**Council’s Corner – November 2019**

**Thank you:**

As ever, there have been a wide variety of people who have helped in the village since our last mailing, some who help month-on-month without ever calling attention to themselves. Of particular note this month were: Lorna and Andrew, who kindly took in surveys at the Jam Jar; Pauline, who cleaned the bus shelter; Margaret who sends brilliant email updates, often at very short notice; and the whole group who help produce and distribute flyers such as this one.

Try as we might, the APC is bound not to know of all good works, so we would be very pleased to hear from you about whose name ought to be mentioned (contact: communication-officer@). However, to those mentioned and those who quietly just get on with helping, we thank you all very much.

**Community News and Notes:**

* Welcome to newest Council member Alan Smythson. Alan, his son Rob and his daughter-in-law Alex have bought one of the barns at Kingstone Farm, and Alan has taken on the role of co-ordinating volunteers within the parish. Please contact him if you feel there is a way you could lend a hand (volunteer-officer@).
* We are hoping to arrange a location for Christmas tree recycling for those without brown bins - more on this when we have it from VWHDC.
* We have had a report of cooked chicken bones being found on the Green, presenting a hazard to wildlife & pets, dogs in particular. We would ask all residents to ensure that such food-waste is always securely contained.

**Budget & precept:**

Following the precept increase last year a number of changes have been made to the structure of the budget to ensure that ‘ringfenced’ funds will be available to meet the future demands on the parish’s resources including general maintenance and replenishing that for the Village Green.

This can be achieved within a balanced budget meaning that the increase in the 2020/21 precept will be for inflation at CPI. The only possible exception to this would be any provision needed to maintain:-

**The Shopperbus Service:**

The ‘best case’ solution for 2020/21 is a replacement but parish specific service jointly funded by the parish [25%] and OCC [75%] - the cost to the parish would amount to some £1,415, and this **WOULD** need be added to this year’s precept. First response from OCC was positive but not yet guaranteed.

The long-term solution is likely to be a similarly equipped vehicle to the shopperbus, paid for & part maintained by OCC using existing grant money and driven by local volunteers. The cost to the parish is anticipated to be comparable to that above, but such a vehicle would also enable the parish to operate other routes such as a link to Shrivenham to connect to the S6 so that a larger proportion of the community could benefit.

**Planning:**

As the Ashbury Neighbour Plan is now in place, the newly formed Neighbourhood Plan Group [NPG[ has taken on the brief of replying to all planning issues on behalf of the Council. Several well-argued examples of their work has already appeared on the Ashbury website so do check it regularly. Queries and comments should now be addressed to: planning@ashbury.org.uk.

**Village Green Update:**

* With the completion of the main earth-moving work the new grass is now growing and looking very good. We're grateful to everyone for respecting the ‘keep off the grass’ signs.
* There are issues for the contractor to address with the surface of the playing field area and the entrance from Malthouse Close, and we have agreed a financial retention with the contractor until these issues are resolved.
* We've now moved onto the second phase of the project, the Heritage Tree Trail, which we launched at a public meeting in the Village Hall on 16 September at 7.30pm. The response has been very positive: we've received 15 offers of sponsorship so far – from individuals and groups.
* We have donated a tree to the St Mary’s Christmas Bazaar raffle, which will be planted with the first batch of trees on 1 December.

**Please join us to celebrate with hot drinks, mince pies and carols**.

* The second planting will be in March 2020. In the meantime, we'll be working to make sure we don't let the weeds grow, especially round the edge of the Green, and looking at what else we need (for example picnic tables) to make the Green a place for everyone to enjoy.

**Resilience and Emergency Planning**

 On 11 November OCC and SSE held a workshop in the Village Hall to help residents makes plans for themselves and their families, should the unexpected occur. The presentation was full of helpful tips and advice, which will appear on the Ashbury website in due course.

**And finally:**

If you wish to contact the council, unless shown above please get in touch with Laura Evans: Email – *clerk@ashbury.org.uk*