

Notes of a meeting at Cropredy

Meeting: 25 August 2009

Present: Cllrs Colin Clarke & Nicholas Mawer, Kevin Larner (Rural Development & Countryside Manager, Catherine Phythian (Scrutiny Officer)
 Jane Barker (Village Shops Worker, ORCC)
 Cllr Ken Atack, District Council Ward Member
 Chairman and 5 Members of Cropredy Parish Council
 Chairman and Member of Claydon Parish Council
 2 members of the Village Hall Committee

1. Introduction

Cllr Clarke introduced the Cherwell District Council representatives and explained that the Council was involved in roughly some 60+ partnerships; the Resources & Performance Scrutiny Board had decided to review the work of ORCC and the effectiveness of the partnership in supporting the needs of the District's rural communities.

Jane Barker introduced herself and her role and responsibilities as the Village Shops Worker at ORCC. She explained that she supported established shops and post offices and helped to set up new outlets in villages across the whole of Oxfordshire.

2. Discussion

Village Plan

- Cropredy had started work on the Village Plan in 2007 and has published the first edition.
- A separate project team had been set up to produce the plan ~ rather than the PC.
- The project team had received very valuable support and advice from the officers at ORCC, especially in developing the consultation material and questionnaire for residents.
- They regarded the Village Plan as a forward looking and evolving document which had helped to raise a number of issues about the village's future in the minds of the residents.
- **Question:** how much use does CDC make of the Village Plans as a potential information source on service needs and delivery?

Village Hall:

- Representatives from the Village Hall Committee stated that they had always received helpful, prompt responses from officers at ORCC and CDC.
- They were very satisfied with the level of support provided from the partnership.

Claydon PC:

- As a smaller parish they had not used ORCC for support on recent projects.
- However, they were confident that they knew who to contact at OCC/CDC or ORCC when necessary.
- The District Council Ward Member provided a lot of advice on specific issues.

Other issues:

- Cropredy PC commented on the difficulties and problems they had experienced when they were exploring options to safeguard the village post office from closure. They felt that they had received inflexible and conflicting advice from CDC and the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils.
- They felt that similar situations were likely to arise in the future, particularly following publication of the LDF, and that there needed to be a more “joined up” response to parish councils’ requests for guidance and advice on legal and democratic matters.
- They also asked for more information about the benefits of the Quality Parish Council scheme and the methods to obtain the accreditation.

Action: Kevin Larnar offered to include these issues on the agenda of the next Parish Liaison meeting in November 2009.

Conclusion:

- That CDC and ORCC provided excellent support to Parish Councils and community groups on specific projects or in response to particular queries.
- That Parish Councils knew who to contact in external organisations in order to follow up on specific issues (e.g. County or District Council, Highways or Environment agency etc).
- That the Parish Councils should be the third member of the partnership and involved in a true dialogue with CDC and ORCC; they sometimes felt that things were “being done to them”.

Scrutiny Officer
9 September 2009