

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
IN EPWELL
HELD ON FRIDAY 15TH MAY 2026 AT 7.30PM
IN THE VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllr Platt (Chair of Epwell Parish Council), Cllr Gibson and Cllr Lejeune

Christine Coles (Parish Clerk), County and District Councillor Chris Brant, District Councillor Nicola Borkmann and sixteen villagers

Cllr Platt welcomed everyone to the meeting and said how lucky they all are to live in this village. This is a gathering of the community to hear from community groups. Each group is invited to speak to 3 minutes to give an update of the last year. Ideas to be discussed in Open Forum.

Village Hall (Nicola Rudge)

Nadira Thain is the Chair but she cannot make tonight. The village hall has had a good year with steady rentals. It is normally villagers who rent the hall and the money raised covers outgoings. Events raise money and get everyone together. Quiz nights are popular. The work is done by volunteers and it is all about being careful and not overdoing events and the work of the volunteers. The role of the Epwell Village Hall Committee is to raise money to cover the upkeep of the hall for everyone to use. Current hirers are yoga and the film club. Some maintenance work was carried out last year. The patio at the back was done. This year they are hoping to paint the toilet block and get a cage for the heater. They are looking to upgrade the heating system and gentlemen's toilets. They are looking further afield for grants and appreciate all the support they get at events. Nicola asked everyone to spread the word to book the hall. This is the best way to advertise.

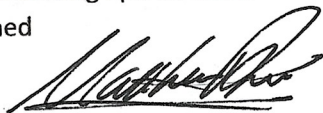
ERA (Liz White)

Epwell Recreational Area (ERA) was condemned by ROSPA last year. There is a duty to get the park open as soon as possible. There are new families with young children in the village. Most equipment is wooden and unsafe. The timber is showing signs of decay and it is about thinking of the future. Timber is not the way forward. Three sessions have been held with volunteers giving up their time and another session is being arranged soon. There is a long way to go and people have good ideas. The park draws families from outside the area and it is a shame it is non operational.

New toddler swings have been purchased. The timber had decayed in the old ones. Delivery is just before the school summer holidays and volunteers will be needed to install them. The group are exploring grant opportunities. Roz Kelling has lots of extensive knowledge to secure grants which will help with the process. A community consultation survey has been put together and this is required when applying for grants. It is online and on paper. The survey will be published in the Echo and the group will listen to ideas for the park. Once grant applications are in, the group are hoping to see funding at the end of the year. It will be in two phases. The first phase will be in 2027 but they need lots of support to be successful. The Summer Solstice event on 20th June will have a barbecue and bar with music. This will be a fundraising event.

A villager asked how much money is needed? The group are thinking big and would like £40K. Another villager suggested asking Cllr Chris Brant for a grant from his Councillor Discretionary Fund and approaching Epwell Trust.

Signed



Dated 13th July 2026

Epwell Garden Group (EGG) - Christian Lejenue

The group has 25-30 members and everyone is on board. They are all happy to come together and it's a social club. They will be planning excursions and build on the social side. If enough people attend meetings they can set up a committee. They are looking to diversify their activities. An internal village gardeb viewing will take place on 20th June and the group will join the Solstice village event after.

St Anne's Church – Carolyn Koch de Gooreynd

It has been a positive and busy year for the PCC. Services are held every week on a Sunday, morning prayers on a Monday and Holy Communion on Wednesdays. The vicar is fantastic and they are lucky to have her. Finances are balanced and it costs £1K per month to run the church. She thanked all those who give up their time to help with flowers, candles, wine for communion and refreshments. Lay led services have been part of their mission as a church to be able to involve other members of the congregation, parish or further afield in the services. This can either be by giving a talk, composing the prayers, being involved in discussions or open prayers. Their aim is to encourage those who attend the services to have space to air their own views, contribute to a service, feel their input matters, have time for deeper contemplation, learn about Jesus Christ and the love of God for them individually. They would like to encourage all the parish to be involved, but hope that through God's grace they may help people to feel welcome in church. Some churches can be cold places and locked up but endless people write lovely words in the visitors book here. Some services held included Mothers Day, Fathers Day and Palm Sunday. The loss of Alison Pollard was really felt as she worked so hard in the churchyard. Alasdair Lowe is the Church Warden. There are regular services and the church is always open, even during the Covid pandemic in 2020. Future fundraising events are the Mad Hatters Tea Party on 28th June and a Christmas Fayre in November or December. From the floor Mr McHugh fully agreed with what had been said. It is the perfect opportunity to leave tablets and phones at home to spend tranquil time in the church.

The Trust (Stephen Rutledge)

Stephen is Chair of the Trust and it was fantastic to see new faces at the meeting. He thanked Cllr Platt for arranging this meeting. The Trust has been going for a number of years with a number of trustees. The trust owns 11.5 acres of land and rents are modest. They recycle money to those who want support and are here to help. Some examples of their work included giving flowers this year to people recovering from illness, a donation towards a suitable chair for the late Tom Page, a donation for the late Jill Holroyd and the Fish and Chip Supper which has always been well supported. They treat all enquiries in a sensitive and confident manner.

