue work on the Neighbourhood Plan then the PC would support them in doing so, however residents would firstly have to come together to make necessary arrangements/suggestions.

Question on the recent solar/eco electric developments ongoing in Bicester.

Cllr. Breese clarified that Bicester is currently listed as an ecozone, thus necessary enforcement of all buildings requiring particular clean electrical outputs would be routinely

monitored. Cllr. Breese reported that this is a recent development and WNC will look into including further climate control measures within future WNC Planning policies.

#### **24/1004 Reports from other village organisations**

The Chair read the Tennis Club and Pre-School Reports to attendees and thanked both organisations for sending in their reports.

The Chair welcomed any residents to read out reports which were not sent to the parish clerk.

A resident volunteered to read out the local library reports which set out the libraries plan to recruit IT support and maintenance volunteers. As well as outlining that the library will begin to be open to more groups from the 21st of September allowing 24 organisations to attend, and finally urged local residents to get involved and register to volunteer.

The Middleton Cheney playing field association report was also read at the meeting, outlining that since the pandemic outdoor facilities and sports are an absolute priority within the parish, ensuring that residents can keep active and continue to enjoy the playing fields. The association has also provided a space for residents to donate items towards the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

The jubilee committee reported that a series of grants had been approved by the parish to fund particular events. Urging residents to enjoy the events throughout the Jubilee week.

#### **24/1005 Any other issues parishioners wish to discuss**

Residents asked if Middleton Cheney parish councillors in attendance could stand up and introduce themselves, so that residents may become familiar with who they are and what they wish to add to the parish.

All members present introduced themselves to a welcomed audience.

**Meeting Close**

## Middleton Cheney Parish Council – Chairman’s report

Good evening, Residents, Members and Officers.

It has once again been a difficult year for so many, what with the effects of global economic challenges, and the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, but despite this it has been wonderful to see the strong sense of community in Middleton Cheney.

Middleton Cheney Parish Council is extremely proud of its voluntary groups and organisations which work consistently to support the local community, some of which will report to the meeting shortly.

As is normal, the Parish Council have experienced highs and lows during the 2022/23 Financial Year. While maintaining the usual high quality of services though, the Parish Council managed to reduce the precept demand by approximately 15% in the last financial year, meaning a lower Parish Council element to resident’s council tax; and have again brought down the demand for the forthcoming year. Investment in updating streetlights from the SOX lighting to the latest LED technology last year is already realising significant savings in energy costs.

Following on from membership challenges in the previous year the Council has gone from strength to strength in the last 12 months. There have been few changes in Council membership. We were very sad to lose Councillors Stuart Howard and Peter Gliwitzki and thank them sincerely for their valued contributions. We are delighted to welcome Councillors Alison Knight, Kay Stevens, Rachel Washer and Nigel Mills. It is fantastic to see their commitment and enthusiasm to their roles, Cllr. Stevens being a returning Member of Council. It is without doubt they will be fantastic assets to the Council and community of Middleton Cheney.

Another very important personnel change in the financial year has been the appointment of our new Clerk Pip Davis. Pip has taken on the role with a great drive and passion and has quickly got to grips with the workings of Council. She is already making great strides on streamlining internal processes and procedures, as well as driving improvements to the fabric of the Council. Currently Pip is dedicating time to overhaul the Cemetery records after identifying significant weaknesses.

It was with deep regret the Parish Council closed the existing Cemetery provision to reservations earlier this year. For many years the Council has been building plans to enable acquisition to facilitate the opening of a new Cemetery provision within the village. Preparation of a Cemetery extension will be a major project for the Council in the coming years.

In addition to the scheduled monthly meetings, a number of Members gave additional time to attend Committees and Working Groups to address specific issues and support future events. This has been a fantastic effort by Members of the Parish Council and volunteers and is to be applauded. I would like to thank you all for your attendance and achievements and support over the last year.

It was very sad to lose her majesty Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022. This invoked operation London Bridge to which Council responded with great agility and precision. Many thanks to all members and the Clerk, who incidentally had been in post for only one month at the time, for their hard work to make this protocol successful, and particular thanks to Cllr. Burgess for the excellent delivery of the proclamation address.

The Council is working towards hosting a commemoration event over the coronation weekend which was to involve a battle re-enactment from the Sealed Knot. Unfortunately securing a suitable site to host the battle has not been achieved, so we have had to halt this element of the proposal. More details of the revised plan will be coming soon. Many thanks to Members and the Clerk for the great deal of work which has already taken place and is still going into this.

Throughout the hardships over the last few years, we have achieved so much. The time Members give of freely is noteworthy and although the Council carried some vacancies for a spell, we now only hold one vacancy. Members bring together diverse skills to support the Council work and those interested in becoming a Parish Councillor are invited to apply.

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## Middleton Cheney Parish Council – Chairman’s report

Our financial situation is sound, with adequate cash reserves, but with the continued financial pressures on local authorities we remain prudent. As Councillors it is imperative that we operate good financial stewardship principles to ensure we spend money wisely. We continue to look for every opportunity to save on our budgeted expenditure, and this year our External Auditor PKF Littlejohn will again audit to confirm our financial management. The previous year’s final audit returns have been delayed due to concerns raised, the auditors have highlighted their issues and weaknesses which will inform the latest AGAR submission accordingly.

