



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL
Virtually at 20:00 Thursday 9th July 2020

Members Present

Chairman	Jim Donahue
Members	Hanna Ferguson Jean-Marc Grosfort Katherine Higley Carrie Leadbeater-Hart Diana Smith Jon Steward

Officers Present:

Clerk	Jane M. Yamamoto
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Public and Press: Will Barclay, Peter Dragonetti, Hilary Jensen, Richard Wingfield

The meeting started at 20:00.

1 **Apologies for absence & Mission Statement** 20:00

2 **Declaration of Interests** by Councillors on any items on the Agenda
No declarations were made.

3 **Public Forum** - an opportunity for members of the public to express their point of view on any item on the agenda. With the Chairman's permission, a member of the public may express their point of view on specific items of business. Five minutes are reserved per item.

4 **Chairman's Announcements** 20:05

Since the flash flood on 16th June, the following activities have taken place:

- A Flood Forum has been formed by a sub-team of the Emergency Team (Warren Beard, John Southey, Richard Wingfield, and Geoff Weir). They have done an analysis of the problem causing flooding at "The Greyhound Bowl" (please see Attachment 1) and asked the PC for the following support:
 - The PC to send a letter to OCC Highways along the lines of the attached draft, to request a meeting as soon as possible.
 - The PC to authorise funding for a survey of the drains near The Greyhound, to be implemented this summer while water levels are low. We estimate that the work can be done within a budget of £500.
- Cllr Donahue has already forwarded their proposal to Market Bostock, who is the Principle Highways Officer for South Oxfordshire, and he will be sending a Technical officer to perform a survey.
- Cllr Donahue now understands that OCC drain clearing contractor, OPC, may be willing to take on the CCTV investigation work so the PC may not need to fund this. As this work may help us in an emergency, he still recommended that the Council authorise budget for up to £500 to support use of a drone with CCTV for the drains near the Greyhound.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the £500 payment for the CCTV culvert to check the drains if it is needed.

- Cllr Donahue has also escalated some longstanding Fix My Street drainage requests for Swanston Field and Hardwick Road, and Mark Bostock is sending people to perform the work over the coming weeks. Both of these areas were hit hard in certain areas during the flash flooding. Swanston Field is identified as an area prone to impact by flash flooding. This should address concerns raised by a number of residents of Hardwick Road and Swanston Field.

Other news

- Intersection at Manor Road improvements are now complete:
 - o Pillar repair complete – well done Cllr Smith!
 - o Phonebox repainting completed – thank you Allen Scriven!
 - o Removal of old storage box courtesy of Nick Plumridge
 - o Logs placed along Manor Road verge – courtesy of Francis Dixon and Martin Bengtzen of the Green Team
- Well done to Cllr Smith and members of the football team for installing the new litter bin and new back stop netting to reduce balls going over the fence. The football club will look at fine tuning the location of the net and has already started Thanks to Alistair Aitcheson for committing to daily checks to empty the trash!
- Alexa from the Green Team met with representatives from Coombe Park to plan work on the Polish Memorial Gardens. The work is targeted for the end of July. During the meeting, Coombe Park reps said that work to cut back trees and replace fences along Manor Road and Hartslock Bridleway were planned for the next 2-3 months in line with approved plans.

Residents Issue:

- Residents on Hardwick Road expresses concern about noise and swearing from youth playing at the field – Cllr Smith and Cllr Donahue met with the resident. We committed to look at use of signs requesting users be respectful of the residential area, and consider alcohol restrictions. These will be covered later on the agenda.
- A resident raised the issue that the Hardwick Road verge is overgrown near the Jubilee walk. This is causing cars to go into the opposite verge and has created a rut and puddle on the other side of the road. Options to address this include asking Iain from Bozdown Alapacs to trim it or report to OCC.
- **Action 153** - : Cllr Donahue to contact Bozdown Alapaca owners to ask if they can use their equipment to cut the hedge.

Whitchurch Pre-school donation:

- Cllr Donahue raised a motion to let the pre-school keep our £750 donation for the 2020 Fete this year even though the Fete will not likely be held until May 2021. We would make an additional donation at that time. It is part of our annual Budget.

Resolution: The Parish Council approved the donation made to the Whitfest to be made to the Pre-School and a further donation next year. Clerk to communicate this to the pre-school team.

5 **To approve minutes of the meeting of 11th June 2020**

Resolution: The Councillors approved the minutes.

- 6 **Planning Applications** 21:15
- 6.1 P20/S2166/HH
Ash Court, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7ER
Demolition of existing detached single garage, erection of detached double garage with additional off-road parking & turning space, Revision of approved application re P20/S0965/HH
Resolution: The Council voted to submit: NO OBJECTIONS.
- 7 **To receive reports from the representatives of Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council.** 21:20
- 7.1 SODC District Councillor Report. See Attachment 2.
- 7.2 OCC County Councillor Report
- 8 **Finance:** 21:30
- 8.1 **Resolution:** The following payments were approved:
- | Payment | Amount |
|---------------------------|--------|
| Clerk salary (July 2020) | BACS |
| ICO (Annual subscription) | £40 |
| Jim Donahue (Zoom – July) | £14.39 |
- 9 **Opening of Manor Road Playground** – Cllrs Ferguson and Steward
The risk assessments had been circulated to parish councillors and parish insurance providers advised of the opening of the playground (see Attachment 3). Cllr Ferguson and Steward would prepare the signs and await approval of the wording. The playground would be sanitised with Milton fluid twice a day. A sanitation station would be fixed to the entrance of the playground.
The Chairman congratulated the Councillors for their good work.
Resolution: The Council voted to approve the payment for a sanitation station and the opening of the playground.
- 10 **Opening of Village Hall** – Cllr Grosfort 20:40
Cllr Grosfort presented the plan was to open the Village Hall from September. A full risk management assessment would be carried out in August with posters, signage and check lists for the risk assessment. A full action would be created in August. The afternoon tea sessions would be assessed for re-starting later in the year depending upon the risk assessment.
- 11 **Village Green Security** – Cllrs Ferguson and Steward
- 11.1 **Relocation of vehicular access and gates** 20:50
An email with the pros and cons of relocating the gate and a map with summaries of the consultations with local groups had been circulated. The primary reason for this consultation was to protect the green from travellers. The Village Green Working Group approved of the idea; WDAS advised that improving the top gate and changing the code on the lock more frequently would suffice; WotHabs expressed no concern for ecological loss but preferred if the current gate was enforced. They also had

