1. **Apologies** for Absence were received from Nick Elsome, Tarek Moghul, Mike Holland and Peter Burdon.
2. **The Minutes** of the previous meeting Thursday 15th April 2021 were read and signed as correct.
3. **Chairman’s Report**. Cllr Liz Collas welcomed a good turnout to our first Annual Parish Meeting to be held in person for three years. The parish has emerged from the rather dull days of lockdown with a variety of activities. Many clubs and organisations kept going over lockdown and are now back to running their full programmes. I am very pleased that many of the organisers are here tonight to report on their activities. We were also very excited to see the return of the Village Quiz, and the produce shows. The fete is also making a very welcome return on May 28th.The parish Council has been busy with a range of projects over the last year, some of them more visible than others. One of our key initiatives has been, finally, achieving a speed reduction through Cray’s Pond. This is something that the residents of Cray’s Pond have been lobbying for over many years, so we were really pleased to see this go through. The costs were covered by grants which was an added bonus. We are now carrying out initiatives to reduce the speed limit further to 20mph in various parts of the Parish, and we have a newly formed Speed Watch Group. Whilst we are a small parish we do have a few assets which we maintain, including the Pond at Cray’s Pond, the recreation ground at Whitchurch Hill, the playground at Garton End, two telephone boxes, three bus shelters, four notice boards and various benches. We have now found a new consultant to help us devise a plan for the maintenance of the Pond, which we will implement with the help of a team of volunteers. The play equipment is regularly maintained, and we are actively looking for ideas to update the facilities. The telephone libraries are proving a great success- thank you to the volunteers who look after these. The bus shelters, notice boards, and benches have been refurbished and maintained to a high standard. This year we have signed a new contract for grass cutting- our single largest expenditure. I hope we will see an improvement in the grass cutting along several roads and in the recreation ground. Some of the areas will be deliberately left to grow as wildflower areas- hopefully providing a habitat for more insects. In the coming year we will be looking at further ways to reduce our carbon use, and also increase biodiversity. We will be marking the Queen’s Jubilee with a beacon lighting on June 2nd. Everyone is welcome and we hope this will be a fun village event. Our latest initiative is the introduction of a new IT system. This will involve a centralised account for communication and document storage. This will bring our data security and general data protection responsibilities up to date. There will be a new website, and new email addresses for all Councillors. More information in the next newsletter. We have also continued with our regular activities, including making sure the footpath network is in good condition, running a Litter Pick, and consulting with the District Council about all the planning applications made within the parish. Financially, we have maintained our spending at a similar level to previous years. Our income was £26,831, mainly made up of the Precept, and we ended the year with just over £30,000 in the bank. We have decided to reduce the precept slightly for the coming year. Our main expenses are the grass cutting contract, the clerk’s salary, support for the local bus service, and the magazine. We are hoping to install two more defibrillators, at the Sun Pub, and the Almshouses. We have applied for a grant, but may need to contribute some of the cost. Finally, I would like to say thank you to my fellow Councillors who give their time and expertise to make things happen in the village, and to Lucy who runs our newsletter. We are kept in order by our valiant clerk, Amanda, without whom we would be so much less effective. Thank you, Amanda for all your hard work, and for always going the extra mile.
4. **District Councillors Report.** Cllr Peter Dragonetti reported that ashe looked back over the year, the District Council has been facing new issues. Although now a distant memory, the garden waste collection was a major concern for much of last year. The plan for new offices at Crowmarsh was put aside, as the reality that they did not need all that space became apparent, and they are now going to take temporary smaller offices in Abingdon as a stop gap. Taking back control of the councils finances has proved to be a good thing, cutting out Capita has saved costs and improved efficiency. The financial outlook for the council is much improved, and although the reserves are declining, the forecast position is much better than it appeared when he was first elected. He has been the District Councillor for 3 years now, and during that time he has been the most active councillor on the District . He has attended 103 meetings since he was elected, more than any other councillor. The next best attended 84 meetings. It has helped that many meetings are now online. He has also attended the meetings of every other parish council in the ward, that’s Whitchurch, Kidmore End and Mapledurham. It is some relief that Mapledurham only meets every two months. In addition to writing in the Goring Heath Newsletter, he also writes in the Whitchurch on Thames Bulletin and Kidmore End Newsletter. As the readership does not overlap, he can often use the same material in each publication. He thinks that it is important to communicate as much as possible, and also be visible. South Oxfordshire District Council, under the control of Lib Dems and Greens, has, in his personal view, run the council efficiently and effectively, and he noted that he is proud to be a member of it.