The Parish Council have recently engaged a new contractor to maintain the Cemetery, parks, and open spaces in good order. Councillors are also currently working on various regeneration initiatives relating to green areas. The Council's Parks and open spaces continue to be well used, and the Council is proud and committed to retaining its open space provision and to build upon this for the benefit of parishioners now and in the future.

Finally, I must thank the Council's other staff, Debbie, and Richard. Who as a team have ensured that the village has been kept tidy, but moreover for their commitment to ensuring our facilities are kept clean and safe for all users. I am very grateful to them both.

I hope the Parish Council and parishioners continue to look forward to better times and the Council invites all to engage and attend its meetings and events and activities it is proud to host in Middleton Cheney.

Alan Youel  
Chairman

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## Middleton Cheney Library Supporters Group - Annual Report, April 2022 – April 2023

The year marked emergence from Covid, although the Vaccination Van, one of several public services, was present for our September Car Park Fair. The second year of this village card table, presentation was run attracting some twenty organisations. Later the same King Charles was proclaimed in the Primary Academy playground later that afternoon.

The Fair, which really should be part of a larger Fete (Takers?), may not survive but the outside Book Swap, spring and summer seasonal Plant Swap, and the indoor Jigsaw Exchange, all Covid products, will continue.

During the past year (calendar 2022) over 5,200 people have entered and used the Library. They have been met by two-person volunteer teams from a group of 31 adult volunteers who have contributed 1600 hours over the year.

Libraries have never been just about books and we regularly offer Bus and Blue pass issue and renewal. The national Summer Reading Challenge, and weekly (Wednesday) Rhyme Time are part of the service.

We are available for letting for events and already host a monthly Book Group, Model Group, occasional craft workshops and British Legion Meetings. We have also hosted West Northants. Community Service Department, Northamptonshire Police, and the Northamptonshire Energy Saving Programme. A Monday programme for Winter Warming, coordinated with the Parish Council and West Northants. received little support, but this seems to have been the case in most Northants. rural areas reporting.

During the year we received Nancy Long's Village Archive, a unique record of events, people and places. This joins a considerable collection of local books for reference. When we have achieved an integrated catalogue we are looking forward to further donation of Village scrapbooks and other material from the Parish Council.

Meanwhile we are collecting memories of the period between Coronations (1953-2023) and always welcome photos and saved paperwork which people don't know what to do with – this is the kernel of local history.

How do we fit it all in to the Library space? A recent volunteer, Sarah Guise came up with a proposal and with the help of her family and friends did a massive move in a single weekend. It has received nothing but praise and has released a new childrens' area, a study and consultation corner with the archive, a Young Adults reading area, light and space.

This built on a substantial improvement in storage and kitchen facilities funded through Section 106 money derived from new housing development.

In the coming year we have funding to improve the Library frontage and expect to resume monthly events managed in the past by Maggie Smith. Debbie Evans is now responsible for lettings and Events. She is available at [middletoncheneycmlbookings@gmail.com](mailto:middletoncheneycmlbookings@gmail.com)

Although we lost no Supporters from Covid some of our volunteers have not been able to work with us since 2020. After their up to twelve years volunteer service we are looking for a younger generation to build on what is very much the community hub which we ensured was saved from closure.

Volunteer time, creative ideas and publicity are always needed and such skills sometimes seem in short supply. Libraries, even volunteer libraries, will remain vulnerable as a public service but we hope that our continued diversification ... and a watchful eye for both opportunities and threats will keep Middleton's Library growing as a community-wide service.

In conclusion we must acknowledge the developing coordination with the Parish Council on matters of public information and events.

Brian Goodey

Chairman : Middleton Cheney Library Supporters Group

[middletoncheneycml@gmail.com](mailto:middletoncheneycml@gmail.com)

M/C History Society continues to thrive, having regular meetings on the fourth Monday of each month, 7.30 p.m., at All Saints Church.

Our talks cover local, national and international themes and subjects of specific or general interest. Recent topics have been "Working Trades in Middleton Cheney", "The History of Chocolate", "Working in Historic Houses", "The Battle of Middleton Cheney" and "The Oxford of Inspector Morse"

We are most grateful to speakers from within our own membership from time to time, but due to the rising cost of 'imported' speakers, and rise in heating costs, we have had to increase annual subscriptions to £15 this year. Visitors are always welcome at £4 per visit.

Our next meeting, 24<sup>th</sup> April, (The Pursuit of Pleasure" Victorian & Edwardian Leisure.) clashes with The Annual Parish Meeting, so I give my apologies with this report.

Chris Wells. (chairman).



The meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> May "Not just Napoleon and Jane Austen" Lesser known weird and wonderful memories from 1815.

Chris Wells. Chairman.

Ian West. Secretary.

Nigel Wadlow. Treasurer.