reservations about larger and more vehicles coming through; Whitchurch Primary School did not approve.

The approximate costs would include a kissing gate, fencing and cross bar for £780 with installation costs of £400-500. Telescopic bollards with current gates would cost between £940 - £1800 depending upon the width and the height. The gate at the car park was estimated at £174 from Mole Valley. It would be the same wood and construction as the benches.

A Councillor stated that Muddy Lane was designated as a footpath with no right of access by OCC. The PC would need to seek permission of the landowner and/or legal authority. This may be SODC or WDAS. It would, therefore, be a criminal offence to drive on the land.

The Councillors discussed the pros and cons of the new vehicular entrance to the green. One mentioned the number of large vehicles for Village Fete. It was agreed that the current gate at the top of Muddy Lane was already one that one could not lift off its hinges.

An alternative proposal was suggested that trees could be used to blockade the gap. However, some Councillors advised that a shorter-term solution was required and trees would need at least 20 years.

It was agreed that specific proposals would be drafted for the Council for the next meeting.

11.2 **Signage and CCTV**

Cllrs Steward and Ferguson advised that should the Parish Council install CCTV on the green, it would need to be registered with ICO. The purpose must be stated and a declaration for privacy ie., overlooking any properties. The company that would install would also guide us through our legal obligations. Only certain Councillors would have access to the footage and after 31 days it would be deleted. A sign would need to be posted with the name and contact details of a Parish Councillor to raise any queries. A Councillor and Clerk would need to be fully aware of the policies with respect to CCTV and to ensure the Parish Council followed the recognised standards.

It was agreed that further consultation was needed with the Cricket and Football Clubs, the adjacent landowners and the Village Green Committee. The Council would see if problems remained on the green in one month.

The Councillors agreed that signage should be created on the green to encourage use of the newly installed litter bin and respectful behaviour to the residents in the area.

Resolution: Councillors agreed to the following outline of the wording for two permanent signs in the Village Green: “We love our Village Green. Please treat this area with respect, use the bins provided or take your rubbish home with you. Please clear up dog mess. This is a residential area so please keep voices down in the evening”
Final wording of the sign would be agreed by email.

PC-154-Action – Cllr Steward to obtain quotes for CCTV.

12

Village Green Alcohol-Free Zone

21:30

Cllr Donahue sent all councillor an assessment of option to limit use of alcohol on the Village Green (see Attachment 4). It was agreed that creating an alcohol-free Village Green would be difficult. Councillors cannot enforce the law only the police can. Councillor agreed that, as a minimum, we should wait for a period of time and consider if the recent anti-social behaviour turns into a long-term issue and also whether controlling alcohol use is the most appropriate method for addressing it.

13

Pavements proposal – Cllr Donahue

Cllr Donahue presented a proposal for resurfacing Hardwick Road pavement and improvement of other pavements in the village that he had discussed with OCC representatives. (see Attachment 5). The Councillors discussed the improvements to the pavements in the village. For an investment from the village of £25k in total (£20,829 from reserves plus the £4,171 grants), OCC would be willing to prioritise a pavement resurfacing and repair programme in the village worth up to £80,000. The Parish Council had received £4,200 in grants and budgeted for over £30k for pavement work in its 3-year plan.

The OCC programme would not include work on the pavements by the Ferryboat. OCC provided several reasons why a raised pavement at the Ferryboat was not feasible, including the resulting tripping and flooding hazard. The recommendation was to ask Lee Turner of OCC to work with TAPAG to ask how to make it safe through road markings and other measures. For example, bollards or signage for one-way traffic. A Councillor expressed concerns that improvements to the pavements in Manor Road would be needed in a few years again. This was because pavements were not designed to hold the weight of a car.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the motion for the pavements being improved by OCC and commit the required investment of £20,829 plus the £4,171 grants we have received but not yet used. Improvements to safety for the pavement in front of the Ferryboat would be forwarded to TAPAG to include the current High Street proposal.

14

New Pavilion Update – Cllr Donahue

Councillors Donahue, Smith and Leadbeater-Hart met with the Cricket Club but not with the other NPWG members (see Attachment 6 notes). It was agreed that the Parish Council review the two options: 1) Refurbishment of current pavilion and creation of tea hut; 2) A descoped version of the new pavilion design to reduce costs. If the Cricket Club owned the tea hut, they would continue to pay for all the utilities. If the Parish Council owned the tea hut, the Parish Council would pay for the utilities, but it could be used for other village events. It was felt that a refurbished Pavilion would be used almost exclusively by the Cricket Club, so it should be up to the Cricket Club to fund and refurbish it.