**5. Whitchurch and Goring Heath History Society.**

Mrs Vicki Jordan reported as follows **“**History meetings did not take place until October of last year, when Martin Wise talked about his parish map and local place names. In November a small group looked at various documents from our archives, helped by a glass of wine. This year we have had our AGM in February and talks on Civil War characters, and on Oxfordshire portrayed in art. We look forward to talks in April and May on Oxford Castle and the literary and artistic footprints of the Thames Valley. We hope the renewed interest of members carries on. During lockdown the Society circulated news from around Oxfordshire so that our members could access speakers via Zoom, and we also answered questions received through the web site, such as the “Bear Pit” in Hardwick woods, and several family history enquiries. A landmark moment was the publication by the Victoria County History of Oxfordshire (with a little help from the Society) of volume XX, which includes the history of our Parish.

**6. Whitchurch Hill Women’s Institute .**

TheReport for Whitchurch Hill WI was delivered to the meeting by Mrs Theresa Elsome, Mrs Frances Strange sent her apologies. Last year’s report covered how Whitchurch Hill WI were supporting members through the pandemic. They came through it very well and with the lifting of restrictions The WI are back in the Parish hall enjoying monthly meetings again. Numbers are down by 10 to 25 as some have moved out of the area or can no longer attend due to illness. There are 4 dual members which means that they already belong to another WI, in this case Stoke Row. Whitchurch Hill WI attracts members from outside the village as they meet in the morning. They also enjoy the company of women from Whitchurch on Thames, Goring and Purley. Of course, when the WI was formed over a hundred years ago it was expected that the members would walk or cycle to their local WI. At the AGM in March, after 9 years, Frances Strange stepped down as President and Sarah Moody is the new President. Sarah was extremely active during lockdown when allowed, delivering food, birthday cards, flowers and generally keeping in touch. They have wasted no time in finding ways to fundraise and have started a craft project. They have held a coffee morning in the Art Café to raise funds for the Motor Neurone Association and the next big event will be the village fete where they will run the tea tent. The craft project is the knitting of bunting, red white and blue, to decorate the well and telephone box for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. Two members have been taught to knit while most of the others rekindled the skill and have enjoyed that old tradition of knitting. They will also donate the plants for the tubs at the well, red white and blue, of course. They meet on the third Tuesday of the month and have a full programme of speakers booked until March 2023. Each month a social event on the first Tuesday is planned, this might be a walk and pub lunch, a visit to a garden, National Trust property or any place of interest such as the Textile Museum at Greenham Common. But one thing is constant, food and drink is always involved at some point. It was noted that New Members are always Welcome.

