

BOXWELL with LEIGHTERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Village meeting

As set out in the Minutes from the Parish Council meeting held in January, a Village Meeting was held on Thursday, 19th February at 7.00pm in St Andrew's Church.

The items under discussion included:

- A Parish Council (PC) update
- A presentation from a member of the Amenities Committee regarding their activities
- Advice on security matters to be provided by a member of the Community Police.

Simon Gale, PC Chairman welcomed residents to the meeting and introduced Edmund Maina from the Tetbury Neighbourhood Policing Team.

In opening, he provided his thanks to the following:

- First, a huge thanks to Martin Weaver, who has recently stepped down, for all his help and input on the Parish Council. However, he will continue editing the B&L Life and erecting the Christmas Tree
- Big thanks to Frankie for organising, and also to everyone who attended, the Christmas Market
- The Amenities Committee for donations that have and will help us to fund projects and events
- Big thanks also to everyone who turned out on a cold and damp day to help plant trees [as part of the GCC Ash Dieback programme] - we have more in store for you!
- Lastly to fellow PC members and officers who give quite a bit of time to the community through their involvement. There is an increasing amount of effort involved in adapting to the latest good ideas from central and local government - Local Government Reform [LGR] is just part of this, and considerable effort is put into chasing down officials from local government. to provide input, assistance and the occasional roadblock!

POLICING & SECURITY

Edmund Maina [EM] gave an overview of the role of the Neighbourhood Policing Team and how residents can help in preventing crime. In essence:

- He strongly recommended that car keys be kept in a Faraday pouch
- Outdoor lighting should be installed and CCTV is also a good idea as it acts as a deterrent and can provide evidence if the unfortunate does happen
- EM will pass on matters raised at the meeting, including concerns about specific matters, such as suspected hare coursing for which he will request that the Rural Crime officer undertakes more patrols in this area.

- He referred to 'Your Community Alerts', which reports issues such as suspicious door-to-door salesmen
- He also mentioned that a Community WhatsApp group could be set up in order to quickly pass on suspicious activity within the village. SG has investigated the most efficient way to implement this and details are provided below and in the next edition of Boxwell and Leighterton Life.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

- We have the opportunity to provide our input through 2 Statutory Consultees:
- Essentially there are 3 proposals:
 - Cotswold District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council, and Tewkesbury Borough Council proposed a **single unitary council comprising the whole of Gloucestershire**, replacing these current authorities:
 - Cheltenham Borough Council,
 - Cotswold District Council,
 - Forest of Dean District Council,
 - Gloucester City Council,
 - Stroud District Council, and
 - Tewkesbury Borough Council
 - Cheltenham Borough Council proposed 2 unitary councils:
 - **East Gloucestershire**: Cheltenham, Cotswold, and Tewkesbury
 - **West Gloucestershire**: Forest of Dean, Gloucester and Stroud
 - Gloucester City Council proposed 2 unitary councils but included a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils:
 - **Greater Gloucester City**: Gloucester plus 12 parishes from Tewkesbury, 8 parishes from Stroud and 1 parish from the Forest of Dean
 - **Gloucestershire**: Cheltenham, Cotswold, and the remaining parts of Tewkesbury, Stroud, and Forest of Dean.
- In all options Parish and Town Councils remain unchanged though with new responsibilities, etc.
- It is very unlikely that the status quo will remain so there will be a period of quite substantial change over the next 3-4 years
 - Elections for new authorities
 - Shadow councils
 - Transfer of assets, responsibilities, etc.
 - New ways of doing things and routes to funding, etc.
- But - it will save money - the government says so!

LOCAL PARISH PRECEPT

- In the last financial year the PC took a first step towards ensuring we had funding sufficient for the projects we outlined at previous meetings and initiated based on your feedback from the questionnaire
- In 2026/7 Financial year we are taking an even bigger step which will mean an increase in the Parish Precept by A total of £6.98 per annum on a Band D property which is the median for how all precepts are calculated.
- To put it into context this increase will still only yield a total of £2,814 for the PC to use
 - Statute imposes obligations on us that currently cost approx £950 per annum and are likely to increase
 - That leaves £1,864 of the precept which we can use to fund the mower, the playground, the parish magazine, and the projects we want to deliver.

This illustrates how important the Amenities Committee and Christmas Market fund-raising is for the village.

PROJECTS

- **The Pond**
 - Great work by Martin Weaver, Peter Huntley and Andy Batten on clearing the vegetation at the edge of the pond
 - Thanks to Simon Ursell for getting one of his experts to assess the pond and make some recommendations on how we can improve it and increase the wildlife benefit. As a first step we need to reduce the number of carp.
- **Traffic**
 - SG handed over to Dan Say, who has definitely devoted the most time to chasing those local authority officials and he provided a verbal update on an inspection conducted by Gloucester Highways in June 2025, for which he has just received the report.
- **Playground**
 - Since the dome went up we have noticed that some other facilities are going to require at least repair, which will be addressed.
 - Regrettably, we have a continuing problem with people stuffing waste into the bin provided in the playground, even when it's full, forcing the liner-bag down and leaving the bin overflowing, which means
 - Cotswold District Council will not collect the refuse which in turn has meant that PC members have had to tidy up - it's most unpleasant to be picking up other peoples waste especially when it includes used nappies, etc.
 - We have put a notice up, please don't be offended.

- **Community Woodland**
 - After a promising start we have hit some obstacles and so will need to reassess what we were trying to achieve and explore some less ambitious alternatives.
 - Unfortunately all alternatives will involve consultation with and approval from GCC who are kind of busy with the LGR
 - However, we have made some progress towards registering the current playground as a 'Community Green Space' which if we are successful will provide some extra protections in the future.

- **Parish/Community Magazine**
 - SG wished to record thanks to Jane Bullock on behalf of the whole community for editing, printing and distributing the BwL Newsletter for so long!
 - When the PC offered to assist, Martin Weaver led the effort and has got BwL News off to a flying start.
 - Please keep providing Martin with fresh content and adverts, so we/Martin can keep moving forward.

COMMUNICATIONS

- We are legally obliged to have a webpage and we will continue to maintain this as it is today.
- We have Boxwell with Leighterton Life which is great for sharing things within the village.
- There is also a Facebook Page which we are going to review and ensure is restricted to residents of the Parish so that it can be better used to pass on information, request help, seek input, etc.
- However, the PC would like to introduce something that has greater reach and allows us to send you information rather than you having to search for it. This ties in with the ideas mentioned by Edmund and other initiatives to have local emergency plans, etc. by providing the means for us to communicate important items that come to us as a PC.
 - Following a positive response at the meeting we will be setting up a WhatsApp Community for the village
 - This will sit as an umbrella for existing (and new) Groups such as Leighterton Ladies and Lads Night
 - It is reasonably easy to set up and manage, easily accessible, compatible with virtually all mobile/smart devices, and secure
 - The idea would be to add everyone who agrees and any new residents to this Community (with their approval). They can then see but not access all the Groups within it and request access to these to suit their interests/needs
 - Obviously people can leave both Community and Groups whenever they wish. As with the FaceBook page, membership would be restricted to local residents.