It was agreed that more due diligence be sought and further discussion is required before a decision on a final way forward is reached.

15 **Parish Council Facebook page** – Cllr Steward

The Councillors discussed the idea of a Parish Council Facebook page. On the whole, they felt it would be a good idea. It would be a source of information more interactive than a comments page on the Whitchurch Web-site. It was agreed that it must be thought through and planned carefully.

The Village Website editors advised that both would need links to each other. It was noted that the Clerk would be busy preparing the audit and was not a regular FB user so could not be asked to support this new initiative in the short-term. This would be something the Council would consider in the future, but not before the end of the year.

It was raised that new government regulation would be in effect if the Parish Council had its own website. Currently, the Parish Council part of the Village Website would need to comply by the end of September 2020.

Action-155: The editors of the Village Website would look into the feasibility of compliance with the website hosting company.

16 **Yew Trees on Manor Road and other trees from playground to High Street** – Cllr Higley

22:05

Cllr Higley provided a detailed report on making recommendations on managing the trees (see attachment 7). This included a review of proposal from three different qualified heritage tree surgeons. One of the companies she met with spent only 15 minutes on site and were not impressive. A second company quoted £900 for a survey upfront to produce a further plan. The Parish would therefore need to pay for it first and if the Council did not approve of the plan, it would need to go back to another company to quote. Their quote was £8k to carry out the work required.

The third and recommended supplier, Heritage Tree Surgeons, are well regarded and specialise in Yew trees. They have proposed to draw up a management plan and separate the costs for taking back the trees. An added health and safety check would need to be in place for the trees in the playground. They could either take back the Sycamore trees or take them out and plant Yew trees. If the Council cut back the Sycamores, they would need cutting back again and would be a continuous cost. Planting more Yew trees would be more cost effective. The Councillor recommended Heritage Trees and passed the management of the company to Cllr Steward.

Resolution: The Council voted to approve the quotation from Heritage for £1,000 in improvements.

17 **Conservation Area Appraisal** – Cllr Higley

Cllr Higley circulated an update on the first stage of work. She has sought feedback from the Whitchurch Society. A draft plan would be drawn up after consultation with SODC and the public. If the Parish Council sought SODC's approval, a public consultation must happen first.

18 The Chairman put forth a motion to extend the meeting past the 2 hour limit. 22:00
Resolution: Councillors approved the motion to extend the time for the meeting.

19 **TAPAG**

19.1 **TAPAG Update** - Will Barclay 22:05

The Chairman of TAPAG circulated the feedback from the Open Day. He said that TAPAG was now proposing to extend the double yellow lines to other parts of the village to address any impact of the restrictions on the High Street that may impact parking overflow on other streets which was raised as a concern by some residents providing feedback on the proposal. This includes adding yellow lines at the High Street near the Toll bridge, from the Ferry Boat to Mill Lane and also on Manor Road in certain places to ensure parking did not excessively impact traffic there. They looked at Eastfield lane parking restrictions but didn't feel yellow lines were feasible there. It made sense to add these changes to the proposal, but we should wait until after the follow-on Open Day as it would not be cost effective to ask Mode to modify their proposal multiple times. If TAPAG went back to OCC for another public consultation, it would cost another £3,120.

The entrance to Manor Road has become more difficult for passing cars with the addition of the logs on the verge. Double yellow lines at the start of Manor Road has also been proposed by a resident from the intersection with the High street to the required 10m distance to create more space at the intersection.

It was suggested that it may be quicker to obtain residents parking if suitable parking bays and double yellow lines were already approved. It was explained that an application for residents parking should wait until Parking Enforcement is transferred from the Police to District Councils as at present the Police are unable to adequately enforce parking restrictions.

The three south Oxford District Councils, SODC, the Vale and Cherwell and OCC are in consultation with the relevant Government Department and hope to achieve the change by late 2021. Part of the process is for them to do an audit of present parking schemes to ensure that signage and road markings are adequate to avoid any legal action by people who incur fines. The Parish Council confirmed their support for future phases of residents parking and a 20-mile speed limit.

A councillor expressed concern that the Council was responsible for public finances and the original budget was for the double yellow line proposal to be done in one action and not in multiple stages. Actioning the proposal in stages would not be cost effective. The proposal was drawn up by professional, approved by OCC and all the appropriate due diligence had been carried out.

Resolution: TAPAG will send a written response to the 30 questions raised by residents objecting to the proposal in the next week. TAPAG would also invite villagers for a second and last Open Day in September. This would be published in the upcoming

Village Bulletin. Detailed proposals would be published online at least two weeks in advance of the Open Day to ensure all could review it in time.

19.2 **Terms of Reference – Cllr Leadbeater-Hart**

There was an extended discussion about the transparency of TAPAG's work prior to the consultation. Will Barclay stated that its proposals were presented to the Parish Council on at least two occasions. OCC Officers have reviewed the proposals and after making some amendments have given their support.

The PC decided to hold a non-mandatory informal public consultation process which is still in progress. To make sure that all objections are heard and considered the PC had agreed to hold a second informal consultation. After this the next step is to put the plan to OCC who will hold a statutory public consultation.