**7. Scouts, Guides and Brownies.** Mrs Doreen Pechey gave the following report.

**Guides.** “It’s been a challenging couple of years both for the Guides and the leadership team. We lost a number of Guides who were not comfortable meeting on zoom and were anxious about meeting in person when we could. Meeting on zoom wasn’t all negative as this enabled us to go to places we’d never normally be able to. The highlights of these two years are as follows. We had a couple of meetings with some Oxfordshire scientists to complete the science careers challenge badge. As part of this badge, we went to Mars with the Mars rover. The Guides designed their own rover as part of this challenge and learned about constellations, moons, galaxies and science careers. It was fascinating, especially as most of the scientists were positive female role models.We did scavenger hunts on Zoom which were great fun, they baked at home and made a cake and a pizza in a mug. We visited a wildlife centre in Essex and got to meet the animals on zoom. We also had a magician/comedian visit us on zoom and he was hilarious. We did a couple of escape rooms online, the Harry Potter one was a favourite. Meeting face to face after lockdowns was a great feeling and although we kept to strict risk assessments, we were able to do lots of activities including visiting Green Broom farm to collect brambles to make bird feeders; circus skills and drumming; a penny hike which led us to the chippy in Woodcote, sailing at Goring sailing club; swimming with the Brownies at the Oratory school and doing some backwoods cooking. We had a visit from the Home Guard Living Museum, who told the Guides about the role of the local defence volunteers. The Guides handled guns, bullets and did some morse code while wearing tin hats. This was one of the best evenings we’ve had and the first time that they have visited a Guide unit. We managed a sleepover under the stars at the hut. Guides used their knowledge to identify constellations and we also had a telescope on hand for a closer look at the moon. Every single Guide took part in this activity which shows how much they missed our camps and residentials. We took part in a parliamentary debate for parliament week with our friends from Peppard Guides. Cats versus dogs was interesting and sweets vs chocolate was also a great debate. We also took part in operation Christmas child preparing and sending shoeboxes with gifts to under privileged children. We wrapped and filled 21 boxes as the Guides brought in so much stuff that we had more boxes than Guides. We found out recently that these boxes ended up in Liberia. Our numbers are slowly increasing and we now have a good flow of Brownies moving up to Guides. We are very fortunate that we have a new young adult volunteer in Guides too. This year we are celebrating our 100th birthday and the Guides are thinking of things that they would like to do for this momentous occasion.”

**Brownies.** Mrs Doreen Pechey gave the following report. **“**It’s been a challenging couple of years both for the Brownies and the leadership team. We lost over half of our Brownies due to a mixture of moving up to Guides anxiety and not being comfortable with zoom as an alternative way to meet. Our online meetings including using You Tube to do some origami bookmark folding. It looked easy but it was a challenge. We also learned how to do some cartoon drawing and found a game online called duck race. This was brilliant with the Brownies all shouting out for their duck to win. They also did some cooking at home baking cookies and cakes. Our scavenger hunts were hilarious with one Brownie bringing along her Dad as part of a hunt. We also visited a wildlife centre online. We spent as much time outside as we could, den building, planting sunflowers, leaf printing, cooking on open fires, having a campfire with the Guides. We also joined them at swimming. We spent an evening experimenting with fizzy rockets trying different ways to reach the highest point. Messy but fun! We had a visit from a local dance teacher who taught the girls some folk and country dancing with live music from a violinist. Woodcote conservation team came in to make bug hotels and to talk about hedgehogs and what we can do to help them survive. Brownies learned about constellations and made their own viewers to find constellations in the sky. We held a Halloween glow party which is always great fun and they make up glow dance routines in the dark.Brownies had an evening carol singing with the residents at Towse Court in Goring which was just lovely.Our numbers are creeping up and we are very fortunate to have a new Guider who was already qualified and moved to Woodcote so we got her involved as soon as we could. The Brownies gained lots of badges during this time and learned new skills and we are thankful that we were able to keep in touch with each other during this challenging time.”

**Cubs.** Mrs Doreen Pechey gave the following report. **“**Getting back to Face to Face meetings during the last year with Cubs has been amazing for leaders and Cubs alike as this is what it is all about. Some cubs have been here for over a year but have only seen other cubs and leaders on zoom calls. Getting to see each other in person was like meeting old friends and we all fitted in together as a happy family in no time at all. We saw some changes at Cubs with very sadly 2 leaders retiring, but also some new leaders volunteering to create a new dynamic team with some new and fresh ideas & renewed energy. At the start of Face to face meetings we were exclusively meeting outdoors. We kept very busy with activities like making fires & cooking on them, putting out fires using fire extinguishers, burning a guy during bonfire night (lots of fires). We did map reading, outdoor games with lots of running around, hiking during the day and at night and we even managed to fit in a Cubs weekend camp at the 1st Goring Heath Scout hut. With covid restrictions lifting we then started doing more indoor activities with fitting in some badge work. We had our classic Pine Wood Derby car races with professional electronic timing in January, we successfully completed from our very own escape room game at the hut, built some rockets out of recyclable materials, baked pancakes on tin cans for Shrove Tuesday. We even had a visit from a family that lived in a temple in the forests of Guatemala to name but a few of the things we got up to. We are full to capacity with most cubs attending all meetings.”