Epwell Echo (Peter Koch de Gooreynd)

We are delighted to say the Epwell ECHO is alive and well.

Summary

We have enjoyed the transition of two editors since the long term editor Nicola Rudge was in post and the editorial is now in the capable hands of Caroline and Marie with the help of Francesco who does the graphical work as well as Nicola, Chris and Suzanne who so capably deliver the copies of the ECHO every 2 months.

Signed



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Health of the ECHO advertising

We are fortunate to have a long list of consistent and faithful advertisers. We also have a number of very kind donors, some of whom advertised in the ECHO and a few who simply make a financial contribution to help us to keep the ECHO in a strong position.

From time to time we find business's circumstances change and as a result some advertisers drop away however we have been fortunate to renew the list with newcomers who have found value in the ECHO and now make a considerable contribution to our publication including Radway Riding School, Chris Corbett's storage business, Jim's Earthwise storage business and Mattys Ember room to mention a few.

Of course, it is not just about money it is also about local businesses which we all benefit from and whom we turn to for their product and services.

Financial position

The impact of this advertising is that we typically publish 5 half colour pages of ads and 10 pages of b/w ads. This generates £200 in revenue per edition against a cost of £187-£204 per edition. In addition we want to thank the Parish Council for their generous contribution which helps with small gaps in the advertising revenue, to cover bank charges and also ensure that we are in a good health and secure going forward. We normally run a cash surplus to cover 2-3 issues with invoices issued to collect funds for future issues.

In conclusion

Many thanks to all the contributions made to the financial wellbeing of the ECHO to ensure that the editors can continue their splendid work to source routine and new content to make the ECHO a useful and appreciated publication for the village.

Caroline Frost thanked everyone for sending interesting articles for the newsletter. She receives great photos and hopes it will continue. It is nice to have an analogue copy of the newsletter and people like to hold something to read. She agreed to include an update on the work of the Trust for newcomers. Nicola Rudge added that the newsletter is produced and delivered every other month. It is great to have and there are many years worth of old copies in the archives. The archives do suffer now as not as many photos are printed off. The ECHO records village life as it is and it started originally in the dining room of The Old Bakehouse. It is hoped a digital record can be built into the village website and will motivate advertisers. Andrew McHugh is a trustee of several charities in Banbury. He spoke about local places which should be celebrated. Tooleys Boatyard in Banbury is the oldest boatyard in the world and the Mill Theatre in Banbury being a world class theatre.

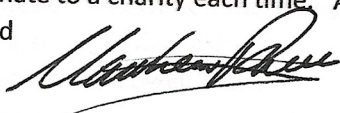
Wonderworks Playgroup

Naomi was unable to attend this evening. She is a teacher and a mum of twins. She runs a playgroup with themed activities. She has raised money for the park. She is an amazing lady but has paused her work at the moment as she is overwhelmed with work.

Open Forum

The coffee mornings were discussed which raised money for local charities. Marie took it on to try and continue the occasion. Suggestions have been made as to where the money goes. Alison Pollard used to donate to a charity each time. A villager agreed to find out the name of the charity.

Signed



Dated 13th July 2026

The Chair thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and sharing information. He then said it was a privilege to welcome County and District Councillor Chris Brant and District Councillor Nicola Borkmann. Cllr Brant knew a lot of faces as came to an event last year. He is a County and District Councillor. He then introduced the newly elected District Councillor Nicola Borkmann.

Cllr Borkmann has been a Parish Councillor at Swalcliffe for three years. She deals with environmental issues. She recently helped with flooding problems and liaised with landowners, residents, Cherwell District Council and Swalcliffe Park School. The flow of water has improved now and there have been no recent incidents. Cllr Borkmann is interested in biodiversity and there is No Mow May in Swalcliffe. Lots of tulips have been planted in the village and the area is being extended. She is Councillor for the Cropredy, Wroxton and Sibford ward and will get ideas. She is currently in the learning and listening phase. Transport is a big issue and recognises that a lot of work will be needed at the play park.

Cllr Brant spoke about the Cropredy, Wroxton and Sibford ward being the biggest in the county with 25 villages. This is his 5th meeting this week. He thanked everyone for their hard work and recognised the extra hours it takes to keep a village working. He spoke about the flooding issues in the village and Highways being involved.

From the floor Caroline Frost thanked Cllr Platt for his work for the Parish Council. The whatsapp group was discussed and whether it could be divided. It was felt it might lose value if sub divided. Instructions to help people use it correctly may be issued.

The completed play park surveys can be left in Donna Boyles letterbox. Other possible grants for the play area were mentioned which will be explored.

The Chair hopes that lots of things will come out of this meeting. There will be future threads that will create synergies. It will happen naturally.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Signed  Dated 13th July 2026