Cllr Leadbeater Hart, having newly joined the council, has expressed interest in joining TAPAG, but the Chairman of TAPAG has expressed reservations as most of the current team has been working on the proposal for over 2 years, and Cllr Leadbeater-Hart has recently expressed her strong opposition to the proposal prior to joining the council. Cllr Leadbeater-Hart stated that she has resigned from the group raising objections to the proposal now that she is on the Parish Council and would aim to help develop a constructive proposal for the village overall. The Clerk had sought advice from OALC about the process for new members joining Working Groups. The advice was: *"The council usually sets up its Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties/Advisory Committees at the start of the council year at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held in May. At that time the terms of reference are agreed. The terms of reference need to make clear why it is being set up and what its responsibilities are. There are no statutory requirements for the composition of a committee/working group but it is the council which decides on the number of councillors and the term of office. Note it is the council not the Chairman that decides the number of people on the Working Party, so it isn't for the Chairman to decide whether this person is on the Working Party or not, it is for the council to decide"*. OALC also forwarded the relevant NALC guidelines for participation in Working Groups and Committees that were sent to all Councillors. The Parish Council confirmed that TAPAG membership and terms of reference were re-approved at the May 2020 meeting. Cllr Donahue suggested that if TAPAG wanted to take on new members in between annual meetings, it is preferable that the TAPAG membership decide as opposed to being dictated to by the Parish Council.

It was clarified that Working Group meetings and Advisory Group meetings were not generally open to the public, but Committee meetings were. TAPAG is an Advisory Working Group so public participation is not required. The current terms of reference state that minutes of all meetings do not need to be shared publicly but should be shared with Parish Council member, but even this has not always happened. Will was asked to consider making minutes publicly available in the future.

Action -156: The Chairman of TAPAG was asked to ensure minutes of all meetings were forwarded to all Parish Council members as defined in the Terms of Reference, and that they consider changing the Terms of Reference to post all future minutes publicly on the village website. TAPAG should also consider if this was the right time to take on a new member of the Parish Council to the WG.

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 20 | To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list. | 23:20 |
| 21 | To confirm the date and time of the next Meeting on 10 th September 2020 at 20:00.
Resolution: The Council voted to approve the meeting. | 23:25 |
| 22 | Meeting Close | 23:30 |

Note:

At the September 10, 2020 Parish Council meeting, Cllr Leadbeater-Hard requested the following additions to 19.1 and 19.2.

Cllr Leadbeater-Hart suggested a low risk staged approach prior to implementing double yellow lines. Particularly methods that could be easily reversible and low cost, such as using cones to create bays to see how this would affect the traffic flow and parking prior to double yellow lines, and trialing traffic priority signs at both narrows. She also advocated ensuring that Residents Parking and Double Yellow Lines are implemented concurrently. It became very apparent during lock-down that the number of cars that belong to residents is small in proportion to the numbers of cars that are parked by people commuting either to shop in Pangbourne, commuting to the station or on hot days to use Pangbourne Meadow. Therefore, parking for village residents must be protected. Cllr Smith stated that she would contact OCC to find out what timescale Residents Parking could be implemented.

Cllr Leadbeater-Hart also asked for evidence from OCC to support the statement that 'SODC is more likely to support Residents Parking if double yellow lines are already down' This is not the case, and is being misquoted in public forums. We must not mislead the public. SODC need to carry out a survey to check existing signage and lines to ensure that where they exist they are enforceable. This is not the case in Whitchurch as no such lines exist.

Cllr Leadbeater-Hart requested the Mode Scope of works and also a copy of the Mode Report. Other Councilors also requested to see them. TAPAG to provide to the Council.

Cllr Leadbeater-Hart stated that she felt that any Council member should be able to attend any Working Group/Sub Committee/Advisory Group and that all perspectives should be welcomed. She stated that differences in opinion leading to healthy debate are essential in achieving balanced decision making. TAPAG have not been open and welcoming to opposing views and through the TAPAG Chairman's own admission he is bombastic which has made him successful and has no intention of being more inclusive. She expressed grave concern that TAPAG is not listening to all opinions and has become blinkered and dictatorial in their views. This is of great concern to Cllr Leadbeater-Hart.

Cllr Leadbeater-Hart has requested to join TAPAG The Council Chairman stated that TAPAG should decide at their next meeting whether she can join.

The Chairman of TAPAG was personally insulting to Cllr Leadbeater-Hart during the Discussion on TAPAG's perceived lack of open-ness. Cllr Leadbeater-Hart left the meeting.

Attachment 1:

Letter from Flood Forum

To: Whitchurch Parish Council

5th July 2020

From: Whitchurch Flood Forum

Flash flood of 16th June 2020

Since the recent flash flood, which caused damage to The Greyhound, we (the members of the Flood Forum (Warren Beard, John Southey, Richard Wingfield, Geoff Weir) have been trying to investigate the causes and effects in order to be able to recommend action to avoid a similar event in the future.

Attached is a 'Sketch showing Drainage of the Greyhound Bowl'. The road drainage system, shown in red, failed to drain the large pool that formed in the road. This was partly due to blocking of gratings at the four gullies near the pub by vegetation washed down the road and partly we believe due to insufficient maintenance of the drainage pipes crossing the road and/or of the main road drain to the river. We would like the opportunity of a meeting with OCC personnel to discuss the adequacy of the drainage infrastructure and the programme of maintenance for these drains. We also want to discuss with them the roadside soakaways on the hill, which despite re-excitation last autumn, appeared to fail in their task.

The second drainage system, shown in blue on the Sketch, sometimes referred to as 'the village stream' or 'the mysterious culvert', is independent of the road drainage system. Its function is now better understood than a few years ago but a survey, proposed in 2014 but thwarted by high water levels, still needs to be carried out. PC funding was earmarked for this earlier. The route and size of the culvert, which traverses several private properties, is still unclear.