**Beavers.** Mrs Doreen Pechey gave the following report.“It’s been a strange time for Beavers as well as the other sections. We felt that the six to eight year-olds didn’t need the extra stress of Zoom initially, so we had no meetings until the September. Then the leaders had to learn to adapt quickly to delivering meetings over Zoom. More cooking, crafts and country (Scottish and Irish) dancing to get the Beavers moving. As soon as The Scout Association allowed, we had half the Beavers meeting outdoors, while the other half were on Zoom, and swapping the next week. At this stage we were unable to take in any new Beavers because we were limited to six meeting face-to-face, so we kept to 12. We are now up to 16, which is a much nicer number. In 2021 it was too difficult to have an overnight camp, so we had two days “camping” and the Beavers went home overnight; some slept in their gardens in tents, while some had their sleeping bags under a table. The Beavers still managed to gain badges, including several attaining their “Chief Scout Bronze Award” which is the highest badge Beavers can get. We are now almost back to pre-Covid normal, and hope to have an overnight camp at the end of May.

**8. The White Lion at Crays Pond.**

**9. The 143 Bus Service.** Mr Mike Ward sent in the following report. **“**When I wrote last year’s report we were just beginning to see some signs of normality returning after a year of lockdowns. Passenger numbers were on the up, and I’m pleased to report that the trend has continued, although still not back to pre-covid levels yet on most of our routes. We fulfilled our promise to run a second bus on the Goring to Reading route, so Whitchurch Hill now has two journeys into Reading on Tuesdays and three coming back, including a new later afternoon service at 2.51pm from Blagrave Street. We hope to be able to continue with this service into the summer, when we might manage to attract some visitors to Beale Wildlife and Basildon Parks, particularly in the school summer holidays. However all this does depend, as always, on the level of support we get from Oxfordshire County Council. The scheme changed from April 1st , and it seems that income from Concessionary Pass journeys will start off being reimbursed at near pre-covid levels, reducing every two months until it matches the actual number of journeys recorded. Whilst this is relatively good news for the first few months, it looks very likely to cause us severe problems by the time we get to late summer/autumn. The Goring to Reading service has to run as part of the overall service we operate so as to have any chance of covering the overheads of the organisation. It seems very unlikely that overall actual passenger numbers will return to pre-covid levels. Furthermore, our fuel costs are now up by well over 50% in the past year, yet there is no additional income to cover that. It looks like it will be a very precarious situation. In the meantime perhaps you would like to know more about what we need to do behind the scenes to keep the buses running?  We would love to hear from you, whether it is helping us keep the timetables up to date at our bus stops, or keeping track of the mileage our buses do, or helping work out our monthly claims to the councils for Concessionary Pass journeys, for example.  There is plenty to do!  Maybe you’d be interested in a part time job? Please email me with your interests for more information. And of course we always welcome anyone who would like to join our team of volunteer drivers who help out when our paid drivers aren’t available.  It’s definitely time we had some lady drivers! You just need D1 on your licence to drive our 14 seater minibuses. As always, we are very grateful for the support Goring Heath Parish Council has continued to give us during this difficult period, and also the contributions we have received from Goring Heath Almshouses. ‘Every little helps’, as they say! Do let us know if you have any questions or comments about our services - please email to littlebluebus@yahoo.com.

**10. Whitchurch and Goring Heath Twinning Association.** No visit took place last year, and in September a new team took over running the Association. An Art Café was held in February. It is our turn to visit La Bouille in 2022, and arrangements are being made for a trip later this year, from 30th September to 3rd October. A small group is also visiting on the early May Bank holiday weekend.