A sealed manhole cover was lifted outside the old fire station shortly after the flood, when the pool was failing to drain away, and water immediately passed down into the culvert, allowing the pool level to drop. Converting this manhole cover into a grating would appear to provide a way of reducing the flood risk at The Greyhound but as a permanent solution it may not be feasible or legal, which is another topic for discussion with OCC.

We propose the following action:

1. The PC to send a letter to OCC Highways along the lines of the attached draft, to request a meeting as soon as possible.
2. The PC to authorise funding for a survey of the drains near The Greyhound, to be implemented this summer while water levels are low. We estimate that the work can be done within a budget of £500.

Whitchurch Flood Forum

John Southey, Geoff Weir, Warren Beard and Richard Wingfield

Attachment 2

Report to Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council July 2020

Council Operations

Planning Committee meetings have resumed, albeit only online. So far there have been three meetings, and from the Council's view they went well. On a personal basis, there are definite advantages in not having to travel to Didcot, but there is a loss of personal interaction with other councillors, and, more importantly, members of the public.

As I hope you are aware, there is no opportunity currently for representations by members of the public and parish councils to be heard at these online meetings, and all representations have to be made in writing in advance. The council is working towards a solution to this, so that public speaking can resume. A first public use of the solution will be for the Audit and Governance committee which is being held next week, 13th July..

At the most recent meeting, out of five applications two were refused, two approved and one deferred pending a site visit.

The process of bringing applications before the committee has been reviewed, and an objection by the parish council does not always result in it coming before committee. As a parish councillor, I know that the parish council has "one shot" which has to be fired before the officer does their assessment, so I have been urging that officers have more communication with parish councils so that both parties can understand the situation, on one side a parish's concerns and on the other the planning framework and legislation that forms the officer's decision. This does seem to be happening.

In the past, there have been occasions where an application has come before the committee because of a parish council objection, and then no parish councillor appears to speak.

If there is an application to which the parish has a serious objection, please contact me so I can make sure that it is referred to the committee if the officer is likely to approve. The officers are all named on the application, and are happy to speak to parish councils.

You will have been advised of the new process which appears to be undemocratic, but it does have various checks and balances, and is not intended to block out the parishes.

Enforcement

There are a lot of issues about enforcement, although only two in Whitchurch at the moment, Hardwick Stud Farm and the Hartslock fence. There is a facility on the SODC website to see the enforcement process. The Enforcement team is pretty stretched, and I hope it can be strengthened. This is the link

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=EnforcementCriteria&TYPE=Enforcement>

Local Plan 2035 (was 2034)

The examination in public starts next week, also online. 14th July. It will be streamed live.

I have made written representations in respect of the development of the Oxford Green Belt, the AONB, Rural Workers dwellings and Reuse of Rural Buildings, and I will be speaking on the latter two.

SODC Corporate Plan

This will be going out for consultation later this month

River Thames

Councillor Jo Robb has been appointed as the Council's Thames Champion. The stretch of the River in SODC includes some of the finest stretches, but it also includes Thames Water's Oxford Waste Water Treatment works at Sandford, which has exceeded its discharge limits in the past. We want to keep the pressure on to ensure good water quality for the Thames in our district, and of course further downstream. Jo is a regular swimmer in the Thames.

Peter Dragonetti

Attachment 3

Manor Road Playground Risk Assessment

Hi all,

Jon and I have discussed and completed a risk assessment for the re-opening of the playground, for your review and for discussion on Thursday. Kindly find it attached. (also find below OALC's guidance email). We are recommending that with the proposed risk mitigation actions being implemented, the playground could be re-opened.

Couple of points to note. The guidance from the government outlines only a few compulsory actions that have to be implemented by all playground owners and operators (carrying out a risk assessment before re-opening, and ensuring that risks from damaged or defective equipment are addressed before re-opening). The government has then provided a long list of helpful suggestions for actions that can be taken to mitigate and reduce risks. It is not expected that all risks are eliminated as that is not considered feasible so they recommend a balanced approach of managing and reducing risks. Each playground owner carries out their own assessment of risks and proposed mitigating actions to conclude whether to re-open or not at this time.

Our proposed mitigating actions, that align with government suggestions, address both the physical distancing concerns as well as concerns regarding touching shared surfaces. I have spoken with OALC today as well as our insurance provider and both considered our recommended approach appropriate, well considered and sufficient.

Let me summarise the decision points we have to discuss and agree on:

- The requirement to ensure safety of equipment (no damaged or defective equipment) in line with standard non-covid related health and safety requirements.

Option A) We can carry out a visual check by councillors (Jon and myself) to assess for any obvious defects with play equipment to ensure we comply with this requirement. This will then be followed by an official RoSPA annual safety inspection which is to be carried out sometime in July. For now they have not given us a specific date as to when this will be. Our insurance provider was ok with this approach as they do not require an official annual inspection in order to comply with this requirement. Also OALC considered this a practical and feasible approach.

Option B) We wait until RoSPA inspection before re-opening. The Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII) recommends this approach. Jon and I however recommend option A. rather than delay opening possibly by weeks.

- Putting in place mitigating measures to address covid-19 related risks

In the attached risk-assessment we have proposed 6 mitigating actions for us to take. As you can see in the last two column on the right, there are further actions we could take (based on government and other providers' suggestions) but we don't consider those necessary if we implement our other recommended actions. Our insurance provider considered our approach appropriate. They did not consider it necessary to implement all the government suggestions and considered some of those impractical to implement. They confirmed that the most important factor is to have considered the risks, put in place a number of mitigating measures so that should anyone bring a case against us, they cannot demonstrate that we were negligent as we tried to minimise risks as far as was feasible and possible. He recommended relevant signs as an important measure. Our six proposed actions, which are outlined further in the attached document in the context of government suggestions, are:

1. Putting in place signage on expected social distancing (1m+) when using facilities (and other important messaging to communicate)

2. Taping off or removing one swing in each swing set as it is not possible to abide by 1m+ rule when using the swings (they are 60+cm apart from each other). Jon will assess whether it is possible to remove a swing. If not, we can tape off one in each set. Taping was suggested by OALC. It is possible to use other play equipment in the playground whilst maintaining 1m+ distance.
3. Implementing a routine programme of cleaning with disinfectant. Jon suggested spraying with disinfectant (Milton, child & baby friendly one). Jon already has the required spraying equipment and cost of disinfectant is minimal. He could do this once per day. Thank you Jon! When covid-19 risk levels reduce, the frequency can also be reduced.
4. Purchasing a hand sanitation station and putting it just inside the main entrance to the playground to provide opportunities for hand-sanitising (foot operated). Approximate cost £120 + Pack of 10 500ml bottles £60, totalling £180. Alternatively we can recommend in the signage that visitors wash their hands at home before and after using the playground but it would be nice to provide a hand sanitation stand.
5. Incident reporting – inviting visitor feedback, including concerns regarding failure to maintain social distancing and/or anti-social behaviours via council email address (Hanna or Jon’s email address provided for reporting any concern on playground use).

Jon and I both very much support the idea to re-open the playground and are happy to lead on the above mitigating measures. It will be a positive boost to the community to have the space re-opened.

Just for comparison, councils are taking different approaches. Ours is a cautious one to ensure safety of users as much as is possible/feasible. I am attaching London Borough of Sutton’s guidance for families for using re-opening playgrounds. As you can see, they intend to do no disinfecting at all and state that people will use the playground at their own risk. Our insurance company did not recommend that approach or language but to use signage to guide people on how they should behave to follow gov guidance in the playground, and take any other mitigating action we consider feasible and practical.

Look forward to discussing more on Thursday.

Regards,

Hanna

Attachment 4

Use of Alcohol on the Village Green

I have looked into the options for restricting the use of alcohol on the Village Green after receiving the following suggestions:

- Laura Lucas suggested Public Space Protection Order for Alcohol free or Controlled Drinking Zones
- The Village Green WG suggested that we post a sign stating 'unauthorized use of Alcohol is prohibited'

I have looked into these options and other, but don't believe that we can do any of them in a simple manner without someone investigating them in more detail and going through extensive processes to get them approved.

Options include:

- Changing Bylaws to prohibit Alcohol: <https://www.alcoholpolicy.net/2009/10/councils-may-use-bylaws-for-no-alcohol-zones.html>. Adding byelaws is a complicated process that would take someone several months and a lot of work to get approved.
- Feedback from Keith Brooks is that the Village Green WG recommendation was based on the assumption that only the Parish Council could authorise the use of alcohol for public events as we have a premises license that we pay SODC for every year. Detailed information is on the web-site, but it appears to be a license to sell alcohol and does not govern the use of alcohol in public spaces: <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/business/licensing/personal-and-premises-licences/premises-licence>
- I looked into the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) which could be used to control rather than prohibit drinking in a public space and give police more powers to confiscate alcohol if it is suspected of contributing the anti-social behaviour, but this is not simple either. I have attached a detailed guideline document for Councils. It talks about the criteria for getting it approved that includes a consultation process and detailed enforcement strategies that need to be developed.

The PSPO guidance included was a list of questions that should be answered before pursuing the PSPO route:

- What evidence is there that the anti-social behaviour is or is likely to be persistent, detrimental and unreasonable?
- Why is a PSPO being proposed to address this issue or issues?
- Is the proposed restriction proportionate to the specific harm or nuisance that is being caused?
- What alternative approaches are available and why is a PSPO appropriate in these circumstances?
- Will the proposals alleviate each of the problem behaviours?
- Have exemptions been considered?
- What might be the unintended consequences for each aspect of the PSPO?
- What will be the impact on different groups?
- Has an equalities impact assessment been undertaken and what were its findings?
- What can be done to mitigate against any negative consequences?
- How have the consultation outcomes and other evidence collated been taken into account?
- How will the PSPO be enforced for each restriction/requirement?
- Are there sufficient resources to do this effectively?

These questions lead me to conclude that prohibiting or controlling the use of alcohol is not necessarily the best way to control anti-social behaviour on our VG. It may help, but a lot of time and effort will be required to get the PSPOs in place and we need to consider if this is a proportionate and appropriate approach before going down this route.