**11. OWL (Our Woodcote Library).** Mrs Vicky Jordan reported ona difficult year, when the library had to deal with covid restrictions and the loss of volunteers. However, the library is now fully open, with Book Club and Rhymetime sessions taking place, and new volunteers recruited to cover all the open hours. In September 2021 there was a celebration of the 30 years the library had been open.A new team of officers has taken over running OWL, running volunteer rotas, raising money, and liaising with Woodcote parish council and OCC.

**12. The Parish Hall.** Mr Chris Whatmore, chair of the Parish Hall Management Committee and interim Hall Manager gave the following report. “Looking back over the last year so much has happened. We re-opened the hall last May under the regulations at the time and some of our regulars returned and there were a few parties. However after giving it a good shot both the Tuesday and Friday Pilates with Vanessa and Michelle decided to take a break and Tots on the Hill didn’t restart. However it is great to see a new selection of regular users who have started using the hall in their place. Kinecroft Dance, after an experimental run last summer term, are now running two classes and Sarah is now regularly using the hall twice a week for her exercise classes. TaiChi has returned and is running extended sessions on some Wednesday’s. It is also good to see that the WI, Scottish Dancing and History Society are also back using the hall. If anyone is thinking of setting up a regular club Monday’s or Friday’s are pretty much the only regular slots available. Parties have been happening most week-ends but although we can be busy we are still not at capacity in this respect. We managed in the autumn to host a Mike Holland Quiz night, which was its usual great success. The timing fortunately fell between lockdowns and seeing the hall full of people having a really fun evening was a great lift. Thanks Mike.Finances are in good shape, thanks to grants applied for and received by the hall from SODC. These more than covered our expenses for the periods where we had no bookings income. Also bookings are now approaching a level where we can run without drawing down on these grants.

Last year I mentioned we were considering equipping the hall with screen and audio system. This has not progressed yet owing to other priorities but is still for investigation in this coming year. We as a committee are very keen to keep the ambience and feel of the hall as currently so any installation would have to be sympathetic but not be such a compromise so as to not be effective. More prosaic work is to have the gable end tiles re hung as some of these are now coming adrift. Expenses such as this are expected in a hall of this age and often come at short notice. As some of you may have noticed our flagpole was a casualty of the winter storms and we hope to have it back in place soon. Thanks to a donation from the fete committee we have had the flat roof section refelted last autumn which was showing signs of seepage and we have also carried out numerous other smaller repairs over the year. To close if you would like to make a booking please contact the hall through our email address: [bookings@goringheathparishhall.uk](mailto:bookings@goringheathparishhall.uk)”

**13. The Fete.**

**14. The meeting was then opened for questions.** Mr Ian Reynolds raised two questions.   
1. Community Speed Watch (CSW) Mr Reynolds advised the meeting that he had registered to participate as a volunteer with Thames Valley Police for this welcome initiative. He had undertaken the online training and passed the test on 16th February. He then emailed the Coordinator (Cllr Nick Elsome) on 21st February to advise that he had completed my training. He then heard nothing further. The Clerk formally apologised for this oversight, noting that the Coordinator had been very busy as he is a family man with a demanding job. (He was not present at the meeting). Mr Reynolds pressed the matter stating that it would have taken only a few minutes to acknowledge the communication. The Clerk would look into the matter and revert.  
2. SODC Discretionary grants in relation to Energy cost support for residents who are outside the current support scheme (Council tax bands A-D). Mr Reynolds asked the District Councillor if he had any further details about this. After some clarification, Cllr Dragonetti agreed to research the issue and would revert.  
Following a further question from Mr Brian Tappern there was open discussion about grass verges (Service Strips) which are owned by OCC in the front of people's houses. There was concern about obstructions being placed on such service strips particularly in the Whitchurch Hill/Path Hill area. Mr Reynolds is familiar with OCC "rules" on Service Strips and he helpfully pointed out that OCC has clear rules/guidance on what can and cannot be placed on such service strips available on its website. Bedding plants were acceptable but shrubs, trees, and other permanent obstructions were not. He further noted that if any resident had a concern they should report the matter via [www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com/). The Clerk offered to make sure the issue was covered in the next GHPC Newsletter. There were no further questions.

**The meeting finished at 9.30pm**