Attachment 5

Whitchurch-on-Thames Pavements Proposal

- OCC are responsible for maintaining and replacing pavements along with the highways they manage.
- The PC has investigated options to resurface pavements in the village that are badly in need of repair, based on continued feedback from residents, particularly for Hardwick Road which is used for the school run.
- The PC was able to privately resurface the Cut at Swanston field for about £5,000 in cooperation with OCC. The PC also paid for laybys at the entrance to the Village at Hardwick road supported by grants from OCC
- The 2019 Village Plan recommends resurfacing of pavements prioritised by condition. Re-surfacing of pavements was the second highest priority (52%) in the Village Plan residents survey after traffic improvements.
 - The pavement improvements recommended in the Village Plan include:
 - Improving pedestrian safety in the narrows outside the Ferryboat - 63%
 - Resurfacing Hardwick Road pavement – 40%
 - Resurfacing High Street Pavement – 36%
 - More formalised pavement on Eastfield lane – 21%, plus several strong comments against making a formal pavement on Eastfield lane.
 - Comments were also received that parts of Manor Road and Swanston Field needed improvement
- An estimate was received from a private contractor of £35,000 for the following changes: raise the kerb at the Ferryboat, resurface Hardwick Road and part of Manor. Swanston Field resurfacing was estimated at £50,000.
- The PC has budget of £27,000 for pavement improvements in the 3-year Village Plan Parish Council that was approved in both December 2018 and 2019.
 - An additional £4,171 in grants has been received from OCC pavement grant and CIL funds (need to be spent by 2023) for a total of £31,100 budget available for this.
- I have been working with Mark Bostock of OCC Highways who manages their budget for Highway repairs. He says they only have budget for 3 footways for the entire year for the county, so would not be willing to look at improvements unless the Parish was willing to make a contribution. His team have now done a site visit and an initial estimate of our requests. Their findings were:
 - Improvements of a raised kerb at the Ferryboat Inn are not feasible. I also spoke to Mark Francis from OCC who was responsible for originally putting this in despite previous requests from the PC for a raised kerb at the time. His explanation was:
 - The current design was implemented due to limitation of carriageway width and drainage issues.
 - A raised kerb would require raised pavement over the entire front of the Ferryboat with significant drainage changes.
 - The land is not owned by OCC and even if a legal agreement was reached with the landlord, the change could result in tripping hazards and flooding issues.
 - He recommended:
 - Improved imprinting of virtual sidewalk, potentially with “hot screed” to delineate pavement.
 - Traffic measures such as giving way priority in one direction to reduce the chances of two cars passing at the same time. The current Give Way signs at either end are not clear and often result in cars entering from both directions.

- Pavement improvements option 1: For Manor Road, Swanton Field, and the High Street, he did not see fundamental issues and recommended a thin 15 mil layer of “slurry” to improve the appearance. Additional patching work would be required in certain areas.
 - He has a cost estimate of £24,000 for the slurry work, but the overall cost could increase to £30-40,000 or more including all of the patching and repair work from his team.
- Option 2: Hardwick Road pavement needs fundamental repairs which he has an initial estimate of £38,000 for but could rise to £40,000- 60,000.
- He estimates at least £80,000 of work for both Options 1 and 2 for the OCC contactors plus the work from his team.
- I told him the budget we have available for this work, and he agreed that if we committed a total of £25,000 (£20,829 plus the £4,100 in grants), he would commit to doing at least one of the options, and see if he could do both.
- If we choose the Hardwick Road option he would commit to getting this done this summer ahead of school starting as he was aware this it is used by parents for the school run.

Recommendation:

- Allocate £20,829 plus the £4,171 in grants to the Hardwick Road pavement option to get the improvement done this summer ahead of the school term. Push OCC to look at improvements to Manor Road and other areas of the village while this work is being done.
- This is within budget already approved for Village Plan pavements work and will not impact other Village Plan commitments such as the new pavilion, Village Hall, and Traffic and Parking improvements.
- We need to spend the £4,100 in grants or it will expire.
- It will be a big win for the many residents who have been complaining about the conditions of the pavements for years, and will be timely support for the school run after the Covid -19 lockdown with children returning to school.
- The Ferryboat pavement improvements should be raised to TAPAG to include as part of their planned improvements. This work is handled by Lee Turner of OCC who is also responsible for changes to parking restrictions they are looking at:
 - Improved virtual pavement markings and add “hot screed” to the surface to further delineate it.
 - Consider giving right of way in one direction to reduce the frequency of two cars or adding bollards using the narrows at the same time.

Attachment 6

Update on New Pavilion:

A meeting was held between the Chairman of the Cricket Club, Mike Butt, Nick Leadbeater-Hart and Cllrs Donahue, Smith, and Leadbeater-Hart

We agreed to look at two options in more detail:

1. Refurbish pavilion and replace tea hut
2. Scaled back version of new pavilion design

While nothing was finalised, the PC's view was that in the first option, the PC would want to own the new tea hut to be used for village events, but the pavilion is unlikely to be used beyond cricket so it would remain owned by the CC.

Mike Butt agreed to work directly with Neil Huntington and team to detail these options. Cllr Donahue raised the concerns that the New Pavilion WG members were not happy with CC support for the NPWG in the past and that they refused to include WG members in this meeting.

We stressed the importance of having strong participation and commitment from them CC to move forward on whatever option we end up going with. The CC made it clear that they could raise limited funds from team members so would be dependent upon a community wide fundraising drive and grant applications for either approach.

I have let Neil and John Bradon know about the outcome and Neil will be approaching Mike with some background questions on the CC setting up the next WG meeting.

Attachment 7

Trees in Whitchurch on Thames.

- I have now spoken to three recognised specialists as required by SODC who have confirmed that damage has been/is being caused to the yew trees in Manor Road and have the following report to share with you.
- Cars parking on the verge in Manor Road are causing damage in two ways. Firstly, the cars wear away the grass which means when it rains the water collects and sits on the soil thus causing the roots to rot. Secondly, the weight of the vehicles is literally squashing the roots and compacting the soil. Yew roots are shallow and are therefore highly susceptible to weight placed upon them.
- You will probably be aware that with the help of TAPAG and a local resident we have placed tree logs down to prevent parking on the verges. It has been suggested that these logs may be stolen in the winter as firewood and or moved by people who wish to continue to park on the verges. If required we have an offer of much larger trunks which cannot be easily moved. I am aware that some residents have requested that the logs are re-positioned so that they can exit their cars and plans are underway to address this.
- Logs are recommended for the following reasons: they can be moved if necessary and provide a habitat for insects. Inserting posts can damage the tree roots. It can be done in a way that minimises damage but it is expensive. It also means that a non-native species is introduced to the soil.
- The National Trust has advised that we do not allow any parking within 5 meters of a tree canopy.
- The trees in Manor Road from the High Street up to the playground are in the village Conservation Area. The flowchart below details the steps that must be taken before any work can take place:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/777646/TPO_flowchart_5.pdf

- It is worth noting that we are not required to submit a section 211 notice to the local planning authority for: the cutting down, topping or lopping or uprooting of a tree whose diameter does not exceed 75 millimetres or the cutting down or uprooting of a tree, whose diameter does not exceed 100 millimetres, for the sole purpose of improving the growth of other trees (e.g. thinning as part of forestry operations).
- The majority of trees particularly the yews do not fall within this exemption. In practice this means that no work can be carried out on the trees unless we have prior approval of SODC.

- One of the yew trees had its branches cut (see photograph below) and as a result has been damaged. Upon the advice of one of the consultants I have been providing the tree with 'first aid' to aid its recovery and will continue to do so (unless there are any objections from yourselves).



- In addition to these requirements the Parish Council has to ensure that it complies with the requirements for statutory distance – see <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/street-maintenance-z/trees-hedges-and-ditches> - extract below:
- Trees and vegetation that overhang the highway should be crown-lifted to at least 5.2m to allow safe passage of high sided vehicles as well as being cut back sufficiently from the edge of the carriageway to allow clearance for wing mirrors. Trees and vegetation that overhang footways and footpaths should be crown-lifted to at least 2.5m and cut back to ensure the footpath/way is at least 1.2m in width. This is to allow safe passage for all footpath/way users including wheelchairs, mobility scooters, etc.
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 prohibits taking, damaging or destroying the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built. The RSPB recommends that no tree work should be undertaken between March – September in order to comply with this legislation.
- Given that bats are often seen in Manor Road we also need to comply with the provisions of Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Before removing the Dutch Elm trees, we make need to seek separate advice on whether bats are using these trees to roost in as they favour old trees. It is offence to damage or destroy a place used by bats for breeding or resting even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time.



- In addition to this, the trees in the playground need to be assessed from a health and safety point of view. There is also some health and safety related work that needs to be carried out to some of the trees in Manor Road itself. It is worth bearing in mind that the yew trees in the playground are part of the former avenue of yews. The other trees in the playground are the remnants of Repton's landscaped garden as the playground was at one time part of the Coombe Park estate. The trees therefore have a historical and cultural value as well as an ecological one.

The yews

- The yews are of cultural significance to the village as they used to provide a tree-line carriage drive to Coombe Park. They are also of ecological value.
- Yew hedges offer nesting opportunities for many birds including the goldcrests and firecrests. The fruit is eaten by birds, such as the blackbird, mistle thrush, song thrush and fieldfare and small mammals, including squirrels and dormice. The leaves are eaten by caterpillars of the satin beauty moth.
- The yews also help combat climate change. Due to the longevity yews are particularly important in carbon sequestration. All trees are critical to human survival as they provide us with the oxygen that we breathe.
- The yews also qualify to be registered as Veteran Trees on the Ancient Tree Inventory. <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>

Dutch Elms

- There are several Dutch Elm trees which are dead and these need to be removed for Health and Safety reasons. There are new Dutch Elms growing and they may well prove to be resistant to Dutch Elm disease so it is worth letting them grow. As above we will need to take advice in relation to the bats before removing these trees.

Sycamores

- There are a group of young sycamores which have self-seeded from the larger sycamore in the High Street. We should consider removing these. The sycamores are a fast-growing species and in order to maintain the statutory distance they will require constant pruning. It will be more cost effective for us to remove these and replace them with a slow growing species such as the yew. It will also enable us to re-establish the historic avenue of yews. This would also allow a little more light through as the sycamores tend to spread and block the light.

Decisions that need to be taken:

- That the Parish Council remind all residents that trees meeting the size requirements within the Conservation Area in the village are protected and that all work requires approval from SODC.
- Record the yew trees on the Ancient Tree Inventory held by the Woodlands Trust. (Other trees in the village that merit listing could be added in due course).
- Give your approval for me to continue to care for the injured yew until it is no longer required.
- Seek advice on the bats in relation to the removal of the dead Dutch Elm trees.
- Work with the Green Team to reduce the laurels on the left-hand side of Manor Road.
- Consider establishing more suitable woodland plants e.g. fox gloves (*Digitalis purpurea*) and wood anemones (*Anemone nemorosa*). WoTHabs have very kindly agreed to make a visit to the site and offer their advice. This meeting will take place on the 9/7/20 so I will be able to discuss their advice during the meeting.
- Place an information board at Manor Road to explain the history and importance of the trees including the yews.
- Consider the role of the Conservation Area Appraisal in highlighting trees that are protected in the village and making the historic link clear.
- Speak to the contractor for the Manor Road playground to ensure that future strimmer damage to the trees is avoided (see below). The specialists have recommended that we replace this dying tree with another rowan which is suitable species for the playground.



- Consider a further tree inventory/tree management plan of other trees in the village that the Parish Council has responsibility for, e.g. Village Green.
- Once we have approved a specialist, I would appreciate the permission of the Parish Council to engage formally with local residents and seek their involvement in the on care of the ground surrounding the trees and the yew trees if appropriate.